

**MEDIEVAL SETTLEMENT AND SOCIETY
IN THE EASTERN SUSSEX WEALD
BEFORE 1420**

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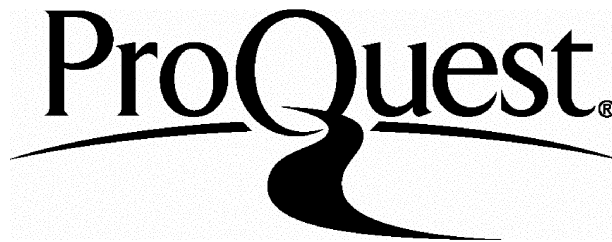
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Abstract

The High Weald in south-east England forms a *pays* with a distinctive landscape and settlement history. By far the greater part of that region lies within eastern Sussex, where it comprises a broad tract of wooded countryside with poor soils. The area was exploited during the Anglo-Saxon period by manors on the coastal fringe, which established outlying settlements in the woodland. The land within the valleys of the Weald was divided up at an early date into large areas, but the exposed ridges were avoided by the settlers and largely remained common land throughout the medieval period.

The early usage established the pattern for later medieval settlement, land-holding and lordship. Most settlement was dispersed and villages did not develop in the area until the 13th century when they emerged as centres for trade and craft-work. Land was held in large free tenements or customary virgates, probably based upon the areas into which the land had been divided in the Anglo-Saxon period. Seigneurial control was generally weak for the scattered lands of many manors made regulation difficult. Villeins were not burdened with onerous work services.

During the 13th century the custom of partible inheritance was replaced by ultimogeniture. The practice of partibility persisted on some manors, particular those near the Kent border, where it was found even among free tenants. Various means were devised in the later 14th century to avoid customary laws of inheritance.

Peasants established close bonds with their near neighbours to whom they were often related. A study of manors in the Wartling area suggests that they often married neighbours, sold land, and lent money and goods to them.

Most peasants before 1350 were smallholders, but plague in the later 14th century reduced the level of population and enabled tenants to enlarge their lands by amalgamating holdings. An active landmarket enabled tenants to build up larger consolidated tenements replacing the earlier pattern of smallholdings often comprising only a field or two.

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Abbreviations

BL	British Library
CKS	Centre for Kentish Studies (formerly the Kent Archives Office)
DB	Domesday Book
ESRO	East Sussex Record Office
HEH	Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California
HMAG	Hastings Museum and Art Gallery
OE	Old English
PRO	Public Record Office
Sawyer	Charter catalogued in P.H. Sawyer, <i>Anglo-Saxon Charters: An Annotated List and Bibliography</i> (1968).
WSRO	West Sussex Record Office

Note

The parish names refer to the historic parishes before 19th-century boundary changes (fig. 2). Sussex is used similarly to describe the historic county before the changes of 1844, 1889 and 1974.

Introduction: Background, Sources and Methods

Historians have long recognised the very considerable regional diversity in the forms of medieval settlement and social structure in England. The scattered farmsteads of woodland regions contrast with the villages in the regions of long-cleared arable agriculture. Homans compared the two regions, which he referred to as 'woodland' and 'champion', and noted in 1944, as others had done before, that the differences were reflected not only in the degree of settlement nucleation, but also in the character of fields, and even the types of inheritance customs. In recent years there has been a growth of interest among historians in the regions of England, often referred to as *pays*, and a perception that local diversity, whether of agricultural regime or social structure, might be understood in terms of these regions.¹

J.E.A. Jolliffe was one of the first historians to try to comprehend the significance of regional patterns for agricultural practice and the structure of local communities. He appreciated that there were fundamental differences in the patterns of settlement, social structure and inheritance customs within south-east England. Although he identified the importance of the contrast between the woodland and champion districts, he did not believe that the differences could be attributed to the influence of geography alone. He argued that social variability originated in the settlement of England by Germanic racial groups during the Migration Period. The emphasis on racial characteristics was common in the thought of the 1920s and 1930s when Jolliffe was writing, and it continued to find support in later historical studies by Homans who detected traces of similar regional settlements by Germanic groups in East Anglia.²

¹ G.C. Homans, *English Villagers of the Thirteenth Century* (1942), 12-28; A. Everitt, 'River and Wold: Reflections on the Historical Origin of Regions and Pays', *Journal of Historical Geography* 3 (1977), 1-19; A. Everitt, 'Place-Names and Pays: The Kentish Evidence', *Nomina* 3 (1979), 95-112; H.S.A. Fox, 'The People of the Wolds in English Settlement History', in M. Aston, D. Austen and C. Dyer (eds), *The Rural Settlements of Medieval England: Studies Dedicated to Maurice Beresford and John Hurst* (1989), 77-101.

² J.E.A. Jolliffe, *Pre-Feudal England: The Jutes* (1933); Homans, *English Villagers of the Thirteenth Century*; G.C. Homans, 'The Rural Sociology of Medieval England', *Past and Present* 4 (1953), 32-43; G.C. Homans, 'The Frisians in East Anglia', *Economic History Review* 2nd series, 10 (1957), 189-206.

More recent archaeological work has not substantiated the racial explanation used by Jolliffe. Though that interpretation of the regional 'cultures' of the South-East can no longer be sustained, many of the features identified by Jolliffe still require exploration. The short study written by Jolliffe in 1933, *Pre-Feudal England: The Jutes*, continues to be cited and has influenced much recent work.³ It remains one of the few studies which attempts to understand the basis of medieval society and land organisation in Kent and the Weald of Sussex and Surrey. However, the limitations of Jolliffe's work are very evident to a contemporary historian. It drew upon a limited range of evidence, using a small number of manuscripts and printed sources from which a general interpretation was constructed. Inevitably, subsequent work has shown that there are many errors, both in detail and in the broader interpretation.

One of the most enduring contributions of *Pre-Feudal England* was to recognise the inter-relatedness of many aspects of regional 'culture'. Settlement and farming of the land were considered to be inseparable from social structure and social relations of the inhabitants. It was necessary to consider collectively the many aspects into which medieval history is often divided - studies of lordship, field systems, agriculture, economy and settlement forms. Such an approach was more characteristic of the French *Annales* historians, or of anthropology than history, for it treated the object of its inquiry as the whole of society rather than examining one of its aspects in isolation. That view of historical societies, though novel in English historical studies in the 1930s when Jolliffe was writing, would today command broader acceptance. A number of recent works have attempted to reconstruct histories of selected areas of medieval England through an examination of aspects of their society and economy.⁴ These studies mark a clear swing of academic interest away from research based upon a single estate, the subject of much earlier work. Current studies emphasise the

³ For contemporary views of settlement of Germanic peoples in the South-East, see S.C. Hawkes, 'Anglo-Saxon Kent c.425-725', in P.E. Leach (ed.), *Archaeology in Kent to AD 1500* (CBA Research Report 48, (1982)), 70-2; M.G. Welch, *Early Anglo-Saxon Sussex* (British Archaeological Reports 112 (1983)), 222-3. For recent work influenced by Jolliffe, see K.P. Witney, *The Jutish Forest: A Study of the Weald of Kent from 450 to 1380 AD* (1976) and A. Everitt, *Continuity and Colonisation: The Evolution of Kentish Settlement* (1986), 7.

⁴ For regional studies, see R.H. Hilton, *A Medieval Society: The West Midlands at the End of the Thirteenth Century* (1983 edition); M.J. Bennett, *Community, Class and Careerism: Cheshire and Lancashire Society in the Age of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (1983); L.R. Poos, *A Rural Society after the Black Death: Essex 1350-1525* (1991).

considerable range of regional variation in England. The simplistic division into woodland and champion areas is inadequate to comprehend local diversity. It is, for example, no longer possible to discuss the field systems of England, as Gray did, in terms of the 'Midland system' and its local variants.⁵

The present thesis reconsiders some of the aspects of the regional 'culture' first identified by Jolliffe. The Weald of south-east England has long been identified as a distinctive area. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* mentions 'the wood called Andredes lea', and a charter of 1018 describes a grant of land in 'the well-known wood [called] Andredeswealde'. The king in the early 13th century might address the men *tam de Waldis quam terris Sussexie*.⁶ Jolliffe believed the Rape of Hastings, the most easterly of those administrative districts within Sussex, had many of the features he called 'Jutish'. He maintained that the Jutish character decreased towards the west of the county where it was overlain by Saxon custom.⁷ The Rape of Hastings forms the main subject of this study, though the eastern part of the Rape of Pevensey is also considered. The reasons for treating the eastern Sussex High Weald as a discrete area are suggested below. Jolliffe was correct in distinguishing it insofar as that part of Sussex has more in common with Kent in many respects than it does with the area to the west.⁸

The aim of the present study is to consider how the character of medieval rural settlement in that area of the High Weald of Sussex evolved up to 1420 and specifically to relate it to the particular form of society which developed within the region. The theoretical basis of that relationship between social structure and human geography is not discussed in detail here, though some brief comments are necessary. Human settlement geography is not a simple response to the environment, but is the result of a complex interaction between the physical characteristics of soils and topography, and the way in which the inhabitants structure their society and organise their means of subsistence. The understanding of that interaction has been influenced

⁵ H.L. Gray, *English Field Systems* (1915).

⁶ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ed. D. Whitelock (1961), 11 (*sub anno* 477); Sawyer no. 950; *Calendar of Patent Rolls* 1, 25.

⁷ Jolliffe, *Pre-Feudal England*, 74-9.

⁸ See especially, Chapters 2 and 7. A. Mawer and F.M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Sussex* 1 (1929), xiv-xv.

by the ideas of Michel Foucault who has suggested that social division and conflict were often expressed in the organisation of space.⁹ The division of land and the control of resources reflect, not only in economic terms, but also symbolically, the structure of society occupying that space. That applies not merely to the separation of the demesne from the land of the tenants, but ~~they~~ units into which the latter was divided and to the very pattern of fields.

Any terminal date chosen for the study of an evolving pattern is to some degree arbitrary. Though the year 1420 cannot be claimed to have any special significance, it does provide a useful concluding date for a study centred on the 14th century. As Howell has written,

The effects of the plagues cannot be assessed by the state of the economy in the 1350s or even the 1370s; it is essential to carry the story through to its conclusions in the 1420s.¹⁰

By the early 15th century the subdivision of land which had been taking place less than a hundred years earlier was clearly in reverse. Tenements were amalgamated and cottages and farms abandoned or demolished as new, larger holdings were created.

It is not possible to study the east end of Sussex in isolation. Settlement originated in the exploitation of land by communities lying to the south and south-west, in the more fertile coastal area. The complementary character of the soils in the interior and on the coast is an important aspect of land exploitation over a long period. In the later medieval and early modern periods stock was driven between regions to make best use of the different qualities of land. The Anglo-Saxon origins of settlement need to be considered at the scale of the whole of the county, and by looking for parallels beyond Sussex in Kent and Surrey.¹¹ Chapter 1, therefore, considers the evidence for the

⁹ M. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977* (ed. C. Gordon) (1980), 63-77, especially 77.

¹⁰ C. Howell, *Land, Family and Inheritance in Transition: Kibworth Harcourt 1280-1700* (1983), 57.

¹¹ The point is made most forcibly in P.F. Brandon and B.M. Short, *The South East from AD 1000* (1990), 12-5. N. Saul, *Scenes from Provincial Life: Knightly Families in Sussex 1280-1400* (1986), 133-4; C.E. Brent, 'Rural Employment and Population in Sussex Between 1550 and 1640', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 114 (1976), 42-3.

administrative divisions of the county of the whole county of Sussex and the light these cast upon the early usage of the Weald.

The settlement of the eastern Sussex Weald is explored in a number of ways. An evolutionary perspective is adopted in Chapter 2 in which the development of occupation and settlement is examined. As the quantity of evidence increases for the late 13th and 14th centuries, it is possible to take a more analytical ^{view} of settlement development. Chapter 3 provides a general introduction to the medieval geography and economy of eastern Sussex. The units of land tenure, their development and significance are investigated in Chapter 4. Settlement in the High Weald outside the few urban centres was mainly dispersed. During the 13th century small nucleated settlements began to develop. Chapter 5 considers the reasons and chronology of the growth of villages and hamlets. The character of lordship in the eastern Sussex Weald, the resistance to seigneurial power and the social structure of the peasants are examined in Chapter 6. The final section analyses the transmission of land both *inter vivos* and *post mortem*. There was considerable diversity in inheritance custom within the area considered, and the changes between the early 13th and early 15th centuries form the subject of Chapter 7. The effect of inheritance customs and of the land market on the transmission of land on manors in the Wartling area are examined in Chapters 8 and 9. The final chapter analyses the patterns of holding size and land transfer elsewhere within the study area.

The greater part of the area considered here lies within the geographical region known as the High Weald (figs. 1, 2). It is an area of poor, acidic soils developed over the Tunbridge Wells Sand, the Wadhurst Clay and Ashdown Beds. The landscape is heavily wooded and at lower elevations has a rolling appearance, but it rises to 240 metres on the Forest Ridges, where the Ashdown Beds produce poor, sometimes podzolised, soils. The relief may be much more dramatic at the higher elevations with narrow, deeply incised valleys known locally as ghylls.¹² On the coastal fringe lies Walland Marsh, the Pevensey and Pett Levels. Fingers of marshland also extend inland up the river valleys. The geology of the area is complex and the varied topography produces a landscape with considerable local diversity.¹³

¹² S.G. McRae and C.P. Burnham, 'The Soils of the Weald', *Proceedings of the Geologists' Association* 86 (1975), 593-610. The term 'ghyll' was used from at least the early 15th century, PRO E315/56, f. 1v.

¹³ R.B.G. Williams and D.A. Robinson, 'The Landforms of Sussex', in The Geography Editorial Committee (ed.), *Sussex: Environment, Landscape and Society* (1983), 33-49.

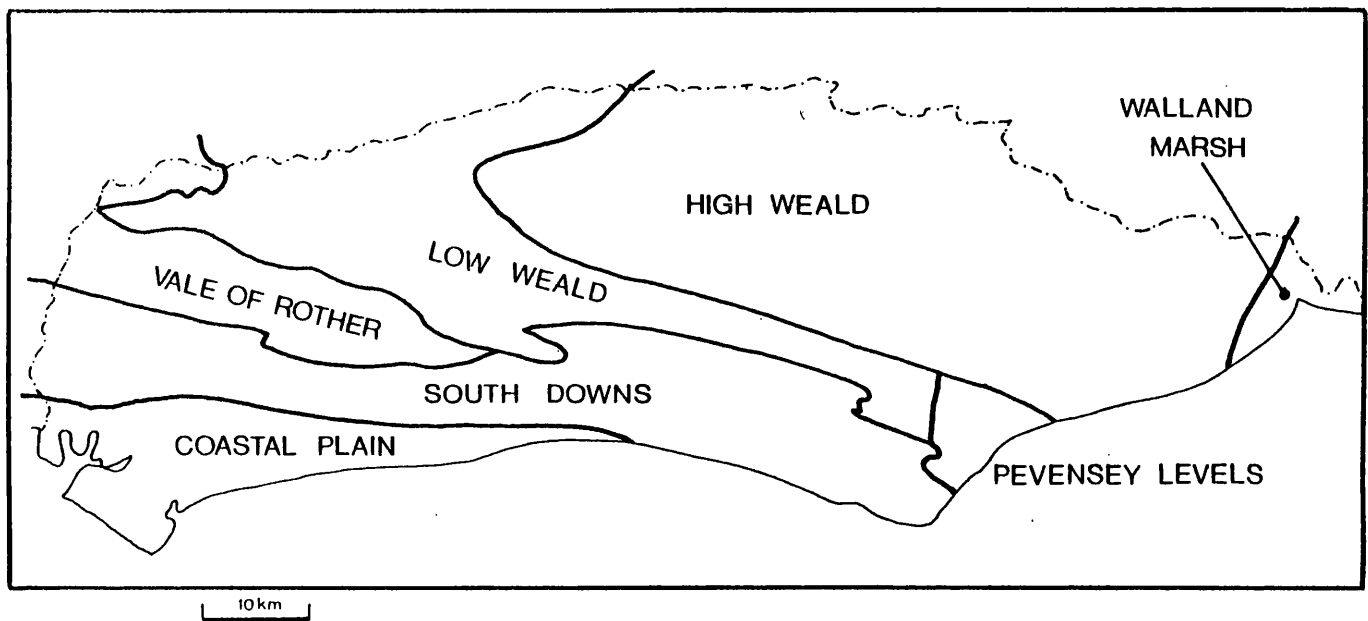


Fig. 1. The regions of Sussex (after S. King, in H.C. Darby and E.M.J. Campbell, *The Domesday Geography of South-East England* (1962), 475).



Fig. 2. The hundreds and parishes of the Rapes of Pevensey and Hastings (source: Ordnance Survey first-edition six-inch maps). Detached areas of parishes are shown by light arrows. Parishes paying pensions or otherwise associated shown with heavy arrows.

To the south of the High Weald lie the clay lands of the Low Weald. The soils developed on the Weald Clay are poor and difficult to work. In the medieval period extensive areas were given over to common land and parks.¹⁴ Beyond that lies a narrow band of better soils at the foot of the South Downs on the Upper Greensand and Lower Chalk. The soils on the Downs themselves are mixed. The soils are very sticky and acid where the chalk is covered with Clay-with-Flints, but otherwise light and well drained, though rather shallow on the upper slopes. The best soils within the county are found on the Coastal Plain, which increases in breadth from Brighton westwards. The quality of the soils in the medieval period has been shown graphically by Yates who has calculated the value of corn in pence per acre recorded in the taxation of ~~Pope Nicholas~~ in 1340 for the Rape of Chichester. The Coastal Plain ^{the ninth} parishes had the highest values generally exceeding 7½d. per acre. Some of those at the foot of the scarp slope of the Downs had values of 5d. per acre or above. The parishes in the Vale of Rother and on the Downs had values below 5d and some below 2½d. per acre.¹⁵

The east end of Sussex has attracted more attention from scholars than other parts of the county. One reason is the relative abundance and accessibility of medieval documents. The records of Battle Abbey survive in considerable numbers, and though the greater part of these has been housed since 1923 in the Henry E. Huntington Library in California, microfilms of some records are available in the East Sussex Record Office. The Battle Abbey material has been discussed in detail by the American scholar, Eleanor Searle. A calendar of deeds, mainly concerning Battle Abbey, has recently been prepared by Christopher Whittick. The records of the other major monastic house in the area, Robertsbridge Abbey, are less complete, but the Centre for Kentish Studies holds a large number of charters relating to the abbey's acquisitions, most of which have been published. These have been used by Chapman in a study of the granges of Robertsbridge Abbey. Du Boulay has treated the manor of South Malling in his study of the estates of the archbishop of Canterbury. The bishop of Chichester's lands, however, have never been the subject of detailed research, though there are some useful rentals for the east Sussex manors.¹⁶

¹⁴ P.F. Brandon, 'Medieval Clearances in the East Sussex Weald', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 48 (1969), 144-5.

¹⁵ E.M. Yates, 'The Nonae Rolls and Soil Fertility', *Sussex Notes and Queries* 15 (1962), 325-8.

¹⁶ E. Searle, *Lordship and Community: Battle Abbey and its Banlieu 1066-1538* (1974); Draft Calendar of the Pre-Dissolution Deeds on the Webber of Battle Abbey Archive, ed. C.H.C.

A number of court rolls survived for Bishopstone, one of the bishop's manors in east Sussex. These have been preserved among the records deposited in the British Museum, now the British Library, by the Earl of Chichester. Also included amongst that deposit were court and account rolls of the Pelham estate studied by Clough.¹⁷ She considered the manor of Laughton, the greater part of which lay in the Low Weald, and also discussed in less detail the manors of Bivelham (Mayfield) and Burwash in the High Weald. The most important work for the present study was the doctoral thesis prepared by Brandon, much of which was subsequently published in a series of articles. He established for the first time the outline of medieval settlement in the eastern Sussex Weald and particularly emphasised the importance of the period 1250 to 1350, when large tracts of poorer land were brought under cultivation.¹⁸ Brandon paid especial attention to the progress of clearance in the eastern Sussex Weald and to the use of Ashdown Forest. He argued that the Weald came under immense pressure from the growing population in the period before 1350. In the later 14th century, or shortly after, the demand for new land declined sharply and by 1420 no tenants could be found for some areas. In the aftermath of the Black Death there

Whittick (1991) (typescript in East Sussex Record Office); A. Chapman, *Granges and Other Landholdings of Robertsbridge Abbey* (1977); F.R.H. Du Boulay, *The Lordship of Canterbury: An Essay on Medieval Society* (1966). For one study on the bishop of Chichester's estate, see R.A. Pelham, 'The Agricultural Geography of the Chichester Estates in 1388', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 78 (1937), 195-210.

¹⁷ M. Clough, *The Estates of the Pelham Family in East Sussex before 1500* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 1956).

¹⁸ P.F. Brandon, *The Commonlands and Wastes of Sussex* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1963); 'Medieval Clearances in the East Sussex Weald', 135-53; 'Demesne Arable Farming in Coastal Sussex during the Later Middle Ages', *Agricultural History Review* 19 (1971), 113-34; 'Late-Medieval Weather in Sussex and its Agricultural Significance', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 54 (1971), 1-17; 'Agriculture and the Effects of Floods and Weather at Barnhorne, Sussex, During the Late Middle Ages', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 109 (1971), 69-93; 'Cereal Yields on the Sussex Estates of Battle Abbey During the Later Middle Ages', *Economic History Review* 25 (1972), 403-20; *The Sussex Landscape* (1974); 'The South Saxon *Andredesweald*' in P.F. Brandon (ed.), *The South Saxons* (1978), 138-59.

was a marked shift towards pastoral farming throughout the South-East, a feature well established in the Weald by the mid-15th century as Mate has shown.¹⁹

Saul has examined three gentry families in one of the most recent contributions to the study of medieval history of eastern Sussex. His book places those families in a broader perspective and examines the character of lordship in that area of the county. That study has stimulated many of the comments in Chapter 6, which examines the character of lordship and the structure of some estates in the area. The *Victoria County History* volume for the Rape of Hastings has proved to be a valuable reference work for tracing lordship. Frequent usage has exposed its limitations, and even rare errors, but it remains an essential guide to the complex manorial structure of the area.²⁰

The study begins with a consideration of the development of Anglo-Saxon settlement in Sussex. It has been possible to omit any detailed consideration of the archaeological evidence, because it has been the subject of recent work by Welch. The charters of the period have also been dealt with in a summary manner, both because of the preliminary work undertaken by Welch and the forthcoming British Academy volume on the Selsey charters, part of which I have been privileged to read in typescript. Attention has also been drawn to a number of lost charters, some of which were grants to the minster church of Bexhill. A summary of that work is incorporated in Chapter 1.²¹ The recorded physical remains of Anglo-Saxon and later medieval settlement in the Weald are scant. During the course of the present study excavations on three moated sites undertaken by David Martin were prepared for publication and new work was conducted on the medieval site of *Ivenden* at Combe Farm, Mayfield. Excavation at the latter suggested that surviving remains were likely to be difficult to identify and

¹⁹ Brandon, 'Medieval Clearances in the East Sussex Weald', 143; M. Mate, 'Pastoral Farming in South-East England in the Fifteenth Century', *Economic History Review* 2nd series, 40 (1987), 523-36.

²⁰ Saul, *Scenes from Provincial Life*; *Victoria County History of Sussex* 9, ed. L.F. Salzman (1937).

²¹ Welch, *Early Anglo-Saxon Sussex*; M.G. Welch, 'The Kingdom of the South Saxons: The Origins', in S.R. Bassett (ed.), *The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms* (1989), 73-83; N.P. Brooks, S.D. Keynes, M. Lapidge and M. Roper, *The Charters of Selsey* (in preparation); M.F. Gardiner, 'Some Lost Anglo-Saxon Charters and the Endowment of Hastings College', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 127 (1989), 39-48.

unrewarding to examine. That conclusion was supported by the results of an excavation on the large stone hall of the medieval grange at Park Farm in Salehurst. Only slight remains were discovered and these were buried beneath 0.8 metres of hillwash and revealed during landscaping work.²²

Most of the sources used in the present study are documentary and cartographic. Medieval records have been used throughout, but retrogressive analysis from later sources has provided an important tool for examining the detail of medieval settlement. The force of custom in the region was sufficiently strong that the quit rents, sometimes paid as late as the 19th century, were identical to the sums given 600 years earlier. Descriptions of land given in later documents may allow the position and extent of earlier holdings to be located precisely. The Ordnance Survey first-edition six-inch maps depict a pattern of fields which in many cases had changed little from that in the medieval period and provide a base for mapping the earlier tenements.

One example shows how retrogressive analysis may be used. In 1590 an area of land held by Thomas Aynscombe in the manor of Mayfield was enfranchised. His holding was described as a house once called *Aylwyns*, orchards, 5 acres of 'old assart' owing a rent of 5d. and seven pieces of land in the first virgate of Wateryard which paid a rent of 5s. 5d. The holding lay to the north and west of the road from Clayton tenement to Dudsland and was bounded on the west, north and east by land held by Edward Bennett, once Meres. A rental of 1519 adds that two of the fields in this holding were called *le Kytchen* and *Dedereede*. A further rental of 1498 shows that the messuage was situated in the 5 acres of 'old assart' and notes that the pieces called *Kichenor* and *Deedereed* were sometime held by 'Walfyns'. These records provide sufficient information to locate the land (fig. 3). The Clayton Farm to Dudsland road is readily identifiable and the messuage called *Aylwyns* survives as Allen's Farm. The adjoining land of Edward Bennett is clearly Meeres Farm. A field called Kitchen Acre is

²² D. Martin, 'Three Moated Sites in North-East Sussex. Part 1: Glottenham', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 127 (1989), 89-112; 'Three Moated Sites in North-East Sussex. Part 2: Hawksden and Bodiam', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 128 (1990), 89-116. M.F. Gardiner, 'Excavations at Ivenden, Combe Farm, Mayfield, East Sussex: A Study in the Relationship of Surface and Sub-Surface Finds' (in preparation); M.F. Gardiner, 'The Archaeology of the Weald - A Survey and a Review', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 128 (1990), 33-53; M.F. Gardiner, G. Jones and D. Martin, 'The Excavation of a Medieval Aisled Hall at Park Farm, Salehurst, East Sussex', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 129 (1991), 81-97.

recorded on an early 19th-century map. Aynscombe's land in Wateryard can therefore be identified with five fields shown on the first-edition six-inch map, rather than the seven mentioned in the enfranchisement, lying between the road and a stream to the north. The piece of old assart is probably the field to the north of Allen's Farm.²³

The earlier history of the land may be traced from a rental of c.1285 which records that Gilbert Alwyne held 15 acres in the virgate of Wateryard and Richard Wlwen another 22 acres. The family of the former gave their names to the farm and the latter was remembered as Walfyn in the 1498 rental. These two tenants held between them 2½ ferlings which if the rent was divided proportionally would have paid 5s. 0d., which is similar to the 5s. 5d. recorded in 1590.²⁴

Not all holdings can be traced backwards so satisfactorily. In some cases it is possible only to identify the general position of medieval tenements, but elsewhere the exact boundaries, even as early as the 12th century, can be traced with confidence. It has not been the aim of the present study to reconstruct substantial areas of medieval landscape, but by means of some detailed examination and more general work to attempt to explain the reasons for the development of the form of settlement in relationship to the society of its inhabitants.

²³ ESRO A1244 enfranchisement no. 3; ESRO A1244 rental, f. 14v.; ESRO AMS 5512, f. 6v.; ESRO AMS 5403.

²⁴ *Customals of the Sussex Manors of the Archbishop of Canterbury*, ed. B.C. Redwood and A.E. Wilson (Sussex Record Society 57 (1958)), 48, 51.

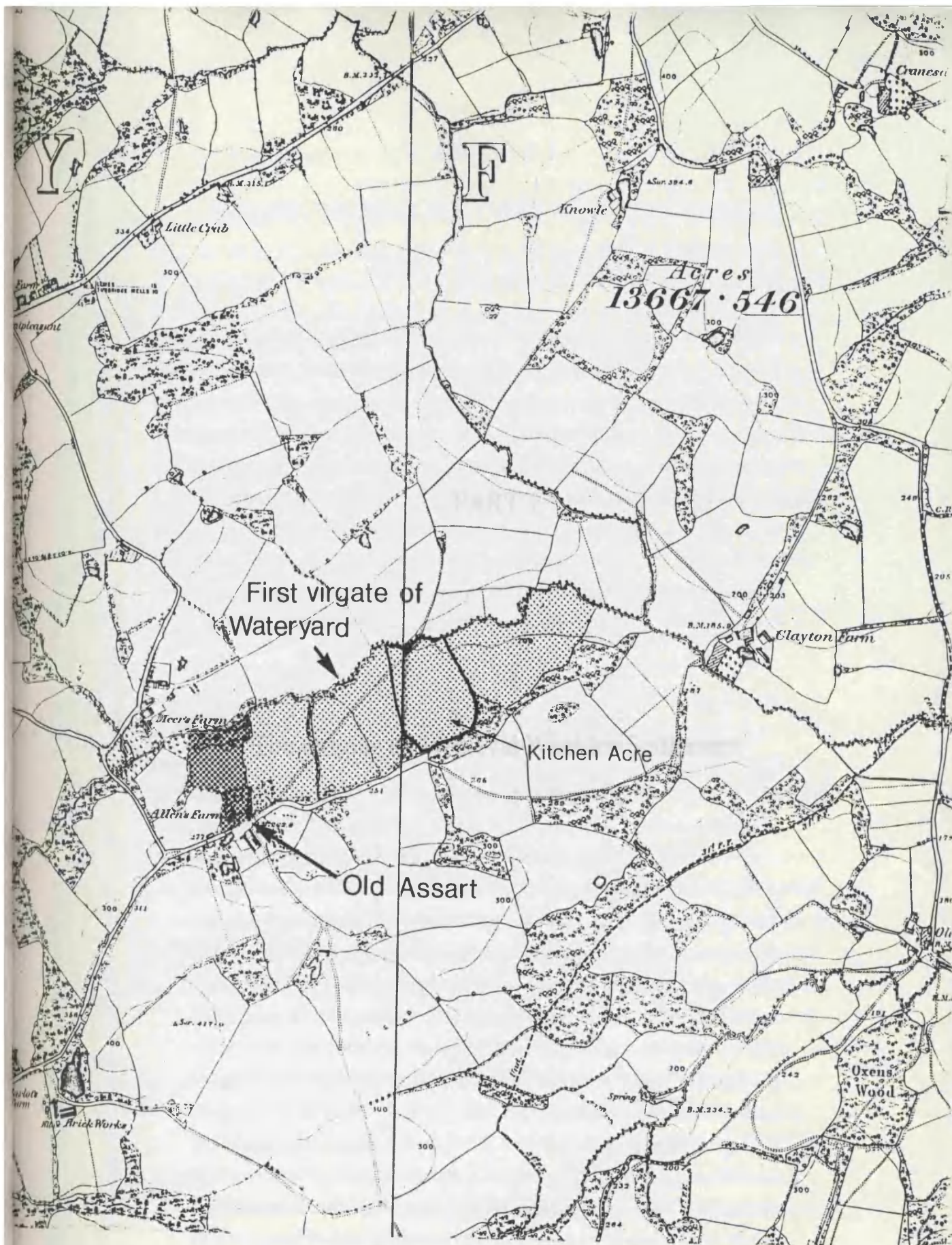


Fig. 3 The land of Thomas Aynscombe on a base map of the first-edition six-inch Ordnance Survey map, surveyed 1873-4.

PART 1

The Origins of Medieval Wealden Settlement

CHAPTER 1

RECONSTRUCTING THE TERRITORIAL PATTERNS OF ANGLO-SAXON SUSSEX

From an early date the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of England were sub-divided into smaller territories. Bede alludes to some of these areas and others are recorded in charters and in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.¹ Other contemporary sources contain occasional indications of the boundaries and functions of these units, but the evidence for the territorial divisions of the kingdoms is generally poor. Notwithstanding the limited evidence, these land divisions have been the subject of considerable scholarly interest. A number of attempts have been made to reconstruct local patterns of boundaries, for these seem to offer a key to the interpretation of the administrative structure of Anglo-Saxon England and an understanding of the development of settlement during that period and in subsequent centuries.²

¹ J. Campbell, *Bede's Reges and Principes* (1979), 3-4.

² Recent studies of Anglo-Saxon administrative geography include S.R. Bassett, 'In Search of the Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms', in S.R. Bassett (ed.), *The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms* (1989), 3-27; M.W. Bishop, 'Multiple Estates in Late Anglo-Saxon Nottinghamshire', *Transactions of the Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire* 85 (1981), 37-47; J. Blair, *Early Medieval Surrey: Landholding, Church and Settlement before 1300* (1991), 12-22; G. Foard, 'The Administrative Organization of Northamptonshire in the Saxon Period', *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History* 4 (1985), 185-222; D. Hooke, *Anglo-Saxon Landscapes of the West Midlands: The Charter Evidence* (British Archaeological Reports 95 (1981)), 31-8, 48-81; D. Hooke, 'Pre-Conquest Estates in the West Midlands: Preliminary Thoughts', *Journal of Historical Geography* 8 (1982), 227-44; D. Hooke, *The Anglo-Saxon Landscape: The Kingdom of the Hwicce* (1985); D. Hooke, 'Early Units of Government in Herefordshire and Shropshire', *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History* 5 (1992), 47-64; G.R.J. Jones, 'The Multiple Estate as a Model for Tracing Early Stages in the Evolution of Rural Settlement', in F. Dussart (ed.), *L'Habitat et Les Paysages Ruraux d'Europe* (1971), 251-67; G.R.J. Jones, 'Multiple Estates and Early Settlement', in P.H. Sawyer (ed.), *English Medieval Settlement* (1979), 9-34; D. Kenyon, *The Origins of Lancashire* (1991); P. Warner, 'Pre-Conquest Territorial and Administrative Organization in East Suffolk', in D. Hooke (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon Settlements* (1988), 9-34; J. Whybra, *A Lost English County: Winchcombeshire in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries* (1990).

The interest in the territorial patterns of Anglo-Saxon England is of long standing. J.E.A. Jolliffe in a series of articles on administrative structure in the 1920s and 1930s suggested that the sub-divisions of Anglo-Saxon kingdoms might be mapped and the general pattern of land-use ascertained by combining the evidence of Anglo-Saxon records with later documents, including Domesday Book (DB). His pioneering work established the principles which might be applied in similar studies. It was Jolliffe's contention that the territorial pattern of Norman and later local administration was based upon an earlier framework. He suggested that it might be possible by stripping away the later accretions to discern the earlier form. Extrapolation backwards from later evidence or 'retrogressive analysis' might be used where the contemporary evidence was inadequate. Jolliffe indicated that Anglo-Saxon sources should be used wherever they survive to provide substance to the analysis, but for many areas the extant charters were too few to allow even a partial reconstruction of the administrative territories.³

A second element of Jolliffe's analysis was the examination of geld renders. It had already shown by J.H. Round and others that the geld of many territories was assessed in recurrent sums. Jolliffe suggested that it might be possible to reconstitute the territories by adding together the hidage of the constituent villis to produce the original overall geld figure. The main source for such work would be DB which provides a comprehensive record of geld.

Thirdly, Jolliffe noted that the contributory villis within a territory were often under the jurisdiction of a central place. Cam, writing at about the same time as Jolliffe, observed that such places often remained important centres in later periods, serving, for example, as meeting-points of hundreds or groups of hundreds, or as the sites of

³ J.E.A. Jolliffe, 'Northumbrian Institutions', *English Historical Review* 41 (1926), 1-42; J.E.A. Jolliffe, *Pre-Feudal England: The Jutes* (1933); J.E.A. Jolliffe, 'The Origin of the Hundred in Kent', in J.G. Edwards *et al.* (eds), *Historical Essays in the Honour of James Tait* (1933), 155-68. For a recent re-statement of the debt owed by the Normans to the Anglo-Saxon administrative structure, see W.L. Warren, 'The Myth of Norman Administrative Efficiency', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 5th series, 34 (1984), 119-28. For the retrogressive approach, see especially Jolliffe, *Pre-Feudal England*, 39-41, and J.L.M. Gulley, 'The Retrospective Approach in Human Geography', *Erdkunde* 15 (1961), 306-9; A.R.H. Baker, 'A Note on the Retrogressive and Retrospective Approaches in Historical Geography', *Erdkunde* 22 (1968), 244-5.

major later medieval manor courts. The identification of these central places might be made from contemporary evidence or from their later function.⁴

Finally, Jolliffe argued that the common land within a territory had once been open to all the estates within it. He postulated that the common was subsequently divided between individual estates creating distant woodland pastures, or outlying lands attached to specific manors. He held out the possibility that

'with the 20-inch [sic] survey and a sufficiency of medieval surveys and pre-Conquest charters, we should be able to reconstitute the whole system',

and so identify the original territories using the common land.⁵

Jolliffe identified a pattern of territories in Northumbria and in Kent which he suggested was once to be found throughout the whole of England. However, the ubiquity of such a pattern was challenged by Cam who recognised somewhat different areas formed by groups of hundreds often administered from a central place, which she also contended were ancient in origin. Though she wrote that these areas were 'akin to the systems of Northumbria, Kent and Sussex', she realised that there were significant differences.⁶ The *scirs* of Northumbria or the lathes of Kent were much larger in area than the groups of hundreds and had a distinctive elongated form which combined areas of better soils with larger tracts of less intensively used land. The

⁴ J.H. Round, *Feudal England: Historical Studies on the XIth and XIIth Centuries* (1895), 44-82; J.H. Round, 'The Hundred and Geld', *English Historical Review* (1895), 732; F.W. Maitland, *Domesday Book and Beyond: Three Essays in the Early History of England* (1897; reprinted 1987), 450-5; F.H. Baring, 'The Hidation of Some Southern Counties', *English Historical Review* 14 (1899), 290-9; J.E.A. Jolliffe, 'The Hidation of Kent', *English Historical Review* 44 (1929), 612-8; J.E.A. Jolliffe, 'The Domesday Hidation of Sussex and the Rapes', *English Historical Review* 45 (1930), 427-35; Jolliffe, *Pre-Feudal England*, 40-67; H.M. Cam, 'Manerium cum Hundredo: The Hundred and the Hundredal Manor', *English Historical Review* 47 (1932), 353-76; H.M. Cam, 'Early Groups of Hundreds', in J.G. Edwards *et al.* (eds), *Historical Essays in the Honour of James Tait* (1933), 13-26, reprinted in H.M. Cam, *Liberties and Communities in Medieval England: Collected Studies in Local Administration and Topography* (1944), 64-90, 91-106 respectively.

⁵ Jolliffe, *Pre-Feudal England*, 57.

⁶ Jolliffe 'Northumbrian Institutions', 1-42; Cam, 'The Hundred and the Hundredal Manor', 373, 376.

hundredal territories did not display the same clear division in land use. The dependent woodlands were close to the areas of arable, and the territories rarely had the characteristic elongated form of Jolliffe's districts.

Jolliffe's claim to have identified a universal pattern of territories has been broadly accepted and, rather surprisingly, similar patterns have been identified in those parts of Wales and Scotland which never came under Anglo-Saxon control. Consequently, it has been argued that these territorial forms were not Anglo-Saxon in origin, but are derived from a common Celtic source and might be traced back to the Iron Age.⁷ Yet the evidence for identification of territories is often slight and ambiguous. Very rarely have the models first propounded by Jolliffe and Cam been tested and, indeed, very rarely are they testable. The fallibility of retrogressive analysis is clear; it assumes that it is possible to sift out the survivals of the earlier periods from the later changes. At worst the approach can merely reinforce prior assumptions by discarding contrary evidence. An early review of Jolliffe's work in Kent commented adversely upon the selectivity of his evidence.⁸ A more rigorous approach requires that the grounds for the selection of some features as primary and others as secondary be clearly stated. Many years previous F.W. Maitland had warned of the dangers of retrogressive analysis with reference to the study of Anglo-Saxon history,:

Here we enter a misty region where arguments suggested by what are thought to be 'survivals' and inferences drawn from other climes and other ages take the place of documents. We are among guesses and little has as yet been proved.⁹

In 1897, nevertheless, the possibility of reconstructing the territories of pre-Conquest England seemed a realistic prospect to Maitland. Historians since Jolliffe have attempted to identify standard units, the basic building-blocks of land which comprised the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. Such units might have had a vernacular name, and indeed Bede does describe areas smaller than a kingdom as *regiones*, but that

⁷ Campbell, *Bede's Reges and Principes*, 11; G.W.S. Barrow, *The Kingdom of the Scots: Government, Church and Society from the Eleventh to the Fourteenth Century* (1973), 9-17; Jones, 'Multiple Estates and Early Settlement', 19-20.

⁸ For the review of Jolliffe, *Pre-Feudal England*, see G. W[ard], *Archaeologia Cantiana*, 45 (1933), 290-4.

⁹ Maitland, *Domesday Book and Beyond*, 340.

term is applied to areas as disparate as Surrey on the one hand and the Ely district on the other. Clearly, it was not a precise technical term for territories of a similar size. Indeed, it may be doubted whether England was ever divided into such uniform areas. The lathes of Kent, for example, measured up to 25 miles long by 10 miles wide and territories of a similar size have been suggested for Surrey, but in Wiltshire some units measured only 12 by 6 miles and the tentatively identified *regio* of the *Stoppingas* in Warwickshire measures only 8 miles by 3. There is no reason why the Anglo-Saxon territories should have been uniform, and it is rather unlikely *a priori* that a consistent pattern would have occurred in every kingdom and throughout the varied countryside of England.¹⁰

The identifications of ancient territories from geld valuations, which formed a central part of Jolliffe's analysis, is fraught with difficulties. The earliest list of geld paid by villis for most areas is DB. There can be no doubt that in some parts of England the burden of geld was apportioned between villis of a territory. When the assessments given in DB for those areas are added together, they make a sum which is a multiple of five, six, ten or 12. But such valuations were not necessarily ancient and consequently the contributing villis may not have comprised a territory of great antiquity. On the contrary, such round sums could suggest that the liability to taxation had been comprehensively revised only shortly before 1066. Hart has argued strongly, for example, that the Domesday hidation of Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire was probably changed in 942. There is strong evidence that the valuations of estates or territories were revised periodically. The number of hides recorded in Anglo-Saxon charters matches only rarely the figures for the same estates in DB.¹¹

¹⁰ Maitland, *Domesday Book and Beyond*, 520; Campbell, *Bede's Reges and Principes*, 3-4, 13 n. 12; K.P. Witney, *The Jutish Forest: A Study of the Weald of Kent from 450 to 1380 AD* (1976), 39; Blair, *Early Medieval Surrey*, 13, fig. 4; J. Haslam, 'A Middle Saxon Iron Smelting Site at Ramsbury, Wiltshire', *Medieval Archaeology* 24 (1980), 59, fig 25, though P.H. Sawyer, 'The Royal *Tun* in Pre-Conquest England', in P. Wormald, D. Bullough and R. Collins (eds), *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society* (1983), 285 argues Lambourn was once part of the Bedwyn estate, which would have made it much larger; Bassett, 'In Search of the Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms', 19, fig. 1.10.

¹¹ Round, *Feudal England*, 44-82; C. Hart, *The Hidation of Cambridgeshire* (Department of English Local History occasional papers, 2nd series, 6 (1974)); C. Hart, *The Hidation of Northamptonshire* (Department of English Local History occasional papers, 2nd series, 3 (1970)); F.M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (3rd edition, 1972), 647-8. Though Stenton

The geld figures for south-east England are difficult to interpret. Evidence for a five-hide pattern has been discerned in some counties, but the task of grouping together vills to produce what are often predetermined totals has the character of numerology rather than rigorous analysis. The degree of tolerance permitted for the totals and the difficulty of determining the figures which should be included allow a latitude in the interpretation of the data. Geld valuations in the South-East, where the evidence is by no means clear, are an unreliable basis for the identification of ancient divisions, though elsewhere they might be used to locate 10th- and 11th-century territories.¹²

Domesday Book describes an interesting pattern of estates between the Ribble and Mersey. The land in that area was divided into six hundreds at the centre of each lay a royal vill controlled by a reeve who kept the peace and collected fines. Land within the hundreds was held by thegns who paid a farm to the king and provided men to harvest the king's crops. That simple pattern has been taken to have more general application. The land in many of the hundreds in Oxfordshire, Gloucestershire and Berkshire was under the jurisdiction of a central vill. In some areas the units of administration were not single hundreds, but groups of hundreds. The three hundreds associated with Basingstoke in Hampshire provide an example of such organisation and may suggest the extent of an ancient territory with a centre formerly situated at Basing.¹³

(*ibid.*, 646-7) draws attention to some cases in which the Domesday hidage was the same as that given in an earlier charter.

¹² E.M.J Campbell, 'Middlesex', 104-5; E.M.J Campbell, 'Berkshire', 248-9; R Welldon Finn, 'Hampshire', 303-4; C.W. Lloyd, 'Surrey', 373; all in H.C. Darby and E.M.J. Campbell (eds), *The Domesday Geography of South-East England* (1962); Jolliffe, 'The Hidation of Kent'; Jolliffe, 'The Domesday Hidation of Sussex and the Rapes'; L.F. Salzman, 'The Rapes of Sussex', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 72 (1931), 20-9; D.K. Clarke, 'The Saxon Hundreds of Sussex', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 74 (1933), 214-25; Blair, *Early Medieval Surrey*, 21-2, 182, n. 54.

¹³ DB i 269b-270a; Sawyer, 'The Royal *Tun* in Pre-Conquest England', 281-2; E.B. Demarest, 'The Hundred-Pennies', *English Historical Review* 47 (1932), 62-72; Cam, 'The Hundred and the Hundredal Manor', 353-76; Cam, 'Early Groups of Hundreds', 16-20; D.A. Hinton, 'The Place of Basing in Mid Saxon History', *Proceedings of the Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society* 42 (1986), 162-4.

The age of these hundredal territories may rarely be established. Hundreds *eo nomine* may only be traced to the 10th century, though there may have been earlier areas of administration of similar extent and character. There is no simple equation applicable throughout England between ancient territories and later hundreds or groups of hundreds. Hundreds were heterogeneous and varied widely in size from those in Sussex which contained only a few hides to the large hundreds of Staffordshire. Some clearly were relatively late formations. The hundreds of Kent, for example, are described by Jolliffe as an 'imposition' upon the existing administrative framework. A few are evidently based upon the late 11th-century holdings in Kent and are unlikely to originate much earlier. In other counties, hundreds were brought together into groups at a later date. Such changes were made for administrative convenience, because they all were in common lordship, or for the payment of shipsoken, and may have happened no earlier than the 10th century. It would be unwise to assume that the hundredal pattern recorded in DB was necessarily ancient.¹⁴

A more promising approach to the identification of ancient territories may be through the study of detached lands and ancient common rights. In many territories there were areas of undeveloped common land, usually lying at a distance from the more intensively settled and cultivated areas. Anglo-Saxon charters from the eighth and ninth century suggest that in Kent such commons were initially for the use of all the settlements within that territory, but were later sub-divided and access restricted to specified manors. By the Norman Conquest the commons had often been completely divided into a series of detached holdings appendant to villas in the older settled areas. The pattern of detached manorial outliers survived for many centuries, and can be identified from medieval and later surveys, or may sometimes be observed as isolated portions of parishes.¹⁵

The reconstruction of ancient patterns of land usage from manorial outliers is not entirely without difficulties. Tenements might be transferred from one manor to another at any date, and so might obscure earlier arrangement. Equally, parish

¹⁴ H.R. Loyn, 'The Hundred in England in the Tenth and Early Eleventh Centuries', in H. Hearder and H.R. Loyn (eds), *British Government and Administration: Studies Presented to S.B. Chrimes*, 3-6; Jolliffe, *Pre-Feudal England*, 121-2; Jolliffe, 'The Origin of the Hundred in Kent', 155-68.

¹⁵ W.J. Ford, 'Some Settlement Patterns in the Central Region of the Warwickshire Avon', in P.H. Sawyer (ed.), *English Medieval Settlement* (1979), 148-51; Hooke, *The Anglo-Saxon Landscape*, 78-85. This development has been most clearly worked out in Kent by Witney, *The Jutish Forest*, 30-103.

boundaries were often not determined until the 12th or 13th century and might be indicative only of land holdings of that period.¹⁶ The identification of areas of early common land should rely not upon one or two detached parcels of land, but on a great number of links showing the general relationship between manorial centres and their appendant holdings. The consistency of these links taken together may indicate that they were derived from an earlier arrangement of land. Conversely, later manorial associations may often be detected as such because they cut across a regular pattern.¹⁷

The study of the structure of ecclesiastical territories undertaken since the work of Jolliffe and Cam has opened up a new avenue for the exploration of the pre-Conquest administrative geography of England. The country was divided into large parishes each served by a minster church staffed by a group of priests in the centuries after the re-introduction of Christianity by Augustine. These Anglo-Saxon parishes, or *parochiae* as they are commonly called by historians, were larger than the areas of ministration attached to churches in the later medieval period. The minster churches in some areas were situated at, or close to, a secular administrative centre, and the boundaries of the *parochiae* were coincidental with the secular territories. Such a pattern may have been of considerable antiquity.¹⁸ In Hampshire, for example, it has been suggested that the *parochiae* and their churches were in existence by 700 or

¹⁶ J. Blair, 'Introduction: from Minster to Parish Church', in J. Blair (ed.), *Minster and Parish Churches: The Local Church in Transition, 950-1200* (Oxford University Committee for Archaeology monograph 17 (1988)), 13-4; Blair, *Early Medieval Surrey*, 152-4 .

¹⁷ Hooke, *The Anglo-Saxon Landscape*, 84.

¹⁸ J. Blair, 'Secular Minster Churches in Domesday Book', in P.H. Sawyer (ed.), *Domesday Book: A Reassessment* (1985), 104-42; J. Blair, 'Minster Churches in the Landscape', in D. Hooke (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon Settlements* (1988), 35-58; J. Croom, 'The Fragmentation of the Minster *Parochiae* of South-East Shropshire', in J. Blair (ed.), *Minster and Parish Churches: The Local Church in Transition, 950-1200* (Oxford University Committee for Archaeology monograph 17 (1988)), 67-81; P.H. Hase, 'The Mother Churches of Hampshire', in J. Blair (ed.), *Minster and Parish Churches: The Local Church in Transition, 950-1200* (Oxford University Committee for Archaeology monograph 17 (1988)), 45-66; S. Foot, 'Anglo-Saxon Ministers: A Review of the Terminology', in J. Blair and R. Sharpe (eds), *Pastoral Care Before the Parish* (1992), 214-25. However, Blair in 'Minster Churches in the Landscape', 40-4 and J. Blair, 'Anglo-Saxon Minsters: A Topographical Review', in J. Blair and R. Sharpe (eds), *Pastoral Care Before the Parish* (1992), 231-40 casts doubt on the coincidence of sites of minster church and administrative centre.

shortly after, and were based upon an existing framework of royal villis and territories. The same may have been true for the whole of Wessex, where Hase has suggested that

There was ... a definite policy to attach to each *villa regalis* a mother church, to ensure that the social, political, judicial and religious life of the countryside centred upon the same point, and all were equally under the king's control.¹⁹

Domesday Book provides some support for that supposition. Page observed that in many hundreds only one church was mentioned and that church was a minster or collegiate establishment staffed by a group of priests. He suggested that the bounds of the *parochiae* and later hundreds were, therefore, often exactly the same.²⁰ That may suggest there were secular administrative districts identical with the minster *parochiae* and pre-dating the formation of hundreds in the early 10th century. Alternatively, the *parochiae* may have been reformed and adopted the secular boundaries at about the time or shortly after the hundreds were established. The late date of the evidence for most of the minster *parochiae* has, however, recently been emphasised, and there is little firm evidence to show that all, or even many, dated from the years immediately after Augustine's mission. It may be that the lack of evidence has encouraged a rather simplistic view of minster churches: they have all been reduced to a single type established at one period. More detailed local studies have begun to suggest that there was a variety of minsters established over a period of time.²¹ It should also be emphasised that there are considerable areas of England where there is little evidence

¹⁹ Hase, 'The Mother Churches of Hampshire', 47; P.H. Hase, *The Development of the Parish in Hampshire, Particularly in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 1975), unpaginated preface.

²⁰ W. Page, 'Some Remarks on the Churches of the Domesday Survey', *Archaeologia* 66 (1914-5), 61-102.

²¹ C. Cubitt, 'Pastoral Care and Conciliar Canons: The Provisions of the 747 Council of *Clofesho*', in J. Blair and R. Sharpe (eds), *Pastoral Care Before the Parish* (1992), 207-10; R. Morris, *Churches in the Landscape* (1989), 128-30; D. Stocker, 'The Early Church in Lincolnshire: A Study of the Sites and their Significance', in A. Vince (ed.), *Pre-Viking Lincolnshire* (Lincoln Archaeological Studies 1 (1993)), 101-19.

of coterminous hundreds and *parochiae*. Page may have been too keen to demonstrate the universality of his discovery.²²

It is now possible, having reviewed the sources of evidence for Anglo-Saxon administrative geography, to establish the basis for a more rigorous approach. Even a superficial review of the evidence suggests that there was little uniformity in the geography of pre-Conquest land units. Argument by analogy must therefore proceed with great caution. Equally, it cannot be taken for granted that early boundaries persisted for many centuries, although that assumption has been fundamental to many previous studies. Contemporary records, particularly Anglo-Saxon charters, must form the basis of the study of the geography of land units, though incidental references in other sources, including the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and saints' lives, may also be considered. Evidence derived from retrogressive analysis should remain secondary to contemporary sources. The assumptions upon which such analyses are based should be clearly stated. The evidence employed in the identification of administrative areas may be heterogeneous, but each strand must be evaluated separately and should not be conflated. Application of these principles will permit a more reliable analysis of Anglo-Saxon administrative geography.

TERRITORIAL PATTERNS IN SUSSEX

The various sources of evidence for territories in Sussex may now be examined, beginning with contemporary evidence and then employing later sources and retrogressive analyses. The evidence for the rapes of Sussex will then be studied, and finally some conclusions about the pre-Conquest structure of the county will be offered.

The boundaries of the county of Sussex, as they existed before 1889, were probably broadly similar those of the kingdom of the South Saxons. According to Bede the South Saxon kingdom extended 'south and west from Kent as far as the land of the West Saxons'. He states elsewhere that the Isle of Wight stood opposite the boundary between the South Saxons and the *Geuissae*, the ancient name for the West Saxons. Yorke has argued that the passage means that the eastern and western ends of the Isle of Wight stood opposite the boundaries of the two named territories, and between lay the province of the Hampshire Jutes. The Jutish province was conquered by the West

²² O.J. Reichel, 'The Church and Hundreds in Devon', *Reports and Transactions of the Devonshire Association* 71 (1939), 331-42.

Saxons in the late 7th century and Bede writing in 731 described the boundary of the South Saxon kingdom as contiguous with Wessex. The parish names, East, North and Up Marden on the west side of Sussex are formed from the OE elements *mære dun* (boundary down) and apparently refer to the boundary with West Saxons, and earlier with the *Meonwara*, the people of the Meon valley, who were probably part of the Jutish mainland province.²³

The eastern end of the kingdom of the South Saxons may have included some of the low-lying wetland of Walland Marsh as it certainly did by the 10th century. It is very likely that the boundary of the kingdom followed the major topographic feature across the marshland, the River Rother. The river ran southwards from the Isle of Oxney towards Rye before turning to the east and running to the north of Broomhill (near Camber), a line detected by the Soil Survey and still marked in the 13th century by a large 'fleet' or creek. However, the present county boundary is rather different and follows the artificially straight Kent Ditch, a drainage channel at the foot of a sea wall, probably constructed in the 14th or 15th century. A charter of c.740 suggests the border of the South Saxon kingdom lay in the vicinity of Broomhill and probably close to the pre-1889 county boundary. The boundaries of a ninth-century estate in Burmarsh, which include *Suthsaxa lond*, apparently near Lympne in Kent, are more difficult to understand. It is possible that it was a detached part of the kingdom or an isolated group of people from that kingdom.²⁴

²³ New administrative counties were created in 1889 by the Local Government Act of 1888. *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, Bede, trans. B. Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors (1969), 4.13, 4.16; B.A.E. Yorke, 'The Jutes of Hampshire and Wight and the Origins of Wessex', in S. Bassett (ed.), *The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms* (1989), 90-3; A. Mawer and F.M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Sussex* 1 (1929), 51.

²⁴ Sawyer no. 108; R.D. Green, *Soils of Romney Marsh* (Soil Survey of Great Britain, Bulletin 4 (1968)); T. Tatton-Brown, 'The Topography of the Walland Marsh Area between the Eleventh and Thirteenth Centuries', in J. Eddison and C. Green (eds), *Romney Marsh: Evolution, Occupation, Reclamation* (1988), 105-6. The wall behind the Kent Dyke appears to post-date the inundation of 1287-8, but pre-dates the innig of East Guldeford begun in the late 15th century (*Victoria County History of Sussex* 9, ed. L.F. Salzman (1937), 151). For the boundary between Kent and Sussex in the early 13th century, see Lambeth Palace Library MS. 1212, pp. 94, 217 and BL Egerton Ch. 383. Sawyer no. 24. For a fuller treatment of the evidence for the boundaries of Sussex, see M.G. Welch, *Early Anglo-Saxon Sussex* (British Archaeological Reports, British series 112 (1983)), 261-2, 274-6.

The limits of the South Saxon kingdom on the north are less clear. There is some slight evidence that at least at an early date the boundaries within the Weald may not have been defined very precisely. It has been argued that the boundaries with Surrey and with Kent were determined by animal drovers who had worked their way progressively across the Weald from north and south, and drew the line at the point at which they met. It is supposed that the pre-19th century boundary was a rationalisation of such agreements made by Anglo-Saxon herdsmen. The evidence for such an interpretation is scant. The boundary between Surrey and Sussex deserves further investigation, but between Kent and Sussex the line follows a series of watercourses - Kent Water, Teise, Bewl, Kent Ditch and Rother - for almost its entire length. It runs to the south of the Isle of Oxney following the course of the River Rother before it was turned in the 14th century. The distribution of the place-name element *denn* considered in greater detail below also suggests that these rivers are likely to have formed the boundary at an early date.²⁵

The eastern end of Sussex lay within a territory occupied by the *gens Hestingorum*, a people first mentioned in 771 when conquered by Offa, the Mercian king. Their land evidently lay around Hastings itself, though it cannot be inferred, as some have suggested, that it was the same as the later medieval Rape of Hastings. Equally, it cannot be assumed that the boundary of their territory ran through Hastingsford in Mayfield: the name may mean no more than 'the ford on the road to Hastings'. As Ekwall has observed, places were not generally named after the people in whose territory they lay. It is hard to conceive that a further place-name, Hastingsleigh near Ashford in Kent, was within the kingdom of the Hæstingas. That name may be better explained as the settlement of a group which had moved outside the area occupied by the Hæstingas.²⁶ The Hastings folk were evidently a subject people of the South

²⁵ G.J. Copley, 'Stane Street in the Dark Ages', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 89 (1950), 98-104. P.F. Brandon 'The South Saxon *Andredesweald*' in P.F. Brandon (ed.), *The South Saxons* (1978), 151-2; Witney, *The Jutish Forest*, 53-4. The evidence advanced by Witney that areas of Kent were incorporated into Sussex does not stand critical examination. Modifications were made to the boundary of Sussex in the vicinity of Tunbridge Wells and Lamberhurst in the 19th century, F.B. Stevens, 'The Boundary Between Sussex and Kent: i The Tunbridge Wells Area', *Sussex Notes and Queries* 2 (1928), 10-14 and 'The Boundary Between Sussex and Kent: ii The Lamberhurst Area', *Sussex Notes and Queries* 2 (1928), 38-41. J.K. Eddison, 'Developments in the Lower Rother Valleys up to 1600', *Archaeologia Cantiana* 102 (1985), 105. For the distribution of *denn* place-names in north-east Sussex, see p. 40-1 below.

²⁶ *Symeon of Durham: Historical Works*, 2, ed. T. Arnold (Rolls Series 75 (1885)), 44. On Symeon see P.H. Blair, 'Some Observations on the *Historia Regum* Attributed to Symeon of

Saxons, rather than an independent tribal group. A charter of *c.* 740 refers to land in Kent abutting upon the *termini Suthsaxoniae*, rather than the *termini gentis Hestingorum*. In 772, a year after the conquest of the Hastings people, a charter was issued granting land in Bexhill, a few miles west of Hastings, to the bishop of Selsey. The charter suggests that the diocese of Selsey encompassed the whole of the South Saxon kingdom, including that area in the extreme east. It is notable that the witnesses to the charter included the former kings of the South Saxons demoted to *duces* apparently after the subjugation of their kingdom by Offa.²⁷

Sawyer first suggested that the kingdom of the South Saxons may have been divided into two provinces and the idea was subsequently developed by Welch. The latter noted that the names of many of the *reges* who granted or witnessed charters in Sussex incorporated the stems *Aethel-* or *Os-*, perhaps suggesting two branches of a royal family. It is, however, not necessary to conclude from the presence of more than one king that the territory was divided; joint rule of an undivided kingdom is attested elsewhere, particularly in Kent, and could have been practised here. The location of lands granted by the kings, or *duces* as they became, does not support the theory of a territorial division into western and eastern halves. Osmund granted land in Ferring, Henfield and Peppering (Burpham) in west Sussex as *rex* between 765 and 770. Aldwulf *rex* granted land at Stanmer in central eastern Sussex in *c.* 765 in a charter witnessed by Aelhwald and Oslac *reges*, but also at Ferring in west Sussex, in his capacity as *dux*, at Ferring in (?)791.²⁸

Durham', in N.K. Chadwick (ed.), *Celt and Saxon: Studies in the Early British Border* (1963), 63-118; M. Lapidge, 'Byrhtferth of Ramsey and the Early Sections of the *Historia Regum* Attributed to Symeon of Durham', *Anglo-Saxon England* 10 (1981), 97-122. M.G. Welch, 'The Kingdom of the South Saxons: The Origins', in S.R. Bassett (ed.), *The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*, 78; Mawer and Stenton, *Place-Names of Sussex* 1, xxxiii-xxxiv; 2, 395; A. Mawer, *Problems of Place-Name Study* (1929), 15; cf. E. Ekwall, 'Some Notes on Place-Names Containing Tribal Names', *Namn Och Bygd* 26 (1936), 178; E. Ekwall, 'Tribal Names in English Place-Names', *Namn Och Bygd* 41 (1953) 130, 143.

²⁷ Sawyer, nos. 24, 108. C. Hart, 'The Tribal Hidage', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 5th series, 21 (1971), 156, n. 115.

²⁸ P.H. Sawyer, *From Roman Britain to Norman England* (1978), 49; Welch, *Early Anglo-Saxon Sussex*, 270; Welch, 'The Kingdom of the South Saxons: The Origins', 79-80; B.A.E. Yorke, 'Joint Kingship in Kent *c.* 560 to 785', *Archaeologia Cantiana* 99 (1983), 1-19; Sawyer nos. 44, 48, 49, 50, 108, 1178.

The written evidence for the kingdom of the South Saxons is sparse. A disappointingly small number of charters survive from the Selsey scriptorium, most in the form of texts copied into episcopal chartularies in the late 13th or 14th century. They provide little evidence for the territorial structure of the South Saxon kingdom and none refers to areas larger than an estate. The grant of an estate to found a monastery at Stanmer in c.765 is a useful point to begin, for it describes the location of the lands in some detail. The text survives only in a corrupt form inserted at the head of a collection of pre-Conquest grants in a 13th-century Canterbury volume. The essential authenticity of the charter is, however, established by the use of the inflectional *-i* characteristic of the supposed date of the grant. The charter records the boundaries of Stanmer, woodlands in Lindfield, the eastern boundary of the Stanmer estate and finally a list of pig-pastures or denns. The recorded estate stretched from Stanmer in the south to Burleigh in the north in a discontinuous band extending across almost the entire width of the county (fig. 4).²⁹

The form of the Stanmer estate may suggest the character of others, which are recorded in less detail. Eight Sussex charters list swine-pastures appurtenant to granted estates and one other mentions woodland, which may have served a similar purpose. A further charter granted a swine-pasture or denn independent of any estate.³⁰ The information on the distribution of denns which can be derived from these charters is limited by the problems of identifying the location of the places mentioned. The denns usually lay over a broad area and are recorded in the charters in the form of lists of place-names. Some of the places mentioned in the charters may have subsequently have become known by different names, and others simply forgotten. The impermanence of Wealden names is suggested by seventh-century charters granting land in Kent at *Pleghelmestun*. Endorsements on the manuscript indicate that the place was later called *Berwick* and later still *Wieghelmestun*. The latter survived as Wilmington (near Somerfield) until the 19th century and the earlier names were forgotten.³¹

²⁹ Sawyer no. 50; Lambeth Palace Library MS. 1212, p. 382; Welch, *Early Anglo-Saxon Sussex*, 271. On the identification of places, see Mawer and Stenton, *The Place-Names of Sussex* 2, 271-3, 280, 300-1, 304-5, 309-10, 312, 340-1, and E.E. Baker, 'Sussex Anglo-Saxon Charters: Part 1', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 86 (1947), 85-90.

³⁰ Charters mentioning swine-pastures: Sawyer nos 43, 48, 50, 425, 525, 624, 714, 803. Charter mentioning woods: Sawyer nos 898. Grant of a swine-pasture alone: Sawyer no. 950.

³¹ Sawyer nos. 19, 21; G. Ward, 'The Wilmington Charter of AD 700', *Archaeologia Cantiana* 48 (1936), 11-28.

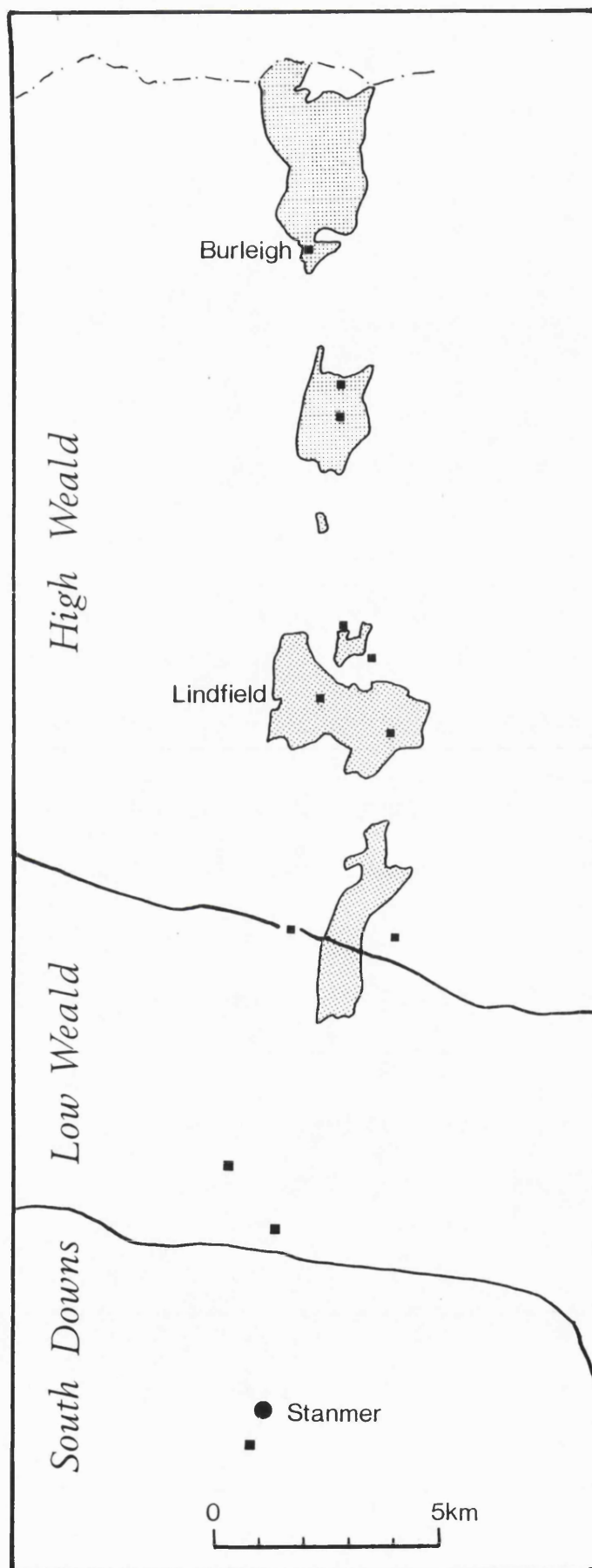


Fig. 4 Places mentioned in Sawyer no. 50 in relationship to the 19th-century bounds of the manor of South Malling Lindfield.

Many estates had Wealden appendages which were very probably quite as extensive as those of Stanmer. The estate of *Derantune*, which may be identified with Durrington in central Sussex, had a total of 18 pasture lands, though only one of these has been located. The Washington estate had 11 lying in a wide area around Horsham. These included 'the three *Crochyresta*' as they are described in a charter of 947, or more explicitly in a charter of 963, 'the west, the second and the third *Crochyrest*'. Felpham, a settlement on the coast, had lands 15 miles to the north in the Petworth area, lying at *Hidhurst* and *Bognora*, and rights in the common woodland pasture called *Palinga Schittas*. The first of these, now called Idehurst Farm, was extensive for in the 13th century there were two parts, *Overridehurst* and *Notherideshurst* (i.e. 'Over Idehurst' and 'Nether Idehurst'). Little Bognor, the second of the pasture lands, lay a little to the south. The last of the outliers has been identified with the lands in Petworth known in the 16th century as *Imbehaugh alias Palshudde*, now Limbo Farm, but there was also an area called *Estpalshudd* (i.e. 'East Palshudd'), lying three miles to the east, near to Idehurst Farm.³² The common woodland of *Palinga Schittas* was either divided into two parts or was a single area stretching from Limbo Farm to Linfold (Kirdford). These dispersed pasture lands may be compared with the place called *Dene* (Dean Court, Westwell) in Kent. The place-name simply means 'swine pasture', and according to DB it was split up into parts being 'divided between three places'.³³

The Wealden dennis varied considerably in size. Some were quite extensive pieces of land, others small plots which may have served as intermediate stopping places where stock could be fed as they were driven towards the centre of the Weald. Such an arrangement is most evident in Kent, mainly from medieval sources, but there are traces of a similar pattern in Sussex. The small area belonging to the manor of South Malling Lindfield lying to the east of the village of Ardingly may have originated as a stopping place between the larger pasture lands at Lindfield and Chiddingly (West Hoathly). The detached piece of Steep parish in central Sussex, only a few acres in

³² Sawyer, no. 562; *The Percy Chartulary*, ed. M.T. Martin (Surtees Society 117 (1911)), 393-4; Mawer and Stenton, *Place-Names of Sussex*, 1, 105 and n., 117; BL Lansdowne Ch. 146; PRO SC6/HEN 8/3481, m. 1v. The account roll refers both to land in Petworth and in Kirdford called *Palshudde* (m. 1r., 1v.) *Estpalschudd* included a meadow called *Lymfoldesmede*, which must be near Linfold Farm, Kirdford.

³³ DB i, 10b.

extent, has been interpreted as serving a similar purpose for animals driven between Steep (Hampshire) and its dependency at Ambersham.³⁴

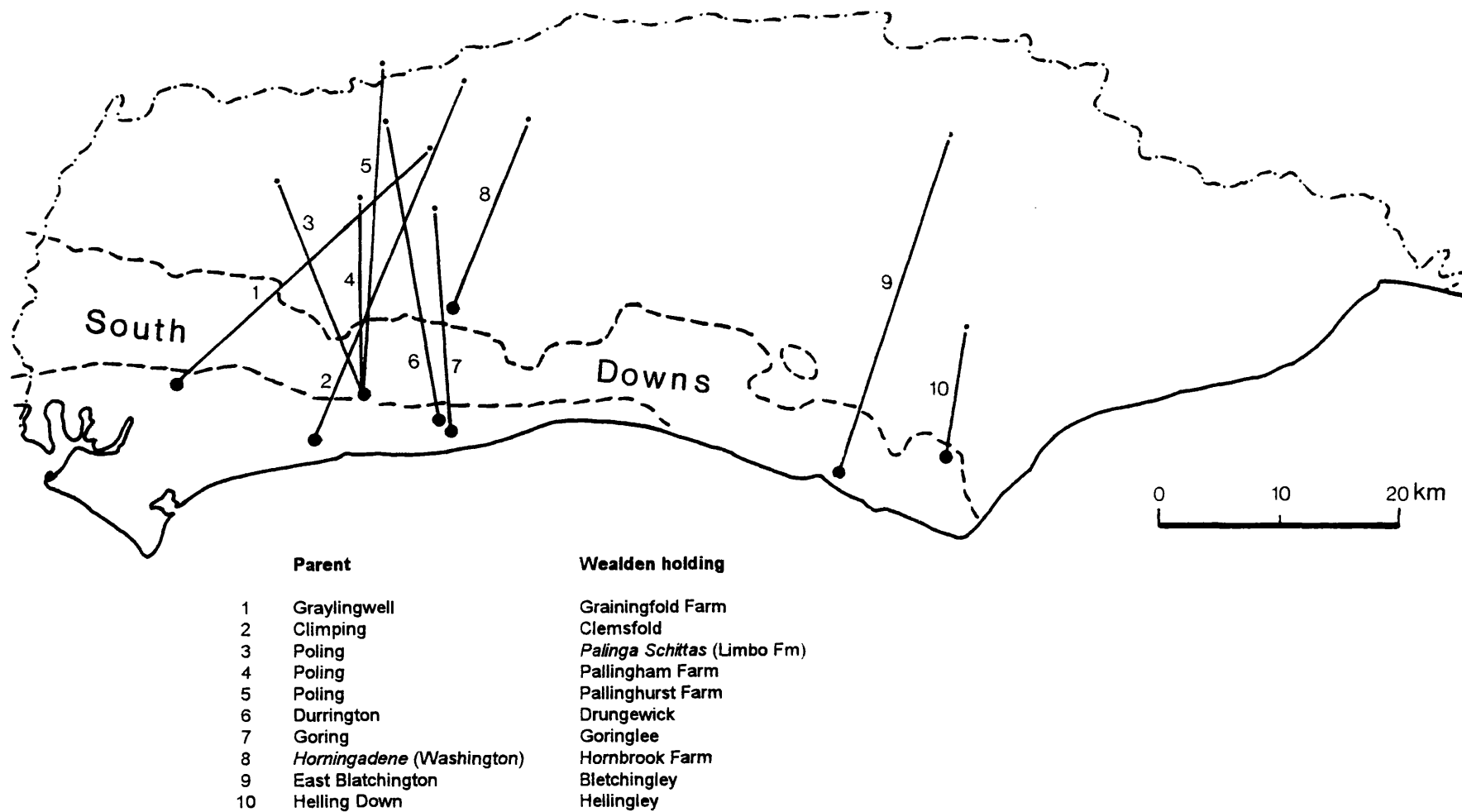
Links between the Wealden pasture lands and the coastal settlements may also be identified from place-names. The volumes for Sussex prepared by the English Place-Name Society remain a fundamental, though now rather dated, source. Since their publication the interpretation of the chronology of place-names has been reconsidered. Place-names with the element *-ingas* are no longer thought to belong to the earliest years of the English settlements and names with the *-hām* and *-ingahām* are more likely to have preceded them. The distribution of various place-name elements in Sussex have been discussed by Dodgson and their relationship to Early Anglo-Saxon sites has been considered by Welch. They have shown that both the *-hām* and *-ingas* names are found particularly on the Coastal Plain, the Downs or in the scarp-foot zone of the Downs, although a group of *-ingas* names also occur in the area around Hastings at the east end of Sussex.³⁵

During the work for the Sussex place-names volume a group of *-ingas* names was noted which had common or similar first elements in the coastal area and within the Weald. These place-names were apparently transferred from the parent settlements to the Wealden pasture lands and must have originated during the currency of *-ingas* as a place-name element. Goringlee in Thakeham was therefore the clearing of the people from Goring, a settlement on the Coastal Plain. Such place-names need to be distinguished from later formations derived from personal names, a type often referred to as 'manorial'. The place-name Posingford in Hartfield, for example, was a

³⁴ Witney, *The Jutish Forest*, 89-90; ESRO A2327/1/5/15, 16; M.F. Gardiner, 'Saxon Settlement and Land Division in the Western Weald', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 122 (1984), 82; see also pp. 77-8 below.

³⁵ Mawer and Stenton, *Place-Names of Sussex*; J. McN. Dodgson, 'The Significance of the Distribution of the English Place-Name in *-ingas*, *-inga-* in South-East England', *Medieval Archaeology* 10 (1966), 1-29; B. Cox, 'The Significance of English Place-Names in *ham* in the Midlands and East Anglia', *Journal of the English Place-Name Society* 5 (1973), 15-73; J. Kuurman, 'An Examination of the *-ingas*, *-inga-* Place-Names in the East Midlands', *Journal of the English Place-Name Society* 7 (1975), 11-44; J. McN. Dodgson, 'Place-Names in Sussex: The Material for a New Look', in P.F. Brandon (ed.), *The South Saxons* (1978), 54-88; Welch, *Early Anglo-Saxon Sussex*, 229-52.

Fig. 5 Linked -ingas names in Sussex.



corruption of the surname of a family from Possingworth in Waldron.³⁶ The genuinely early linked names showing evidence of the use of the *-ingas* element as an active part of the name need to be separated from those which were simply to have been reapplied to another place, often at a later date. The former are names which 'must have arisen while the *-ingas* group was still a living reality'.³⁷ Figure 5 shows the distribution of such names. Place-names in *-ingas* occur throughout the Weald of Sussex, but linked names containing that element are found mainly in the west and the parent settlements are concentrated on the Coastal Plain, particularly between Chichester and Worthing. Poling near the coast is linked with the largest number of derived names, including one, Palinghurst Farm, situated just beyond the county boundary in Surrey.³⁸

A further source of evidence is that of the landscape itself. The links between the better soils in the south of the county and the extensive woodland of the Weald to the north are preserved in the form of a sub-parallel network of roads and tracks tending north-south or north-east to south-west. By the 13th century the economic interdependency of the coastal and Wealden areas was declining and settlements in the former were unable to maintain their rights to common land in the latter. The system of roads and tracks must pre-date that period and indeed may be very much older. It has been conjectured in other areas of England that similar patterns of roads linking poorer land with settlements in the better arable soils may be pre-Roman. Some support is given to that notion by the relationship of tracks and boundaries in the area around Ripe where the unusually regular pattern of fields and roads may be the result of centuriation, the systematic division of land for Roman legionary veterans. Evidence has been found not only in the rectilinear arrangement of boundaries, but also in the apparent use of Roman units of mensuration. However, if that area was divided by the Romans, then the centuriation must have been aligned upon a pre-existing pattern of tracks. The tracks continue beyond the centuriated areas on exactly the same axis, though in a less regular pattern. The centuriation may have been a local

³⁶ Mawer and Stenton, *Place-Names of Sussex* 1, 168, 181; 2, 368, 407. On 'manorial' place-names of an earlier date, see M. Gelling, *Signposts to the Past: Place-Names and the History of England* (1978), 184-5.

³⁷ Mawer, *Problems of Place-Name Study* (1929), 125.

³⁸ Mawer and Stenton, *Place-Names of Sussex* 1, 117-8, 134, 171-2; J.E.B. Gover, A. Mawer and F.M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Surrey* (English Place-Name Society 11 (1934)), 231; E. Ekwall, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names* (1960, 4th edition), 368.

rationalisation of a network of routeways already present and dating from the Iron Age or earlier.³⁹

The sources already considered have shown that Sussex, like the neighbouring counties of Kent and Surrey, had a pattern of coastal lands linked to a Wealden hinterland utilised for woodland grazing. These connections may be studied in greater detail by examining medieval and post-medieval records. These sources enable the reconstruction of the pattern of lands held by medieval manors, both within and outside the Weald. Similar work undertaken in Surrey, Kent and elsewhere in England has shown that it is possible to identify the general disposition of parent holdings and outlying lands and so infer earlier patterns of usage. The limitations of retrospective analysis have already been discussed and it would be simplistic to project backwards 500 years and more and assume an identical arrangement of land. Nevertheless, the later sources do have a value in identifying the general relationship between parent settlements and Wealden outliers.

Retrospective analysis of landscape requires the isolation of earlier elements by the elimination of later alterations. It is necessary to distinguish lands associated with an estate as a result of purchase or gift from the links formed through traditional usage of remote lands. The first might be termed 'tenurial outliers' and the second 'customary outliers'. The lands at Buckholt in Hellingly granted to the Battle Abbey in the 13th century and added to their manor of Alciston, are an example of a tenurial outlier.⁴⁰ It may not be possible to separate all such tenurial holdings from the customary outliers, but Hooke has suggested that later manorial links often cut across the earlier pattern, allowing them to be identified. In that way the general pattern of tenurial association can be recognised, even though some elements might be anachronistic.⁴¹

³⁹ R. Bradley, *The Prehistoric Settlement of Britain* (1978), 59; M.G. Bell, 'Saxon Sussex', in P.L. Drewett (ed.), *Archaeology in Sussex to AD 1500* (CBA research report 29 (1978)), 68; I.D. Margery, 'Roman Centuriation at Ripe', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 81 (1940), 31-42. For the later prehistoric origin of field-systems and trackways on another clayland area, see T. Williamson, 'Early Co-axial Field Systems on the East Anglia Boulder Clays', *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* 53 (1987), 419-31.

⁴⁰ ESRO SAS/G Charters 23, 43; HEH BA vol. 29, ff. 140v.-141v. (new foliation). See also below, pp. 47-8.

⁴¹ Hooke, *The Anglo-Saxon Landscape: The Kingdom of the Hwicce*, 84.

An example shows how the method may be applied. The eighth-century Stanmer charter does not allow the exact boundaries of the estate to be traced. By the 11th century the estate granted to construct a monastery had come into the hands of the canons of the College of South Malling and after the Dissolution the manor of South Malling Lindfield was formed out of the northern elements of those lands. An estate map of 1830 shows the boundaries of the manor (fig. 4). It is hardly probable that the extent of the manor in the 19th century was the same as that of the northern part of the estate a millennium earlier, but the coincidence of the names listed in the charter with those to be found on the map suggests that it cannot have been greatly different. The later manor comprised a series of isolated pieces of land spread out in a band and provides some indication of the general form of the eighth-century estate.⁴²

The pattern may be studied over a broader area using later medieval and post-medieval rentals, surveys and maps. A sample area within the Rape of Pevensey was chosen to consider the relationship between the Wealden and coastal areas. A preliminary list of Wealden outliers had already been compiled by Brandon and his evidence has been re-examined and augmented (Appendix 1).⁴³ Some of the identified links were eliminated as probably tenurial in origin. For example, the connection between Ripe and East Grinstead cuts across the grain and is thus unlikely to be an ancient association.⁴⁴ The marshland of the Pevensey Level, which remained largely undrained until the 13th century, probably formed an obstacle to movement into the Weald on the east side of the rape.⁴⁵ Manors adjoining the marsh sometimes had outliers situated to the north-west, but otherwise the map of the linked manorial holdings shows a clear pattern of outlying lands in the Weald generally lying to the north-east of the manorial centre, an axis also followed by the drove roads (fig. 6).

⁴² Sawyer no. 50; *Victoria County History of Sussex* 7, ed. L.F. Salzman (1940), 239; ESRO A2327/1/5/15, 16.

⁴³ P.F. Brandon, *The Commonlands and Wastes of Sussex* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1963), 323-6.

⁴⁴ *The Chartulary of the Priory of St. Pancras, Lewes, Part 1*, ed. L.F. Salzman (Sussex Record Society 38 (1933)), 119.

⁴⁵ L.F. Salzmann, 'The Inning of Pevensey Levels' *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 53 (1910), 38-43; P.F. Brandon, 'Agriculture and the Effects of Floods and Weather at Barnhorne, Sussex, During the Late Middle Ages', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 109 (1971), 78-9.

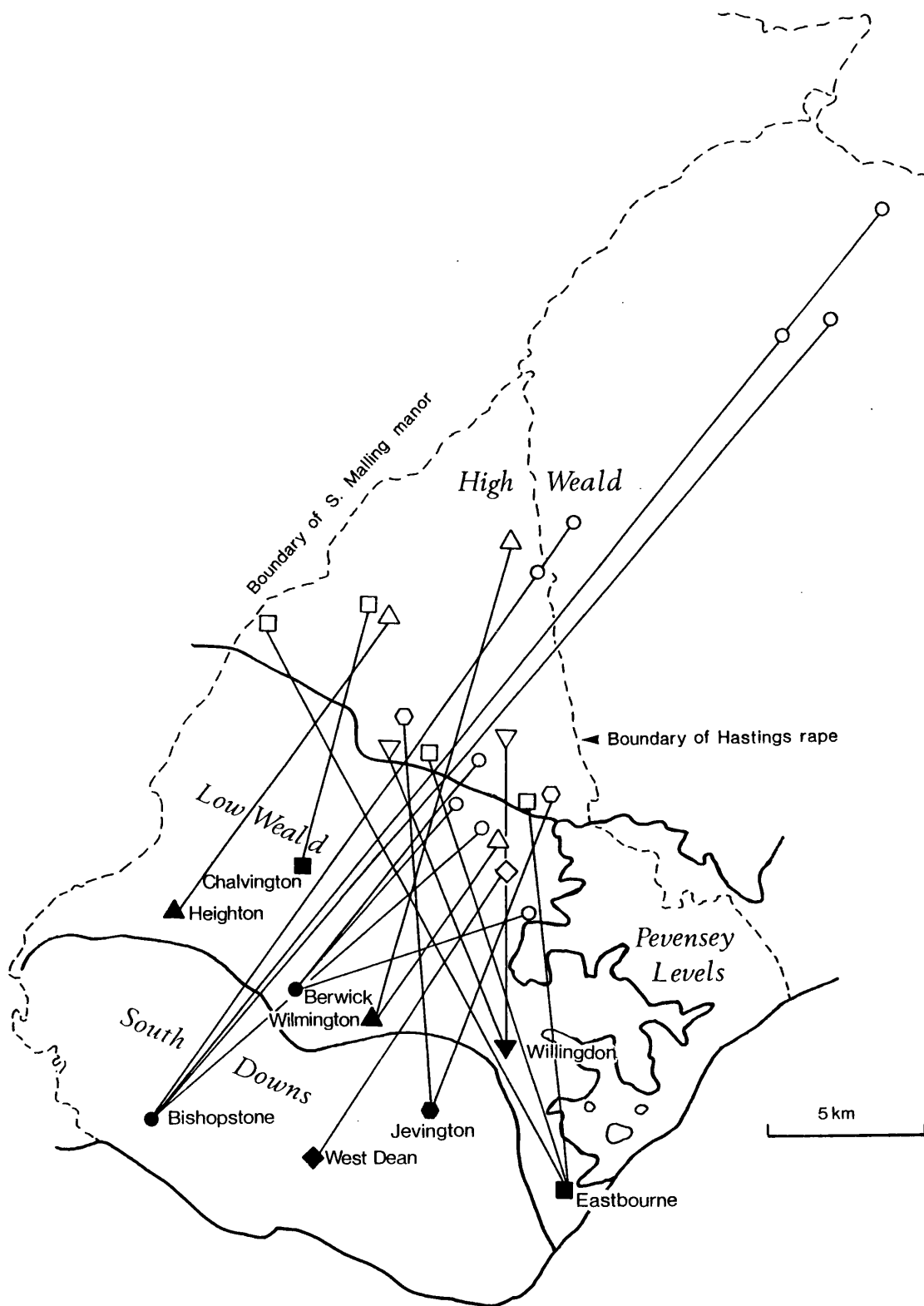


Fig. 6 Plan showing relationship of parent manors (solid symbols) in the Rape of Pevensey and their Wealden outliers (open symbols).

It is worthy of note that the manor of South Malling on the west of the sample area is aligned in the same direction. The map shows that the boundary between the Rapes of Pevensey and Hastings generally delimits the area of detached holdings. Only the lands of the episcopal manor of Bishopstone straddle the rapal boundary for reasons which are not known. The majority of the outliers lay within or close to the southern boundary of the High Weald. The map as a whole may be interpreted with some confidence as a reflection of an ancient pattern of association between the Wealden and coastal lands.

Links between coastal and Wealden lands had run across the boundary between the Norman Rapes of Pevensey and Hastings, but these connections were severed in a post-Conquest territorial reorganisation. The principle which underlay that Norman restructuring may be inferred from DB. Estates were arranged so that the manorial centres always lay in the same rape as its outlying lands. Where the core of the estate lay in a different rape, the outlying portions were removed from the manor and DB records the reduction in the valuation, generally listing the outlying parts separately. The reason for such a change is clear: it was not practical for parts of the same manor to lie in different baronies. Most of the lands so removed lay in the Weald, but DB also records other estates in the south of the county which before 1066 had 'lain in' another estate centre. There is rarely sufficient evidence to suggest how these coastal holdings came to be linked with a coastal estate centre, but it may be surmised that their association was tenurial.⁴⁶

The estate of Alciston included both tenurial and customary outliers. An early 12th-century document lists the seven hides of land which had been removed from the estate at the time of the Conquest. Amongst these were 3½ hides in Hastings Rape and two hides in Lewes Rape which DB records were held by the manor before 1066. The lost lands named in the 12th-century record included Ovingdean in the Rape of Lewes where Alnoth, the pre-Conquest tenant of Alciston, had held an estate, and Shoyswell, Boarzell (Ticehurst) and Batsford (Wartling) in the Rape of Hastings. The land at Batsford was presumably linked to Alciston through Alnoth's tenure of Wartling. Thus Ovingdean and Batsford in the south of the county were evidently associated with Alciston by tenure, but Shoyswell and Boarzell in the Weald lying to the north-east were probably former seasonal pasture lands.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ E.g. DB i, 28a, 29a.

⁴⁷ DB i 17b; BL Harleian Ch. 43 C 12; DB i, 18a, 26b.

By the mid-11th century many estates in eastern Sussex, as elsewhere, were made up of a constellation of lands. Holdings had been added to the traditional Wealden pasture lands to form 'federative estates', lands treated as a single entity for fiscal purposes and held by a single lord, though geographically dispersed.⁴⁸ The paucity of charter evidence precludes a general examination of the growth of such estates in Sussex, though one document is particularly informative. A charter purporting to date from 772 records a grant made to the bishop of Selsey of lands of the estate of Bexhill. The charter survives only in the form of 13th-century and later copies, but the extant text is evidently a 'collage' with 10th-century passages added to the original eighth-century grant. Fortunately, the document may be partly disentangled by means of textual analysis and with the aid of a list of other lost Anglo-Saxon charters. A 14th-century chartulary of the bishop of Chichester provides a list of the titles of some now lost grants from which parts of the Bexhill charter text were drawn (Table 1). The initial grant was apparently that described in the list of titles as 'the charter of the old foundation of the minster of *Bixle*'. Two further charters mentioned in the list concern grants of eight hides of land at Crowhurst, and land at Salehurst. These, and further areas at Icklesham to the east of Bexhill and Barnhorne to the west, were described in the charter text as outlands. It seems that probably by the 10th century a substantial 'federative estate' had been formed from the lands given in a series of grants. It had a centre at Bexhill and outlands lying beyond.⁴⁹

ADMINISTRATIVE DISTRICTS OF SUSSEX

The discussion above has examined the general territorial structure of Sussex and the patterns of tenure within it. It is now necessary to turn to the early districts into which Sussex was divided, the rapes, and the ecclesiastical minster parishes or *parochiae*.

⁴⁸ E. Miller, 'La Société Rural en Angleterre (Xe - XIIIe siècles)', *Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull' Alto Medioevo* 13 (1966), 117. On estate development in neighbouring Surrey, see Blair, *Early Medieval Surrey*, 24-34. The phrase 'federative estates' is Jolliffe's, *Pre-feudal England*, 17.

⁴⁹ WSRO Ep. VI/1/2, f. 20v.

Table 1

Summary of an Analysis of the Bexhill Charter

(Sawyer no. 108)⁵⁰

Section	Comments
Invocation and proem	Proem similar to Sawyer no. 1178
Dispositive clause	Comparable to Sawyer no. 49
Grant of land at Bexhill and bounds	
List of outlands	The division into inland and outland cannot be contemporary with the original grant. Some of these, perhaps all, were later additions: the Chichester chartulary list mentions a grant of eight hides at Crowhurst, which is included among the outlands.
Immunity clause	Position without parallel in any contemporary South Saxon charter and similar clauses in charters of the period are rare.
Anathema	Similar to Sawyer no. 45
Bounds of Icklesham	Evidently an addition
List of witnesses	Includes names appropriate to the period which no forger would have known
Bounds of Barnhome	Dated from language to the 10th century

⁵⁰ A full analysis of the text of Sawyer no. 108 is given in M.F. Gardiner, 'Some Lost Anglo-Saxon Charters and the Endowment of Hastings College', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 127 (1989), 39-43. See also Welch, *Early Anglo-Saxon Sussex*, 327-8 and H. Edwards, *The Charters of the Early West Saxon Kingdom* (British Archaeological Reports, British series 198 (1988)), 267-72.

The case for and against an Anglo-Saxon origin for the rapes of Sussex has been disputed for more than a century.⁵¹ These territories recorded in Domesday Book divided the county into north-south bands of land, each rape held by a Norman lord. Such a division may have had a military value, for it ensured that in the event of a rebellion no single lord would be able to seize control of all the Channel ports and so divide the English and French territories. Although the arrangement of the rapes may have aided the Norman kings' security, it is possible that it was based upon a yet earlier pattern. For present purposes the arguments which have been advanced for the origin of the rapes may be reduced to their bare essentials. It is agreed on virtually all sides that Anglo-Saxon rapes, if they existed, had been reorganised in the 20 years before 1086. DB records many holdings which had been in one rape and were transferred to another. The dispute is whether such changes were made in one or more stages, and whether those changes were made to administrative divisions introduced by the Normans or inherited by them from the Saxons.

An important element in the argument adduced by W. Hudson in 1912 was a plan of the deaneries of Sussex (fig. 7). Most of the deaneries are not mentioned before 1291, but it is likely that in Sussex, as in other areas of England, they were very much older. Hudson observed that the boundaries of the rapes and deaneries coincided very largely, but realised that the points of divergence were significant. Between 1066 and 1086 land in the East Grinstead area was transferred from the Rape of Lewes to that of Pevensey. The boundary between the deaneries of Lewes and Pevensey follows that of the rapes, except at East Grinstead, which it placed within the deanery of Lewes. Salzman drew the inference that the deanery boundary had been established at a date before the post-Conquest reorganisation of the area.⁵²

The evidence of the boundary between Hastings and Pevensey Rapes may be set against Salzman's interpretation. DB records that distant holdings in the Weald of north-east Sussex, mainly in the hundreds of Shoyswell, Henhurst and

⁵¹ The main contributions to the debate are cited below and are listed by J.F.A. Mason, 'The Rapes of Sussex and The Norman Conquest', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 102 (1964), 68, n. 1. The only recent contribution to the discussion has been T.P. Hudson, 'The Origins of Steyning and Bramber, Sussex', *Southern History* 2 (1980), 17-8.

⁵² W. Hudson, 'The Ancient Deaneries of the Diocese of Chichester and their Relationship to the Rapes of the County of Sussex', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 55 (1912), 108-22; Salzman, 'The Rapes of Sussex', 20-9.

Hawksborough, had been separated after 1066 from their parent estates in Pevensey Rape and placed in the Rape of Hastings.⁵³ The boundary between the Domesday Rapes of Pevensey and Hastings, however, is broadly followed by the border between the deaneries of Pevensey and South Malling on the one hand, and the deanery of Dallington on the other. If Salzman was correct, then we should expect the boundary to place Shoyswell, Henhurst and Hawksborough in the same deanery as their parent estates. But it does not. Instead, it broadly follows the same line as the rape boundary. Two interpretations might be suggested; either the deanery boundaries followed only some secular boundaries, choosing to adopt the old, unreformed rapal lines in some places and not in others, or alternatively, there must have been two phases of change. The second alternative would require the transfer of land from Pevensey Rape to Hastings Rape shortly after 1066, the establishment of deanery boundaries based on the new rapes and the subsequent transfer of land from Lewes to Pevensey Rape.

A further significant divergence between the deanery and rape boundaries occurs on the west and east sides of the Rape of Bramber. The boundaries of that rape are not followed in any part by those of the deaneries. Salzman suggested that the Rape of Bramber might have been a later creation and his argument was developed further by Mason. The latter established that a Rape of Bramber could have been carved out of the land of the adjoining Rape of Lewes to the east and the rape of Roger de Montgomery, who held land around Arundel and Chichester, to the west, but was unable to prove the case conclusively. Both scholars connected the supposed formation of the Rape of Bramber with the entries for Norfolk and Suffolk in Little Domesday Book which refer to lands held by William de Warenne for 'the exchange of Lewes'. They suggested that Warenne was granted lands in East Anglia to compensate for those lost on the west of Lewes Rape to Bramber and in the East Grinstead area to Pevensey Rape. Mason admitted that there was no reason why the boundaries of the deaneries should have followed those of the rapes and T.P. Hudson in the most recent contribution to the debate has cast doubt upon whether the two were originally coincidental. He has argued that ecclesiastical and secular areas might be quite independent, and that the lands in Norfolk and Suffolk given for 'the exchange of Lewes' might be compensation for the losses in the East Grinstead area only, and not for any supposed diminution of the rape caused by the creation of a Rape of Bramber.⁵⁴

⁵³ DB i, 18b-20a.

⁵⁴ Mason, 'The Rapes of Sussex', particularly 89; Hudson, 'The Origins of Steyning and Bramber', 18, 26 n. 71.

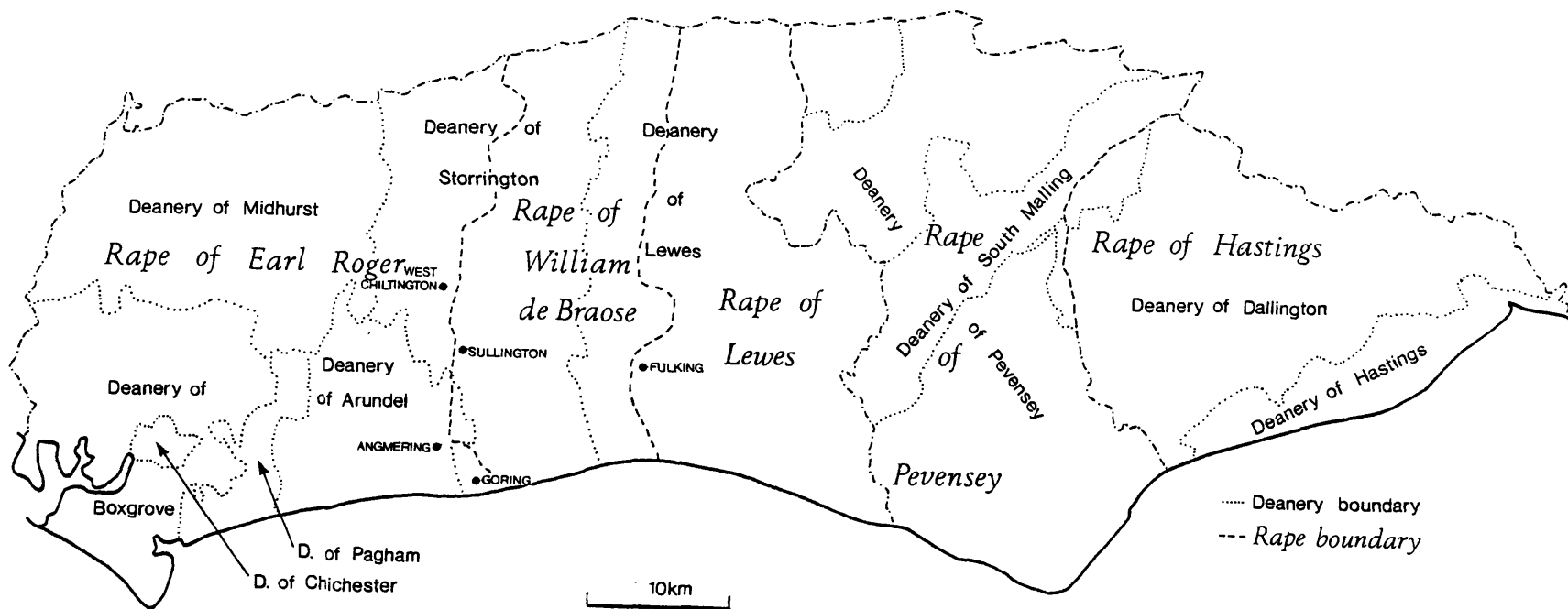


Fig. 7 The boundaries of rapes and deaneries.

The evidence of Domesday Book has not been deployed fully in the discussions so far. It has already been argued that some evidence for changes in boundaries may be found in the 1086 survey. A principle underlying post-Conquest tenure in Sussex was that all the lands of a manor should lie within a single rape, and to achieve that it was necessary to detach some outlying lands from their parent manors with consequent reduction in geld assessments. For example, Hoe in Lancing (Bramber Rape) was removed from its parent estate of Hurstpierpoint (Lewes Rape), and similar cases can be found throughout the Sussex folios.⁵⁵ The separation of Wealden outliers in East Grinstead from their parent manors is recorded in considerable detail, and similar information is provided for the hundreds of Hawksborough, Shoyswell, Henhurst, Baldslow, Netherfield and Battle where the new rapal boundaries divided the coastal lands from their distant woodland holdings. An exception to that rule is the land held by Fécamp Abbey at Steyning which, DB explains, though part lay in the Rapes of Arundel and Bramber, *tamen abbas tenet omnes modo*. The word *tamen* seems to acknowledge the unusual character of the tenure.⁵⁶

We might expect to find evidence for a similar separation of lands of estates if Bramber had been inserted into an existing pattern of rapes. Domesday Book indeed shows exactly that. Three manors were bisected by the border at Goring on the west side of the rape, and at nearby Angmering another two (fig. 7). Manors in Sullington and two in West Chilington further north were assessed for reduced geld because part of their land had been taken into the adjoining rape.⁵⁷ The same occurred on the east side of Bramber Rape. Fulking in Lewes Rape was removed from the estate of Shipley, and Paythorne (Fulking) in the same rape lost 2½ hides to Bramber Rape.⁵⁸ Divided manors are found at the edge of no other rape, except where known boundary changes, already discussed, had been made. Furthermore, it has long been observed that the boundaries of Bramber uniquely cut the hundred of *Easewrithe* on the west side and the hundreds of Wyndham and Fishersgate (DB hundred of

⁵⁵ DB i 27a, 29a.

⁵⁶ DB i, 17a. A further exception to the rule, the episcopal manor of Bishopstone, is discussed on p. 47 and 74.

⁵⁷ Goring: DB i, 24b-25a, 28b-29a. Angmering: DB i 24b. Sullington: DB i, 28a. West Chilington: DB i, 24b, 29a.

⁵⁸ DB i, 27a, 26b.

Eldretune) on the east. There is, therefore, a very strong case for regarding the boundaries of the Rape of Bramber as a later imposition upon an existing tenorial and administrative framework.

Mason has suggested that the Rape of Bramber was brought into existence in c.1073 and granted to William de Braose, a few years after the other lords had been settled in theirs. At the same time as land was taken from the west side of Lewes Rape to form Bramber Rape, East Grinstead may have been removed from the east side and granted to the Rape of Pevensey. The figures in Domesday Book do not allow any certainty on the question of whether the East Anglian manors given 'for the exchange of Lewes' were for the loss of East Grinstead alone, as T.P. Hudson contends, or also for land relinquished to Bramber Rape, though the latter is surely more probable.

The further evidence advanced here for the late creation of the Rape of Bramber strengthens the argument for the original coincidence of deanery and rape boundaries. The divergencies between the two sets of boundaries in central Sussex and around East Grinstead can be explained by these subsequent alterations. It is now necessary to turn again to the area at which the two boundaries coincide, even though Domesday Book indicates territorial change had taken place. The deanery boundaries ignore the changes on the east side of the Rape of Pevensey where the lands within the hundreds of Shoyswell, Henhurst, Hawksborough, Baldslow, Netherfield and Battle had been separated from their parent estates (fig. 8). It is possible that the Wealden lands had always lain in a separate rape from their parent manors and the Normans merely tidied up that administrative irregularity, but that is hardly likely. The evidence from Kent and Surrey, which had analogous divisions, shows that parent and customary outlier were generally in the same district.⁵⁹ There remains the second explanation offered above. There were two phases of change. In the first, shortly after the Conquest and before the boundaries of the deaneries were settled, the Wealden hundreds were placed within the Rape of Hastings. During the second phase the Rape of Bramber was created and the hundred of East Grinstead transferred to Pevensey Rape.

The development of the rapes of Sussex have been retraced to the years immediately following the Conquest, but it is more difficult to follow it back further. The main arguments in favour of pre-Conquest rapes may be considered under two heads. Firstly, under the entry for Lewes DB refers to a rape in its description of pre-Conquest customs. These laws are one of a number of such provincial customals in DB which record Old English practice. The relevant passage states that the purchaser

⁵⁹ Witney, *The Jutish Forest*, 36 ff.; Blair, *Early Medieval Surrey*, 14.

of a slave gave 4d to the reeve wherever he was bought *within the rape*. The application of these laws to the period before 1066 is made quite certain by a scribal correction from *sunt* to *erant*.⁶⁰

The second argument in favour of the existence of Anglo-Saxon rapes has relied upon the use of the OE term *forraepe*. Jolliffe drew attention to the significance of the word and noted its use to describe a land type in a 10th-century charter for Merstham in Surrey. Its Latin form, *foris rapum*, is used in DB for entries concerning land in the Weald and the word recurs in post-Conquest rentals and charters with reference to land in Sussex, Hampshire and Wiltshire. The term has been discussed from a linguistic point of view by Ekwall, Rumble and, most recently, by Coates.⁶¹

It is necessary to divide the sources in which the term occurs into two classes. In the first are documents concerned with liability to geld, of which the most important is DB itself. The expression *foris rapum* and its synonym *extra rapum* are used to explain why land was exempt from taxation. The entry for Shovelstrode (East Grinstead) says, 'Nunc extra rapum est, nunquam geldat'. Likewise the entry for Goring reads, 'Foris rapum est et extra numerum hidarum'. The interpretation offered by Morris, that lands 'outside the rape' lay in an adjacent rape is not supported by these and similar entries. An equally clear statement of the meaning of the word is given in a charter of c.1100 granting land to Lewes Priory. The charter concerns 60 acres of marshland at Renching (Westham) in the Pevensey Marshes, which 'owed no hidage nor any other service, because they were *forsrap*'.⁶²

The term is also found in manorial records. *Forreplond* is recorded in rentals of the bishop of Chichester's manors of Bishopstone at Heathfield, Cakeham and Sidlesham,

⁶⁰ On such customs, see H. Ellis, *A General Introduction to Domesday Book* (1833), 189.

⁶¹ Jolliffe, *Pre-Feudal England*, 83-7; Sawyer no. 528; E. Ekwall, 'Old English *forraepe*', *Studia Neophilologia* 16 (1944), 33-8; A. Rumble, 'The Merstham (Surrey) Charter-Bounds, A.D. 947', *Journal of the English Place-Name Society* 3 (1971), 7; A. Rumble, 'Place-Names and Their Context with Special Regard to the Croydon Survey Region', *Proceedings of the Croydon Natural History and Science Society* 15, 182; R. Coates, *Toponymic Topics: Essays on the Early Toponymy of the British Isles* (1988), 81-8.

⁶² DB i, 22b, 28a. *Domesday Book: Sussex*, ed. J. Morris (1976), unpaginated notes. *The Chartulary of the Priory of St. Pancras, Lewes, Part 1*, 73.

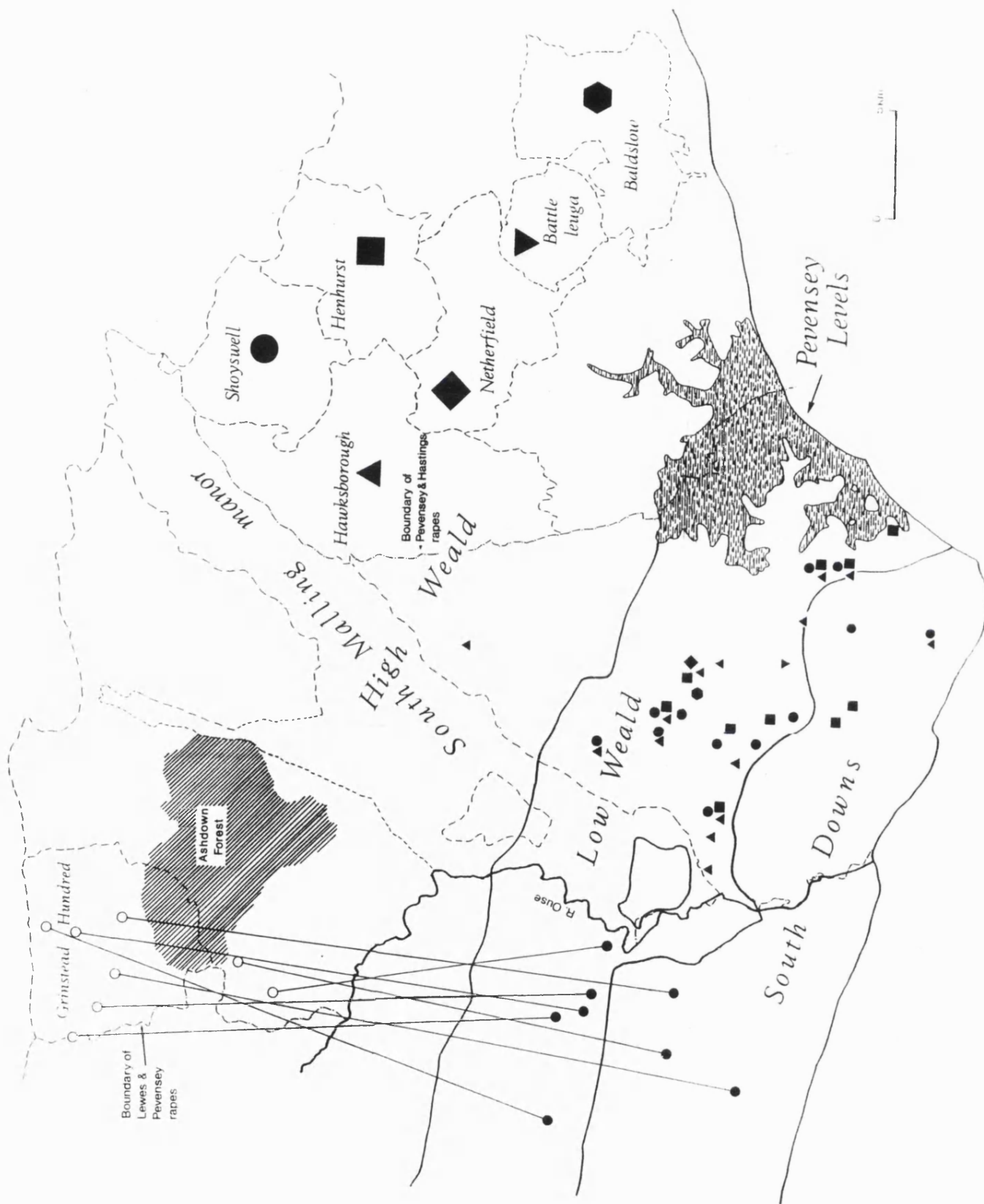


Fig. 8 Parent manors and detached Wealden holdings in the hundreds of East Grinstead, Shoyswell, Henhurst, Hawksborough, Baldslow, Netherfield and Battle.

and also at the manor of Bosham. There were tenants called *foreplemen* or *forespsmen* on the manors of Bishopstone, Westdean, Singleton and Charlton, presumably so named because they held land of that type. The use of the term for ungelded land is remembered in a Heathfield rental which contrasts those holding hides and those with *foreplelonde*.⁶³

It seems likely that the term *forreplond* referred at first to fiscal liability and later was applied to land type. An exactly similar shift in meaning had taken place for the hide and virgate which were used initially as measures of geld and subsequently applied to areas of land. The Old English prefix **for(e)* seems to have meant outside or beyond. That at least was the understanding of the term by the compilers of DB where the equivalents *foris* and *extra* occur. Jolliffe argued that the word *forræpe* helps to define its antonym, the rape. Land outside the rape was ungelded and therefore one purpose of the rape must have been as an area of tax collection. The entries in DB state that lands *foris rapum* never paid tax and presumably refer back to a time before 1066, a supposition reinforced by a reference in a charter of c.947 which mentions *forræpe* on the north side of Thundersfield in Surrey.⁶⁴

A serious problem for that interpretation is that the term *forræpe* is found not only in Sussex, but also in Wiltshire, Hampshire and Surrey, counties not known to have been divided into rapes.⁶⁵ Philologists have suggested that a possible origin of the term 'rape' is likely to be the west German stem **raip-* and the Old English *rāp* meaning 'rope'. It has been noted that courts in Germany were held in areas defined by ropes, and later the term was used to refer to the district administered by such a court, though the relevance to England is doubtful. The description by Orderic Vitalis of the use of ropes to measure land for the assessment of geld may be more significant. The lowy of Richard fitz Gilbert at Tonbridge is also said to have been measured out using

⁶³ WSRO Ep. VI/1/3, ff. 47v., 92v. (new foliation); Ep. VI/1/5, 108r., 112r., 138r.; WSRO Acc. 939/III/14; PRO C132/42 (5).

⁶⁴ Sawyer no. 528.

⁶⁵ *A Collection of Records and Documents Relating to the Hundred and Manor of Crondal, Part I*, ed. F.J. Baigent (Hampshire Record Society 3 (1891)), 136; *The Manor of Chilbolton, Hants*, formerly held by St Swithun's Priory, Winchester, ed. J.S. Drew (1945 (typescript in the Institute of Historical Research, London)), 14, 112; Sawyer no. 528.

a rope.⁶⁶ The rope was a primitive surveying device; land called *forreplond* may have been outside the assessment of the land thus measured, as DB suggests. To argue thus stays well within the limitations of the evidence, but we cannot follow Jolliffe and conclude that the use of the term *forræpe* necessarily implies the existence of districts called rapes. That would require that we posited rapes in the counties of Surrey, Hampshire and Wiltshire, where the term *forræpe* is also found, but for which there is otherwise no evidence. If then we accept that the use of *forræpe* does not necessarily require the presence of rapes in those counties, the corollary must be that the term cannot be used to support the contention that there were rapes in Sussex before the Conquest.

In summary, the evidence is too slight to determine with any certainty whether there were pre-Conquest districts called rapes in Sussex. It has been established that the Weald was exploited in a very similar manner in the counties of Kent, Surrey and Sussex. The existence of the lathes of Kent and the districts called *regiones* which Blair identified in Surrey might suggest that there were similar territories in Sussex, though no pre-Conquest source mentions them. The parallel with the lathes of Kent even extends to the name of the court of the greater part of the Rape of Hastings, which from at least the late 12th century was also called the lathe court. But argument by analogy does not constitute proof and all that may safely be inferred is that districts called rapes may have existed in Sussex. Such rapes might have served as administrative districts, as the customs under the Lewes entry in DB imply, and they might also have been used for the collection of geld. Some of the functions performed by the hundreds elsewhere may have been carried out by the rapes in Sussex.⁶⁷

The evidence for the ecclesiastical divisions, the minster parishes or *parochiae*, is no less problematic. Much of the evidence is late in date; the fees paid by one church to another are often not recorded until the 14th century. Hase has contended, however, ² that no matter how late the evidence, these payments invariably originated when local

⁶⁶ Mawer and Stenton, *The Place-Names of Sussex* 1, 8; Coates, *Toponymic Topics*, 87; *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis* 4, ed. M.M. Chibnall (1974), 172; W. Lambarde, *A Perambulation of Kent*, 384.

⁶⁷ For reference to the lathe court of Hastings in 1176, see *Report on the Manuscripts of Lord De L'Isle and Dudley Preserved at Penshurst Place*, Historical Manuscripts Commission (report 77, vol. 1 (1925)), 34-5. For discussion of the lathe court of Hastings, see *Lathe Court Rolls and Views of Frankpledge in the Rape of Hastings, A.D. 1387 to 1474*, ed. E.J. Courthope and B.E.R. Formoy (Sussex Record Society 37 (1934)), xx-xxi.

churches were established within the *parochia* of a minster church. Fees were paid in lieu of revenue lost by the superior church through the establishment of other churches in its area of ministration. Other indicators of minster status are the presence of a particularly large parish, often with an irregular outline as if 'bites have been taken from around the edge', a substantial endowment and the presence of several clergy recorded in DB.⁶⁸

At the western end of Sussex the minster churches and their *parochiae* can be recognised fairly readily (fig. 9). Easebourne church with its large parish including chapelries at Fernhurst, Midhurst, Todham and Lodsworth is very likely to have been a former minster. Petworth to the east had a similar constellation of dependencies: the chapels of Duncton, Treve (*alias* River) and the church of Tillington. North Chapel, as the name implies, became a church in its own right only at a late date, and had formerly been part of Petworth parish. The name *Berieminstre* recorded in the early 12th century indicates that Bury was a collegiate church, although otherwise there is little evidence for it had only a single chapel, at West Burton. By contrast, Singleton church situated on the South Downs had associated chapels at East and West Dean, Binderton and Chilgrove. The church is credited in DB with three hides, one virgate and clergy in the plural clearly indicating its superior status. Stoughton with an endowment of 1½ hides is also a likely minster church.⁶⁹ Domesday Book mentions either more than one priest or substantial holdings of land at Bosham, Boxgrove and Aldingbourne. The foundation of the monastery at Bosham preceded the mission to the South Saxons by Wilfrid. Although Bede mentions it in disparaging terms, the monastery of the Irish monk Dicuil may have been more important than he allows. By the 11th century and perhaps as early as the mid-seventh century that church had been

⁶⁸ R.V. Lennard, *Rural England 1086-1135: A Study of Social and Agrarian Conditions* (1959), 396-404; Hase, *The Development of the Parish in Hampshire*, unpaginated preface; Blair, 'Secular Minster Churches in Domesday Book', 106.

⁶⁹ Easebourne: *The Chartulary of the High Church of Chichester*, ed. W.D. Peckham (Sussex Record Society 46 (1946)), 314; *Calendar of Documents Preserved in France, Illustrative of the History of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1, ed. J.H. Round (1899), 238. Petworth: *Calendar of Documents Preserved in France*, 510; Mawer and Stenton, *The Place-Names of Sussex* 1, 113. Bury: *Calendar of Documents Preserved in France*, 44; *The Chartulary of the High Church of Chichester*, 311. Singleton: DB i, 23a; *The Acta of the Bishops of Chichester*, ed. H. Mayr-Harting (Canterbury and York Society 130 (1962)), 91-2; *Victoria County History of Sussex* 4, ed. L.F. Salzman (1953), 120. Stoughton: DB i, 24a.



Fig. 9 Minster churches in western Sussex and the probable boundaries of the Domesday hundreds.

granted extensive lands.⁷⁰ Apart from an entry in Domesday Book mentioning that the clergy of the church held one hide of land, there is little evidence for a minster church at Boxgrove. The priory established here in the early 12th century may have been a refoundation of the existing collegiate church. Aldingbourne was held in 1086 by the bishop of Chichester and four clergy held land of him, which probably indicates a collegiate establishment. In the ninth century it had been held by King Alfred. Munby has made a good case for reconstructing a minster parish based upon Chichester itself. Finally, Domesday Book alludes to a minster church in Westbourne.⁷¹

In western Sussex the minster church generally lay at or near the centre of the hundred. That was the case at Easebourne, Rotherbridge, Bury, Singleton, Boxgrove and Bosham. The pattern of coincidental hundredal meeting places and minster churches to which Page drew attention is found, although there are some anomalies including two minster churches in the hundred of Westbourne. It is possible, though the evidence is not conclusive, that the boundaries of the hundreds and *parochiae* were co-terminous, as Hase founded in neighbouring Hampshire. But that pattern contrasts with central and eastern Sussex where the *parochiae* and hundreds covered rather different areas. The *parochia* of the minster church of Steyning included Bramber which lay in an adjoining hundred. Bexhill church evidently included within its area of ministration Ninfield, Hooe, Bulverhythe, St Leonards and the Hastings parishes of All Saints and St Clement, though all of these lay outside the hundred of Bexhill. Beckley, Iden, Playden and Northiam paid pensions to the church of Peasmarsh, and were thus presumably once part of its *parochia*, though the last-named parish lay outside the hundred of Goldspur. More fundamentally, it is notable that hundred and parish boundaries in eastern Sussex rarely coincided, suggesting that they had developed along quite separate lines (fig. 2).⁷²

⁷⁰ DB i, 17a. *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. B. Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors (1969), IV, 13; D.P. Kirby, 'The Church in Saxon Sussex', in P.F. Brandon (ed.), *The South Saxons* (1978), 168-70.

⁷¹ DB i, 25b, 16b. Sawyer, no. 1507. J. Munby, 'Saxon Chichester and its Predecessors', in J. Haslam (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon Towns in Southern England* (1984), 323-6. DB i, 24a.

⁷² *Calendar of Documents Preserved in France*, 37-8; Gardiner, 'Some Lost Anglo-Saxon Charters', 45.

THE ANGLO-SAXON ADMINISTRATIVE GEOGRAPHY OF SUSSEX

Having assembled and reviewed the materials for the study of pre-Conquest geography of Sussex, it is now possible to draw some general conclusions about the structure of the county and the development of settlement within it. The Weald remained peripheral to the main regions of agriculture throughout the Anglo-Saxon period. It is supposed that it was used first on a seasonal basis as supplementary pasture and for the other resources offered by woodland and that permanent settlements were established later.⁷³ The general pattern of usage has been identified by studying the medieval and later associations between Wealden and coastal manors. The detailed work necessary for studying the whole county in that way has not been attempted, but a general map can be compiled using the primary sources for the eastern part of the Rape of Pevensey and the Rape of Hastings, and published material for the remainder (fig. 10).⁷⁴

A map of territorial links shows a number of significant patterns. It is notable that almost none of the downland or coastal manors in the Rape of Chichester had detached lands within the Weald. Instead land in the Vale of Rother and to the north was utilised by manors lying at the scarp foot of the Downs or within the Rother valley. Resource exploitation was locally based and did not depend upon distant outliers. That pattern may be associated with the administrative structure of the area. The west of the county alone has a regular pattern of hundreds, often with large central manors and coterminous *parochiae*, the type of territories described by Cam and Page. The hundreds seem to have performed an important early administrative function. It is possible that there was no Rape of Chichester until the 13th century. DB refers to that area, later divided into the Rapes of Arundel and Chichester, as the rape of Earl Roger. The first reference to a separate Rape of Chichester is not found

⁷³ P.F. Brandon, 'Medieval Sussex', in P.L. Drewett (ed.), *Archaeology in Sussex to AD 1500* (CBA Research Report 29 (1978)), 85.

⁷⁴ The sources used are M.F. Gardiner, 'Saxon Settlement and Land Division in the Western Weald', *Victoria County History of Sussex* 6 i, ed. T.P. Hudson (1980); *Victoria County History of Sussex* 6 ii ed. T.P. Hudson (1986); *Victoria County History of Sussex* 6 iii ed. T.P. Hudson (1987); *Customs of the Manors of Laughton, Willingdon and Goring*, ed. A.E. Wilson (Sussex Record Society 60 (1961)); *The Book of John Rowe, Steward of the Manors of Lord Bergavenny, 1597-1622*, ed. W.H. Godfrey (Sussex Record Society 34 (1928)); DB i 18a-22b. The map does not show individual linked settlements, but seeks to show the general pattern.

until 1275.⁷⁵ By contrast in central and eastern Sussex the rape was the main unit of administration from at least the early Norman period. The western end of Sussex and the remainder of the county appear to have had contrasting systems of land usage and associated forms of administration.

The second aspect of land usage illustrated by the map is the absence of outlying holdings at the eastern end of Sussex. The contrast found elsewhere between the fertile coastal strip and the wooded interior is not present in that part of the county where the Weald extended to the coast. Before the Norman Conquest the north-western part of the Rape of Hastings had been utilised by manors in the area between Lewes and Eastbourne. Such usage is remembered in the many names of farms and fields which incorporate the OE element *denn* ('woodland pasture'). At the east end of Sussex there are relatively few -den place-names in contrast to their frequency further west and in the immediately adjoining area of Kent (fig. 11). Darby, who first noted the pattern, wondered whether it was the product of the survival of evidence, the localised use of the word, or might reflect the distribution of swine pastures.⁷⁶ The first of these possibilities can be rapidly dismissed. A study of the place-names, and the field-names from tithe maps, confirms the clear contrast between the element's prevalence in the north-west part of Hastings Rape and its infrequency in the east.⁷⁷ Nor is it likely to be due to the local usage. The very sharp boundary between the distribution in Kent and eastern Sussex could hardly be due to dialect which would not be contained by the administrative borders. The third suggestion seems the most likely: there was a absence of swine pastures at the eastern end of Sussex.

A further notable feature of the land exploitation is the very marked difference in the relation of outliers and parent settlements on the west and east sides of the River Ouse. The axis of linked holdings on the eastern side of the river is aligned north-east/

⁷⁵ Mason, 'The Rapes of Sussex', 72-4; Mawer and Stenton, *Place-Names of Sussex* 1, 10; *Victoria County History of Sussex* 4, 1-2.

⁷⁶ H.C. Darby, 'Place-Names and the Geography of the Past', in A. Brown and P.G. Foote (eds), *Early English and Norse Studies* (1963), 15-8.

⁷⁷ The map has been compiled from names in Mawer and Stenton, *The Place-Names of Sussex*, 2 and by abstracting field names from the tithe maps and awards for parishes in the Rape of Hastings: ESRO TD/E 1, 2, 4, 8, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 19, 20, 34, 38, 40, 43, 47, 50, 68, 71, 86, 88, 89, 93, 96, 99, 107, 109, 121, 127, 132, 133, 139, 141, 146, 147, 157, 158.

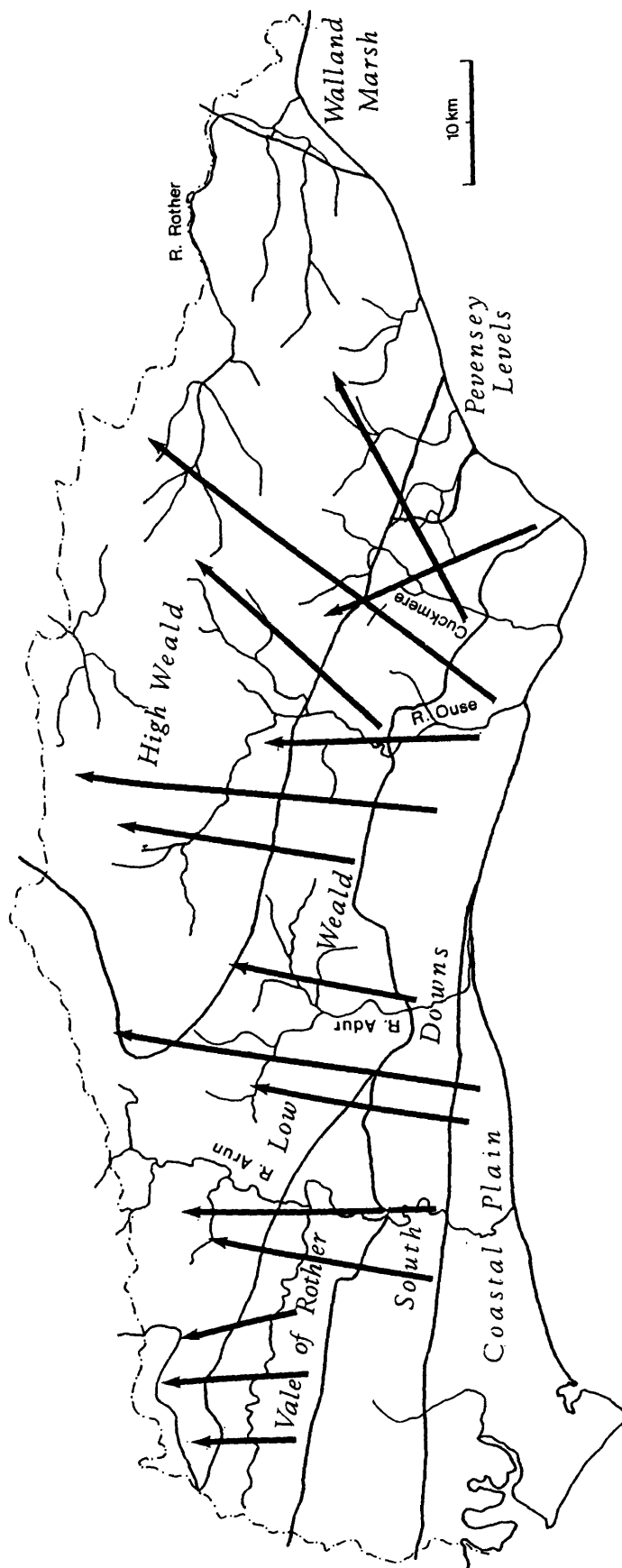


Fig. 10 The pattern of detached Wealden holdings in Sussex.

south-west; on the west of the river DB and later sources show a pattern of associated lands lying in a north/south direction (fig. 8). The high ground which forms Ashdown Forest lay between the two groups and was eschewed by both. There is little evidence that the Forest was settled before the Conquest and it remained largely unoccupied until the 13th century when, under pressure of growing population, settlers began to encroach upon the waste. Neilson thought the pattern of later medieval grazing on Ashdown Forest was a survival of an ancient practice of the common usage of woodland by the whole of Pevensey Rape.⁷⁸ It is altogether more likely that it remained common land in the later medieval period because the area had been avoided by earlier settlers on account of the poverty of its soils.

The pattern of links between parent settlements and outliers have been used in some areas to reconstruct the extent of ancient territories. In Warwickshire two areas of transhumance have been identified, separated by a border perpetuated as a diocesan boundary, but evidently of ancient origin. In Surrey two groups of linked settlements, one running north/south and the other east/west, seem to suggest a similar boundary between territories.⁷⁹ The River Ouse in Sussex seems to mark the position of another ancient territorial boundary, for the pattern of linked holdings is markedly different on the two sides. The river is also followed by the deanery boundary and, therefore by inference, the unreformed Norman rape. Both may have been based upon an earlier, Anglo-Saxon, boundary.

The present study has attempted to uncover the administrative form of Anglo-Saxon Sussex and to indicate the course of settlement development. The interpretation of the structure of county suggested here is different and more complex than those of Jolliffe or Salzman. It has more in common with the ideas of Brandon and Short who have suggested that the contrast between the interior and the coastal fringe, and the exploitation of the latter by the former, has been influential in the development of south-east England. The integration of the more fertile lowland areas with the poorer

⁷⁸ P.F. Brandon, 'Medieval Clearances in the East Sussex Weald', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 48 (1969), 139-40; *The Chartulary and Terrier of the Priory of Bilsington, Kent*, ed. N. Neilson (British Academy Records of the Social and Economic History of England 7 (1928)), 34-8.

⁷⁹ Ford, 'Some Settlement Patterns in the Central Region of the Warwickshire Avon', 150-1; Sawyer, *From Roman Britain to Norman England*, 146-7; Blair, *Early Medieval Surrey*, 14-7.

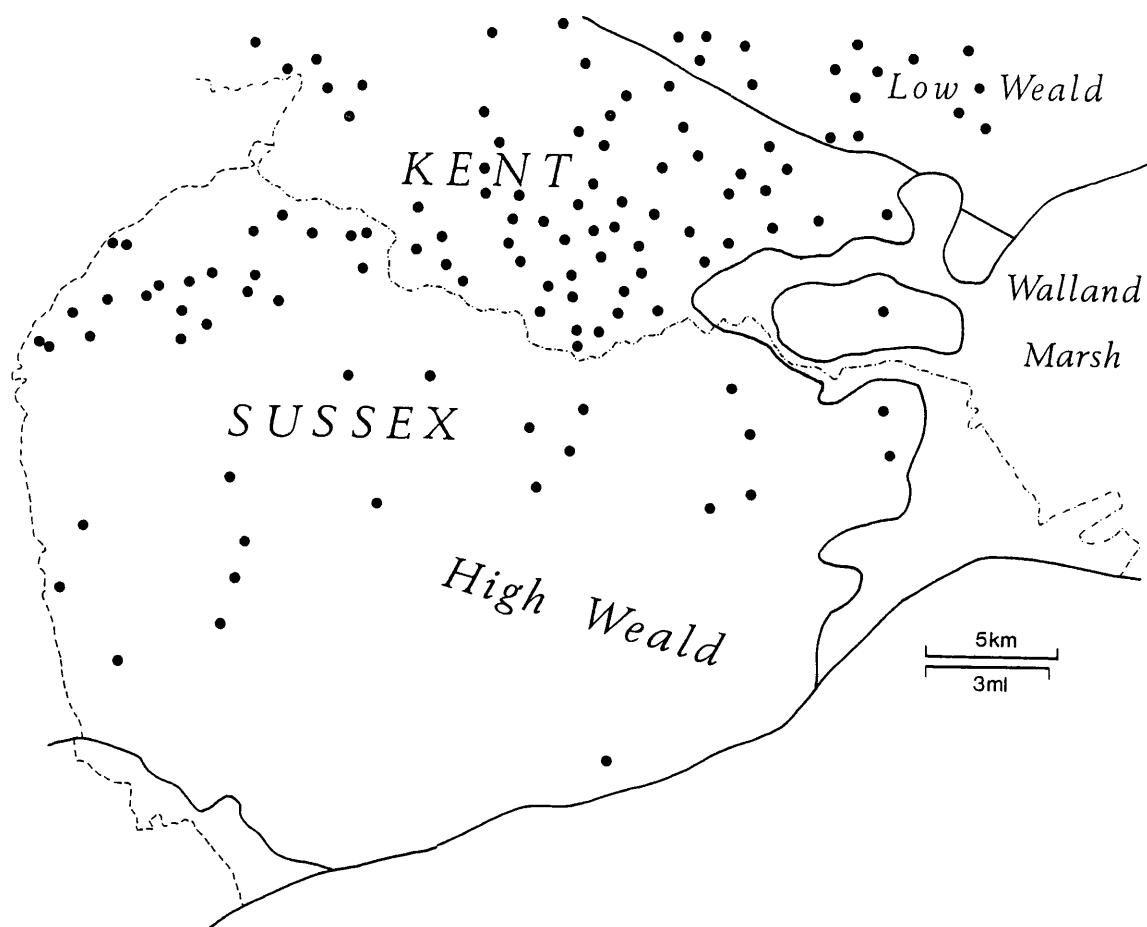


Fig. 11 *Denn* place-names in Hastings Rape and southern Kent.

soils of the highland interior has been explored in the context of Sussex and elsewhere by Glanville Jones.⁸⁰ He has shown that that type of exploitation which combined the resources of two zones was a common pattern of primitive land usage. It is unnecessary to ascribe a Celtic origin to that form of land organisation, as he did, or a Jutish origin, as Jolliffe did. Rather it represents an effective way of managing the resources of two areas in a non-intensive manner, which need not be specific to an ethnic group, but can be found in many areas of the British Isles where regions of better and poorer soils are found in association.

⁸⁰ P.F. Brandon and B.M. Short, *The South-East from AD 1000* (1990), 12-5; Jones, 'The Multiple Estate as a Model for Tracing Early Stages in the Evolution of Rural Settlement'; Jones, 'Multiple Estates and Early Settlement', 9-34. For a critique of the ideas of Jones, see N. Gregson, 'The Multiple Estate Model: Some Critical Questions', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 11 (1985), 339-51, answered in G.R.J. Jones, 'Multiple Estate Perceived', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 11 (1985), 351-63.

CHAPTER 2

THE CHARACTER AND PROGRESS OF MEDIEVAL SETTLEMENT IN THE EASTERN SUSSEX WEALD

According to earlier scholars, at the time of the Norman Conquest the Weald was a tract of heavily wooded and sparsely settled land. In more recent years historians have argued that by the late 11th century the region had a greater population than a superficial reading of Domesday Book (DB) might suggest. Yet there is a lack of agreement about the degree to which the area had been settled, and little attention has been given to the process by which it was achieved. The extent of occupation is not entirely clear before the middle or late 13th century, at which time a greater number of documents allow a pattern of land usage to be established. But there is some evidence for the earlier period which suggests the character and progress of Wealden settlement.¹

The seasonal movement of swine from the coastal region of Sussex into the northern woodland pastures was evidently amongst the earliest uses of the area in the Anglo-Saxon period, and was the means by which the Weald was subsequently opened to permanent settlement. It is probable that such settlements had been established even in the most distant areas of the Weald by the late 11th century. DB catches one place in central Sussex at the moment of change from unsettled land to permanently occupied farmstead. In 1066 unnamed land in the hundred of East Easewrithe was described as pasture land belonging to the manor of Storrington. When DB was compiled 20 years later it was 'newly settled', so recently that the vill had not yet been hidated. The presence of a mill recorded in the entry suggests, however, that land was already under cultivation.² In east Sussex similar changes were taking place. The Kent folios of the Domesday survey mention four denns which were formerly part of the manor of Leeds, and the 11th-century inquisition of St Augustine's, Canterbury adds the information that they were in Sussex. After the Conquest they were detached from

¹ For the older view see W.G. Hoskins, *The Making of the English Landscape* (1970 edition), 76-7; L.F. Salzman, 'The Rapes of Sussex', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 72 (1931), 23. For more recent comments, see E.M.J. Campbell, 'Kent', in H.C. Darby and E.M.J. Campbell (eds), *The Domesday Geography of South-East England*, 495-500; P.H. Sawyer, 'Medieval English Settlement: New Interpretations', in P.H. Sawyer (ed.), *English Medieval Settlement* (1979), 3.

² DB i, 29a.

Leeds and were recorded in the Sussex folios of DB among villis in Staple and Netherfield hundreds in the Rape of Hastings. Though regarded from Leeds as outlying animal pastures, when the Domesday commissioners reached Sussex and took evidence there, they found that the land had been settled. In the Sussex folios they were recorded as four virgates of land cultivated by villans. Each denn was assessed as one virgate.³

It is possible that many of the places in Kent described in DB as denns were settled and cultivated lands by 1086. It has been argued that there may have been a difference between the places described as denns with plough-teams and/or tenants, and therefore permanently settled, and the denns *de silva*, or those without a recorded population, which may still have been seasonal woodland pastures. That may not be a valid distinction, for not all the woodland denns were unoccupied. The Leeds denns were described in the 11th-century inquisition of St Augustine's, for example, as *silvarum*.⁴ We may also wonder about land at Hazelhurst (Ticehurst) in Sussex described on a contemporary endorsement to a charter of 1018 as a denn and in the text as a woodland pasture. The charter, however, grants the land without reference to the estate to which it had presumably once belonged. Consequently, Ward believed that the land was settled and farmed and he doubted if by the 11th century 'any considerable part of the business of this settlement was the tending of swine'.⁵

The bounds of Hazelhurst suggest that it was surrounded on the south and east by other similar tenements, Rowley, Holbeam and Whiligh. Holdings of that type are found in later medieval sources as large free tenements or customary virgates. These, like the denn of Hazelhurst, were commonly bounded by streams or their borders followed other dominant features of topography, particularly ridgelines. Otherwise the edges were marked by roads or tracks. These holdings were at least 80 acres in extent, but often much larger, up to 500 or 600 acres, and often possessed a degree of tenurial independence from the manor to which they belonged, sometimes being held

³ DB i, 7b, 18b; *An Eleventh-Century Inquisition of St Augustine's, Canterbury*, ed. A. Ballard (British Academy, Records of the Social and Economic History of England and Wales, 4 ii (1920)), 2. See also G. Ward, 'Some Eleventh Century References to Sussex', *Sussex Notes and Queries* 4 (1933), 238.

⁴ Campbell, 'Kent', 528; *An Eleventh-Century Inquisition*, 2.

⁵ Sawyer, no. 950; G. Ward, 'The Haeseler's Charter of 1018', *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, 77 (1936), 122.

for knight's service, or by a small or nominal rent.⁶ The tenants sometimes gave rents or services in common. The tenement of Broadhurst (Heathfield, Mayfield, Burwash), also called the denn of Broadhurst, was typical of such holdings. It was bounded on the north by the River Rother and on the west and east sides by streams flowing towards the Rother. Only on the southern side was there no clear topographic feature. The 'whole land of Broadhurst' was held by Richard and Henry de Broadhurst and their parceners for the service, to be performed in common, of carrying a cloak to any port in the Rape of Hastings when the lord wished to embark.⁷

There were a series of similar holdings along the upper Rother valley (fig. 12). Immediately to the east of Broadhurst lay the tenement of Holmshurst bounded on the east side by the road from Heathfield to Witherenden Bridge, and to the north partially by the River Rother. The reversion of Holmshurst had been granted to Robertsbridge Abbey in the early years of the 13th century by Alured de St Martin. It was subsequently confirmed to the tenants, an unnamed group of men, for the annual payment of 15s. That rent was apparently paid collectively by the tenants for 14th-century rentals of the abbey note only the name of the tenement, without listing tenants. The same sum was still paid to Robertsbridge manor in c.1567 when it was described as a 'common rent' and was collected by a beadle elected from among the tenants of the holding. That may have been the practice earlier.⁸ The demesne of Hammerden was a similar large area of land. It occupied a large triangular-shaped area on the north of the River Rother bounded by the road to Witherenden Bridge on

⁶ *Ibid.*, 125-8; K.P. Witney, *The Jutish Forest: A Study of the Weald of Kent from 450 to 1380 AD* (1976), 97 notes that the denns ranged from about 100 to 700 acres, but the average was ½ square mile (320 acres).

⁷ ESRO SAS/PN 517; ESRO ASH 206, f. 49v. The latter deed can be attributed to 1256 x 64 when Reginald de Burghurst was lord of the manor (*Victoria County History of Sussex* 9, ed. L.F. Salzman (1937), 196). I am grateful to David Martin for his plan of the boundaries of the tenement of Broadhurst. Witney, *The Jutish Forest*, 186 notes that in Kent denns were corporate units of assessment.

⁸ *Survey of the Manor of Robertsbridge, 1567-70*, ed. R.H. D'Elboux, (Sussex Record Society 47 (1944)), 96-104; *Curia Regis Rolls* 5, 289-90; CKS U1475/M242, M243.

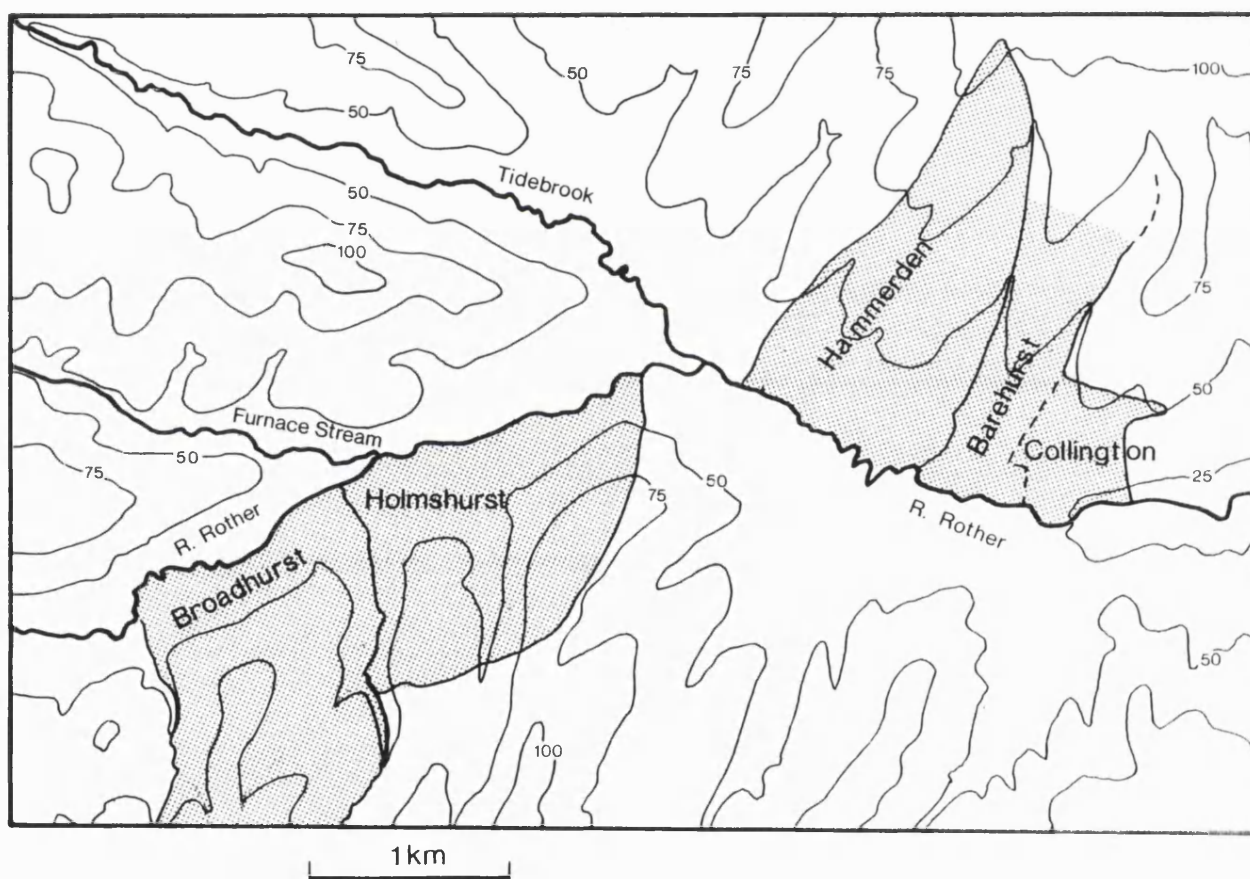


Fig. 12 Some tenements in the upper Rother valley (contours in metres).

the west and a stream on the east.⁹ The tenement of Barehurst (Ticehurst) lay adjacent to it. It had been granted by Walter de Scotney, the lord of Hammerden, to his brother William, whose son Manser subsequently gave it to Battle Abbey.¹⁰

Large tenements of that type were re-arranged during the 12th and 13th centuries by grant and sub-infeudation, rather like a child's building bricks, to create new patterns of land holding. Holmshurst had been granted by the count of Eu to Alured de St Martin who, as already mentioned, granted it to Robertsbridge Abbey. The abbey also was granted the tenements at Perryfield (Udimore), Foxham (Beckley or Peasmarsch) and Pattleton's Farm (Westfield) which seem to have had the same character, for all paid common rents. Some secular landholdings were also augmented in a similar manner by grouping blocks of land together. The manor of Burghurst was enlarged in the early 13th century and comprised many such blocks of land, including the denns of Quedley (Ticehurst) and Broadhurst (fig. 13). The lands of Alan de Bugsell were apparently similar, for in addition to his manor of Bugsell (Salehurst), he had other tenements nearby at Ringden (Ticehurst), Hazelden (Ticehurst) and *Colteslond* (?Etchingham). These tenements owed nominal rents resolute or knights' service to the overlord.¹¹

It is possible that these large tenements mentioned in deeds of the late 12th and 13th century were identical to the denns of land separated from their parent estates near the coast shortly after 1066.¹² It is difficult to substantiate that surmise for DB does not record the names of the outlying lands, but on general grounds it may be argued that the very size of the holdings and their boundaries, often delimited by topography, suggest that they originated in an early phase of settlement in the Weald. There is some more definite evidence, for Boarzell and Shoyswell (Etchingham) recorded as pre-Conquest outliers of Alciston, were tenements of that type. After the

⁹ ESRO SAS/CO/D 3.

¹⁰ HEH BA 37/1008; Lincoln's Inn Library Hale MS. 87, ff. 54r.-v.; ESRO SAS/CO/B 72.

¹¹ CKS U1475/M242; *Report on the Manuscripts of Lord De L'Isle and Dudley Preserved at Penshurst Place*, Historical Manuscripts Commission (report 77, vol. 1 (1925)), 70, 83; *An Abstract of Feet of Fines from 2 Richard I to 33 Henry III*, ed. L.F. Salzmann (Sussex Record Society 2 (1902)), 59. On Burghurst, see Chapter 6 below, PRO C134/98 (2).

¹² DB i, 18b-20a.

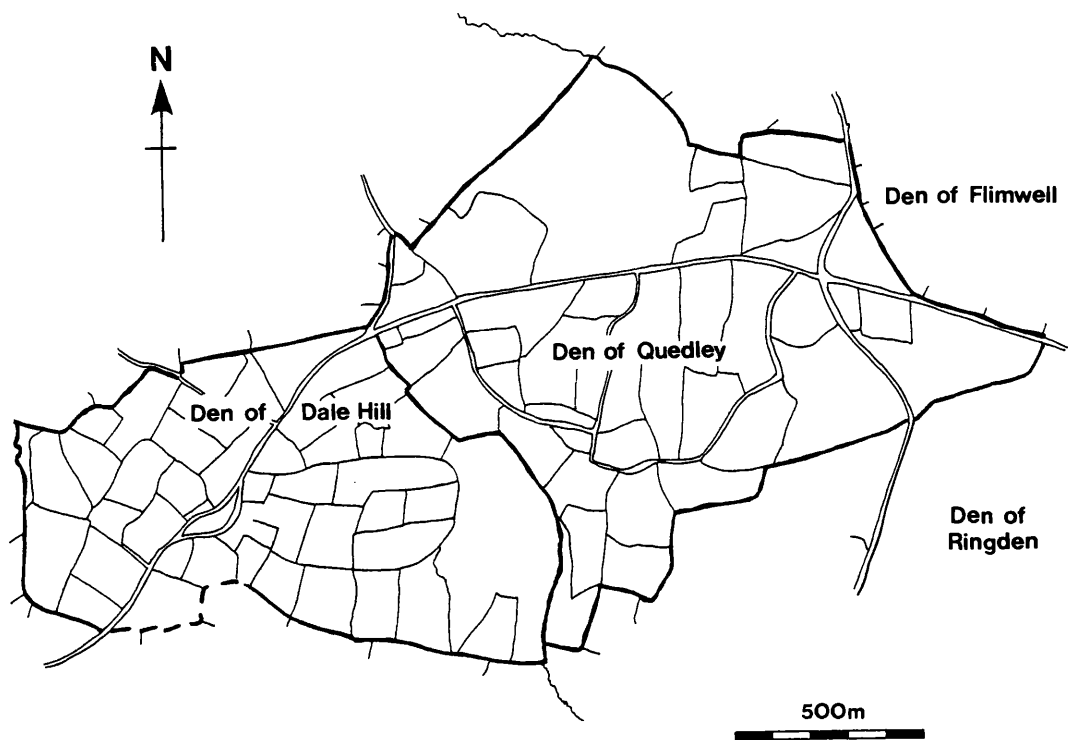


Fig. 13 Some dennis in Ticehurst parish.

Conquest they were held of the manor of Etchingham, but both became sub-manors. A deed of 1454 mentions the 'denn of Boarzell'. Land at Dale Hill in Ticehurst was another such area of land. It exceptionally was not separated from its parent manor of Bishopstone, though the latter lay in the Rape of Pevensey. It was known as the 'denn of Dale Hill' (fig. 13).¹³

Some caution is necessary about these description of land as denns. Most such references are not found before the 15th century, and then are described as denns mainly in charters and leases (Table 2). Manorial documents rarely refer to their lands as denns; the 15th-century rental of the manor of Mote (Iden) is the sole exception. It is possible that the tenements were so called at a late date when memory of any former function as animal pastures had long been forgotten. Land located in a deed of 1431 'on the denn of Swiftsden' (Etchingham) was said 50 years earlier to be in the vill (*villa*) of Swiftsden.¹⁴ If the usage is late, then it may well have been adopted from Kent where the term was very widely used for similar areas of land, and indeed many of the places called denns do indeed lie very close to the county boundary (fig. 14).

Some of the detached manorial holdings on the southern periphery of the High Weald in the Rape of Pevensey were quite different in character. These were small parcels of land, often only a few acres in extent. They lay in the same rape as their parent manor and for that reason had not been removed from it. Unlike the large tenements in the High Weald these could not have sufficed to pasture many animals for an extended period. It is likely that these originated as intermediate stopping places along drove roads at which stock might be fed. The pattern of such holdings on the west side of Clearhedge Wood is particularly clear. An area of eight acres held of Chalvington lay at Sinderford in Waldron, mid-way between the main area of the manor and larger outliers in Heathfield to the north. There was a similar area held of the manor of Heighton St Clere close by and further east beside Summersbrook Stream was 12 acres belonging to Chalvington manor (fig. 15). All these were situated on the valley sides above streams, where stock might be watered.¹⁵ A similar pattern is found near Hamly Bridge (Hellingly) where the land adjoining the stream was divided

¹³ BL Harl. Ch. 43 C 12; ESRO DUN 1/25; ESRO AMS 4666/13. See above, p. 53.

¹⁴ ESRO AMS 4666/8; ESRO DUN 20/2.

¹⁵ ESRO SAS/CH 215, 216; ESRO ADA 46, f. 3r.; ESRO A2327/1/4/30; ESRO QDD 6/E2.

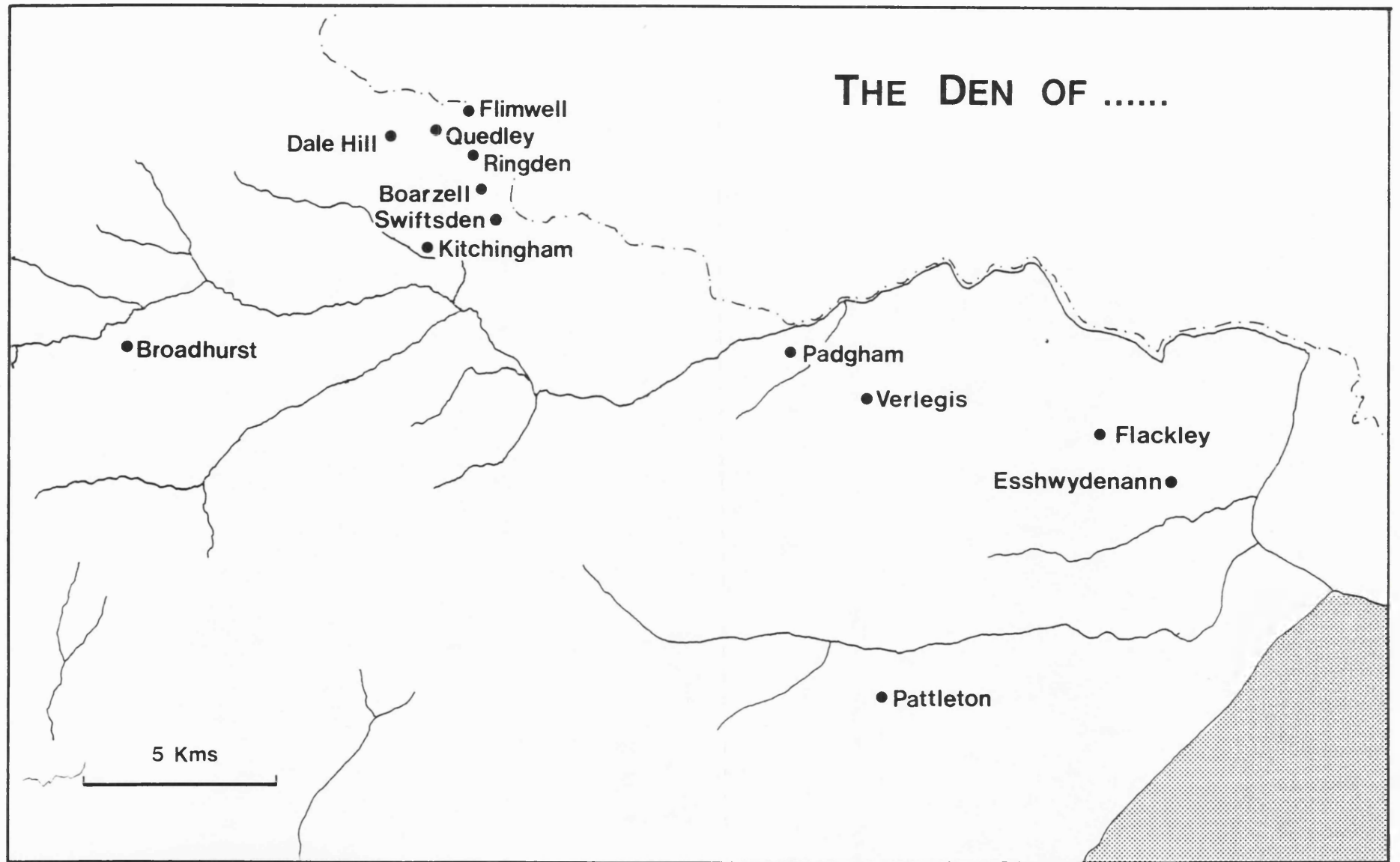


Fig. 14 Sussex lands recorded as lying with a denn.

Table 2

Sussex Lands Recorded as Lying Within a Denn

'Denn of	Parish	Reference	Date
Boarzell	Etchingham	ESRO DUN 1/25	1454
Broadhurst	Heathfield	ESRO SAS/PN 517	1632
Dale Hill	Ticehurst	ESRO AMS 4666/13	1400
<i>Esshwydenann</i>	Peasmarsh	ESRO RYE 136/182	1424
Flackley	Peasmarsh	ESRO NOR 15/13	early 15th century
Flimwell	Ticehurst	ESRO AMS 4666/3	1544
Kitchingham	land in Ticehurst	ESRO DUN 1/26	1455
Padgham	Ewhurst	ESRO NOR 15/13	early 15th century
Pattleton	Westfield	CKS U1475/T264/580	1474
Quedley	Ticehurst	ESRO DUN 2/50	1520
Ringden	Ticehurst	ESRO DUN 3/2	1369
Swiftsden	Etchingham	ESRO DUN 20/2	1431
<i>Verlegis</i>	Northiam	HMAG HPL E2	1402

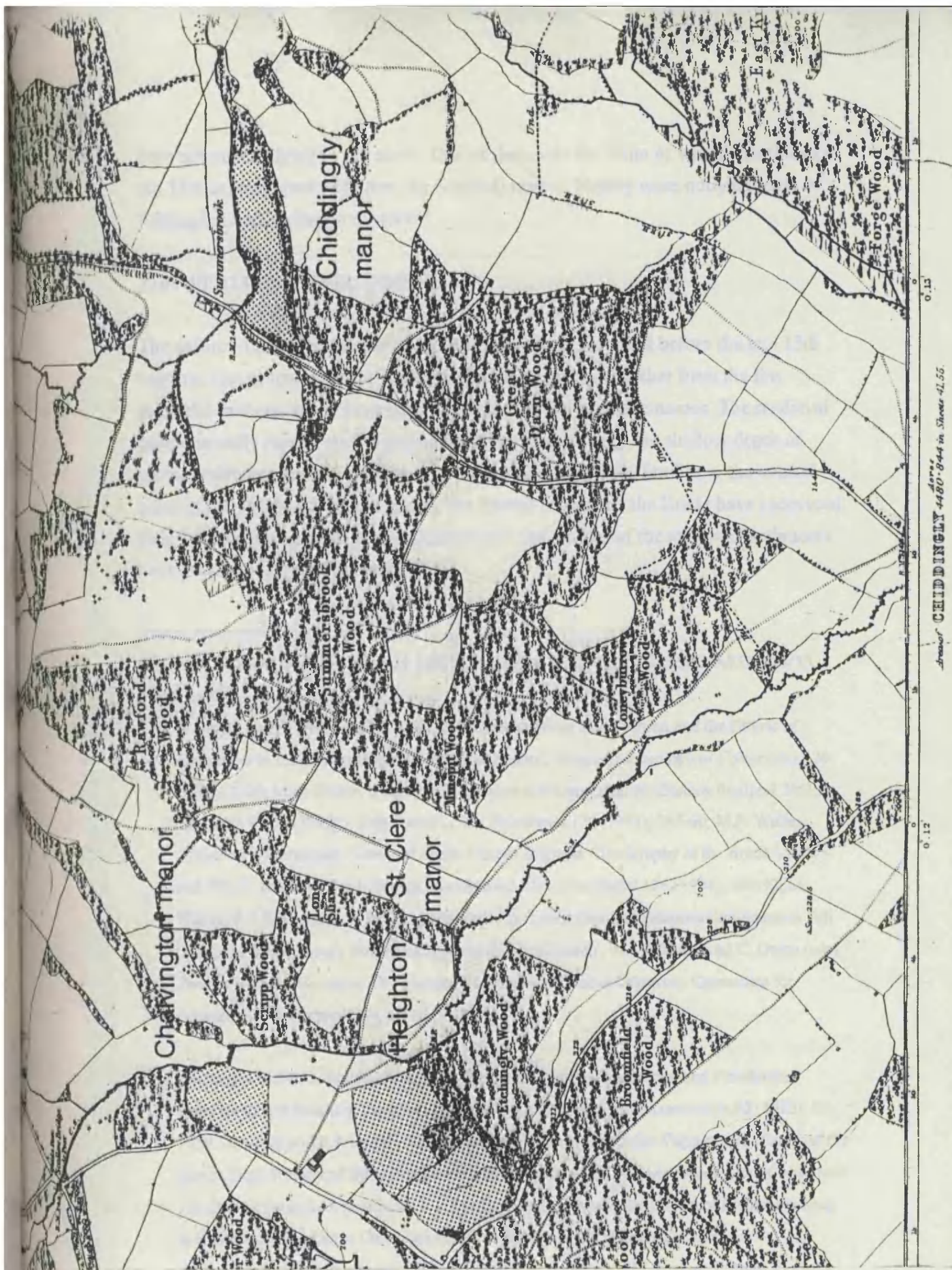


Fig. 15 Detached manorial holdings near Waldron on a base map of the first-edition six-inch Ordnance Survey map, surveyed 1874-5.

between manors lying to the south. One of these was the 'denn of wood' mentioned in the 13th century, part of Sutton (by Seaford) manor. Nearby were outlying parts of Willingdon and Jevington manors.¹⁶

THE WEALDEN ENVIRONMENT

The nature of the environment of the Weald is poorly recorded before the late 13th century. The character of the landscape has to be pieced together from the few scientific analyses which have been undertaken and from place-names. The medieval period is badly represented in palynological analyses, due to the shallow depth of recent sediments and the consequent poor survival of pollen. Studies in the coastal parts of the valleys of Combe Haven, the Pannel Sewer and the Brede have recovered little information on post-Roman vegetation¹⁷ and studies of the valley-fill sediments have been equally uninformative.¹⁸

¹⁶ ESRO SAS/M 343, 344; BL Add. MS. 28550, f. 7v.; ESRO ADA 73; ESRO A2327/1/4/30.

¹⁷ C. Smyth and S. Jennings, 'Mid- to Late-Holocene Forest Composition and the Effects of Clearances in the Combe Haven Valley, East Sussex', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 126 (1988), 1-20; M.P. Waller, 'Flandrian Vegetational History of South-Eastern England. Pollen data from Pannel Bridge, East Sussex', *New Phytologist* 124 (1993), 345-60; M.P. Waller, 'Flandrian Vegetational History of South-Eastern England. Stratigraphy of the Brede Valley and Pollen data from Brede Bridge, East Sussex', *New Phytologist* 126 (1994), 369-92; M. Waller, P.J. Burrin and A. Marlow, 'Flandrian Sedimentation and Palaeoenvironments in Pett Level, the Brede, Lower Rother Valleys and Walland Marsh', in J. Eddison and C. Green (eds), *Romney Marsh: Evolution, Occupation, Reclamation* (Oxford University Committee for Archaeology monograph 24 (1988)), 3-29.

¹⁸ P.J. Burrin and R.G. Scaife, 'Aspects of Holocene Valley Sedimentation and Floodplain Development in Southern England', *Proceedings of the Geologists Association* 95 (1983), 81-96; R.G. Scaife and P.J. Burrin, 'Floodplain Development in and the Vegetational History of the Sussex High Weald and Some Archaeological Implications', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 121 (1983), 1-10; R.G. Scaife and P.J. Burrin, 'The Environmental Impact of Prehistoric Man as Recorded in the Upper Cuckmere Valley at Stream Farm, Chiddingfold', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 123 (1985), 27-34; R.G. Scaife and P.J. Burrin, 'Further Evidence for the Environmental Impact of Prehistoric Cultures in Sussex from Alluvial Fill Deposits in the Eastern Rother Valley', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 125 (1987), 1-9; P.J. Burrin, 'The Holocene Floodplain and Alluvial Fill Deposits of the Rother Valley and their Bearing on the Evolution of Romney Marsh', in J. Eddison and C. Green (eds), *Romney Marsh: Evolution,*

Useful results for the medieval period have been recovered from only two studies of sediments, both on the Pevensey Levels where peat formation began at 1765 ± 80 bc (calibrated date of 2200-1970 Cal BC) inland and on the coast at 810 ± 50 bc (calibrated date 930-830 Cal BC) and continued throughout the medieval period.¹⁹ Both studies show that the wetland environment followed a common vegetational succession from brackish reed marsh to alder carr. A major change in the non-local pollen was dated by radiocarbon at 1460 ± 50 ad and 1450 ± 50 ad giving a combined calibrated date of 1410-1450 Cal AD. Primary and secondary woodland species with some open-ground vegetation predominate before that date, with the latter increasing at the expense of the former. The woodland taxa decline slightly during that period and there was a progressive increase in grassland pollen. After 1410-50 the vegetation changed considerably when secondary woodland, open-ground and waste-ground species expanded.

The date of the change in vegetation of the early 15th century is difficult to interpret in an historical context. Moffat postulates that the environments likely to have produced the post-c.1400 vegetation might be

Cleared woodland on or off the Levels; levées and aggraded banks; the littoral; laid down pasture ...; fallow; and weed-infested arable fields. They are suggested in a ranked order of importance.²⁰

Occupation, Reclamation (Oxford University Committee for Archaeology monograph 24 (1988)), 30-52.

¹⁹ M. A-T. Barnes, *Vegetational History of the Pevensey Marsh, Sussex* (unpublished M.Sc. thesis, University of London, 1974).; B. Moffat, *An Evaluatory Study of the Methods Used in the Reconstruction of Historical Vegetation and Land-Use, with Reference to part of East Sussex, England* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Council for National Academic Awards (Polytechnic of North London), 1984); B. Moffat, 'The Environment of Battle Abbey Estates (East Sussex) in Medieval Times; A Re-Evaluation using Analysis of Pollen and Sediments', *Landscape History* 8 (1986), 78-93; Moffat, pers. comm. Radiocarbon dates calibrated by the program CALIB 3.0.3: M. Stuiver and P.L. Reimer, 'Extended ¹⁴C Database and Revised CALIB Radiocarbon Calibration Program', *Radiocarbon* 35 (1993), 215-30. All dates quoted at one sigma range.

²⁰ Moffat, 'The Environment of Battle Abbey Estates', 88.

Historical evidence suggests the most likely cause of the change is an increase in pastoral farming at the expense of animal husbandry, which seems to be reflected particularly strongly in the pollen record.²¹ Another significant result of the study, and one more relevant to the early medieval settlement in the Weald, is the proportion of secondary woodland species, birch and hazel (*Betula* and *Corylus*), present during the period of medieval assarting.

Place-names are an equally problematic source for an understanding of the Wealden environment. Names were applied not only to the common features of the landscape, but also to unusual aspects of topography or vegetation which may have been the more memorable. Individual place-names are not a reliable guide, though collective evidence of a number of names may provide a useful indication of the vegetation. A preliminary survey of the material has already been undertaken by Brandon who has drawn attention to the presence of names suggestive of an open environment in the High Weald. The OE element *feld* refers to open countryside on the edge of woodland, though it is often applied to clearings within areas of wood, a more probable meaning in the context of the Weald. He noted that it is found mainly on the ridges of the High Weald, where he suggested the 'trees began to thin out ... yielding only a sparse cover on their summits'.²²

The distribution of that element in the eastern Sussex may be investigated in greater detail using the names in the English Place-Name Society volume with further additions.²³ A notable feature of the distribution (fig. 16) is that the *feld* place-names are highly correlated with the areas of later medieval 'downland' or common. The churches of Heathfield and Westfield, the sub-manor of Netherfield, and the tenement of Maxfield, for example, lay either in or adjacent to areas of downland. The parishes of Uckfield, Framfield, Maresfield and Hartfield lay around the largest area of Wealden downland, Ashdown Forest, and themselves included extensive

²¹ M. Mate, 'Pastoral Farming in South-East England in the Fifteenth Century, *Economic History Review* 2nd series, 40 (1987), 523-36.

²² P.F. Brandon, 'The South Saxon *Andredesweald*' in P.F. Brandon (ed.), *The South Saxons* (1978), 142, 152.

²³ The names recorded before 1300 are conveniently collected in J. McN. Dodgson, 'Place-Names in Sussex: The Material for a new Look', in P.F. Brandon (ed.), *The South Saxons* (1978), 70. To that list have been added the names Mountfield and *Smalefeld* in ?Brightling (HMAG HPL B1-3).

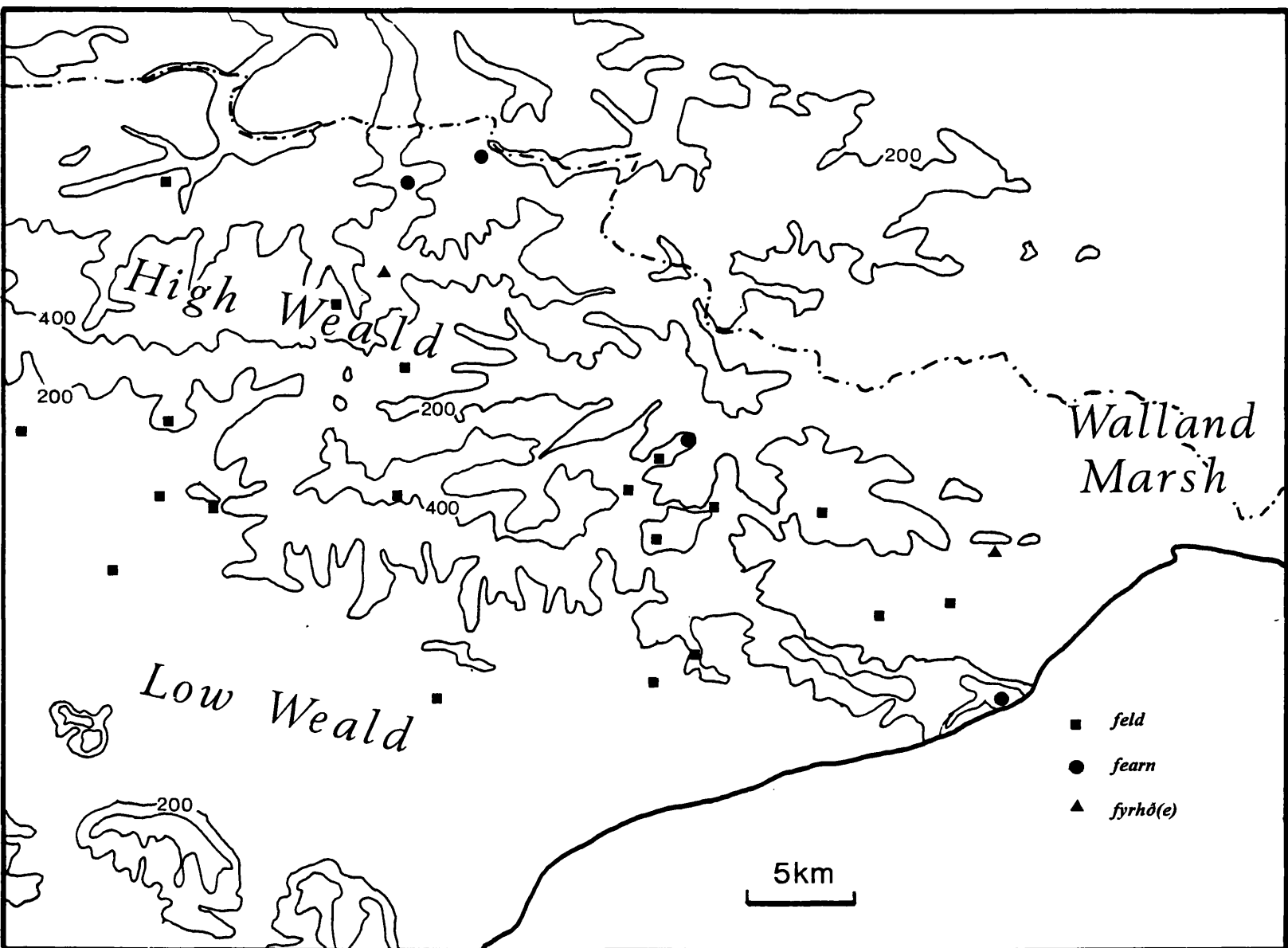


Fig. 16 *Feld, fearn and fyrhð(e)* place-names in eastern Sussex. Contours in feet.

areas of poor common land.²⁴ Such places remained common land for their soils were so poor that they could not be successfully cultivated. Their modern use for forestry shows that these areas were not so barren that they could not sustain woodland. The *feld* place-names suggest that either the woodland in these areas was thinner than elsewhere or that it was unable to regenerate after it had been cleared because of continued grazing. Many of these areas may have supported heath at an early date, as the place-name Heathfield implies and as they certainly did by the 14th century. Rackham has postulated that the Wealden heathland can be traced back before the Conquest, though cites no evidence in support. The OE elements **hǣð* and *hæð* (heath) are found widely in place-names on the ridges of the High Weald, though as they were usually applied to peripheral locations, they were rarely recorded in documents before 1300. The same comments apply to OE *fyrhð(e)* meaning a wood or wooded countryside. It is used for the name of woodland in Udimore and for a farm in Rotherfield, and occurs in many field and other minor names. Poor soils in Frant parish produced two names typifying the vegetation, Frant itself ('place overgrown with bracken') and Verridge ('bracken ridge'). The same element OE *fearn* ('bracken') also occurs at Fair Ridge (Salehurst) and Fairlight.²⁵

The evidence suggests that the Weald was not an unbroken woodland when the Anglo-Saxon settlers occupied it. The vegetation had been modified by many thousands of years of activity creating secondary woodland and producing areas of heathland and open land. However, the areas settled first were not the Wealden ridges where the woodland was lightest, but the better soils on the slopes of the broad valleys.²⁶

²⁴ For medieval downland, see p. 108 below. Heathfield lay south of Hawksborough Down. Netherfield and Westfield were both close to down. For the heathland at Maxfield, see ESRO BAT 39, ff. 40-41. For common land around Ashdown Forest, see PRO DL42/112, f. 168v. and P.F. Brandon, 'Medieval Clearances in the East Sussex Weald', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 48 (1969), 139-40.

²⁵ O. Rackham, *The History of the Countryside* (1986), 289; PRO C131/3 (15); A. Mawer and F.M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Sussex* 2 (English Place-Name Society 7 (1930)), 373, 379, 458-9, 507.

²⁶ M.F. Gardiner, 'The Archaeology of the Weald - A Survey and a Review', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 128 (1990), 42-3. For discussion of the location of early Wealden settlement, see p. 102.

THE PROGRESS OF WEALDEN SETTLEMENT

Although few would now contend that the Weald in which the Normans fought the Battle of Hastings was a trackless waste, there is little agreement about the extent of Wealden settlement in the 11th century. Some argue for minimal settlement at the time of the Norman Conquest. Brandon, for example, suggests that the villis recorded by DB in the north of Hastings Rape were 'isolated farms, ... probably recent clearings', a view also supported by Searle. Sawyer has cast doubt on that interpretation of the Domesday evidence, noting that DB provides an incomplete record of the settlements in the Weald of the adjoining county of Kent. The Kent folios list few villis, though it is clear from other, nearly contemporary records, that almost all the medieval churches had been founded by the late 11th century, suggesting the presence of a substantial permanent population. According to Sawyer it would be wrong to assume that the Weald was an area of recent colonisation. Although some settlements are recorded for the first time in 1086, they had been assessed *tempore regis Edwardi* under the coastal estates of which they had then formed part.²⁷

There are no records for the county of Sussex comparable to the *Excerpta*, the *Domesday Monachorum* or the *Textus Roffensis*, which provide evidence for settlement in 11th-century Kent.²⁸ The Chronicle of Battle Abbey gives a brief text which illuminates the entries in DB, but otherwise there are few other records of the extent of settlement in the late 11th and early 12th century. As in Kent, ecclesiastical provision may be used as a guide to the progress of settlement in the Sussex Weald. DB provides a demonstrably deficient record for the churches of Sussex in contrast to

²⁷ P.F. Brandon, *The Sussex Landscape*, 81; E. Searle, *Lordship and Community: Battle Abbey and its Banlieu 1066-1538* (1974), 46; P.H. Sawyer, 'Medieval English Settlements: New Interpretations', in P.H. Sawyer (ed.), *English Medieval Settlement* (1979), 3; Campbell, 'Kent', 494-500; H.C. Darby, *Domesday England* (1977), 24-6.

²⁸ For the *Excerpta*, see *An Eleventh-Century Inquisition*; for *Domesday Monachorum*, see *The Domesday Monachorum of Christ Church, Canterbury*, ed. D.C. Douglas (1944), and G. Ward, 'The Lists of Saxon Churches in the Domesday Monachorum and the White Book of St Augustine', *Archaeologia Cantiana* 45 (1933), 60-89; for *Textus Roffensis*, see *Textus Roffensis*, ed. T. Hearne (1720), and G. Ward, 'The List of Saxon Churches in the Textus Roffensis', *Archaeologia Cantiana* 44 (1932), 35-59. Witney, *The Jutish Forest*, 125-7.

neighbouring Surrey where Blair has argued, mainly from internal evidence, that its account is relatively complete. He has suggested that DB lists about 80 per cent of churches established by 1086, but the same can hardly be true in Sussex.²⁹ In the whole of the Wealden part of the Rape of Pevensey only a single church is listed, at Selmeston, and a single priest is identified, at Brambletye. Nearly contemporary sources mention churches at Eckington (Ripe), East Grinstead, Rotherfield and a chapel at Frant in the same rape. The life of St Dunstan suggests that the church at Mayfield may also have been of some antiquity. The 10th-century saint is said to have dedicated a wooden church at Mayfield but, finding it to be incorrectly aligned, pushed it round with his shoulder to face the correct direction. The structure of Arlington church also argues for its pre-Conquest origin.³⁰

The Domesday record of churches in the Rape of Hastings is more comprehensive. It mentions churches in 15 places, including five churches at *Rameslie* and two in Bexhill. The entry for the abbey of Fécamp's estate of *Rameslie* must include churches at Brede and Rye, and perhaps also a church at (Old) Winchelsea and at *Iham* (later New Winchelsea).³¹ The Domesday list may be supplemented by the churches recorded in a charter confirming gifts to Hastings College, which adds a further 12 churches and chapels. The charter survives in the form of a 12th-century *inspeximus* issued by Henry, count of Eu, the grandson of Robert, the founder. The original foundation charter must date from before c.1090 when Robert de Eu died. A

²⁹ J. Blair, 'Local Churches in Domesday Book and Before', in J.C. Holt (ed.). *Domesday Studies: Papers read at the Novocentenary Conference of the Royal Historical Society and the Institute of British Geographers, Winchester 1986* (1987), 277-8; J. Blair, *Early Medieval Surrey: Landholding, Church and Settlement before 1300* (1991), 109-33.

³⁰ DB i, 21b, 22b; *The Chartulary of the Priory of St. Pancras, Lewes, Part 1*, ed. L.F. Salzman (Sussex Record Society 38 (1933)), 72-3, 75; BL Cotton Ch. VIII 10; *Memorials of St. Dunstan*, ed. W. Stubbs (Rolls Series 63 (1874)), 204; H.M. and J. Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture* 1 (1965), 29-30; H.M. Clarke and P.E. Leach, 'The Medieval Churches of the Cuckmere Valley', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 123 (1985), 99-100.

³¹ The estate of the abbey of Fécamp included Brede, Rye and Winchelsea. For the church of St Leonard of *Iham*, see W.M. Homan, 'The Founding of New Winchelsea', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 88 (1949), 26; *Taxatio Ecclesiastica*, ed. T. Astle *et al.* (Record Commissioners, 1802), 136.

further church is mentioned in a charter of c. 1100 for Westfield.³² The churches at Icklesham and at Ore may be added from the structural evidence; both have features attributable to the beginning of the 12th century or earlier.³³

Table 3

Churches Recorded in the Rape of Hastings

Before c.1100

Recorded in Domesday Book

Additional churches in Hastings College charter

Ashburnham

Bexhill (two)

Brightling

Catsfield

Fairlight

Filsham (for Hollington?)

Hazelhurst (for Ticehurst?)

Herstmonceux

Hooe

Ninfield

Playden

Salehurst

Sedlescombe

Udimore

Beckley

Bodiam

Bulverhythe

Ewhurst

Guestling

Hollington

Iden

Mountfield

Northiam

Peasmarsh

Wartling

Wilting

Structural Evidence

plus five churches in *Rameslie*:
(Brede, Rye, ?Old Winchelsea and
?Iham)

Icklesham

Ore

Other Sources

Westfield

³² Hastings College charter: WSRO Ep. VI/1/4, f. 236r.-237r., printed in *The Chartulary of the High Church of Chichester*, ed. W.D. Peckham (Sussex Record Society 46 (1946)), 299-302 and another copy is PRO E210/1073, printed in summary in *Ancient Deeds* 3, 532-3. Westfield church: BL Add. Ch. 20161; Lincoln's Inn Library Hale MS. 87, f. 48r.

³³ The west tower and the north wall of the now ruined church at Ore have features which must date to the end of the Anglo-Saxon period or the early years of the Norman settlement. For Icklesham church, see *Victoria County History of Sussex* 9, 187-9.

Only 11 out of 41 churches with parochial status in the medieval period were unrecorded before 1100, if the unknown number of churches in the borough of Hastings are excluded (Tables 3 and 4). Of these 11 unrecorded churches, Battle was constructed very shortly after, in the first decade of the 12th century, to serve the new town which had grown up at the abbey gates. Broomhill was a later foundation established c. 1200 on reclaimed marshland. A chapel probably existed in or next to the manor house at Etchingham from an early date, though it was not elevated to parochial status until 1362.³⁴ It is apparent that by 1100 the great majority of churches in the Rape of Hastings had already been established and settlement in the eastern Weald must have been well advanced (fig. 17).

Table 4

Churches not Recorded in the Rape of Hastings

Before 1100

Battle	Heathfield
Broomhill	Penhurst
Burwash	Pett
Crowhurst	Warbleton
Dallington	Whatlington
Etchingham	

DB is generally a poor guide to the settlement of the Weald, though in some areas where the holdings were separated in the Norman reorganisation from their former estates the record is more complete. There are for that reason fuller details of the hundreds of Shoyswell, Hawksborough, Henhurst and East Grinstead. DB records

³⁴ Searle, *Lordship and Community*, 70 dates the construction of Battle church to 1102 x 07. Land was given to provide the site of a chapel with burial rights in the marshes of *Grikes* and *Swanmere*, which lay adjacent to Broomhill, in c. 1200. It later became the church of Broomhill, Lincoln's Inn Library Hale MS. 87, 29r.; M.F. Gardiner, 'Medieval Society and Settlement in the Broomhill Area and Excavations at Broomhill Church', in J. Eddison and C. Green (eds), *Romney Marsh: Evolution, Occupation, Reclamation* (1988), 112-27. For a grant of land to form a cemetery at Etchingham, see *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1361-4*, 224; *Calendar of Papal Registers 1342-65*, 583.

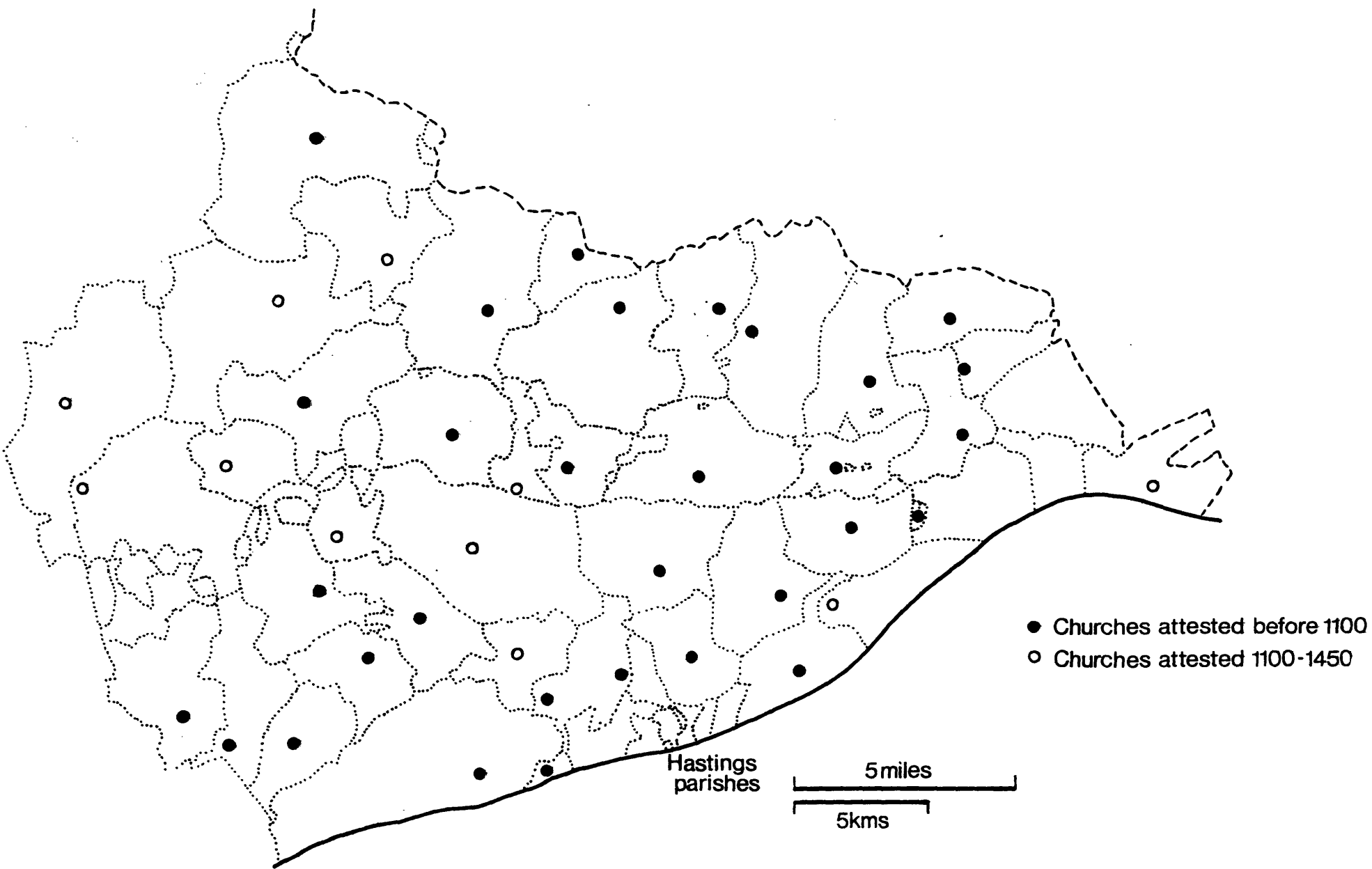


Fig. 17 Churches in the Rape of Hastings.

that 14 out of 22 vills in Shoyswell were valued at one virgate and had an average enumerated population of two. Few had any demesne. The vill of Hazelhurst was unusually large with a recorded population of 12. The vills in Henhurst hundred were valued more highly, but the majority were still ½ hide or less. There were larger settlements in the Rother valley at *Drisnesel* and Salehurst. Hawksborough hundred was similar with little demesne and few vills valued at more than ½ hide, though the lands which had formerly belonged to Beddingham and Laughton manors were more substantial.³⁵ The majority of settlements in East Grinstead and Rushmonden hundreds, which were transferred to Pevensey Rape were valued at less than one hide and had few recorded tenants.³⁶

Domesday Book also provides a detailed account of the holdings in the rape or 'lowy' belonging to Battle Abbey. It comprised a circular territory one league in radius surrounding the abbey church. The rape, thus arbitrarily defined, cut through pre-Conquest holdings and divided many of the lands already given by the count of Eu to his knights. The Domesday commissioners listed all the lands within the lowy recording the manors in which they had lain. The list of lands in the Battle lowy is, therefore, similar to the lists of detached vills in the hundreds of Shoyswell, Hawksborough, Henhurst and East Grinstead.³⁷ But the entry for Battle is valuable not only because it reveals the structure of lordship in the area of the lowy preceding the grant to Battle, but also allows an estimate of population. Searle has shown that the expedient used at Battle, and indeed elsewhere in the Weald, was to value each peasant's holding as one virgate. The details of that valuation are complex, for the commissioners treated the holdings which had been part of inland manors at the rate of eight virgates per hide and those of the coastal manors at the usual rate of four virgates.³⁸ DB, and the passage in the Battle Abbey Chronicle which reproduces and comments on the Domesday text, therefore provide not only a fiscal record, but what is, in effect, a survey of the lands of the lowy.

³⁵ DB i, 18b-19b.

³⁶ DB i, 22b.

³⁷ DB i, 17b.

³⁸ E. Searle, 'Hides, Virgates and Tenant Settlement at Battle Abbey', *Economic History Review* 2nd series, 16 (1963), 294-7.

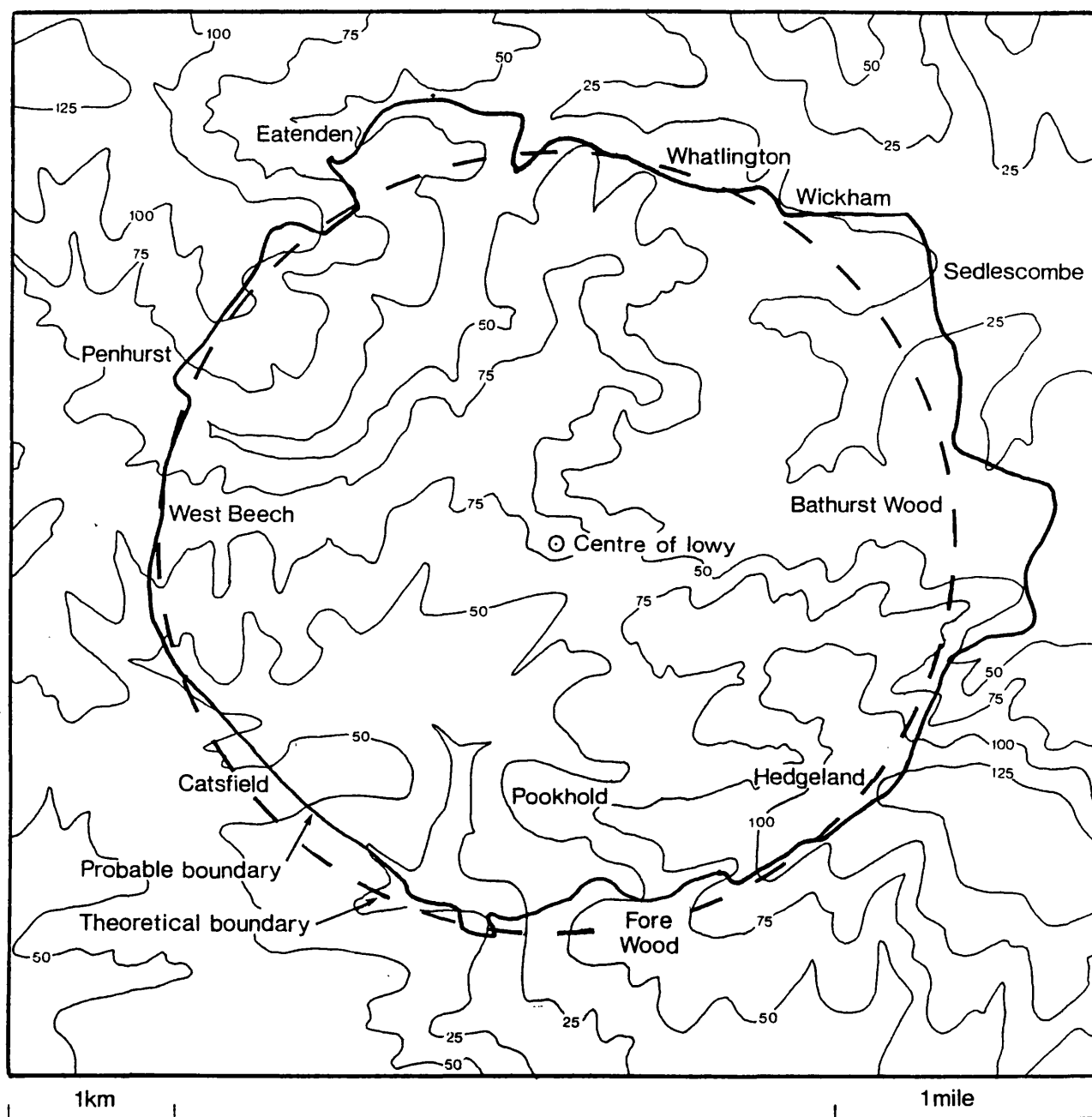


Fig. 18 The lowy of Battle in the late 11th century. Contours in metres.

The bounds of the lowy in the early 12th century recorded in the Battle Abbey Chronicle, together with later sources listing the abbey's holdings and its subsequent purchases, allow the boundary of the lowy to be traced with some accuracy (see Appendix 2 and fig. 18). The lowy was clearly never exactly circular, but accommodated the topography and, to some degree, the surrounding landholdings. On the north-east the lowy was greater than one league in extent and included the whole of Petley Wood, but excluded all the meadow land of the lordships of Whatlington, Wickham and Sedlescombe in the valley of the River Line. The abbey acquired that land on the valley floor in the 13th century. The boundaries on the south with Crowhurst and on the south-west with Catsfield were defined by streams. The Chronicle records the boundary according to the cardinal points. It defines the north, east and south sectors, mainly in terms of the adjoining lordships; the west side is identified partially by place-names which may suggest that the area in question to the south of Netherfield Down was sparsely settled.

The lordship of Battle was an entirely new creation which owed nothing to Anglo-Saxon tenures. The core of the new manor was the former lordship of Uckham. The greater part of the lowy, however, was formed out of lands which appertained to adjoining manors: Beech, Netherfield, Penhurst, Catsfield, Filsham, Wilting and Hollington. These lands had been granted to new Norman lords, and then divided, part coming under the overlordship of the count of Eu and part under the abbot of Battle. Some lands in the lowy belonged to manors lying a short distance away, Hooe, Bullington (Bexhill). Only the manor of Wilmington in the Rape of Pevensey lay a greater distance from Battle. These tenures confirm that the pattern of parent manors and distant Wealden outliers, found in the western part of the Rape of Hastings, did not generally occur further east.³⁹

The area of the lowy, though it cannot be calculated exactly, because of uncertainties of the bounds, may still be estimated reasonably well. Had the lowy been exactly circular, it would have comprised an area one league (2560 yards) in radius and had an area of 4254 acres. In reality the circle was approximate and there was additional land on the north-west and east side forming an area of perhaps 4300 acres. Each of the 36 tenants enumerated in DB held one virgate. The virgates of DB were usually a fiscal measure with no direct relation to population, but that was not the case at Battle where the number of virgates was the same as the number of tenants. The area of a virgate in later surveys of Battle manor was about 32 acres, and holdings in the early

³⁹ See above, pp. 63-5.

12th century elsewhere in the area were a similar size.⁴⁰ The total area held by the tenants in 1086 was therefore about 1152 acres. There was no demesne. Thus it may be estimated that about one quarter of the total area of the lowy was under cultivation.

This estimate of cultivated land around Battle provides the context for the many churches which it has been shown were founded before the end of 11th century. Though the figure is based on a number of assumptions, it nevertheless gives an impression of the extent of agricultural activity in the late 11th century and is likely to be broadly accurate. The Battle area was not typical of the Weald as a whole, for it included some of the poorest lands in the region. The abbey itself was situated on a slight col between two ridges where the soils were generally difficult to cultivate and the monks had little land in the more fertile valleys to the north-east and south (fig. 18). It seems probable that the degree of settlement and cultivation would have been even greater in other areas of the Weald. Clearly then, large tracts of the Weald must have been cleared by the time DB was compiled. The state of settlement had advanced much further than Brandon's 'isolated farms, thinly scattered'.⁴¹

SOME EARLY TWELFTH-CENTURY SETTLEMENTS

The nature of settlement was changing by the late 11th and early 12th centuries. Newly-established tenements were much smaller than the large blocks of land which had been formed out of animal pastures or dennis. The newer holdings were created from the waste for the purpose of farming, possibly by a single family. A charter of c.1120 refers to such land as fields 'which were until recent times woodland'.⁴² These later tenements generally occupied less favourable positions, higher on the ridge slopes or in the steeper valleys. The documents of Battle Abbey record some of these tenements and allow them to be identified in some detail.

Land at Bucksteep (Warbleton) was granted to the monks of Battle by William, son of Wibert, the Domesday holder of the manor of Warbleton. The grant was made

⁴⁰ Searle, 'Hides, Virgates and Tenant Settlement', 299. For early 12th-century holdings, see below, pp. 92-6.

⁴¹ Brandon, *The Sussex Landscape*, 81.

⁴² *The Chartulary of the Priory of Lewes, Part 1*, 2, 131.

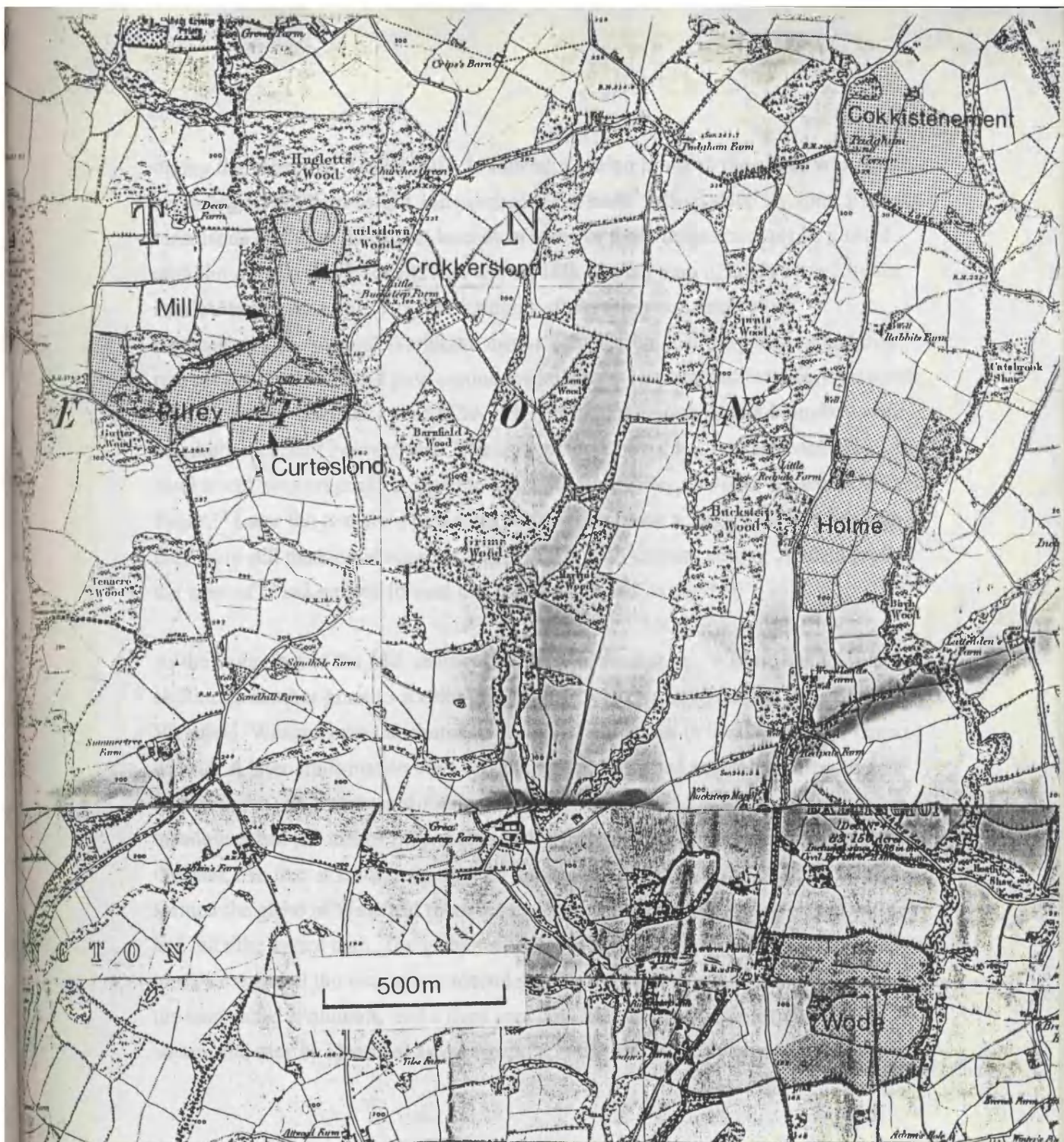


Fig. 19 Battle Abbey holdings at Buckstep. Base map: first-edition six-inch Ordnance Survey maps (reduced), surveyed 1873.

during the abbacy of Ralph (1107-24) during a period in which the abbey was rapidly extending its holdings by gift and purchase. The lands at Bucksteep lay apart from the main lands of abbey. The exact bounds of some of these tenements may be plotted with the aid of a survey of 1429/30 and an 18th-century map of lands owned by the Battle Abbey estate (fig. 19). The holdings of the abbey consisted of six tenements on the edge of Warbleton manor. It is notable that the parish boundaries respect the tenements and pass around the holdings. The hundred boundary, however, cuts across the tenement called Pilley. The fields to the north of that boundary were an addition called *Crokkerslond*. 'The land which Edward le Crockere once held... in Bucksteep', was originally a separate tenement from Pilley, the land 'sometime William Pynle'.⁴³ Later the two were held together as if they were a single tenement, though they were still mentioned separately in the early 15th-century survey. A small area to the west of *Crokkerslond* formed the site of a mill and its pond.⁴⁴

At the beginning of the 12th century the donor of Bucksteep, William son of Wibert, confirmed another grant to Battle Abbey made by his tenant, Wening, the lord of Westfield. Wening gave the church at Westfield and a wist (a local term for a virgate) of land. A later confirmation adds that the wist was divided into three parts, an area on which the priest's house stood, part called *Walilande* and, some distance away, a meadow called the mill of *Hikenexewelle*.⁴⁵ The particular interest of the grant is that the land, like that at Bucksteep, may be located precisely (fig. 20). The wist of land formed the glebe of Westfield recorded in 17th-century terriers and on a map of 1737 and the tithe award map. The glebe was in three parts as described in the charter. One piece surrounded the vicarage, a second stood on the top of a hill and was probably the land called *Walilande*, and a third area consisted of three adjacent fields by a stream and may be identified as the meadow at the mill of *Hikenexewelle*.

⁴³ The fields are identified as Upper, Middle and Lower Crockers on the tithe award map ESRO TD/E50; see also ESRO BAT 4421 for the locations of the tenements. HEH BA vol. 30, ff. 81r.-v., 88r.; PRO E315/56, f. 45r. *Pynle* and *Crokkerslond* paid a rent of 3s. 5d. In 1292 the lord had a fine of 3s. on the death of John de Pynngelegh (HEH BA vol. 5, no. 194). The fine is likely to have been equal to the annual rent, as it usually was on Wealden manors, before the tenement was amalgamated with *Crokkerslond*.

⁴⁴ PRO E315/56, f. 45r.; HEH BA vol. 5, nos. 307, 311.

⁴⁵ BL Add. Ch. 20161; Lincoln's Inn Library Hale MS. 87, f. 48r.

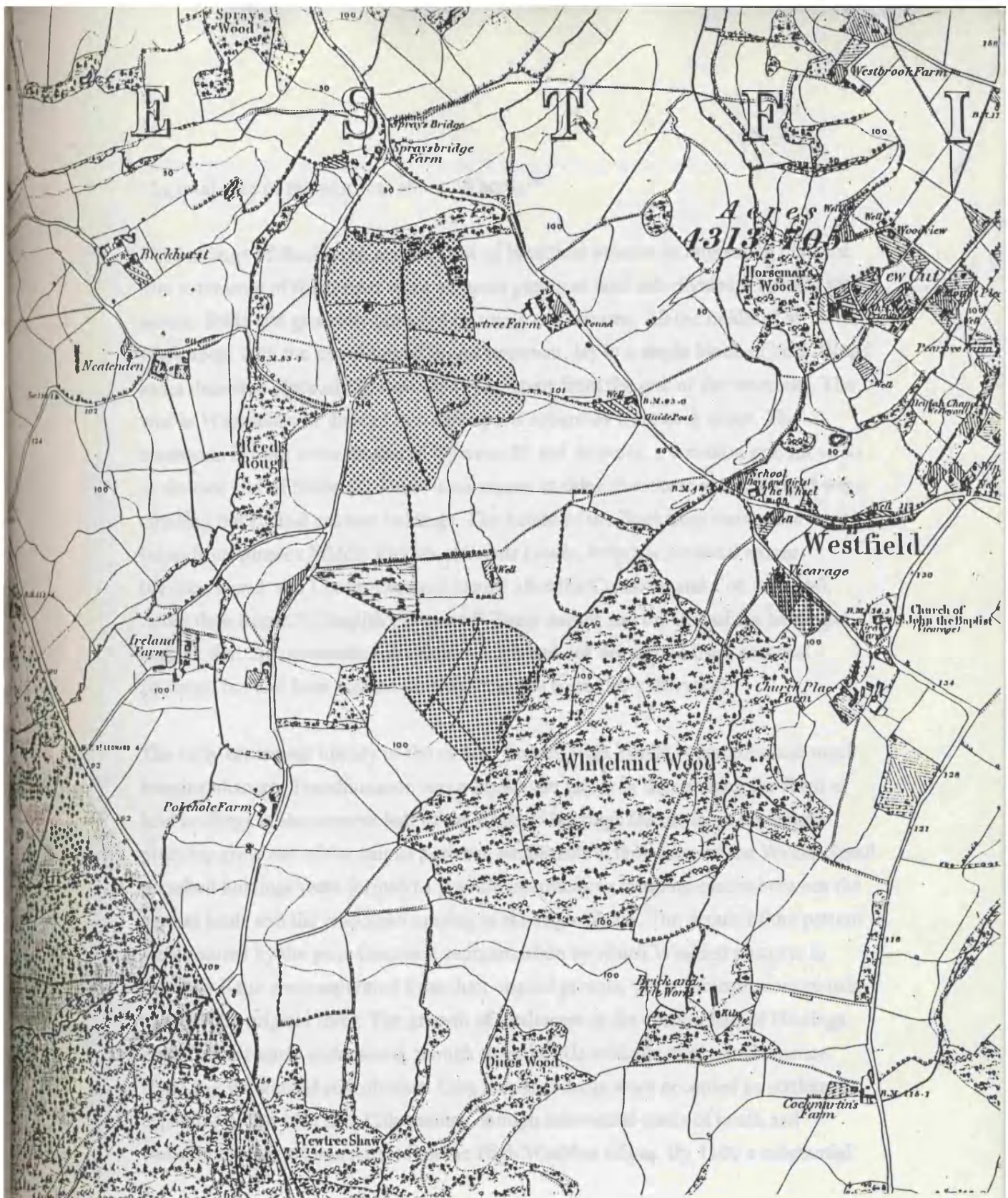


Fig. 20 The glebe of Westfield. Base map: first-edition six-inch Ordnance Survey map, surveyed 1873.

The total area of the wist was about 38 acres.⁴⁶

The holdings of Bucksteep and the wist of Westfield present an interesting contrast. The tenements of the former were compact pieces of land sub-divided internally into several fields and generally bounded by roads and streams. All the holdings at Bucksteep, with the exception of Wood tenement, lay in a single block of land. Wood had a detached piece of meadow land lying apart from the rest of the tenement. The wist in Westfield was divided into three parts separated from each other. The tenements in both areas measured between 20 and 40 acres, a common size for wists at the east end of Sussex.⁴⁷ There is no reason to think that these grants of land were anything but typical peasant holdings. The names of the Bucksteep tenements were taken from simplex Middle English elements (*wude*, *holm*) or personal names (*Crokkerslond*, and *Cokkistenement* named after the Crockere and Cok families), rather than from Old English elements.⁴⁸ These names and the size of the holdings suggest that the tenements were farms which had not developed from seasonal pastures, but had been cleared directly from the waste for cultivation.

The early settlement history of the eastern Sussex High Weald is complex and much remains obscure. Transhumance was a significant factor in determining the form of land holdings in the western half of the Rape of Hastings for the large tenements probably grew out of the animal pastures established in the centre of the Weald. Small detached holdings were formed to provide intermediate stopping-places between the coastal lands and the woodland grazing in the High Weald. The details of the pattern are obscured by the post-Conquest reorganisation by which Wealden pastures in Hastings Rape were separated from their coastal parents, yet sufficient traces remain to show the original form. The growth of settlement in the eastern half of Hastings Rape is less clearly understood, though there is little evidence that transhumance made any substantial contribution. Less favoured areas were occupied as settlement expanded in the 11th and 12th century, though substantial tracts of heath and woodland remained unoccupied on the High Wealden ridges. By 1100 a substantial

⁴⁶ WSRO Ep. II/17 (Westfield) records both the rectorial and vicarial glebe; ESRO PAR 504/6/1, 4 shows the glebe before the sale of one field adjoining Whiteland Wood.

⁴⁷ *Crokkerslond* and the mill site are counted together.

⁴⁸ HEH BA vol. 5, nos. 331, 752, 753, 1238, 1239, 1284.

proportion of the Weald had been settled, though large areas of poorer and heavier soils remained unoccupied.

PART 2

Medieval Economy, Settlement and Social Structure

CHAPTER 3

GEOGRAPHY AND RURAL ECONOMY OF THE EASTERN SUSSEX WEALD, 1300-1420

The character of settlement in the High Weald of East Sussex was largely established by the late 13th century. The area under cultivation continued to expand during the first half of the 14th century, with assarting of the waste continuing up to, and even beyond the advent of the Black Death.¹ That did not significantly alter the established pattern of dispersed settlement of isolated farms, hamlets and small villages scattered among the commons, hedged fields and extensive woods, which had probably emerged in the course of the previous 200 years.

The best agricultural land in the eastern Sussex Weald lay in the broad valleys of the River Rother and its tributaries. The Domesday vills with the greatest number of ploughlands, Hazelhurst (Ticehurst), *Drisnesel* (in Salehurst), Salehurst, Ewhurst, Udimore and Playden, lay along these valleys or further east by the valleys of the Brede and Tillingham.² The first site of Robertsbridge Abbey on a spur overlooking the Rother is unlikely to have been a desolate waste when the house was founded in the late 12th century, in spite of the Cistercian enthusiasm for such locations. The monks appreciated the value of the land along the Rother and shortly after the abbey had moved to *Elham* (Salehurst), one mile to the east, it began enlarging its possessions in the area. The better lands in the valley bottom were obtained in exchange for inferior land on the edge of Dallington Forest. Having created a substantial estate within the Rother valley, the monks established a grange a short distance from *Elham*, and close to the site of the Domesday vill of *Drisnesel*, to exploit the valley lands.³

¹ P.F. Brandon, 'Medieval Clearances in the East Sussex Weald', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 48 (1969), 135-53.

² DB i, 19a-20a; Brandon, 'Medieval Clearances', 149.

³ *Report on the Manuscripts of Lord De L'Isle and Dudley Preserved at Penshurst Place*, Historical Manuscripts Commission (report 77, vol. 1 (1925)), 47, 62-4; *Survey of the Manor of Robertsbridge, 1567-70*, ed. R.H. D'Elboux, (Sussex Record Society 47 (1944)), 124.

The avidity with which land in the river valleys was sought by religious houses, and the area eventually acquired, testifies to the value of the land. There was a string of ecclesiastical holdings along the Rother valley downstream from Mayfield. A Robertsbridge Abbey holding lay at Holmshurst (Burwash), Battle Abbey had land at Barehurst (Ticehurst) and there were lands of Combwell Priory at Collington (Ticehurst) and the mill at Wreckery. Close to these were further Robertsbridge lands at Battenhurst and *Chiterlond* (both Ticehurst). Nearby was the land of the bishop of Chichester at Turzes (Ticehurst). At Kitchingham (Etchingham) on the River Limden, a tributary of the Rother to the north, lay holdings of Combwell Priory and Bayham Abbey. There was a large block of land held by the abbey from the village of Robertsbridge eastwards. A substantial part of that was the abbey demesne, identifiable by its exemption from tithes as late as the 19th century. On the north side of the Rother lay meadow lands of Robertsbridge Abbey and also of Battle Abbey, which extended as far as Bodiam Bridge. Further east still was the grange of Robertsbridge at Methersham (Beckley).⁴

The land in the valley bottom required drainage to improve the pasture and meadow, and canalisation to speed the flow of the rivers. The character of the Rother before improvement is suggested by a charter issued shortly after 1229 which mentions two islands in the river at Wreckery (Ticehurst); there was a further one at Robertsbridge. The River Teise at Lamberhurst on the Kent border was similar. Among the fields there were two named Small Island (*Parva Insula*) and *Wytegose Ye* (from OE *ē g*, island) and close by was Bayham Island.⁵ The monks of Bayham undertook drainage

⁴ Holmshurst: *Survey of the Manors of Robertsbridge*, 96-104. Barehurst: HEH BA vol. 29, ff. 126r.-127r. (new foliation). Collington: BL Harl. Ch. 76 A 5. Wreckery: College of Arms Ch. 117-9. Battenhurst and *Chiterlond*: *Survey of the Manors of Robertsbridge*, 82; ESRO SHE 7/3, 7/4; on the location of *Chiterlond*, see ESRO TD/E2, parcels 1356, 1358-60. Turzes: *Victoria County History of Sussex* 9, ed. L.F. Salzman (1937), 197. Kitchingham: College of Arms Ch. 112-4. Robertsbridge demesne: *Manuscripts Preserved at Penshurst Place*, 67; M.F. Gardiner, G. Jones, and D. Martin., 'The Excavation of a Medieval Aisled Hall at Park Farm, Salehurst, East Sussex', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 129 (1991), 89-91. Meadowlands of Robertsbridge and Battle Abbeys: *The Chronicle of Battle Abbey*, ed. E. Searle (1980), 86-7, 254-7; C.H.C. Whittick, 'Dallingridge's Bay and Bodiam Castle Millpond - Elements of a Medieval Landscape', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 131 (1993), 119-23. Methersham: CKS U47/42/M12.

⁵ College of Arms Ch. 119; HEH BA vol. 29, f. 126v. (new foliation); *Manuscripts Preserved at Penshurst Place*, 91. Bodleian Library, MS. Sussex Ch. 171; BL Add. Roll 71302. A plan of

or canalisation works here in the early 13th century on land adjoining the abbey. When Battle Abbey acquired land in the Brede valley between Whatlington Bridge and *Iltonsbathe* (Sedlescombe) in the middle of the 13th century, some fields were already ditched, but the abbey dug further drainage channels including a leet to their mill. Among the meadows on the valley floor was one called *Mora* (from OE *mōr*, moor, marsh).⁶ An incidental effect of the construction of water mills would have been to control the flow of water along the rivers. Mills were constructed in the early 13th century or before on the larger rivers, the Rother at Ockham near Robertsbridge and at Wreckery, and on the River Brede at *Iltonsbathe*. In the early 14th century, mill construction extended to the minor rivers, for example Willingford (Brightling) on the River Dudwell and Doningford (Whatlington) on the River Line.⁷

The problems in the lower part of the river valleys were different. Flooding from sea water driven up into the valleys was an increasing problem in the 1330s and 1340s. In 1341, six parishes bordering on the Brede and Rother rivers included submerged lands. The Knelle Dam was constructed shortly after 1332 as a sea-defence across the mouth of the Rother valley to prevent flooding.⁸ A wall called *Damme* was built, probably in the late 13th century and certainly before 1309, across the Brede valley to prevent incursions of the sea and another called *Morespiche* Wall was erected where the Waller's Haven stream entered Pevensey Marsh.⁹ Bodiam Bridge seems to have

1614 shows such islands in the River Rother to the south of Hammerden and suggests that they were cut-off meanders: ESRO SAS/CO/D 3.

⁶ Lincoln's Inn Library Hale MS. 87, ff. 57r.-59r.; A.H. Smith, *English Place-Name Elements*, 2 (English Place-Name Society 26 (1956)), s.v. *mōr*.

⁷ *Registrum Simonis de Langham, Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi*, ed. K. Major (Canterbury and York Society 50 (1951)), 148; HEH BA Robertsbridge Box 1498, 1505 (see also ESRO A4919/11/1); HEH BA vol. 29, f. 126v. (new foliation); *Manuscripts Preserved at Penshurst Place*, 91; ESRO AMS 5847; Lincoln's Inn Library Hale MS. 87, f. 58r.; HEH BA Robertsbridge Box 1504 (see also BL Egerton Ch. 399); HEH BA 47/667.

⁸ P.F. Brandon, 'Agriculture and the Effects of Floods and Weather at Barnhorne, Sussex, During the Late Middle Ages', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 109 (1971), 80; J.K. Eddison, 'Developments in the Lower Rother Valleys up to 1600', *Archaeologia Cantiana* 102 (1985), 95-110; A.R.H. Baker, 'Some Evidence of a Reduction in the Acreage of Cultivated Lands During the Early Fourteenth Century', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 104 (1966), 4.

⁹ HEH BA 436; M.F. Gardiner, 'Medieval Farming and Flooding in the Brede Valley', in J.

marked the limit of marine flooding on the Rother and money was collected from the tenants with land in the river valley downstream to maintain the drainage system and sea defences. Similar payments were made in the Brede valley. These payments, called scots, were levied at a rate of 3d. an acre in the Rother valley in the early 15th century, and were similar to those made on the Romney and Walland Marshes.¹⁰

In spite of the problems of draining low-lying land, the cost of maintaining sea defences and the periodic flooding which nevertheless took place, the land in the lower reaches of the river valleys was very profitable while agricultural prices remained high. In the manor of Knelle (Beckley) on the edge of the Rother valley the arable in the upland was worth 4d. an acre, but the arable in the brookland was valued at 15d. or 2s. per acre in 1295. Similar values are given in the 1305 extent for the Battle Abbey estate at Barnhorne (Bexhill) on the edge of the Pevensey Marsh. Some of the low-lying land was under plough, but part was used as meadow land or pasture.¹¹

As these values suggest, there was a sharp contrast between the land on the valley floor and that on the lower slopes and Forest Ridges. The soils in the High Weald

Eddison (ed.), *Romney Marsh: The Debatable Ground* (forthcoming). It is possible, however, that the *Damme* was constructed earlier still, for two tenants near Lidham (Guestling) in 1278 had the surname 'de Damme', *Rotuli Hundredorum*, ed. W. Illingworth 2 (Record Commissioners, 1818), 218, and L.F. Salzman, 'The Hundred Roll for Sussex, Part III', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 84 (1945), 77. W.M. Homan, 'The Marshes Between Hythe and Pett', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 79 (1938), 205; R.A. Pelham, 'Studies in the Historical Geography of Medieval Sussex', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 72 (1931), 173; N. Saul, *Scenes from Provincial Life* (1986), 118, n. 81; L.F. Salzmann, 'The Inning of the Pevensey Levels', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 53 (1910), 48-51 and map opposite 32.

¹⁰ For the Rother Valley, see HMAG JER collection, unlisted membrane headed 'The Wanes 3d Upon an Acre'. The document can be attributed to 1408 x 49 since it mentions Alice, Lady of Bodiam and Roger de Fiennes (*Victoria County History of Sussex* 9, 133, 263). For marshland in Ewhurst, see *Calendar of Close Rolls 1389-92*, 76. For the Brede Valley, see HMAG JER collection, unlisted membrane headed 'Roll of the Walls of le Damme on the part of the fee of Udimore' and Gardiner, 'Medieval Farming and Flooding in the Brede Valley'.

¹¹ PRO C133/71 (5); *Custumals of Battle Abbey, in the Reigns of Edward I and Edward II, 1282-1312*, ed. S.R. Scargill-Bird (Camden Society n.s. 41 (1887)), 17-8; PRO C135/151 (14); PRO SC2/205/59, mm. 1r., 6v.; HMAG JER coll. (Udimore accts); PRO SC11/660 and /661.

were difficult to cultivate and required considerable amounts of marl to obtain a reasonable crop. Inquisitions *post mortem* valued lands in the Weald at a rate of only 3d. or 4d., or occasionally up to 6d. an acre for marled land, and 2d. to 3d. an acre for unmarled land. These values are notably less than those recorded in similar documents for land elsewhere in south-east England. The extents of inquisitions *post mortem* tend, however, to underestimate income and a more accurate assessment of value may be that given in an assignment of dower made on the death of Ralph atte Beech. His lands were said to be worth either 4d. or 6d. an acre. Similar values were recorded for the upland fields in an extent of the manor of Iden.¹²

The location of the better land in the High Weald may be plotted by identifying the fields categorised as free and customary as opposed to assart land. The poorer soils were assarted later or remained unenclosed waste. There is no simple correlation of geology with soil quality. In Framfield the areas of Wadhurst and Weald Clays were generally avoided and the Ashdown and Tunbridge Wells Sands were preferred. On the higher ridges to the north in Mayfield and Rotherfield, however, the Ashdown Beds produce poor soils which suffered from nutrient leaching and these were left as waste.¹³ The position of customary land may be identified in an area to the south-west of Mayfield. That area lies to the north of the Heathfield ridge and includes the watershed between the Ouse draining westwards and the Rother eastwards. Free land has not been plotted since it can be located less accurately. Some doubt remains about the exact boundaries of some pieces of customary land, but the general pattern

¹² PRO C132/15 (2); C133/4 (5); C133/68 (7); C134/16 (2); C134/54 (17); C134/98 (2); C135/14 (2); C135/44 (3); E152/4, m. 19v.; SC12/15/66; P.F. Brandon and B.M. Short, *The South-East from AD 1000* (1990), fig. 2.4; BL Add. Roll 31504, note attached to m. 9r.; PRO SC11/660, /661. For comments on the doubtful accuracy of inquisitions *post mortem*, R.F. Hunnisett, 'The Reliability of Inquisitions as Historical Evidence', in D.A. Bullough and R.L. Storey (eds), *The Study of Medieval Records: Essays in Honour of Kathleen Major* (1971), 206; E.A. Kosminsky, *Studies in the Agrarian History of England in the Thirteenth Century* (1956), 46-63; N. Saul, *Knights and Esquires: The Gloucestershire Gentry in the Fourteenth Century* (1981), 206-7. For a more optimistic assessment of their worth, see B.M.S. Campbell *et al.*, 'Rural Land-Use in the Metropolitan Hinterland, 1270-1339: The Evidence of *Inquisitiones Post Mortem*', *Agricultural History Review* 40 (1992), 3-6.

¹³ Cf. Brandon, 'Medieval Clearances', 145-9.

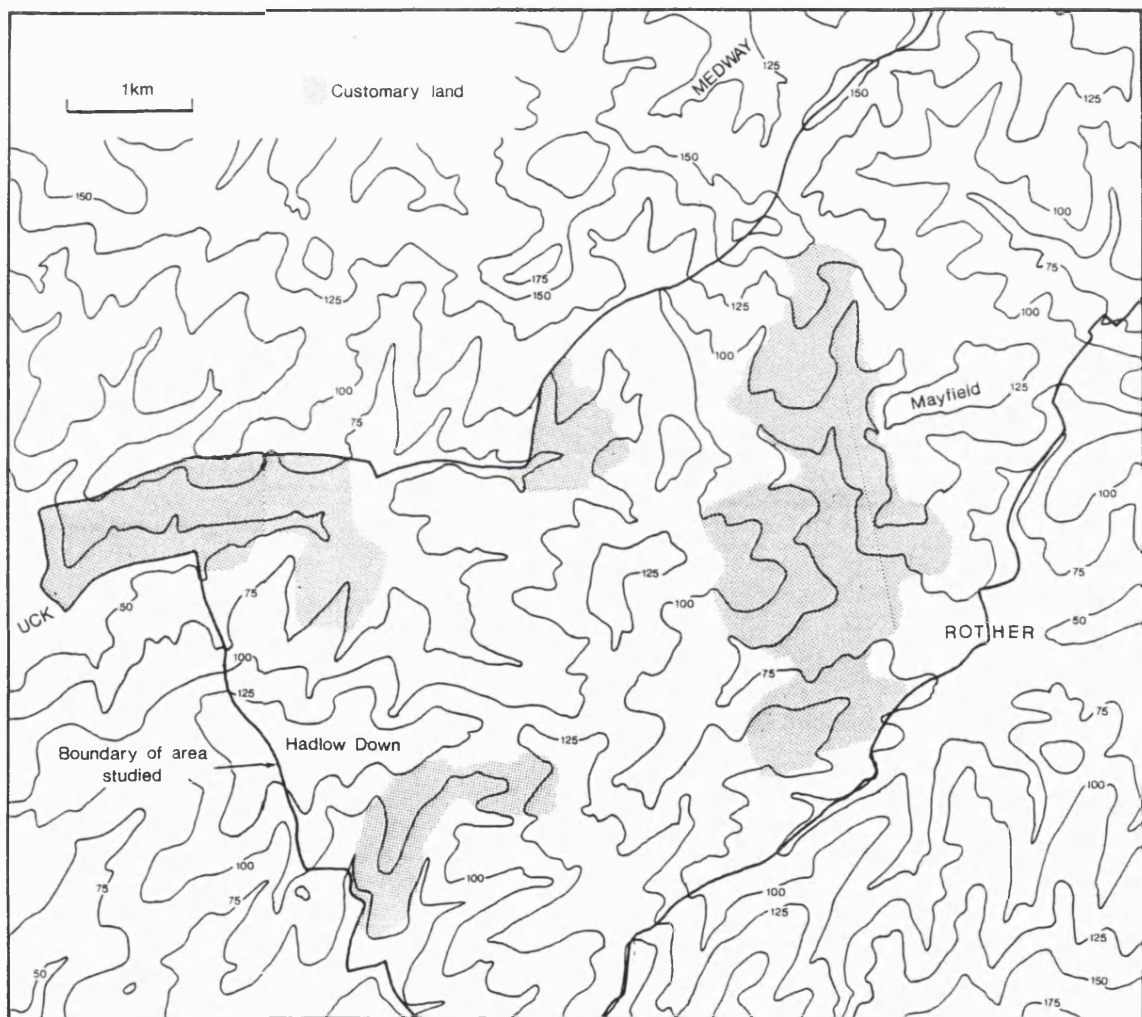


Fig. 21 Customary land north of Heathfield. Contours in metres.

is clear (fig. 21). The watershed and ridge to the south was avoided and the preferred land generally lay below the 100-metre contour.¹⁴

The poorer soils on the higher land were used for woodland or for grazing, though some areas were cultivated. The demesne at Herstmonceux included 80 acres which were sometimes ploughed, but otherwise used as poor pasture, described as heath. The 60 acres of *Brounhothe* in Burwash must have been similar, for it was poor grazing land worth only about 1½d. an acre. A 10-acre field of downland in Warbleton was used for cattle grazing when first mentioned, but was later let for arable. The names of the holdings on the Forest Ridges reflect the poor soils. In Brightling the tenement of *Denyselond* is described as 'land and heath' and lay adjacent to other holdings called *Gretehorthe* and *Melwardeshothe*. Some areas of heath on the ridges were held in large parcels for grazing. Heath and broom grew on *Nolleslond* in Guestling, which was occasionally cut, but was otherwise let for grazing. Large heathland holdings of 40 acres in Beckley and 100 acres in Guestling are mentioned in the 15th century. On the Wadhurst Clay the soils were not only poor, but also badly drained. There were 102 acres of marshy pasture worth only 1½d. an acre at Bivelham (Mayfield), which lies on the clay, and 22 acres of meadow valued at 7d an acre because it was covered in reeds.¹⁵

The farmland on the lower slopes and Forest Ridges was generally divided into small fields, rarely more than a few acres in extent. On minor tenements some of the fields were a little more than an acre or so. A lease recorded in the court rolls of the manor of Playden mentions an area of three acres lying in two fields, but these fields were particularly small. More typical was an area of 35 acres in Lamberhurst, which lay in five crofts. The assignment of dower to Joan, widow of William de Fiennes suggests that the demesne fields at Herstmonceux were little larger than those of the tenants. The 60-acre holding of Ralph atte Beech nearby, described in a similar document, was held in 11 fields, and the more highly valued land lay in the larger parcels. The

¹⁴ The evidence for plotting the customary land was drawn mainly from ESRO AMS 5512; ESRO A1244; ESRO TD/E 133.

¹⁵ PRO C135/151 (14), m. 6; PRO C145/149 (15); BL Add. Roll 31310, mm. 2r., 3v. ; ESRO SAS/RF 1/209, 210, 216; HEH BA 436, BA 450; HMAG JER coll., Bundle D (court of Monday before St Valentine 3 Henry VI (13th February 1425)) and unlisted deed no. 27; PRO C135/40 (8). The value of the grazing at *Brounhothe* in Burwash may have been underestimated in the inquisition *post mortem*, for in the early 15th century it was let for 26s. 8d. a year (BL Add. Roll 31359).

fields in the Battle Abbey manor of Marley (Battle), which included both upland and meadow land in the Brede valley, were a similar size.¹⁶

The area of common land in the Weald was extensive, though it was not as large as Jolliffe and others have supposed.¹⁷ Notwithstanding the names of some pieces of common land, there was no forest in the legal sense anywhere in the county. Most of the commons were wooded and provided pannage and mast for swine, and pasture and browse for cattle.¹⁸ They were an important source for fuel and for building. Ashdown Forest provided timber for construction work at Chichester Cathedral in 1234 and joists were cut on the Broyle (Ringmer), and scaffold poles and firewood at Clear Hedge Wood (Waldron) for building at Pevensey Castle in 1289.¹⁹ Yet by the end of the 13th century intensive grazing and the practice of firing the vegetation to improve the 'bite' had turned some areas of the common to heathland. The burning of heath is recorded on the Broyle and at Ashdown Forest and that, and the cutting of furze, heath and bracken, prevented the growth of new trees. Ashdown Forest was intensively used by the many small tenants who lived on the periphery of the waste and were permitted to have pigs without stint on the common and graze as many cattle as could be overwintered on their own tenements.²⁰ The woodland was able to

¹⁶ ESRO AMS 4884, m. 16v.; Bodleian Library MS. Sussex Ch. 171; PRO C135/151 (14), m. 12; BL Add. Roll 31504, membrane attached to m. 9r.; E. Searle, *Lordship and Community: Battle Abbey and its Banlieu 1066-1538* (1974), 270-1.

¹⁷ J.E.A. Jolliffe, *Pre-Feudal England: The Jutes* (1933), 82; *The Chartulary and Terrier of the Priory of Bilsington, Kent*, ed. N. Neilson (British Academy Records of the Social and Economic History of England 7 (1928)), 34-8; P.F. Brandon, *The Commonlands and Wastes of Sussex* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1963), 33-43.

¹⁸ O. Rackham, *Trees and Woodland in the British Landscape* (1976), 135-41.

¹⁹ *Calendar of Close Rolls 1231-34*, 461; L.F. Salzmann, 'Documents Relating to Pevensey Castle', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 49 (1906), 11.

²⁰ J.K. Irons, *Aspects of the Impact of Man on the Historical Ecology of Ashdown Forest before 1885* (unpublished D.Phil. thesis, University of Sussex, 1982), 328-9; PRO SC12/15/46; BL Add. Roll 31864; Rackham, *Trees and Woodland*, 147. For the practice of burning heath and cutting bracken and complaints of the consequent destruction of woodland in West Sussex in the 17th century, see BL Add. MS. 28529. On the cutting and sale of heath and broom at Udimore, see HMAG JER collection (unlisted accounts).

regenerate only when the population declined in the late 14th century. By 1393-94 parcels of birch, characteristic of secondary woodland on poor soils, were being sold from Ashdown Forest.²¹

The commons may be divided into those not attached to a specific manor and usually controlled by the holder of the rape, the 'forensec woods', and the commons limited to the tenants of named manors. In the first category in Pevensey Rape were the commons of the Broyle and the Dicker in the Low Weald, and Hawkhurst, Waldron, Clearhedge Wood and Ashdown Forest in the High Weald. There were extensive rights of common on these lands. In late 13th century there were 208 customary tenants on Ashdown Forest, who were tenants of manors in the vicinity. There were also a considerable number of animals grazed by 'outsiders', tenants of manors more distant from Ashdown Forest. As many as 2000 cattle were grazed a year by the end of the century and the 'outsiders' alone were grazing a similar number of pigs. Many religious houses had rights of grazing on these commons granted to them by the lord of the rape. Wilmington Priory could take wood and have pannage for pigs and pasture for animals on the commons in Pevensey Rape, and Michelham Priory and Bayham Abbey had similar, but more restricted rights. The tithes of Ashdown Forest, Laughton and Waldron chases were received by the church in Pevensey Castle.²²

The only forensec wood in Hastings Rape was the Forest of Dallington, also called the Forest of Worth. It is mentioned in Domesday Book, which records that the count of Eu held half a hide in the forest. The land so called was divided into three parts, the Forest itself, an area of assarts and pasture land adjoining the Forest. The assarts seem to have lain mainly around Mansbrook (Dallington) and in Brightling. The pasture land was bounded by Coblye Wood (Brightling) and Mansbrook to the

²¹ PRO DL29/441/7094; Brandon, *Commonlands and Wastes of Sussex*, 103; Irons, *Aspects of the Impact of Man*, 339. Parcels of birch were also sold in the manor of South Malling in Mayfield and Wadhurst at about the same time: Lambeth Palace Library ED 1900.

²² Brandon, *Commonlands and Wastes of Sussex*, 32-43; for forensec woods in Kent, see F.R.H. Du Boulay, 'Droving, Denms and Danger', *Archaeologia Cantiana* 76 (1961), 76. For Ashdown Forest: Brandon, *ibid.*, 100-9; PRO SC12/15/46; ESRO AMS 3559, 1, being a copy of the Pipe Roll of 26 Edward I; *Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous* 1, 469, 532. The tithes of Ashdown Forest were granted to the church in Pevensey Castle *temp.* Henry I or before, apparently as part of the endowment of the college, WSRO Ep. VI/1/3, f. 175 v.; see also M.F. Gardiner and C.H.C. Whittick, 'Some Evidence for an Intended Collegiate Church at Pevensey', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 128 (1990), 261-2.

south, Darwell Stream on the east and Willingford Stream, 'the stream where three roads meet' on the west. In the early 13th century the count granted Robertsbridge Abbey general rights of pasture and dead wood in that area. Later these were defined more closely. The right to take wood was relinquished by the monks and the number of cattle and horses to be grazed on the common was limited. The count granted similar rights to Hastings Priory: to take dead wood, to have pannage for 20 pigs and have common pasture with the vill of Dallington. The count also gave the priory free ingress and egress through the pale surrounding the Forest proper, which seems to have lain to the west of it.²³

Usage of the other commons in the Weald was limited to the adjacent manors. The common of Hawksborough Down, for example, was restricted to the manor of Burghurst and the others neighbouring the down. Even the extensive common at Rotherfield, said to be twelve or more leagues in extent, was only for the use of the tenants of the manors of Rotherfield and Frant.²⁴ Some of the commons, such as those at Rotherfield and Crowhurst, also served as parks. Like Ashdown Forest they were enclosed by a pale and were entered through gates. The regulations governing their use were strict and the commoners' animals were excluded from certain areas during the fence month to ensure there was adequate pasture for the deer.²⁵ Like the foresec commons, substantial areas of the manorial wastes were covered with woodland, though they too may have become denuded of trees in the 14th century with the pressure of grazing. The common of Southwood in Heathfield was described as a waste in 1379, though by 1552 it was again wooded with oak and beech of 100 years' growth. The nearby common of Hawksborough Down produced heath, furze and broom indicating that it too had areas of scrub.²⁶

The larger areas of High Wealden common land were situated on the top or the

²³ PRO C135/151 (14), m. 10; DB i, 18b; BL Add. Roll 31359; ESRO ASH 198; HMAG HPL/B9; Darwell Stream was the boundary of the fee of Netherfield, HMAG HPL/B71; *Manuscripts Preserved at Penshurst Place*, 1, 59-60, 82-3; PRO C135/40 (8); PRO SC6/1116/9, m. 10r. ESRO SAS/RA 61.

²⁴ ESRO ASH 206, f. 43r.; PRO C132/27 (5).

²⁵ ESRO SAS/LB 34; PRO C135/40 (8).

²⁶ BL Add. Roll 31265, m. 3r.; WSRO Ep. VI/2/1, f. 39r.; PRO C145/149 (15); *Thirteen Custumals of the Sussex Manors of the Bishop of Chichester*, ed. W.D. Peckham (Sussex Record Society 31 (1925)), 97.

flanks of the ridges and were called *terra montana*, or *dounelond* in the vernacular. Some were contiguous and formed bands of upland grazing. To the north of Waldron Forest lay the 600-acre common of Beacon Down used in the mid-14th century by the tenants of Possingworth manor for their cattle, sheep and pigs.²⁷ To the east lay an area of common of Laughton manor, the commons of Heathfield manor of which the largest was East Down, an area of 100 acres, and the common of Hawksborough Down. Crowborough Down some distance to the north was a substantial area situated on the edge of Ashdown Forest. Its eastern flank had been partly enclosed by assartes from the manor of the Rotherfield. The remainder was common to the tenants of the borgh (township) of Greenhurst in South Malling manor.²⁸

Grazing on common land formed an important part of the economy in the Weald. In Crowhurst park in 1398, when the number of swine may have been less than earlier in the century, eighteen tenants had 108 swine at pannage. In Rotherfield the tenants had similar rights to the pannage and beech mast in the park and gave 200 pigs a year for the privilege. To sustain the considerable herds of pigs through the winter, the lord of the manor contributed 10 quarters of ~~malted wheat~~ to the tenants' swine. The land in the northern part of the manor of South Malling was divided into wards, each based around an area of common woodland. The wards are not mentioned in the late 13th-century custumal, though a similar system may be implied by the reference to the right of common:

mulberry corn
2

'All the freemen have common in the same wood appurtenant to their freeholdings and the customary tenants by the reason of the hens which they give each year to the lord.'

Hens were given for a general right of common in the woodland, a payment called *foresteshenn* or woodhen. The customary tenants gave a money payment for the right of pannage by pigs which was collected by ward.²⁹ Hens were also given for the right

²⁷ D. Martin and B. Martin, 'Old Farm Buildings in East Sussex 1450-1750', *Historic Buildings in Eastern Sussex*, 3 (1982), fig. 3; CKS U1475/T264/533; ESRO SAS/J606.

²⁸ ESRO QDD/6/E2; WSRO Ep. VI/2/1, f. 39r.; ESRO ASH 206, f. 43r. BL Add. Roll 31306, m. 1r. refers to land called *le Doune* further east; *Custumals of the Sussex Manors of the Archbishop of Canterbury*, ed. B.C. Redwood and A.E. Wilson (Sussex Record Society 57 (1958)), 84; Brandon, 'Medieval Clearances', 148.

²⁹ ESRO A2300 (Crowhurst court rolls), m. 6r.; for Rotherfield, see pp. 140-1, below. *Custumals of the Sussex Manors of the Archbishop of Canterbury*, 94, 116; ESRO AMS 5512; ESRO

of common in the manor of Laughton on the Dicker in the Low Weald. In other manors, hen payments are not so clearly associated with the usage of the common. In Chalvington and at Bexhill, for example, they were included among the dues paid by each virgate.³⁰

Not all woods were subject to common usage. There were extensive woodlands, parks and heathland, over which there were no such rights. The 70-acre wood in the manor of Crowhurst called Fore Wood, and Batts Wood (Mayfield), where there were 60 acres of pasture and *Conyngwode*, both in Bivelham, were demesne. The bishop of Chichester had a woodland of an unspecified area in Ticehurst, with pannage in severalty worth 3s. 4d.³¹ One of the largest single woods was in Etchingham manor, where there was a woodland park of 300-400 acres and a further 200 acres outside the park. Nearer the coast and away from the Forest Ridges the areas of woodland were generally smaller. At Barnhorne the demesne wood was only 12 acres in extent and in the neighbouring manor of Bexhill the area was about the same and it was also used for common grazing.³² There were coppice woods in Herstmonceux at Bemsell of eight acres, 20 acres at *Lewstrod* and a further wood called Rock Wood held in severalty. These relatively small woods were evidently insufficient to supply the lord's household, for the services of the neifs included the transport of wood from *Baily*, which lay to the north in Heathfield.³³

Most woodland held in severalty was managed as coppice with standards. The woods of Battle Abbey at Bathurst and Petley (Battle) produced firewood for domestic use

A1244, no. 22. Many of the names of the wards are found in a 16th- or 17th-century list of woodland in the manors of Mayfield and Wadhurst, BL Harl. Roll I. 5.

³⁰ *Custumals of the Manors of Laughton, Willingdon and Goring*, ed. A.E. Wilson (Sussex Record Society 60 (1961)), 18; ESRO SAS/CH 215; WSRO Ep. VI/1/3, ff. 163r.-v.

³¹ PRO C145/149 (15); PRO C135/40 (8); *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1405-08*, 185; BL Add. MS. 6165, f. 108v.

³² PRO C133/68 (7); PRO C134/100 (15); PRO C135/14 (1). *Custumals of Battle Abbey*, 19; WSRO Ep VI/1/5, f. 149r., printed in *Thirteen Custumals of the Sussex Manors of the Bishop of Chichester*, 133; BL Add. MS. 6165, f. 108r.

³³ PRO C135/151 (14), mm. 6, 10; ESRO SAS/C 250. *Baily* has been known from the 1780s as Heathfield Park.

and were therefore coppiced. Coppice was destroyed by straying animals in Combe Wood in Mayfield. The park at Crowhurst, even though subject to common rights, contained closes of coppice woodland as did many of the customary tenements. Only one area of demesne woodland in Udimore is specifically described as coppice, but as the main produce of the wooded area was faggots, that must have been the case generally.³⁴

The area of woodland on tenements is rarely recorded, but is generally concealed by the formula 'a messuage with n acres and appurtenances', listing only the area of arable. Exceptionally, the late 13th-century custumal notes the acreage of coppice held by tenants in the manor of South Malling. The figures given for the borghs of Greenhurst, Mayfield and Wadhurst, which all lay in the High Weald, suggest that coppice woodland covered the equivalent of about 10% of the area of the cultivated acreage. The corresponding figure in Framfield, which lay on the periphery of the High Weald, was only 4%, and in Uckfield borgh to the south of Framfield no coppice is noted.³⁵ Woodland in the Weald was rarely rented or sold separately from the adjoining cultivated land, though a small number of grants were made of woodland alone.³⁶ The most informative of these is a lease of a wood at Sandhurst in Mayfield granted for three years. That was evidently a coppice, for the wood was to be cut and then fenced to prevent animals feeding upon and destroying the new growth.³⁷

Assarting of the waste for arable led to a very substantial decrease in the area of woodland during the 13th and 14th century. Rights of free chase, such as those held by Richard Waleys from Isfield as far north as Withyham and Ticehurst in the manor of South Malling, and by the counts of Mortain in the south of the Rape of Pevensey, were of diminishing value as the area of unimproved land contracted. Parks were established to contain and protect the animals as the practice of hunting deer,

³⁴ *Accounts of the Cellarers of Battle Abbey 1275-1513*, ed. E. Searle and B. Ross (Sussex Record Society 65 (1967)), 111, 158 and *passim*; *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1405-08*, 185; ESRO A2300 (Crowhurst court rolls), mm. 5r., 19r., 22v.; HMAG JER coll. (unlisted Udimore accounts).

³⁵ *Custumals of the Sussex Manors of the Archbishop of Canterbury*, 30-83.

³⁶ BL Add. Ch. 30853; ESRO ASH B20; ESRO RYE 137/5; PRO C146/5773.

³⁷ ESRO GLY 1219.

particularly fallow deer, grew in popularity. Settlement within the parks was limited or excluded and deer could breed free from disturbance.³⁸ Sometimes parks were formed simply by embanking and empaling demesne woodland; elsewhere to obtain an adequate area it was necessary to buy out existing tenant holdings. The process of establishing a park at Hawksden in Mayfield is recorded in some detail. Lands had been held in that area by the Waleys family since late 13th century and in 1337 Sir John Waleys and Robert de Sharnden, who held the neighbouring lordship, agreed to view the bounds to establish the limits for the park. Sir John had already exchanged lands within Hawksden for others nearby to form a discrete block of land.³⁹ A similar process must have taken place at Broomham in Catsfield where peasant tenements were extinguished and a tract of woodland and heath emparked to form an area amounting to one quarter of the area of the parish.⁴⁰ In the late 14th and early 15th century some existing parks were enlarged. That was achieved at Herstmonceux and Frankham (Mayfield) by reducing the area of the cultivated demesne and at Crowhurst and Burwash by incorporating former peasant tenements.⁴¹

The park at Rotherfield was much older and was mentioned in Domesday Book, but the problem was similar: to distinguish an area for cultivation from that given over to hunting. The boundaries of the park left the customary holding of Lightlands as an island of cultivated land inside the pale. On the south-east side the boundary between

³⁸ *The Glynde Place Archives*, ed. R.F. Dell (1964), x; ESRO GLY 954, m. 2; Lambeth Palace Library MS. 1212, p. 103, translated in F.R.H. Du Boulay, *The Lordship of Canterbury*, 104; *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1247-58*, 161; *Calendar of Charter Rolls 1 (1226-57)*, 410. For the identification of the bounds of the area of free warren, see I.D. Margary, 'Roman Roads from Pevensey', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 80 (1939), 32-33.

³⁹ ESRO AMS 5896/5, m. 2; ESRO GLY 1595; GLY 1222.

⁴⁰ *Customals of Battle Abbey*, 14-6; *Victoria County History of Sussex* 9, 242; Searle, *Lordship and Community*, 160; *Nonarum Inquisitiones in Curia Scaccarii*, ed. G. Vanderzee (Record Commissioners, 1807), 393.

⁴¹ Brandon, 'Medieval Clearances', 143; *Calendar of Charter Rolls 1427-1516*, 13-14; Lambeth Palace Library ED 1900; ESRO A2300 (Crowhurst account rolls, account of Michaelmas 1405-06); BL Add. Roll 31359.

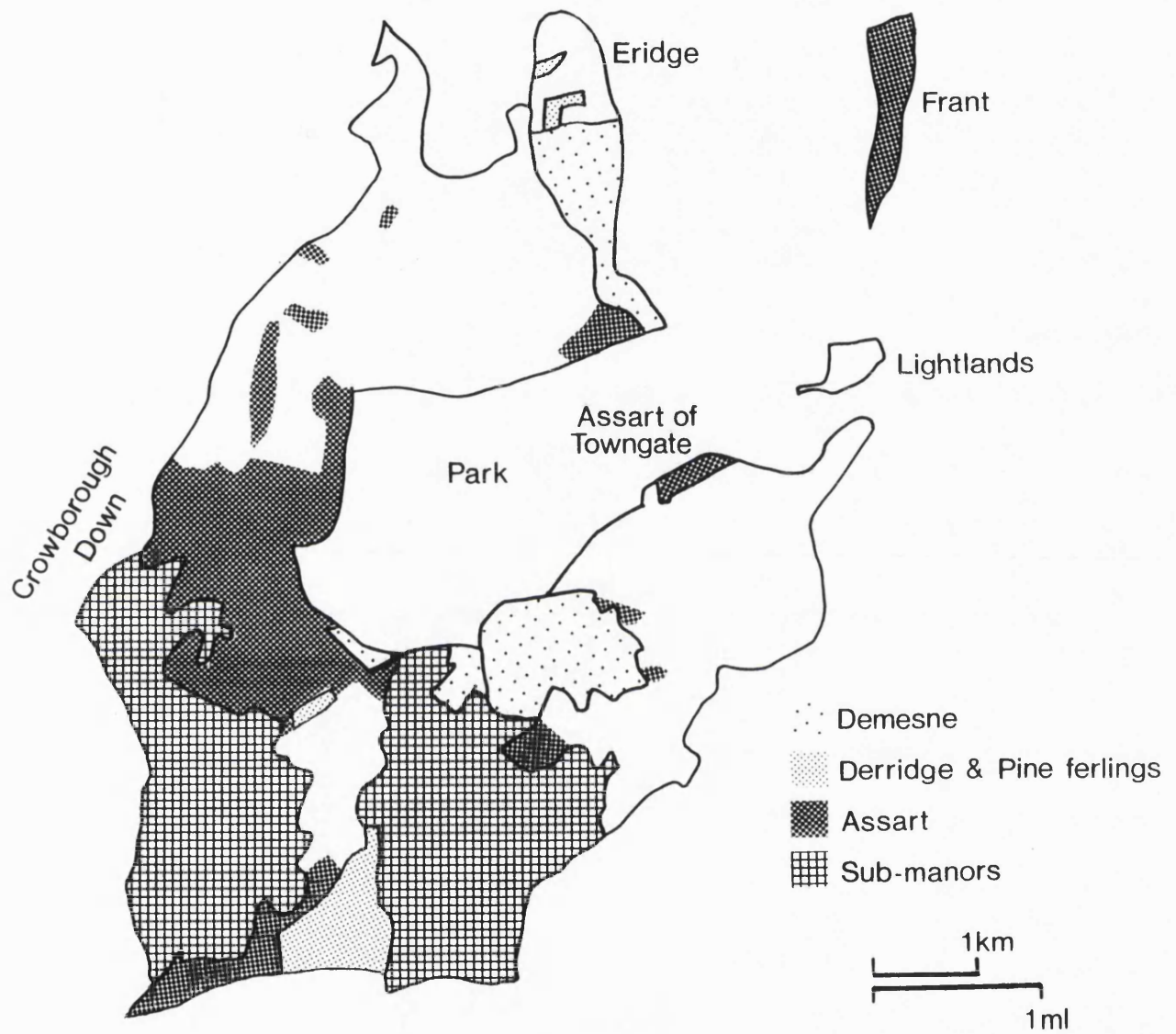


Fig. 22 Some elements of landholding in Rotherfield.

the tenants' lands and the park was defined arbitrarily by three long, straight alignments. Pressure to acquire further land for cultivation in the later 13th or early 14th century led to the gradual diminution of the parkland. A strip of land was cut out of the park next to the straight boundary to form further cultivated land called the Assart of Towngate before 1346 (fig. 22). Similar areas of land were taken out on the west side where successive encroachments described as 'old' and 'new' assart are recorded. Near Eridge, a long strip was removed before 1296 to make a new area of demesne and separated from the park by a ditch called *Maredyke*.⁴²

Parkland was used not only for hunting, but was valued for the timber and wood growing there, and some areas were cultivated. Services of the tenants on the manors of Rotherfield and Herstmonceux included boon works on arable lands in the parks. Hay was grown in Wartling park and there were rabbit warrens at Herstmonceux, Wartling and Crowhurst.⁴³

Although the High Weald was fairly extensively wooded, the density of parks in the region was not much greater than other areas of England.⁴⁴ Some parks including those at Rotherfield already discussed, Frankham in Mayfield (330 acres) and Battle (Great Park, 725 acres) were particularly large, but in other areas there were few parks. In Waldron parish there was none, partly because of the extent of the foresec woods of Clearhedge and Hawkhurst, but also because the prevalence of minor manors with demesnes too small to be given over to parkland. There was a single park at Bivelham and one at Hawksden, but these were the only ones in the manor of Bivelham, the greater part of which was divided between many small sub-manors.⁴⁵

⁴² DB i, 16a; ESRO GIL 32; ESRO SAS/LB 34; PRO C133/77 (3); ESRO SAS/Aber 68; Brandon, 'Medieval Clearances', 137-8.

⁴³ ESRO SAS/Budgen 9; *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1405-08*, 185; ESRO SAS/LB 34; ESRO SAS/C 250; BL Add. Roll 31503, m. 1r.; Harvard Law School manorial records 68.

⁴⁴ Rackham, *The History of the Countryside*, 123, commenting on data from L. Cantor, *The Medieval Parks of England: A Gazetteer* (1983) which, however, gives an incomplete list for East Sussex.

⁴⁵ PRO C134/100 (15); ESRO A1244, enfranchisement no. 27; ESRO BAT 4419; *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1301-07*, 347; PRO C145/38 (10).

THE PEASANT ECONOMY

No class of medieval records describes the economy of the peasantry in detail and consequently there are few details of their sources of income and expenditure. There is no reason to assume that the tenants' economy was similar to that of their lords, though the physical constraints on the types of crops grown affected both equally. The peasant economy, therefore, has to be reconstructed from incidental references to crops, stock, the use of common land and by-employment, and with cognisance of practices on the better-documented demesnes.⁴⁶

A rare insight into the peasant's appreciation of land and its value is given in an inquiry held in c.1258. Witnesses were called to determine the tithes due to Leeds Priory for land held by Robertsbridge Abbey at Lamberhurst on the Kent-Sussex border. The abbey had there 218 acres of arable of which 55 acres had been marled in the past, 113 acres improved by marling by the monks, 36 acres described as 'almost sterile' and 14 acres of fertile land, which could be improved by marling. The field names indicate that the fertile land lay on the floor of a river valley. The witnesses called to assess the land were local men, one commenting that his family lived and was supported on similar land. They agreed that the land was not in fact sterile and suggested that it could produce a crop of winter oats if ploughed twice the first year, could be sown with oats the second year and left fallow the third. It could be let to farm, they judged, for 6d. an acre or for one fourth or one fifth sheaf.⁴⁷

Oats, the crop recommended by the witnesses for the poor soil at Lamberhurst, were widely grown in the Weald. The soils were heavy and damp and less suitable for wheat and barley, which flourish only on better soils. Crops cultivated by tenants are mentioned in actions for trespass by animals heard in manorial courts. In a group of manors across the High Weald, 37 cases were noted in which the crop grown was described. Trespass in fields of oats was the most common complaint, mentioned in eleven, or almost a third of these actions. Beans (six cases) and wheat (five cases)

⁴⁶ C.C. Dyer, *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages: Social Change in England c.1200-1520* (1989), 109; R.H. Hilton, *The English Peasantry in the Late Middle Ages* (1975), 37-53. For an attempt to examine the peasant economy in this way, see C.C. Dyer, *Lords and Peasants in a Changing Society: The Estates of the Bishopric of Worcester, 680-1540* (1980), 316-54.

⁴⁷ Bodleian Library MS. Sussex Charter 171; *Manuscripts Preserved at Penshurst Place* 1, 107.

were the other main crops with barley, spelt, peas, vetch and flax also recorded.⁴⁸

The predominance of oats seems to have been even more pronounced on the demesne fields. In the years ending 1371-7 on the Lamberhurst demesne, 64% of the sown acreage was seeded with oats, 30% with wheat, and barley was cultivated on less than 2%. The only other significant crop was beans, grown on about 4% of the acreage. At Udimore the twelve surviving account rolls for the years ending 1362-82 record that the same proportion of sown land was put down to oats, with the figures for barley and wheat of 14% and 9% respectively. The pattern of arable was similar at Battle, Bexhill and Barnhorne with oats covering between half and two-thirds of the demesne acreage sown.⁴⁹ Wheat was grown on the demesnes on the better soils, and peas and beans often sown in parts of fields alongside other crops. Leguminous crops were similarly planted on peasants' fields. A trespass in a single field at Herstmonceux resulted in damage to barley, beans and oats.⁵⁰

It is important not to over-exaggerate the importance of oats in Wealden agriculture. A single account roll for Icklesham Rectory lists the tithes received in 1344 and provides a useful overview of agriculture in the whole parish. A total of 140 quarters of oats and 63 quarters of wheat were given in tithes; the quantity of wheat was slightly reduced that year by flooding in the marshland. The value of the wheat tithe was, however, slightly greater than the figure for the oats, for the former grain could be sold at a higher price. That is an useful reminder that the sown acreage provides only a partial view of the agricultural economy of the area; the value of the crops is

⁴⁸ The analysis is based on references to trespass in the court rolls of Brede, Bucksteep, Crowhurst, Hammerden, Herstmonceux, Playden and Udimore. For references, see Chapters 8 and 10.

⁴⁹ BL Add. Rolls 71301-6; HMAG JER coll. (unlisted Udimore accounts); Searle, *Lordship and Community*, 289; R.A. Pelham, 'The Agricultural Geography of the Chichester Estates in 1388', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 78 (1937), 200, Table II; Brandon, 'Agriculture and the Effects of Floods and Weather at Barnhorne', 75.

⁵⁰ Searle, 'Lordship and Community', 289-90; Brandon, 'Agriculture and the Effects of Floods and Weather at Barnhorne', 72-3, Table 1; M. Mate, 'The Agrarian Economy of South-East England before the Black Death: Depressed or Buoyant?', in B.M.S. Campbell (ed.), *Before the Black Death: Studies in the 'Crisis' of the Early Fourteenth Century* (1991), 81-2; Harvard Law School manorial records 74.

also of significance.⁵¹

Cultivation in severalty allowed a flexible cropping regime to be adopted on the lands of the lords and their peasants. A practice, similar to the convertible husbandry advocated in the 16th century and later, has been recorded on the Battle Abbey demesne. Fields were cropped for successive years and then allowed to revert to grass to regain their fertility. The alternation of arable and pasture cultivation allowed the poor Wealden soils to be cultivated for as long as they could produce reasonable crops yields, and the pattern could be adapted to the quality of the soil in particular fields. 'Up-and-down' husbandry may be implied on 199 acres of the Herstmonceux demesne which was valued at 4d. an acre when sown and when not sown, 3d. an acre as pasture.⁵²

The evidence of peasant leases suggests convertible husbandry was also practised in the tenants' fields. Leases were normally granted for arable cultivation with the lessor taking a proportion of the crops grown. The fraction paid in rent in kind was commonly a reciprocal of the length of the lease in years. A lease for five years would therefore pay one fifth sheaf. A longer lease gave a smaller part of the crop yield, implying that declining returns were expected from the land and that a smaller proportion of the produce could therefore be charged. After the term of the lease the only way to improve the fertility of the land was to put it down to pasture to recover, which was, in effect, a convertible regime.

That was not the universal pattern. To prevent the exhaustion of soil, longer leases sometimes specified the number of crops which might be grown during the term. Typically these were for two-thirds of the period of the lease. A lease drawn up in 1316 in Bucksteep (Warbleton) for 15 years specified that only 10 crops might be taken during that period.⁵³ Under such conditions the lessees' interests might be best served by fallowing the land every third year, rather than by putting it down to a long ley at the beginning or end of the term. A pattern of fallowing one year in three is also suggested by the Lamberhurst witnesses.

⁵¹ HEH BA 452. On the ratio of the price of various grains, see D.L. Farmer, 'Prices and Wages', in H.E. Hallam (ed.), *Agrarian History of England and Wales*, 2 (1042-1350) (1988), 795.

⁵² Searle, 'Lordship and Community', 272-86; Brandon, 'Agriculture and the Effects of Floods and Weather at Barnhorne', 71-7; PRO C135/151 (14), m. 6.

⁵³ BL Add. Roll 31310, m. 6v.

The application of marl was one of the few ways known for improving land. The witnesses at Lamberhurst indicated that marling was of great importance in improving and maintaining the quality of land. That is reflected in the valuations of demesne made in inquisitions *post mortem* in which marled land was carefully distinguished from the less highly valued unmarled acreage. The efficacy of marling has been clearly demonstrated in the yields from demesne land on the manor of Ebony in Kent. Marling was very widely practised on the peasants' land and the sums paid by villeins to obtain marl, charged at the rate of 8d. for an acre in Bucksteep, reflect the value placed upon it.⁵⁴

The purpose of marling was evidently to alter the texture of the soil, though where calcareous Wadhurst Clay was applied, the acidity may also have been reduced. Many leases required that the lessee should marl the land during the period of occupancy. Land in Bucksteep was let on the condition that it received four inches of marl. A lease in Robertsbridge manor required three inches and a grant of marl in Herstmonceux was for a similar depth.⁵⁵ Clearly the volumes of marl applied to the soil were substantial. Marl was dug from pits at the edge of fields, in woodland or at the side of the road. The costs of excavating marl, transporting it to the fields and spreading were great. At Lamberhurst 3¼ acres were marled in 1323-4 at a cost of 40s. 0¾d., about 12s. 4d. an acre. A drain had to be dug to clear water from the marl pit. Carting the marl was six weeks' work for three carts. The costs per acre of marling at Icklesham were similar, but these expenses may reflect the problems of digging and moving marl, for four acres were marled at Herstmonceux by contract for only 15s. Denshiring, the burning of pared grass, seems also to have been used to improve the Battle demesne.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ M. Mate, 'Medieval Agrarian Practices: The Determining Factors?', *Agricultural History Review* 33 (1985), 23; P.F. Brandon, 'Demesne Arable Farming in Coastal Sussex during the Later Middle Ages', *Agricultural History Review* 19 (1971), 134; BL Add. Rolls 31088; 31309, m. 7r.; 31311.

⁵⁵ On the effect of marling generally, see W.M. Mathew, 'Marling in British Agriculture: A Case of Partial Identity', *Agricultural History Review* 41 (1993), 97-110. Brandon, 'Agriculture and the Effects of Floods and Weather at Barnhorne', 77; J.L.M. Gulley, *The Wealden Landscape in the Early Seventeenth Century and its Antecedents* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1960), 141; BL Add. Roll 31310, m. 2r.; CKS U1475/M237; ESRO SAS/Budgen 2.

⁵⁶ Brandon, 'Demesne Arable Farming in Coastal Sussex', 134, n. 4; PRO E315/56, f. 1r.; BL Add. Roll 31086; *Rotuli Hundredorum* 2, 218, and L.F. Salzman, 'The Hundred Roll for

Improvement of soil texture was of considerable practical significance since the clays within the Weald produce a very heavy tilth. A team of 10 oxen was necessary to pull the wheeled plough according to the Hammerden custumal; a normal team comprised eight oxen, or six oxen led by two horses. The sticky soils also made carting difficult. In the autumn, winter and early spring months tenants giving carting services for Battle Abbey had to provide a team of four oxen to pull loads of firewood; in summer only two oxen were necessary.⁵⁷ Different types of ploughs were used on the upland and for the marshes and river valleys. The marsh plough was not necessarily lighter than the upland plough for the Udimore account rolls, which detail the making of a new plough in 1365-6, show that it too was wheeled.⁵⁸

The rough upland pasture in the Weald, including the heathlands on the ridges, was particularly suitable for cattle. They were grazed on the heath on Ashdown Forest and on the downland on tenants' holdings.⁵⁹ Sheep were kept only in relatively small numbers on manors with pasture land in the river valleys or on the marshes. The peasants' sheep are mentioned in court rolls in Wartling, Brede, Playden and Crowhurst manors either because they were given as heriots, or in cases when owners of dogs were charged with sheep worrying. A flock of 200 sheep belonging to the tenants is recorded in Herstmonceux. Somewhat surprisingly, the Wealden abbeys of Robertsbridge and Bayham are mentioned among the monasteries supplying wool in a list compiled by Pegolotti, the merchant. Both, however, had

Sussex, Part III', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 84 (1945), 76; Mate, 'Medieval Agrarian Practices', 23, n. 5; BL Add. Roll 71300; HEH BA 436; ESRO SAS/Budgen 5; ESRO NOR 18/3; BL Add. Roll 32686; Searle, *Lordship and Community*, 291, n. 5.

⁵⁷ ESRO SAS/CO/B 72; R. V. Lennard, 'The Composition of Demesne Plough-Teams in Twelfth-Century England', *English Historical Review* 75 (1960), 193-207; P. D. A. Harvey, *A Medieval Oxfordshire Village: Cuxham 1240 to 1400* (1965), 57-8; J. Langdon, *Horse, Oxen and Technological Innovation: The Use of Draught Animals in English Farming from 1066 to 1500* (1986); BL Harl. MS. 3586, f. 46v.

⁵⁸ HMAG JER coll. (unlisted Udimore accounts); cf. Brandon, 'Agriculture and the Effects of Floods and Weather at Barnhorne', 84-5; BL Add. Roll 32721.

⁵⁹ PRO SC12/15/46; BL Add. Roll 31310, m. 3v. For a 16th-century assessment of the value of Wealden heathland for cattle, see ESRO SAS/J 606.

lands outside the Weald, where the sheep are more likely to have been kept.⁶⁰ Fines for animals grazing on demesne, heriots and cases concerning straying stock show that pigs, cattle, and horses were the animals most commonly owned by tenants, though there is very little evidence for the size of herds kept. Fines for pannage detail the numbers of pigs of each tenant and indicate that while many peasants had up to half a dozen swine, individuals did not have large herds.⁶¹

Lists of tenants' animals suggest that peasants favoured mixed stock. John Hugeles at his death in 1308 had one bullock, one cow, two sheep and two lambs on a holding of three acres in Playden. There was a similar mixture of stock on the more substantial Udimore holding of John Brokax, who in 1349 had four horses, four bullocks, six affers and a flock of 30 sheep. Nicholas Crull, who was indicted as a felon in 1391, had a holding in Crowhurst with at least four fields. He, by contrast, kept only two pigs. When he had surrendered his tenement in 1385 and received it back to farm for life, he had not given a heriot, because he had no animals. His chattels included a wagon, plough and harrow, a field sown with wheat, eight seams of oats and a parcel of hay suggesting a mainly arable holding and his few pigs were grazed on the common. Thomas Dod, who held land of uncertain acreage on Herstmonceux and Wartling manors, had a team of 6 oxen, 8 milking cows, two young bullocks and a calf, and a mare with foal. Finally, Robert Janekyn who was a tenant of 8 acres in Crowham and a further 3½ acres leased jointly with another tenant had four stots, two mares, two cows and two pigs.⁶²

Another perspective on the livestock of the peasantry is provided by the heriots given on the deaths of tenants or their surrenders of the residue of their holdings. Heriots given between 1300 and 1420 were examined on a group of manors across the High Weald in eastern Sussex; the results are presented in Table 5. Most of the tenants who died between 1326 and 1375 held an animal of some sort, but these years

⁶⁰ Brandon, 'Agriculture and the Effects of Floods and Weather at Barnhorne', 84; BL Add. Roll 32689; HMAG JER coll. (unlisted, Bundle A); ESRO AMS 4884, m. 21r.; ESRO A2300 (Crowhurst court rolls), m. 3r.; ESRO SAS/Budgen 6; PRO JUST 1/933, m. 1r.; W. Cunningham, *The Growth of English Industry and Commerce* (6th edition, 1915) 1, 634, 635.

⁶¹ ESRO SAS/Budgen 10; ESRO A2300 (Crowhurst court rolls), *passim*.

⁶² ESRO AMS 4884, mm. 1v., 21r.; HMAG JER coll. (Udimore courts of Wednesday after St James ap. 23 Edward III (29th July 1349), 5th April 24 Edward III (1350)); ESRO A2300 (Crowhurst court rolls), mm. 1r., 3r.; BL Egerton Roll 8838; ESRO AMS 5686, m. 9r.

include a high proportion of plague victims who died prematurely. They are not strictly comparable with the periods before and after, when tenants might expect to die in their old age and when they may have divested themselves of some of their land and animals before their death. The evidence suggests that, except in the first quarter of the 14th century, the great majority of tenants would have had at least one animal. The figures bear comparison with similar statistics derived for the manors of the bishopric of Worcester, but show an even greater pastoral emphasis in the Weald.⁶³

Table 5

Tenants Giving Animal Heriots 1300-1420

	1300-25	1326-50	1351-75	1376-1400	1401-20
Animal	67%	89%	88%	78%	75%
No animal	33%	11%	12%	22%	25%
Total number	79	156	40	60	64

Grazing on the common lands was unstinted, except for the restriction that the tenants could have no more animals than they could overwinter on their own land. Not all manors had access to the extensive commons on the Forest Ridges; elsewhere animals were grazed on pasture on the tenants' holdings and the arable lands between harvest and ploughing. Some leases specifically reserve grazing on the harvested fields. On the manors of Herstmonceux, Bucksteep, Udimore and Wilting the tenants paid fines to graze the demesne fields after harvest and the demesne woodland throughout the year, at least that seems to be the implication from the repeated presentments of tenants for 'damage' or trespass made in the lord's crops and woods.⁶⁴

⁶³ The court rolls of the manors of Bivelham, Bucksteep, Crowham, Crowhurst, Hammerden, Herstmonceux, Playden, Robertsbridge, Udimore and Wartling were used in the analysis. For references to the sources used, see Chapters 8 and 10.

⁶⁴ PRO SC12/15/46; *Custumals of the Sussex Manors of the Archbishop of Canterbury*, 140; BL Add. Roll 31310, m. 5r.; Harvard Law School manorial records 68; BL Add. Roll 31309, m. 6r.; HMAG JER collection (Udimore court rolls); BL Add. Rolls 32737.

Fruit was widely grown in orchards, not only on the demesne, but also by tenants. A Herstmonceux widow was given among her dower portion five rows of apple trees in a garden. Most of the references to fruit occur in plaints of theft. Adam Dyne, a Wartling tenant prosecuted John Stunt to whom he had leased the pasture on a piece of his land and garden, but John had also removed the apples there, claiming that they were included in the agreement. Similarly, pears and apples were stolen as they were ripening in late July 1383 at Chilsham (Herstmonceux).⁶⁵ Some of the fruit was used for making cider and perry. Presshouses are recorded on a tenement at Northiam and among the buildings of the *curiae* of Penhurst, Brede and Udimore. At the latter, the presshouse was repaired in 1362-64 when the cost of replacing parts of the apple mill are noted.⁶⁶

Peasant agriculture in the 14th century was mixed and although there was an emphasis on pastoralism, especially where there was access to unimproved waste, arable agriculture was widespread. The wood-pasture regime of the 16th and 17th centuries was not yet established. That impression is confirmed by the detailed draft returns for Henhurst hundred drawn up for the 1332 subsidy levied on goods. As Salzman concluded, it is unlikely that the stock and grain listed represent the entire possessions of the tax-payers, only the saleable excess. Wheat and oats are the only cereals mentioned and there were greater quantities of the latter. There were considerable numbers of cattle, some horses, but few sheep and some of the taxpayers also had swine. A number of the tenants had casks of cider.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ ESRO SAS/Budgen 1; BL Add. Roll 36689; ESRO SAS/Budgen 17. For other references to apples and pears, see BL Add Roll 31310, m. 4r. and *Lathe Court Rolls and Views of Frankpledge in the Rape of Hastings, A.D. 1387 to 1474*, ed. E.J. Courthope and B.E.R. Formoy (Sussex Record Society 37 (1934)), 46.

⁶⁶ ESRO FRE 6909; ESRO ASH B9; PRO SC6/1021/5; HMAG JER collection (unlisted Udimore court rolls). For fruit growing and cider making in the same area in the 16th century, see C.E. Brent, 'Rural Employment and Population in Sussex Between 1550 and 1640', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 114 (1976), 41.

⁶⁷ HEH BA 995 (consulted from ESRO AMS 5926/34-9); L.F. Salzman, 'Early Taxation in Sussex, part II', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 99 (1961), 16-8. The printed returns give only a partial summary of the document. J.F. Willard, *Parliamentary Taxes on Personal Property 1290 to 1334: A Study in Medieval English Financial Administration* (1934), 77-85 also suggests subsidies were charged upon the excess of goods and stock above that needed for sustenance and farming.

During the early 15th century pastoral farming increased in the Weald, as elsewhere in England, but that change is difficult to follow on the lands of the peasants. There was little alteration in the proportion of arable and pasture between 1340 and 1406 on the Pevensey Marshes beyond the Weald. The increase in grazing is also not apparent in the proportion of tenants giving animal heriots in the period 1401-20 (Table 5).⁶⁸

Although farming was the mainstay of the Weald, trade, craft and industry contributed to the regional economy. The large areas of woodland in the Weald were an important source for firewood, timber and tan. Wood was cut either side of the River Rother in Kent and Sussex for export, particularly to Flanders, and also for shipment to elsewhere in England. There were wharves on the Rother in Kent at Reading Street, Maytham and Newenden, and in Sussex at Bodiam, on the River Brede at *Damme* and *Sloghdam* near Winchelsea and in the Combe Haven valley at Bulverhythe. Land transport was used to reach the ports from woods, such as those in Battle not within reach of the Rother, and the presence of wood-merchants at Cranbrook and elsewhere in the Kent Weald suggest that it was moved similar distances from the north to the quays on the Rother. Men from Goudhurst near Cranbrook paid 15s. for wood from the Lamberhurst demesne in 1376-7. Wood formed one of the major exports from Winchelsea and Rye, the greater part of it as firewood. The export of sawn wood increased during the 14th century, though did not approach the value of firewood.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ A.J.F. Dulley, 'The Level and Port of Pevensey in the Middle Ages', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 104 (1966), 39; M. Mate, 'Pastoral Farming in South-East England in the Fifteenth Century', *Economic History Review* 2nd series, 40 (1987), 525; Brandon, 'Medieval Clearances', 143.

⁶⁹ *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1354-58*, 70, 578-9; R.A. Pelham, 'Studies in the Historical Geography of Medieval Sussex', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 72 (1931), 173; HMAG JER collection (unlisted Udmore account rolls), ESRO A2300 (Crowhurst court rolls), m. 1v.; *Accounts of the Cellarers of Battle Abbey*, 45. For Kent, see K.P. Witney, 'The Woodland Economy of Kent, 1066-1348', *Agricultural History Review* 38 (1990), 37-8; F.R.H. Du Boulay 'Dennis, Droving and Danger', 85-7; BL Add. Roll 71306. R.A. Pelham, 'Timber Exports from the Weald During the Fourteenth Century', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 69 (1928), 176, 178-180.

The costs of cutting and transporting faggots from demesne woods some distance from the Channel ports or the river wharves was prohibitive. Clough found that in the period 1421-26 the average annual income derived from wood-sales on the Pelham manor of Bivelham (Mayfield) was 3s. and from the manor of Burwash between 1409-22 was 6s. 9d. Accounts of Rotherfield manor in 1283-4 show that sales from the demesne woods at Henley and Castle Wood were worth considerably more and produced the sum of 27s. 2d., though since the manor was at farm that year these may have been greater than usual: wood was a valuable asset, which could be readily realised. Battle Abbey, which had woodlands much closer to the ports, was able to cut firewood and cart it to Winchelsea to pay creditors, though it was not heavily involved in the wood trade.⁷⁰ Large quantities of wood were cut and sold from the Udimore demesne. There was ready access to the town and port of Winchelsea and to the wharf at *Damme*. Even so, the costs of carting firewood the short distance from Udimore to Winchelsea more than doubled the price. During the 1360s the quantity of wood produced on the manor per year varied considerably reaching a peak in 1366-67 when 19,000 faggots, two parcels of woodland and some rods were sold, and throughout the later 14th century wood-sales accounted for a significant portion of the demesne income.⁷¹

Firewood was a low-value, bulky product which could not easily be transported overland. By converting the wood to charcoal it was possible to create a lighter, less bulky fuel which could be moved at lower cost. Charcoal-burning was practised in woodlands without access to water transport and some charcoal was also shipped abroad. The charcoal-merchant recorded in the poll-tax records at Worth near Crawley in central Sussex was well situated to send his goods by road northwards to London and also to supply the iron industry in the area.⁷²

⁷⁰ M. Clough, *The Estates of the Pelham Family in East Sussex before 1500* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 1956), 147-9; ESRO ASH 198; PRO SC6/1028/7; *Accounts of the Cellarers of Battle Abbey*, 42, 45; Searle, *Lordship and Community*, 267.

⁷¹ HMAG JER coll. (unlisted Udimore accts).

⁷² PRO SC6/1028/7; *Calendar of Close Rolls 1288-96*, 70; R.A. Pelham, 'The Foreign Trade of Sussex 1300-1350', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 70 (1929), 109; *Accounts of the Cellarers of Battle Abbey*, 45, 111. The account roll for Burwash in 1295-6 lists no sales of charcoal as 'no one came to buy' (PRO SC6/1116/9, m. 10r.), presumably implying that in other years it was sold to merchants. PRO E179/189/41, m. 18v. A misreading of the Patent Roll printed as *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1354-58*, 70 by W.D. Cooper, *A History of*

Participation in the trade in wood was more difficult for customary tenants who were forbidden to cut wood, except that necessary for 'husbote' (building) and 'heybote' (hedging). The villeins at Wartling claimed that they were able to cut and sell timber and firewood freely, and had it been recognised, they would have had exceptional rights. In fact, they were allowed wood only for the purposes mentioned and punitive fines of three times the value of the wood were imposed there and at Herstmonceux for cutting the timber trees of oak, ash and beech.⁷³ There was particular concern that the guardians of underage tenants should not cut timber, and tenants who rented land were limited in the amount of wood they could take to prevent them committing waste. On the manor of Crowhurst, which was in convenient reach of the ports at Bulverhythe and Winchelsea, the cutting of wood for billets and timber was permitted on the payment of nominal fines. Some of the wood was explicitly cut for sale and in other cases the licences granted for 1000 or 2000 billets at a time imply quantities greater than for domestic use.⁷⁴

The Crowhurst neif Thomas Nateleghe was possibly a part-time wood merchant, since his goods seized in 1400 after a conviction for felony included 48 'schypbords' and 800 roofing shingles. Most of his Crowhurst lands were at farm and he paid chevage to live outside the lordship, but had agricultural interests in the manor of Battle, where he kept a herd of 18 cattle. A number of tenants at Crowhurst and Udimore dealt in firewood and talewood which they cut by licence either on their own lands or on the demesne. Similarly, John Remys a Lamberhurst tenant who paid 79s. for wood from the demesne in 1369, is likely to have been a merchant. Employment was provided by cutting and working the wood. The poll-tax for the vill of Blackham in Hartfield records three carpenters, a cooper and a woodman among the 15 artisans. Wooden items produced by craftworkers in the Weald included casks, troughs and hurdles, which were owed by the customary tenants at South Malling as part of their

Winchelsea (1850), 120 is the source of the persistent myth that large-scale charcoal burning was carried out at Winchelsea.

⁷³ *Customals of Battle Abbey*, 21-2; C.R.J. Currie, 'Timber Supply and Timber Building in a Sussex Parish', *Vernacular Architecture* 14 (1983), 52-4; BL Add. Rolls 32620, m. 2r.; 31503, m. 1r.; 32674, m. 6r.; ESRO SAS/Budgen 17. The timber trees are defined in BL Add. Roll 31508, 32683.

⁷⁴ BL Add. Roll 32657, mm. 6v., 7r.; ESRO A2300 (Crowhurst court rolls), mm. 1v., 3r., 9r., 19r.

services.⁷⁵

Industry probably formed a small part of the Wealden economy during the period studied, although there were abundant raw materials available locally. In addition to wood for fuel, there were also iron ore, clay and sand suitable for the production of iron, pottery, brick, tile and glass, and many fast-flowing streams to provide water-power. Yet in spite of these advantages, the industries remained small and not until the 16th century did the scale of production increase significantly.⁷⁶

The medieval Wealden iron industry was not large and in Sussex was mainly concentrated in the centre of the county around Horsham and Crawley, from whence London was relatively accessible. A smithy at Roffey near Horsham leased in 1344 with its anvil, hammer, tongs and other tools may have been the source of 1000 horseshoes ordered in 1327 and 150 sheaves of arrows in 1347.⁷⁷ In eastern Sussex excavated sites at Minepit Wood (Rotherfield) and at Chingley in Kent have shown the size of sites and have indicated that substantial investment was required for iron-working. Not surprisingly, the site at Chingley lay on the demesne, as did the well documented bloomery at Tudeley (near Tonbridge) in Kent. The forge established by Ralph Kenne to found iron on the neif tenement of Adam Creppe in the manor of Wartling may have been working on a smaller scale. Nevertheless, Ralph was a person of some local importance who held land in Brightling, frequently acted as witness to charters and was probably related to Alan and Richard Kenne who held a substantial areas of land in the same parish.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ ESRO A2300 (Crowhurst court rolls), mm. 8r.-v. For land held by Thomas Nateleghe in Battle, see also BL Add. Ch. 20042. BL Add. Roll 71301; PRO E179/189/35, m. 3r.; *Customs of the Sussex Manors of the Archbishop of Canterbury*, 37. More generally see J.R. Birrell, 'Peasant Craftsman in the Medieval Forest', *Agricultural History Review* 17 (1969), 91-107.

⁷⁶ On the glass industry not discussed here, see G.H. Kenyon, *The Glass Industry of the Weald* (1967), on and rural industry generally, J. Thirsk, 'Industries in the Countryside', in F.J. Fisher (ed.), *Essays in Economic and Social History of Tudor and Stuart England* (1961), 70-88.

⁷⁷ H. Cleere and D.W. Crossley, *The Iron Industry of the Weald* (1985), 89, 90; PRO E326/4039. The forge at Roffey was leased by the widow of Walter de Bonewyk. Walter was clearly a person of some substance as his position towards the head of the witness-lists in PRO C146/4714 and BL Add. Ch. 17296 suggests. *Victoria County History of Sussex* 2, ed. W. Page (1907), 242.

⁷⁸ J.H. Money, 'Medieval Iron-Workings in Minepit Wood, Rotherfield, Sussex', *Medieval*

Studies of pottery manufacture and distribution have pointed to the contrast in the scale of production in the medieval and early modern periods. Kilns of 13th- and 14th-century date are known in eastern Sussex at Brede, Rye, Hastings, Abbots Wood (Arlington) and suspected at Pevensey, most of them near to towns. Most kilns seem to have produced only for local sale. Very little 'Winchelsea' Black Ware made its way along the coast to Lewes, for example, in contrast to its abundance in medieval deposits at Winchelsea. Rye ware was more widely distributed, but still mainly served the local area. Although pottery is well represented on archaeological sites, its economic importance was slight. Pottery was not highly valued and its manufacture provided employment for a small number of people. Two men are identified as potters in the Brede court rolls in 1402-03 and a further one is mentioned in 1425. The level of employment at Ringmer seems to have been similar.⁷⁹

Cloth-making in the eastern Sussex Weald was not as important as the larger industry based around Cranbrook in Kent. Nevertheless, cloth-workers or merchants were found in a number of villages, and there were fulling mills in the narrow valleys in the High Weald. Two fulling mills are recorded in the Uckfield borgh of South Malling manor and single mills at Hammerden, Buxted, Rotherfield, Rushlake Green (Warbleton) and nearby at Bucksteep, though the latter was derelict in 1367. The site of a fulling mill is suggested by field names recorded in 1567 to the east of Robertsbridge, though no mill remained by the mid-16th century. Dying was carried

Archaeology 15 (1971), 86-111; D.W. Crossley, *The Bawl Valley Ironworks* (1975); Cleere and Crossley, *The Iron Industry of the Weald*, 92; BL Add. Roll 32615, m. 4v. For Ralph Kenne as a tenant, BL Add. Ch. 13605, BL Add. Ch. 42640-1, 42644, and as a witness see, ESRO SAS/RF 1/209, ESRO AMS 4457, HMAG HPL/B4-6, BL Add. Ch. 42639, 42649. For Alan Kenne see HMAG HPL/B4, BL Add. Ch. 42638, 42649 and for Richard Kenne, see p. 174.

⁷⁹ A.D.F. Streeten, *Medieval and Later Ceramic Production and Distribution in South-East England* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Southampton, 1985); A.D.F. Streeten, 'Craft and Industry: Medieval and Later Potters in South-East England', in H. Howard and E.L. Morris (ed.), *Production and Distribution: A Ceramic Viewpoint* (British Archaeological Reports, international series 120 (1981)), 323-46; K.J. Barton, *Medieval Sussex Pottery* (1979); A.J.F. Dulley, 'Excavations at Pevensey, Sussex, 1962-6', *Medieval Archaeology* 11 (1967), 219-20; PRO SC2/205/59, mm. 3v., 10v.; HMAG JER coll., Bundle D (Brede court rolls); J. Bleach, 'The Medieval Potters of Ringmer', *Ringmer History* 1 (1982), 43-54.

out in Burwash.⁸⁰ Local supplies of cattle-hides and of oak-bark and the plentiful streams in the Weald made it a suitable area for tanning. The abbeys of Battle and Robertsbridge both had tanneries and other tanners were working in the hundred of Henhurst and in the tithings of Dill (Warbleton), Mountfield, Wilting (Hollington) and *Inlegh* (Westfield). There were also numerous carriers who prepared the tanned skins for use.⁸¹

Salt-working was carried out on the coastal fringe and as far inland as Hailsham on the River Cuckmere. Though in the 11th century the greatest concentration of salt-working in England had lain in the Rye area, by the 14th century the industry was in decline. In the 1320s Flemish merchants were still shipping salt from ports in the east of the county, but at by the end of the century salt was being imported from the west coast of France.⁸²

Most crafts and industries in the Weald did not provide full-time employment, but were supplementary to agricultural work. The potters at Brede also held land and their craft was presumably a by-employment which could be carried on in the slack periods of the agricultural year. John Baker, a leather-worker in Ticehurst, apparently also worked part-time, since he held land, which he enlarged through purchase. He was identified by his craft to distinguish him from a similarly named tenant who was a

⁸⁰ J. Thirsk, *The Rural Economy of England: Collected Essays* (1984), 225; *Lathe Court Rolls and Views of Frankpledge in the Rape of Hastings*, 38; *Custumals of the Sussex Manors of the Archbishop of Canterbury*, 75; PRO C145/38 (10); BL Harl. Ch. 87 G 35; PRO C135/252; ESRO AMS 5592/107; BL Add. Roll 32675, m. 6r. *Survey of the Manor of Robertsbridge*, 137; the fields called Lower Fulling Mills and Upper Fulling Mills are shown on ESRO TD/E 86, parcels 22, 23. ESRO ASH 198.

⁸¹ Searle, *Lordship and Community*, 299-303; CKS U1475/Q4, 5, 6; *Rotuli Hundredorum* 2, 218, and Salzman, 'The Hundred Roll for Sussex, Part III', 77; *Lathe Court Rolls and Views of Frankpledge in the Rape of Hastings*, 120-1, 128-9, 136-7. On the sale of oak bark, see BL Add. Roll 71304.

⁸² Lincoln's Inn Library Hale MS. 87, ff. 59r., 69r.-v.; *Custumals of Battle Abbey*, 40. For the location of Saltland, see J.A. Brent, 'Alciston Manor in the Later Middle Ages', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 106 (1968), map facing 89. R.A. Pelham, 'Some Further Aspects of Sussex Trade During the Fourteenth Century', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 71 (1930), 183-5; ESRO RYE 136/51; A.R. Bridbury, *England and the Salt Trade in the Later Middle Ages*, 168-71.

baker, but he was adaptable in his trade for in a later gloss he is described as 'leather worker, now cooper'. Some of the merchants who traded the goods of the part-time craftworkers seem to have been very successful. Thomas Natelegh, the wood-merchant and Crowhurst neif, was a minor trader, but he managed to purchase land in Battle on which he kept a small herd of cattle. Thomas de Vinehall (*Fynhagh*) was of greater wealth. He was a local merchant, but purchased one of the three parts into which Socknersh manor was divided in 1350. Thomas Kenne, the descendant of the holder of another third of the manor, was a ripier or fish carrier.⁸³

⁸³ PRO SC2/205/59, mm. 1r., 10v.; ESRO SAS/CO/B 4, m. 3v.; ESRO SAS/CO/B 71, B 73; BL Add. Ch. 13605; *Nonarum Inquisitiones*, 373; HMAG HPL/B14, B36; BL Add. Roll 32675, m. 3v.

CHAPTER 4

UNITS OF LAND TENURE IN THE EASTERN SUSSEX WEALD

In his pioneering study of the regional character of English field systems Gray drew a bold line dividing Sussex into two parts. The line separated the South Downs and scarp-foot zone, an area of open-field agriculture, from the Weald. Subsequent research has largely confirmed Gray's division. Agriculture within the Weald of eastern Sussex was generally practised in severalty, each tenant's land lying in one or more small fields surrounded by hedges or shaws, whereas open fields were found only a few miles away at the foot of the Downs.¹ That sharp contrast in land-management was the evidence Jolliffe sought for areas of Saxons and Jutish settlement, and he was content merely to emphasise the differences in agriculture without attempting to study the pattern of Wealden fields in any detail. Indeed, the High Weald of eastern Sussex is barely considered in any of the standard works on the field systems, for these by definition address only regions with open fields. The pattern of fields and tenements of the area, nevertheless, deserves closer study for the light it casts on evolving pattern of settlement and land-use.²

The land on many Wealden manors was divided into tenurial units recorded by various names: virgates, wists - the local term for virgates - or, in Rotherfield, ferlings.³ These were blocks of land whose fields were generally contiguous, though occasionally might lie in two or three different parts. The Battle Abbey wist at Westfield lay in three pieces and some of the virgates held by the abbey at Glasseye

¹ H.L. Gray, *English Field Systems* (1915), preface map. A.R.H. Baker, 'Field Systems of Southeast England', in A.R.H. Baker and R.A. Butlin (eds), *Studies of Field Systems in the British Isles* (1973), 426-7. Open fields were, however, known in the Low Weald in central Sussex at Thakeham and Warminghurst, *Victoria County History, Sussex* 6 ii, ed. T.P. Hudson (1986), 41, 54-5.

² J.E.A. Jolliffe, *Pre-Feudal England: The Jutes* (1933), 10-12, 76. It was clear Gray was thinking of common fields when he defined a field system as 'the manner in which the inhabitants of a township subdivided and tilled their arable, meadow, and pasture land', Gray, *English Field Systems*, 3. Baker, 'Field Systems of Southeast England', 422-25.

³ 'Dividitur igitur leuga per wistas, que aliis in locis virgate vocantur', *The Chronicle of Battle Abbey*, ed. E. Searle (1980), 60-1.

(Beckley) were divided into the same number of parts.⁴ The tenurial units were sometimes bounded by streams and roads. On many manors there was no standard virgate size. In the High Wealden part of the extensive manor of South Malling the virgates varied from about 60 acres to twice that area, and in Rotherfield the ferlings, equivalent to a virgate elsewhere, measured between 35 and 134 acres.⁵ The land within each tenurial unit was worked in small fields and the fields themselves were occasionally sub-divided, for example, when parts were leased.⁶

Land was not held in similar tenurial units on every manor. On some manors the land was divided into large tenements, which though not called wists and virgates were otherwise identical in other respects. The three men who paid a joint rent of 14d. to Robertsbridge Abbey in the early 14th century were very probably the tenants of one of the wists at Hoadley (Ticehurst) given to the monastery in the late 12th century, for one of the tenants had the locative surname, de Hothlegh. The Robertsbridge rental does not describe the holding as a wist of land, though the nearly contemporary rental of Hammerden manor, to which Robertsbridge paid rents resolute, does list the holdings in these terms. Customary tenants on the manor of Vield (Peasmarsh) each held pieces of the substantial holdings which, though they were not called wists in the late 15th-century rental, were effectively the same.⁷

It was clearly inequitable to levy the identical rents and services upon tenurial units of widely differing sizes. The grosser differences were accommodated by valuing some tenements more highly than others. All the customary virgates in South Malling manor gave similar rents and services. Though most tenements were assessed at one virgate, some of the larger were valued at two virgates and the tenement of Yardhurst (Mayfield) was assessed as three virgates. Equally, smaller areas of land were assessed as half virgates or even as ferlings (quarter-virgates).⁸ Tenements on

⁴ PRO E315/56, ff. 1r.- 5r.; see pp. 94-6 above.

⁵ *Customals of the Sussex Manors of the Archbishop of Canterbury*, ed. B.C. Redwood and A.E. Wilson, (Sussex Record Society 57 (1957)), 62 (*Turtelond*), 63 (*Stapelyegh*); ESRO GIL 32.

⁶ BL Add. Roll 31309, m. 3v.; BL Add. Roll 32631, m. 2r.; ESRO AMS 4885, m. 13r.

⁷ *Report on the Manuscripts of Lord De L'Isle and Dudley Preserved at Penshurst Place*, Historical Manuscripts Commission (report 77, vol. 1 (1925)), 38; CKS U1475/M242; ESRO SHE 7/3; ESRO SAS/CO/B 72; CKS U455/M50.

⁸ *Customals of the Archbishop of Canterbury*, 39 (*Bercle*), 52 (*Watsted*), 70 (*Dune*).

the manor of Hammerden also varied in their valuation; some were reckoned as half-wists and others as $1\frac{1}{3}$ wists. The work-services were assessed according to these values, but the rent paid seems to have been calculated on a different basis, though it too was broadly proportional to area. The large wist at Cottenden (Ticehurst) gave 6s., but the smaller wist of Pickford gave only 2s.⁹

There was less disparity in tenement size at the east end of the High Weald. A standard 32-acre wist is mentioned in rentals and extents for the lands within the lowy of the manor of Battle, though there were some exceptions. One tenant held 13 acres of land 'for a wist' and on the demesne there was a wist of 48 acres. The apparent uniformity in area otherwise implied by the surveys may have been spurious. The Battle wists may nominally have comprised 32 customary acres, though these did not necessarily amount to 32 measured acres.¹⁰ A rental for Bexhill suggests that the tenants regarded the area of wists as 30 acres, unless they were clearly much larger or smaller. Even when this is allowed for, there was a considerably greater uniformity of tenement size at the east end of Sussex. Thirty-acre wists are also found at Crowhurst, and probably at Wilting (Hollington). The measured tenements of Vield manor had a mean area of 34 acres and varied in area between 29 and 41 acres.¹¹

The difference between the varied, and generally much larger tenements of the west part of Hastings Rape and Pevensey Rape and the smaller, more uniform tenements of the east may be related to their different origins. Those in the former area, it has been suggested, evolved from detached animal pastures. The history of settlement in the eastern part is obscure, but seems to have been rather different. They do not seem to have evolved as animal pastures, but may have been created for farming *ab initio*

⁹ ESRO SAS/CO/B 72.

¹⁰ E. Searle, 'Hides, Virgates and Tenant Settlement at Battle Abbey', *Economic History Review* 2nd series, 16 (1963), 299; E. Searle, *Lordship and Community: Battle Abbey and its Banlieu 1066-1538* (1974), 170. The distinction between 'fiscal' and measured acres is discussed by A. Jones, 'Land Measurement in England, 1150-1350', *Agricultural History Review* 27 (1979), 10-8. *Manorial Records of Cuxham, Oxfordshire, c.1200-1359*, ed. P.D.A. Harvey (Historical Manuscripts Commission, Joint Publications 23; Oxfordshire Record Society 1 (1976)), 78 emphasises that the size of virgates or similar divisions was nominal.

¹¹ WSRO Ep. VI/1/3, ff. 160v.- 163r. For Crowhurst, see ESRO A2300 (Crowhurst court rolls) mm. 1r., 1v. The wists at Crowhurst were later called tenements. BL Add. Roll 32737; CKS U455/M50.

and consequently were smaller areas which might be cultivated by a single family.¹²

Tenurial units in the Low Weald within a single manor were broadly of uniform area and were considerably smaller than those in the High Weald. The wists at Berwick measured 20 acres, and 18 acres at nearby Chalvington. A measure of a similar size was used for wists on the Battle Abbey lands at Alciston and Tilton, though there is some evidence that the 18-acre measure was a fiction to which holdings of differing sizes were made to conform. The early 14th-century rental divides up the holdings into wists, 'great wists' and half-hides. The 'great wists' were somewhere between the sizes of the two others. They paid a rent of 2s. 11d., a greater sum than the 2s. 4d. paid by the ordinary wists, but gave almost the same works as half a hide of land. The half hides gave twice as much rent and services as the wists. It seems possible that here, as in the High Weald, irregular-sized holdings of land were forced into one or other of the categories.¹³

The systems of land assessment had to be sufficiently elastic to accommodate the realities of the countryside and to enable new land brought into cultivation to be fitted into the pattern of the tenurial units. Two rentals for the manor of Hammerden show how new areas were incorporated within the structure of assessment. A rental attributable to c.1295 lists 14 wists on the manor, but by 1397 these had grown to 20.¹⁴ Not all of the wists in 1397 gave the full value for work services and most of those formed in the previous 100 years paid only part, suggesting that they could not support the burden of complete wists. Some of these new wists had evidently been created by fission, the division into parts of a large wist. In the c.1295 record two pieces of Limden wist, East and West, were mentioned, though these were assessed

¹² See above, pp. 93-5.

¹³ Searle, 'Hides, Virgates and Tenant Settlement', 299; ESRO SAS/CH 12; J.A Brent, 'Alciston Manor in the Later Middle Ages', *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, 106 (1968), 89n.; *Customals of Battle Abbey, in the Reigns of Edward I and Edward II, 1282-1312*, ed. S.R. Scargill-Bird, (Camden Society, new series 41 (1887)), 26-9.

¹⁴ The earliest rental is rolled inside ESRO SAS/CO/B 72. It is dated to c.1295 by a comparison of names on the 1296 subsidy roll, *The Three Earliest Subsidies for the County of Sussex*, ed. W. Hudson (Sussex Record Society, 10 (1910)), 10-11. ESRO SAS/CO/B 72 lists about 13 wists, but Down wist is not mentioned, though it is referred to in 1266 (A. Mawer and F.M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Sussex* (1930) (English Place-Name Society 7), 2, 452. An inquisition, PRO C145/38 (10) dated 1279/80 mentions 14¼ wists, which seems about accurate. The later rental is ESRO SAS/CO/B 71.

together as $1\frac{1}{3}$ wists; by 1397 they had been valued at one full wist each. Likewise, the land called 'the part at Watere' in 1397 had earlier probably been included in the Hazelhurst wist. The latter had been evaluated at $1\frac{1}{3}$ wists in c.1295 and had included tenants with the locative surname 'at Watere'.

The Hammerden wists were not ~~a~~ fixed areas, but flexible units which could grow as land was added and might be split when they reached an adequate size. On the manor of South Malling there was a similar cycle of expansion followed by fission. There were a total of eight ferlings at Possingworth (Framfield) in c.1285, equivalent to two virgates. Later documents call these the first and second virgates of Possingworth. Their extent may be determined by using 19th-century and earlier records to plot their exact boundaries; when plotted it is apparent that the lands of the two were intermixed (fig. 23). It is probable that the original, single virgate of Possingworth grew until it became sufficiently large to bear a double burden of rents and services. It was then divided and the individual holdings allotted to one or other of the virgates with the result that lands of the two were mixed.¹⁵

Much of the land clearance of the Weald took place gradually by removing the undergrowth from areas of waste immediately adjoining farmed land and bringing it into cultivation.¹⁶ A rather different pattern of development is indicated within the tongue of land of South Malling manor in Withyham. The boundaries of the land units here may be identified using post-medieval rentals and court records. Where some uncertainty remains it has been indicated on the plan (fig. 24) by a broken line.¹⁷ The most striking aspect of the plan of the customary holdings is the elongated, broadly regular form of the virgates. Gillridge virgate stretched for 2.8 km. and Alkesford for about half that distance. Their shape was quite different from land units already

¹⁵ ESRO AMS 5843; ESRO ADA 137 and 139; ESRO SAS/J 566; ESRO TD/E 6.

¹⁶ P.F. Brandon, 'Medieval Clearances in the East Sussex Weald', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 48 (1969), 146-7 suggests that this was the process and the evidence of the Possingworth virgates supports this interpretation.

¹⁷ ESRO AMS 5843; ESRO ADA 122-5, 137 and 139; ESRO TD/E 138. For a description of the process of plotting the virgates here, see M.F. Gardiner, 'Planned Medieval Land Division in Withyham, East Sussex', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 123 (1985), 113.

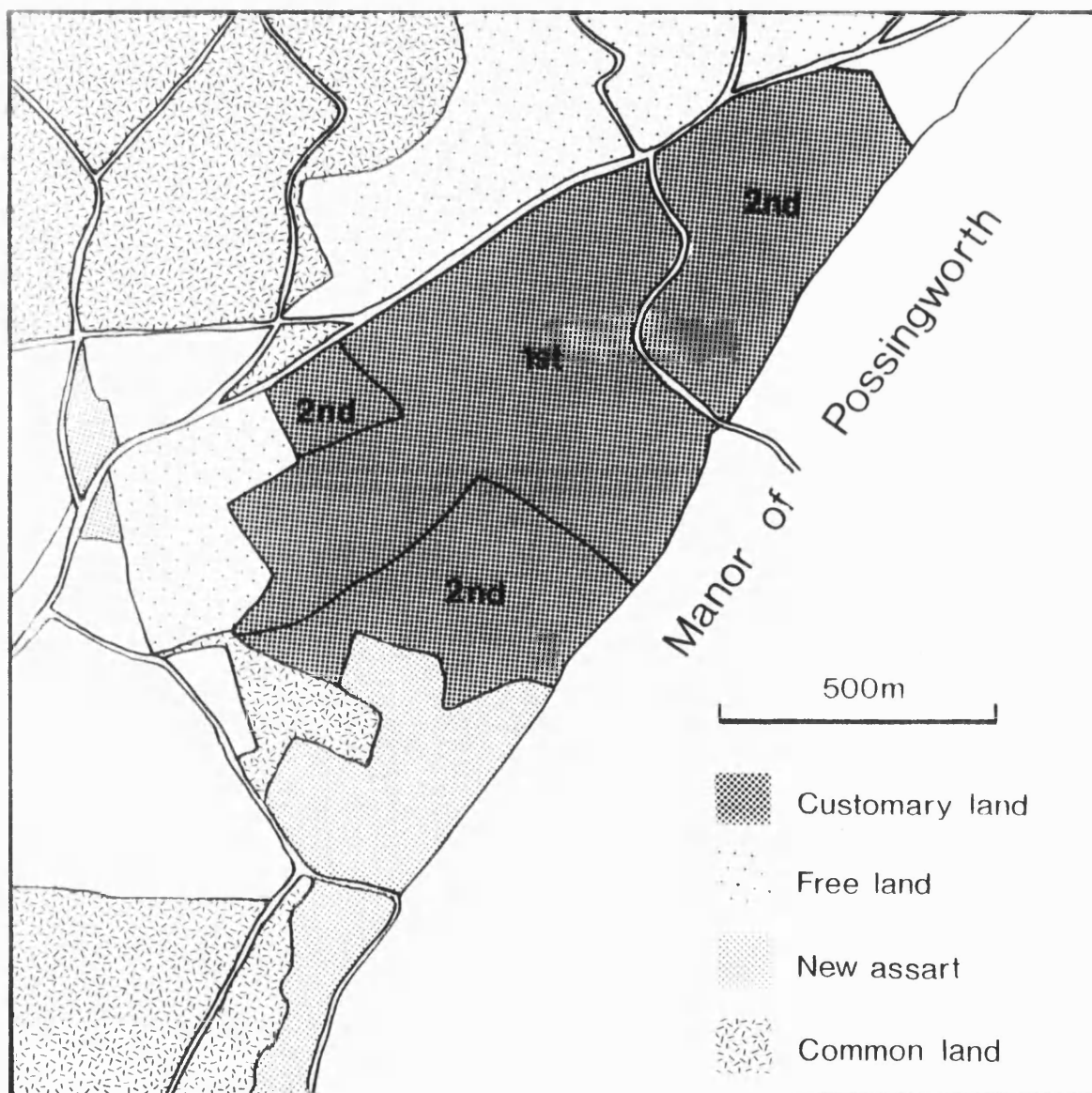


Fig. 23 The virgates of Possingworth.

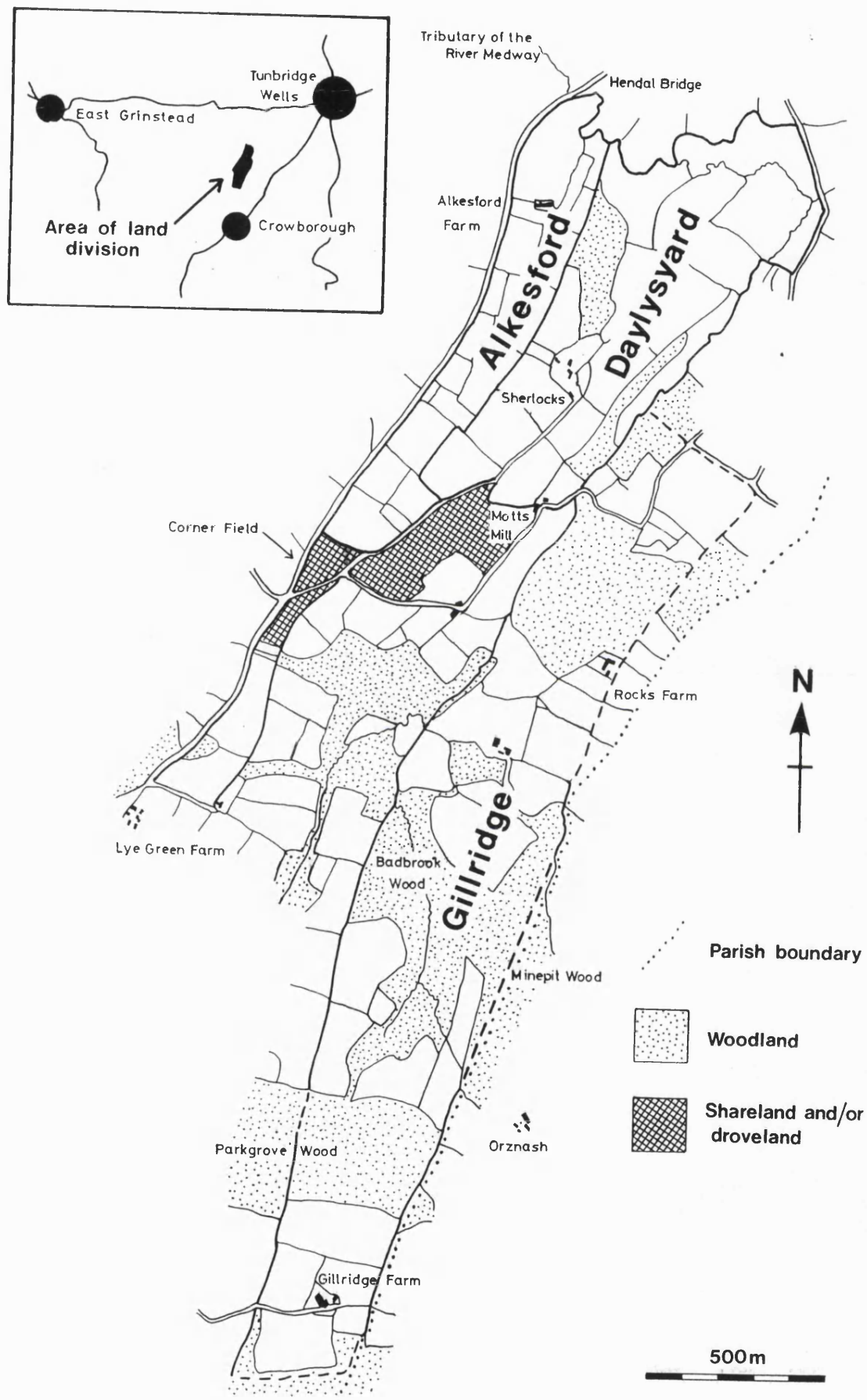


Fig. 24 Virgates in Withyham.

illustrated which were compact, not elongated in form. The land of the manor in Withyham was itself a thin band, but this does not explain entirely why the holdings developed as they did. The better land in the wide valley-bottom of the tributary of the Medway was divided between the virgates of Alkesford and *Daylisyrd* producing long, rather narrow holdings. The virgate of Gillridge extended southwards beyond the other two on to the lower slopes of Crowborough Beacon. Land on the upper slopes of the Beacon was infertile and remained as common until the 19th century.¹⁸

It is improbable that these long, regular strips of land would have arisen by gradual accretion of cleared land. The pattern of the fields, to use the terminology applied by Bradley and Richards to prehistoric field systems, is cohesive rather than aggregate.¹⁹ It is more likely that the boundaries of the customary tenements may have been determined either by replanning an existing pattern of fields, or by newly clearing the undergrowth to colonise this remote part of the manor. It is sometimes thought that such concerted action must have been initiated by the lord, but it is equally possible that the tenants themselves may have determined it and carried it out.²⁰

Planned tenements are also found in the adjoining manor of Rotherfield. Three of the ferlings recorded on the 1597 map of the manor were an identical size, 30 perches short of 80 acres. None of the ferlings elsewhere on the manor was of a similar area to any other. It is also notable that the main part of the three ferlings lay adjacent, at the southern extremity of the manor. However, unlike most of the ferlings, not all the lands of these tenements were situated in one locality. Part of two lay some distance away at Maynards Gate and a further piece was sited at Eridge Green (fig. 22). An additional reason for associating two of them is that they uniquely were named after former tenants, John a Derridge and Ralph a Derridge.²¹ All three ferlings were very

¹⁸ Brandon, 'Medieval Clearances', 149.

¹⁹ R. Bradley and J. Richards, 'Prehistoric Fields and Boundaries on the Berkshire Downs', in H.C. Bowen and P.J. Fowler (eds), *Early Land Allotment* (British Archaeological Reports 48 (1978)), 53.

²⁰ Cf. Gardiner, 'Planned Medieval Land Division'. For action by communities, see C.C. Dyer, 'Power and Conflict in the Medieval Village', in D. Hooke (ed.), *Medieval Villages: A Review of Current Work* (OUCA monograph 5 (1985)), 27-32.

²¹ ESRO SAS/LB 34; ESRO GIL 32. The former tenants took their names from Derridge (Farm).

likely laid out at the same time according to a common standard intended to be 80 acres. Such a work of measurement was well within the ability of the Rotherfield officials or tenants who were capable of measuring areas to within a fraction of a perch. The intention, as at Withyham, seems to have been to bring land at the periphery of the manor into cultivation. It was necessary to include a few acres of land situated some distance away to make the requisite area for equal-sized ferlings.

Some areas of meadow land, unlike most of the land within the Weald, was held in common. The parcel of meadow at Glasseye (Beckley) called *Menewyssh*, meaning 'common marshy meadow', was common to the adjoining tenants of the virgates of *Haysyerd* and *Avolynsyerd*. Not all meadow in the township was held in common; the land called *Broc* or *Les Brokes* was held in separate parcels by named tenants.²² Common meadow in the upper Brede valley held by the 'men of Whatlington' is mentioned in an early 13th-century grant and shares in the fields close by called *Brodewishe* and *Gorwisse* are referred to in charters of the same period. The land called Salehurst Mead in the Rother valley may also have been held in common and another field called *Menewishe* lay nearby. There was a further parcel of meadow in Wartling called *Menewisse*.²³

CHANGES IN THE ASSESSMENT OF RENT

The assessment of rents and services by tenurial units was a cumbersome system. Half of the land units in Hammerden did not give the services of a standard wist. It was perhaps for this reason that an alternative means of assessing the rent and services of land was used from the early 13th century for land taken into cultivation

²² The name contains the OE elements *(ge)mæne* or *(ge)mænnes* and *wisce*. For *Menewyssh*: PRO E315/56, f. 5r.; for *Broc* or *Les Brokes*: PRO E315/56, ff. 5r. and 2r.; HEH BA 950. On the use of OE *broc* for water meadow, see Mawer and Stenton, *Place-Names of Sussex*, 558.

²³ Lincoln's Inn Library Hale MS. 87, ff. 59r., 60v., 61v.; HEH BA 35/1142, 40/1125, 40/1174; *Manuscripts Preserved at Penshurst Place*, 59. D. Martin and B. Martin, 'An Architectural History of Northbridge and Salehurst Villages', *Historic Buildings in Eastern Sussex* 2 (i) (1980), 21, evidently referring to *The Manor of Etchingham cum Salehurst*, ed. S.P. Vivian (Sussex Record Society 53 (1953)), 63-5. For location of Salehurst Mead, see ESRO AMS 5691/3/4. *Survey of the Manor of Robertsbridge, 1567-70*, ed. R.H. D'Elboux (Sussex Record Society 47 (1944)), 135. *Menewish* was called Mine Brook on the tithe apportionment, ESRO TD/E86, parcel no. 144. BL Cotton MS. Otho Aii, f. 33v.

from the waste. Newly-settled land became, what Dodgshon has termed 'non-assessed land', land held by assart tenure.²⁴ The land was carefully measured and allotted a rent proportional to its area. The rate for assart was set on South Malling manor during the archiepiscopates of Stephen, Richard and Edmund (1207-40) at 1d. per acre. It rose to 2d. an acre during the time of Archbishop Boniface, that is from 1245, and a higher rate of 4d. was levied for land taken at an indeterminate point after the rental of c.1285. These were called early, middle and late assart land.²⁵ There was a comparable distinction in Rotherfield between the old assarts 'held from former time', in the words of the 1346/7 rental, and generally paying 1d. or 2d. per acre, and the later assarts giving 3d. or 4d. The rents of the holdings at Rotherfield were assessed by measuring the land area with considerable precision. Brandon, extrapolating backwards and assuming a uniform rate of land enclosure, has suggested a starting date of c.1220 for assart tenure in Rotherfield.²⁶ A rental dated to 1329/30 for Heathfield, a Wealden member of the manor of Bishopstone, in addition to four customary yardlands, lists 'Rudland', that is cleared land, held at a uniform rent of 2d. an acre. Much of this had already been cleared by the middle of the 13th century. Old and new assart land is mentioned in Burwash manor in 1334/5 and is distinguished from the other land held by customary tenants. At Bexhill in 1379 assessed land held in wists was distinguished from other small parcels held by the acre, some described as assart.²⁷

The transition from the assessment of land in virgates to its assessment in acres occurs not only in eastern Sussex, but also in neighbouring counties. In Surrey, the valuation of new holdings as virgates had generally ceased by the end of the 12th century in the north, but lingered as late as c.1220 in some parts of the Weald. Similarly, new land on the archbishop of Canterbury's manors in Kent was distinguished separately. The 1285 rental shows that newly-won assarts were not grouped in yokes (*iuga*) or *logi*, another local unit of land assessment. *Forland*, that is the 'land outside', was distinguished from *terra antiquitus iugata* at Charing, and at

²⁴ R.A. Dodgshon, *The Origin of British Field Systems: An Interpretation* (1980), 83 ff.

²⁵ *Customals of the Archbishop of Canterbury*, 31, 49, 66; ESRO A1244 (rental of the manor of South Malling).

²⁶ ESRO SAS/LB 34; Brandon, 'Medieval Clearances', 148.

²⁷ WSRO Ep. VI/1/5, ff. 138v.-139v.; PRO C145/149 (15); WSRO Ep. VI/1/3, f. 163v.

Wrotham there were parcels of new land and assart.²⁸ The early years of the 13th century, therefore, marked a transitional point on many manors throughout south-east England, when newly-cultivated lands were no longer assessed in terms of customary land units, but were described according to acreage. On some Sussex Wealden manors new land continued to be added to the existing virgates; the example of Hammerden has already been discussed. The court rolls of Bivelham (Mayfield) suggest that all land, free or neif, lay within one of the several wists. Though an entry dated 1442 distinguishes between the neif land and 'reedland' (assarted land), it records that both types formed part of a single wist. The significant difference was presumably between land held by customary tenure and land which was not. At Brede too virtually all the land was held in virgates, many of them named after former tenants. Only a small fraction of the recently enclosed land can be accounted for by the limited list of incremental rents.²⁹

The development of assart tenure was the first of the changes to affect the structure of land holdings and the assessment of rent. Rentals increasingly recorded the names of individual tenants and their dues, and less commonly attributed rent to blocks of land or to undifferentiated groups of holders. Three stages may be identified in the allocation of rents. In the first rents were charged against the block of land. Later the rentals list the names of tenants holding land within each tenorial unit, but do not identify the payments made by individuals. That only took place in the third stage when rents were levied against named tenants. The first two stages may be seen in successive rentals of the lands of Battle Abbey at Glasseye (Beckley). The earlier rental from 1406 x 08 does not name any tenants, but lists merely the yardland tenements and their rents. A subsequent survey of 1429/30 shows that each yardland was held by a number of tenants, some of whom were named, together with an unknown number of *socii* or associates. The tenants contributed towards a common rent paid by the yardland as a whole; rents were not paid by individuals.³⁰ The change

²⁸ W.J. Blair, *Landholding, Church and Settlement in Surrey before 1300* (unpublished D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1982), 166; J. Blair, *Early Medieval Surrey: Landholding, Church and Settlement before 1300* (1991), 74; A.R.H. Baker, *The Field Systems of Kent* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1963), 98; A.R.H. Baker, 'Open Fields and Partible Inheritance on a Kent Manor', *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, 17 (1964), 14; F.R.H. Du Boulay, *The Lordship of Canterbury: An Essay on Medieval Society* (1966), 117, n. 3.

²⁹ BL Add. Rolls 31108, 31118; HMAG JER coll. (unlisted Brede rentals).

³⁰ HEH BA 948, 950; PRO E315/56, ff. 1r.- 5r. For collective rents, see also pp. 69-70.

from the second to third stage of rent type can be traced in rentals of Baiden (Mayfield). Amongst the rents listed in 1363 were those paid by Helewise, the widow of Thomas de Wobenham, by William, son of Richard de Wobenham and by Richard, son of John de Wobenham. The locative surnames suggest that they may have held pieces of land close to one another. Stitched to the rental is a cover made from another document, probably the preceding list of rents. It records that William, Richard and John de Wobenham, their respective forebears, had paid a collective rent equal to the three individual rents recorded in 1363.³¹

The progression in the form of rent attribution is exemplified most clearly in three rentals of the Wealden member of Bishopstone manor at Heathfield. The earliest list of 1253 x 62 records four virgates and gives the rent and customary services for each. Though the names of the tenants are noted, no individual rents are given for they 'do everything according to their share'. In the second rental compiled in 1329/30 the tenants are listed individually, with the proportions of the virgates that they hold and the appropriate rents. Only a customary due called *wodepanes* was still given jointly. When the third rental was drawn up in 1379/80 almost all traces of the virgatal structure had disappeared. Only one virgate was described as such, and the land was listed in terms of its acreage rather than as fractional portions of assessed land units.³²

The growth of individual ascription of dues and the closer definition of land-holdings went together in the manor of Rotherfield. In the mid-13th century the customary tenants owed a collective rent of 200 swine for pasturing their pigs within Rotherfield park. A rental of 1346/7 lists the ferlings and the names of the customary tenants holding land within each and notes that the tenants gave a collective render of 200 pigs or their value. It does not note the rents of each tenant. By the mid-15th century neither the payment of the swine render, nor the rent for the ferlings was given jointly. Both had been divided up between individual tenants. Each of the 32½ ferlings of land in the manor was required to give six swine. Each ferling was divided into six parts called 'suems' upon which the burden of rendering one swine fell. The total number of swine owed was, therefore, 195 almost the same as the former

³¹ ESRO GLY 1117.

³² WSRO Ep. VI/1/5, f. 88v., printed in, *Customals of the Manors of the Bishop of Chichester*, ed. W.D. Peckham, (Sussex Record Society, 31 (1925)), 96; WSRO Ep. VI/1/5, f. 138r.; WSRO Ep. VI/1/3, f. 156r.

collective render of 200.³³ No documents show the evolution of this unique system of land division. In the earliest extant court roll of 1444/5 a marginal note records the number of swine given by each tenant within one ferling. Other court rolls of the mid-15th century mention one-sixth, one-twelfth and one-twenty-fourth parts of a ferling confirming that each had been split into six parts. Not apparently until 1538 is a 'swyme' of land mentioned by name and an undated list, probably written shortly after that, gives the complete list of 'all the bond tenants in Rotherfield that use to pay hogs' and the swine owed by each ferling. The unique system of land division in Rotherfield which had developed by the mid-15th century integrated the rent given for the pasturing of swine in the park with the holdings of customary land.³⁴

The customary tenurial holdings, whether ferlings, virgates or wists, usually maintained their character longer than comparable units of free land. Rent-payments could be divided relatively simply among tenants; it was more difficult to split up work-services, especially those which were given collectively by customary tenants. The mid-14th century holders of the ferlings in Rotherfield may have divided up the duties of ploughing ½ acre of demesne, harrowing, weeding, harvesting and threshing between themselves, but as far as the lord of the manor was concerned the service was owed by the ferling as a whole. It was quite impossible for the lord to divide the work-services which drew upon the combined resources of groups of tenants until those services were commuted for a money payment. Indeed, the tenants at Hammerden and Crowhurst acted not only in concert with other holders in the same wist, but also with other wists. The tenants' oxen were harnessed together in teams of 10 beasts to plough the demesne. The acreage ploughed by each wist was proportional to the number of oxen held: each wist at Crowhurst ploughed one acre, or a smaller area if the tenants did not have a full team.³⁵

The holders of tenurial units on some manors were collectively liable for manorial duties. Virgates on the manor of Brede had apparently once been held by individuals for they were called by the personal names of previous tenants. The virgates were

³³ On such group payments, see P. Vinogradoff, *English Society in the Eleventh Century: Essays in English Mediaeval History* (1908), 114, n. 2; PRO C133/7 (3); ESRO SAS/LB 34; ESRO SAS/Aber 102; cf. C. Pullein, 'The Rotherfield Swine-rent', *Sussex Notes and Queries* 1 (1926), 118-20.

³⁴ ESRO SAS/Aber 84; ESRO DYK 424 *et seq.*; PRO PRO 30/26/40/18; ESRO SAS/Aber 102, which is undated, but probably late 16th century.

³⁵ ESRO SAS/LB 34; ESRO SAS/CO/B 72; PRO C135/40 (8).

later divided by inheritance and sale between many tenants, but the duty of suit of court from the time of the earliest surviving court rolls of the mid-14th century fell upon the tenurial unit as a whole, not upon individual tenants.³⁶ The custom may have been a survival from an earlier date, but at Crowhurst the practice of collective service was an innovation of the late 14th century. The tenants agreed in 1396 that the 'tenements' should perform the manorial offices in turn. These 'tenements' had, until the late 14th century when the term dropped from usage, been called wists. Twelve tenements served in turn as the receiver of the Rape of Hastings and a similar number, made up of either whole tenements or two halves grouped together, acted consecutively as reeve of Crowhurst. The practice was also introduced to the manor of Bivelham within the same lordship. In 1401 the duties were performed by individuals, but in 1437 John Manser and his parceners who held the wist of Hightown served as beadle, and the parceners of *Ree* wist acted as receiver.³⁷

These changes at Crowhurst and Bivelham were contrary to the general trend by which the duties of rents and services were transferred from an area of land to the holder of that land. A number of elements in the process have been identified:

- i) categorisation of new land as assart, a precisely defined area valued according to its size and held by named tenants
- ii) attribution of rent to the holders of land rather than to the land itself
- iii) measurement of land held by individual tenants in terms of acreage rather than as fractions of a virgate or wist.

The final stage of the process was the dissolution of the pattern of tenurial units and the assessment of all land according to its acreage with rents ascribed to individuals. The process had run almost its full course at Wartling when a rental was compiled in

³⁶ HMAG JER collection (unlisted Brede court rolls); PRO SC2/205/59, m. 4r. For a similar practice in the Norfolk manor of Gressenhall, see J. Williamson, 'Norfolk: Thirteenth Century', in P.D.A. Harvey (ed.), *The Peasant Land Market in Medieval England* (1984), 52-53.

³⁷ ESRO A2300 (Crowhurst records), rental of 19 Henry VI. For the Crowhurst wists, ESRO A2300 (Crowhurst court rolls), m. 1r., v. and PRO C135/40 (8). BL Add. Roll 31086; BL Add. Roll 31113.

1366. The land was divided into two groups, the free and customary holdings, all listed simply with the names of the tenants and their rents. Traces of larger tenements can be discerned in the order in which the tenants were recorded or the brackets in the margins. *Tenementa operabilia*, customary holdings paying a rent of 4s., and giving work-services, referred to 40 years earlier, had entirely disappeared.³⁸ The structure of tenurial units at Rotherfield took longer to wither away. The 1346/7 rental lists the holdings under land type. The free tenements precede those in Rotherfield village and are followed by the assart tenants, the holders of customary ferlings and the cotmen. One hundred years later, however, a rental grouped together all the lands of whatever type under the tenants' names.³⁹

These changes in the means of assessing land may now be set within the context of the evolution of settlement in the Weald and in relationship to wider social and economic changes. The tenurial units in the north-west of the Weald were quite different from the virgates on the typical Midland manor, or even on manors in coastal Sussex. They were often large and sometimes irregular in size having grown through the clearance of adjoining land. Baker has suggested that at Gillingham in Kent the larger tenurial units lay on the poorer soils, so that the net value of the resources of each were equal, but there is no evidence for that in eastern Sussex.⁴⁰ These irregular tenurial units are unlikely to have been brought into existence by seigneurial authority, which would have sought to impose a greater regularity for administrative convenience; it is more probable that they arose from the early pattern of peasant land-holdings. The 1346/7 Rotherfield rental apparently preserves a distant memory of a time when each ferling was a family holding for it recalls that the 32½ ferlings were once held by 32½ tenants alone, but had been divided between many tenants by sale. The virgates in Brede too may have begun as family tenements for they bear the names of earlier holders. The size of some of the Rotherfield ferlings does lead to some doubt about the conclusion drawn by the mid-14th-century clerk. The named holders to which he refers may, as in other rentals, have simply been one of a number of tenants not individually listed who stood for an uncertain number of *socii* or *participes*.⁴¹

³⁸ ESRO SHE 7/16 and see Chapter 8 below.

³⁹ ESRO SAS/Aber 68.

⁴⁰ A.R.H. Baker, 'The Kentish *Iugum*: Its Relationship to Soils at Gillingham', *English Historical Review* 81 (1966), 74-9.

⁴¹ ESRO SAS/LB 34; Jolliffe, *Pre-Feudal England*, 23-7 discusses *socii*, *participes* and other

The rents and services given by the tenurial units represented a poor compromise between an assumption of uniformity which facilitated their collection, and a recognition of the differing abilities of virgates or wists to render dues. The problem was made more difficult by the continuing growth of tenurial units by the assarting and incorporation of waste. The unusual structure of tenurial units at Hammerden was one resolution of this difficulty. Another means of creating uniformity was to divide newly-enclosed land so as to achieve a regular pattern of tenurial units, the solution adopted at Withyham and in parts of Rotherfield. Ultimately, it was barely possible to contain the irregular areas of assarted land within a rigid structure of tenurial units. Newly-enclosed land was measured according to its area and held by assart tenure. It is probable too that assart tenure was introduced, not only to facilitate the collection of rents and services, but also to maximise the dues given by new holdings. The revival of demesne agriculture in the late 12th century and early 13th century was accompanied by a growing interest by manorial lords in the closer management of their lands.⁴² The often vague terms in which earlier manorial customals were couched were replaced by a more precise descriptions of services given in later documents and the burden of duties often increased. The 1251-2 customal of Battle, for example, specifies in greater detail than an earlier 12th-century record the work to be carried out by customary tenants labouring on the abbey demesne.⁴³ In the same way throughout the 13th and 14th centuries the manorial officials in the Weald sought a more precise definition of responsibility for rents and services, and to record the names of those individuals in new rentals.

The value of dues given by free and villein holdings, though eroded by inflation and rising costs, could not be increased very much if at all. The force of custom was sufficiently strong in the Weald to prevent increase in entry fees or rents. New lands, however, might be forced to carry heavier dues from the outset.⁴⁴ Assart tenure was

similar terms.

⁴² M.M. Postan, 'The Chronology of Labour Services', in M.M. Postan, *Essays on Medieval Agriculture and General Problems of the Medieval Economy* (1973), 89-106; P.D.A. Harvey, *Manorial Records* (1980), 19; E. Miller and J. Hatcher, *Medieval England: Rural Society and Economic Change 1086-1348* (1978), 210-3.

⁴³ E. Searle, *Lordship and Community: Battle Abbey and its Banlieu* (1974), 168-71. For a similar process on the bishop of Worcester's manors, see C.C. Dyer, *Lords and Peasants in a Changing Society: The Estates of the Bishopric of Worcester, 680-1540* (1980), 102-105.

⁴⁴ P.D.A. Harvey, 'The English Inflation of 1180-1220', *Past and Present* 61 (1973), 3-30; D.L.

a more effective means of extracting the greatest dues from land, for it was related to area and, therefore, to the productive capacity of the land. The rate per acre for new land might be increased as demand rose or the value of the rent fell in real terms. Work-services were the *raison d'être* of the virgate, as Blair has observed for neighbouring Surrey.⁴⁵ Once these were commuted to money payments the tenurial units might disappear, as happened at Wartling, and rentals might be re-organised and list all payments from whatever class of land under the name of the tenant. The renewed interest in the former wists of Crowhurst and Bivelham seemingly stands out against the tendency towards the dissolution of tenurial units. The structure of wists was preserved at Crowhurst under the name of 'tenements' only because it facilitated the appointment of seigneurial officials. These burdensome jobs were accepted reluctantly by tenants and there was opposition to the performance of services at all. Officials, previously elected in court by the whole homage, might be appointed more easily from each tenement in turn, and since most tenements had more than one tenant, the duty might be spread among a number of individuals who could divide the work or contribute to pay one person to perform the service. The tenurial units were preserved in that way long after they had ceased to have any other significance.⁴⁶

Farmer, 'Prices and Wages', in H.E. Hallam, (ed.), *Agrarian History of England and Wales*, 2 (1042-1350) (1988), 717-8. On the force of custom, see p. 179 below.

⁴⁵ Blair, *Early Medieval Surrey: Landholding, Church and Settlement*, 81.

⁴⁶ For reluctance to serve in Crowhurst, see BL Add. Roll 31487. For the appointment of a substitute at Bivelham, see BL Add. Roll 31083.

CHAPTER 5

THE DEVELOPMENT OF VILLAGES AND HAMLETS

The High Weald was generally an area of dispersed settlement with few concentrations of population. There were a small number of towns in the region, but the urban centres generally lay at the periphery of the Weald, along the coast, at Pevensey, Hastings, Winchelsea and Rye, or in the Low Weald at Hailsham and Cuckfield (fig. 25). The only other towns in the area considered here were Battle and, less certainly, Uckfield. East Grinstead, though in the High Weald, lay to the west beyond the area studied.¹

The growth of a town at the gates of the abbey at Battle in the final years of the 11th and the opening years of the 12th century was remarkable. There was no urban centre here when the abbey acquired the land after the Norman Conquest, but by the first rental in c.1100 there were already 109 householders. The town's people were derived in the main from the local area, with the addition of some immigrants from France. The area occupied by the town continued to increase, and by 1240 a new tithing of Montjoy had been formed along the Whatlington road; further suburban expansion was constrained by the borough crosses which defined the limits of burgage tenure. Limitations of space may have led to the sub-divisions of messuages in Battle in the late 13th century. But the growth in the urban population, which had reached between 1,000-2,000 before the advent of the Black Death, was effectively halted by the pestilence and by the late 14th century the population was in decline. In 1390s land within the town was lying vacant, tenements were engrossed and more substantial houses began to be constructed on the sites formerly occupied by a number of smaller buildings.²

Battle and the ports of Pevensey, Hastings, Winchelsea and Rye were all 11th-century foundations. The next wave of town foundation occurred in the years around 1200 when new urban centres were established throughout England.³ In eastern

¹ F.G. Aldsworth and D.J. Freke, *Historic Towns in Sussex: An Archaeological Survey* (1976).

² *The Chronicle of Battle Abbey*, ed. E. Searle (1980), 50-1; C. Clarke, 'Battle c.1110: An Anthroponymist Looks at an Anglo-Norman New Town', *Anglo-Norman Studies* 2 (1980), 31; E. Searle, *Lordship and Community: Battle Abbey and its Banlieu 1066-1538* (1974), 116-7, 354-6, 359-64.

³ D.J. Freke, 'Medieval Urban Archaeology in Sussex', in P. Drewett (ed.), *Archaeology in*
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Sussex, new towns were established at East Grinstead, and the existing town of Hastings was probably relocated to a new site in the Bourne Valley.⁴ The settlement of Uckfield was founded during this period at the edge of the High Weald with the intention of creating an urban centre on the Lewes-Tonbridge road. In 1219/20 a charter was granted to allow a Wednesday market there, though this may have lapsed or the day may have been altered, for by the end of the century the market was held on Monday. Although it aspired to the status of a town, in the late 13th century Uckfield had only 12 burgesses and 11 shops and remained little more than a village in size. Traces of the original pattern of rents of 9d. for burgess holdings and 6d. for shops can be discerned in a rental of c.1285. The subdivision and amalgamation of these original plots may suggest that the town had already been in existence for some years. The town of Hailsham may also have been founded during the 13th century for a charter of 1270 x 98 granted the 'men of Hailsham' freedom from heriot and work services. The intention was evidently to encourage the growth of the market centre by giving its tenants some of the rights of town-dwellers.⁵

Outside these towns there is very little evidence for nucleated settlement in the eastern Sussex Weald before 1250. The growth of villages and hamlets in the Weald occurred substantially later than the development of such settlements in other areas of England.⁶ Although most of the pre-modern villages had probably been established by 1300, the process is difficult to follow for settlement growth occurred gradually and invariably leaves only tangential documentary evidence. The best sources are

Sussex to AD 1500 (Council for British Archaeology, research report 29 (1978)), 90; M.W. Beresford, *New Towns of the Middle Ages: Town Plantation in England, Wales and Gascony* (1967), 329.

⁴ For East Grinstead, see P.D. Wood, 'East Grinstead Borough in the Middle Ages', *Bulletin of the East Grinstead Society* 19 (1976), 5-6, 10; P.D. Wood and P. Gray, 'East Grinstead: A Borough and its Buildings', in J. Warren (ed.), *Wealden Buildings: Studies in the Timber-Framed Tradition of Building in Kent, Sussex and Surrey* (1990), 173-7. For the relocation of Hastings, see *Victoria County History of Sussex* 9, ed. L.F. Salzman (1937), 9.

⁵ *The Great Roll of the Pipe for the Fourth Year of the Reign of King Henry III*, ed. B.E. Harris (Pipe Roll Society 47 new series (1987)), 69; *Customals of the Sussex Manors of the Archbishop of Canterbury*, ed. B.C. Redwood and A.E. Wilson (Sussex Record Society 57 (1958)), 76-7, 95; L.F. Salzman, *The History of the Parish of Hailsham* (1901), 24-5.

⁶ C.C. Taylor, *Village and Farmstead: A History of Rural Settlement in England* (1983), 126-8.

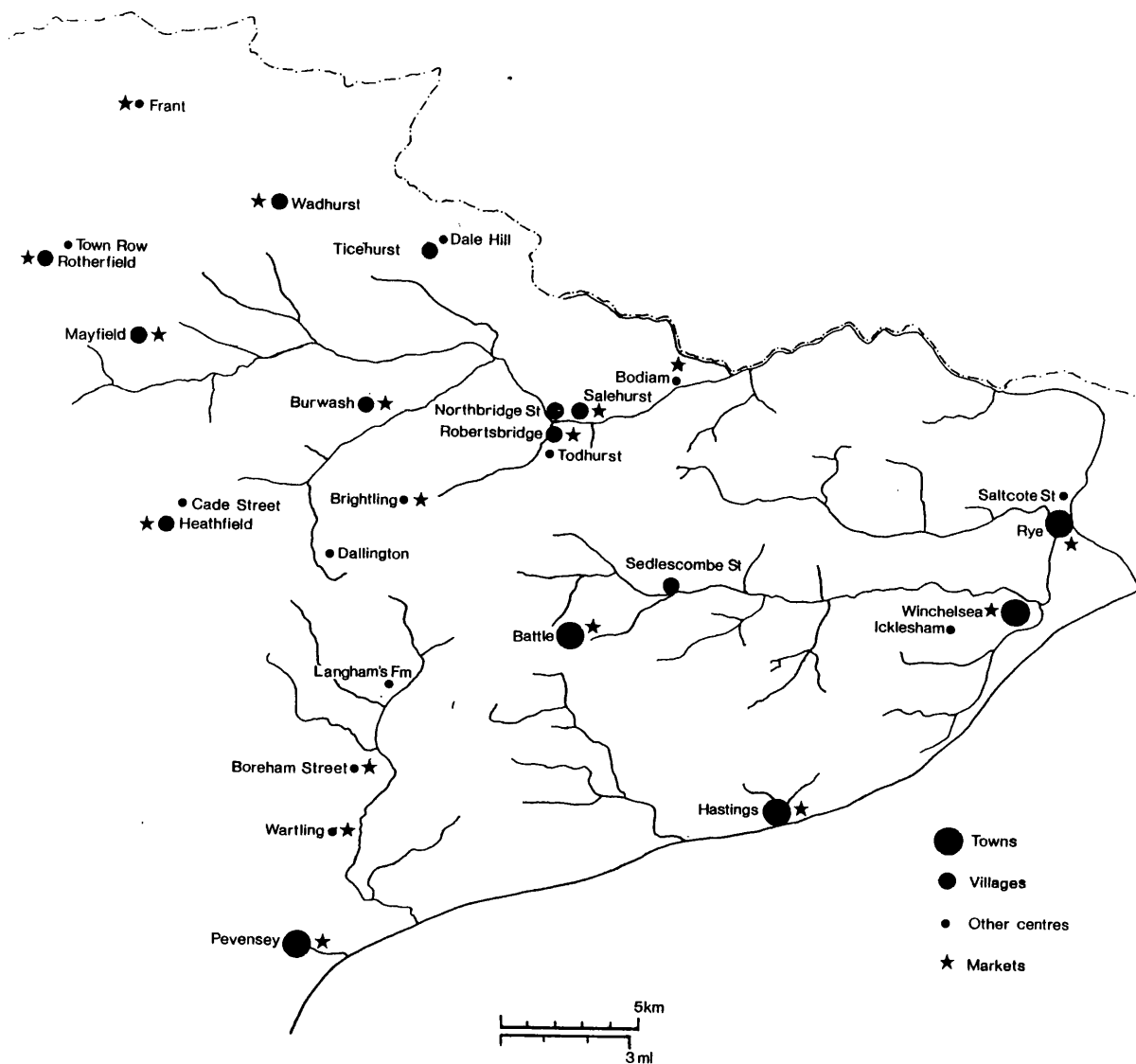


Fig. 25 Towns, villages and selected other centres in the eastern Sussex Weald.

detailed surveys and rentals, but these are few in number, and less comprehensive rentals may not provide sufficient information to locate tenants' places of residence. There is some evidence that medieval sources used the terms *villa* and *vicus* to discriminate between a village and hamlet. Burwash was a *villa*, but nearby Brightling was always a *vicus*. The word *villa* was generally used for a village, but is sometimes applied to a vill or tithing, which otherwise were *villata* and *borgha*. The evidence from other sources is more oblique. Since nucleated settlement in the eastern Weald seems to be closely associated with trade or manufacture, grants of markets may suggest the presence of a village. Strictly, a grant indicates only an intention to create a market and not all markets flourished; some, indeed, may never have been established. Other markets were not held at centres of population and permanent settlements may never have grown up around them. Records of shops in rentals and charters are a more reliable guide to commercial activity.

The relationship between nucleated settlement and trade in the Weald is complex. Commercial activity might precede settlement or indeed might take place independently of it. The village of Mayfield, which grew up outside the wall of the archbishop of Canterbury's palace and near to the parish church, illustrates the association between commerce and settlement. Du Boulay has suggested that the palace was constructed shortly after 1260 when the rectory was appropriated to the archbishop. It was certainly built before 1279, and was further enlarged in c.1310. A market was granted in 1261, but no income from shops is recorded in the c.1285 survey. During the late 13th century the archiepiscopal household stopped at Mayfield generally once or twice a year and would have created a demand, albeit periodic, for provisions.⁷ A series of plots were set out as shop places and buildings were

⁷ *Calendar of Charter Rolls* 2 (1257-1300), 38; F.R.H. Du Boulay, *The Lordship of Canterbury: An Essay on Medieval Society* (1966), 138; *The Register of John Pecham, Archbishop of Canterbury 1279-1292* 1, ed. F.N., Davis and others (Canterbury and York Society 64 (1969)), 10; N. Coldstream, 'Fourteenth-Century Corbel Heads in the Bishop's House, Ely', in F.H. Thompson (ed.), *Studies in Medieval Sculpture* (Society of Antiquaries Occasional Paper 3 (new series) (1983)), 176, n. 14; cf. M. Wood, *The English Medieval House* (1965), 353. The household under John Pecham generally stopped at Mayfield in July or August; under Robert Winchelsey its visits, usually in late December or the New Year, were more frequent and of longer duration. *The Register of John Pecham*, ix-xv; *Registrum Roberti Winchelsey, Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi AD 1294-1313* 1, ed. Rose Graham (Canterbury and York Society 51 (1952)), xxxviii-xli. For the stimulus to market development provided by a major household, see K. Mertes, *The English Noble Household 1250-1600: Good Governance and Politic Rule* (1988), 118-9.

constructed on them. Buildings on 85 shop places were destroyed in 1389 when a fire swept through the village burning down houses and damaging the church. By this date most of the tenants held more than one 'shop place' for the small plots originally laid out for stalls had very probably been grouped together to create larger areas for more substantial buildings. Certainly this had happened by the mid-15th century when even a cottage occupied two shop places and bigger houses stood on the sites of three or more stalls. Though the site may have been adequate for original stalls set out in front of the church, it was inconvenient for a village. The palace and church on the north side of the High Street limited growth in that direction and in the 15th-century barns and gardens appurtenant to the houses lay on the opposite side of the road in 'forelands'. Away from the centre of the village other buildings stood on pieces of the archbishop's former parkland, on demesne which had been granted out and on waste.⁸

Mayfield exceeded the intention of its founder and became not only a place of trade, but also of settlement. Wartling, however, does not seem to have developed beyond a group of stalls. A grant to hold a weekly market was issued in 1337 and the first reference to shops appears in 1340. The shops, a forge and a stable stood around a market place close to the church, but many of these were little more than booths and would not have provided accommodation. The largest was a 'place' of 14 by 10 feet. Shops of seven feet by five feet and six feet by four feet are also mentioned. The buildings on the shop sites were permanent structures. A thief gained access to one shop through the window of the door of the building. The rental of 1366 lists seven shops, but six of these are said to have been in the lord's hands for want of tenants. That may be correct, but from the 1370s onwards the demand for shops was strong. New sites were let for shops and the lord was able to charge increased rents. Presentment for repairs to buildings in the 1390s and 1400s do not indicate a faltering of the market at Wartling, for the defective buildings were often sold and repaired by new tenants.⁹

The villages of Wadhurst and Ticehurst may also have begun as trading centres. There

⁸ *Custumals of Sussex Manors of the Archbishop of Canterbury*, 47-60; W.D. Cooper, 'Mayfield', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 21 (1869), 17; Lambeth Palace Library ED 2068, 1900 (I am grateful to Eric Keble for drawing my attention to the latter document), ED 1080; ESRO AMS 5512, ff. 5v., 8r., 10r., etc.

⁹ *Calendar of Charter Rolls* 4 (1327-41), 431; BL Add. Rolls 32641, 32642, m. 1r., 32692, m. 13v., 32695, 31508, 32693, 32712, m. 2r.; ESRO SHE 7/16; BL Add. Rolls 32691, 32697, 32700.

is no trace of a settlement at the former place in the c. 1285 rental, although a market charter had been granted in 1253 and stallage was paid in the late 13th century. The stall plots, like those at Mayfield, were very small and were later amalgamated to form larger holdings. The village which later developed on the site of the market place was never very large and in 1498 there were only 19 shop places, then occupied by houses.¹⁰ The village of Ticehurst developed a few miles to the east on the same road around the market place in front of the church. A rental of c. 1295 mentions a piece of land, presumably for a stall, 7 by 13 feet in the market place, a forge and a number of further shops and plots. A century later Ticehurst was described as a *villa* and there were a number of houses and cottages there.¹¹

The villages of Mayfield, Wartling, Wadhurst and Ticehurst grew from market stalls set out close to their churches. The foundation of the first three of these settlements was probably due to seigneurial initiative. Market charters were purchased and the plots for stalls laid out. No charter has been found for Ticehurst. The village of Heathfield, by contrast, was not founded as a market and had no formally established shop places. The stimulus for the development of a settlement evidently came from both manufacture and trade. The first extant rental of Heathfield attributed to 1253 x 62 mentions four shops held by Adam Baker, Geoffrey Chaloner, Richard Basok and Adam de Beckington, the last of these lying next to the churchyard. The shops of Richard Basok and Adam de Beckington were constructed on former farmland, part of a customary virgate. The rental evidently lists the tenants in a broadly topographical order, for others in the same part of the document, Adam de Ecclesia and Robert Vicar, bear names suggesting their proximity to the church. Other tenants mentioned in that part of the rental include Geoffrey Weaver (*Textor*) who had one house, Nicholas Weaver with one house and 1½ acres and Godfrey Mercer who may have lived nearby. If, as seems likely at this date, many of these surnames were not hereditary but were derived from their livelihood, then Heathfield may be identified as a settlement of textile workers and merchants. Heathfield was not granted a charter

¹⁰ *Calendar of Charter Rolls* 1 (1226-57), 432; *Custumals of Sussex Manors*, 30-47; Lambeth Palace Library ED 1900; ESRO AMS 5512, ff. 34r.-53r.

¹¹ HMAG Hastings Priory Ch. 13. The charter is undated, but witnesses include Robert de Pashley who was a fine in 1275 (*An Abstract of Feet of Fines Relating to the County of Sussex from 34 Henry III to 35 Edward I*, ed. L.F. Salzman (Sussex Record Society 7 (1908)), no. 807) and Richard ate Water who was a tenant holding land in Ticehurst market place in the c. 1295 rental (ESRO SAS/CO/B 72). ESRO SAS/CO/B 71, 72.

for a weekly market until 1315.¹²

Ticehurst, Wadhurst and Heathfield were all small villages, perhaps not a great deal larger than hamlets, but Mayfield and Rotherfield were more substantial settlements. The village at Rotherfield or the tenements 'on the hill' as they are described, comprised 34 plots of land with buildings in 1346/7. A plan of 1597 suggests that these lay in three areas: to the north of the church on the opposite side of the road, to its west and to its east. The village was entirely surrounded by demesne land (fig. 22). The Hundred Rolls report that the lord of Rotherfield, the earl of Gloucester, had made an encroachment on the highway there and had taken rent for the land to the value of 20s. Such a substantial sum, even if exaggerated, implies a major purpresture. The church stands at the head of a funnel-shaped piece of land (fig. 26). It is suggested that the village may have been established in part upon land enclosed from that area, which may have been the former market place. If that supposition is correct, the village probably originated in the second half of the 13th century.¹³

Few of the plots of land in Rotherfield village were more than a rood or two in extent. Less than half the tenants in the village held land elsewhere and may have been wage labourers or undersettles or craftsmen. Two of the village tenants who held land elsewhere were neifs and the remainder held pieces of free or assart land. Three of the buildings were occupied by chaplains and a fourth cleric held other land 'on the hill'. They presumably served the church close by. Brandon has suggested that hat-making was important in the village in the mid-14th century, though no evidence has been found to substantiate this.¹⁴

¹² WSRO Ep. VI/1/3, f. 47r. A similar rental from Liber P (WSRO Ep. VI/1/5, f. 89r.) is printed in *Thirteen Customals of the Sussex Manors of the Bishop of Chichester*, ed. W.D. Peckham (Sussex Record Society 31 (1925)), 97. R. McKinley, *The Surnames of Sussex* (English Surnames Series 5 (1988)), 56-7, 60-1. *Calendar of Charter Rolls* 3, 306.

¹³ ESRO SAS/LB 34; BL Harl. Ch. 111 C 42; ESRO GIL 32; *Rotuli Hundredorum*, ed. W. Illingworth 2 (Record Commissioners, 1818), 203; L.F. Salzman, 'The Hundred Roll for Sussex, Part II', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 83 (1943), 35.

¹⁴ ESRO SAS/LB 34; P.F. Brandon, 'Medieval Clearances in the East Sussex Weald', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 48 (1969), 149.

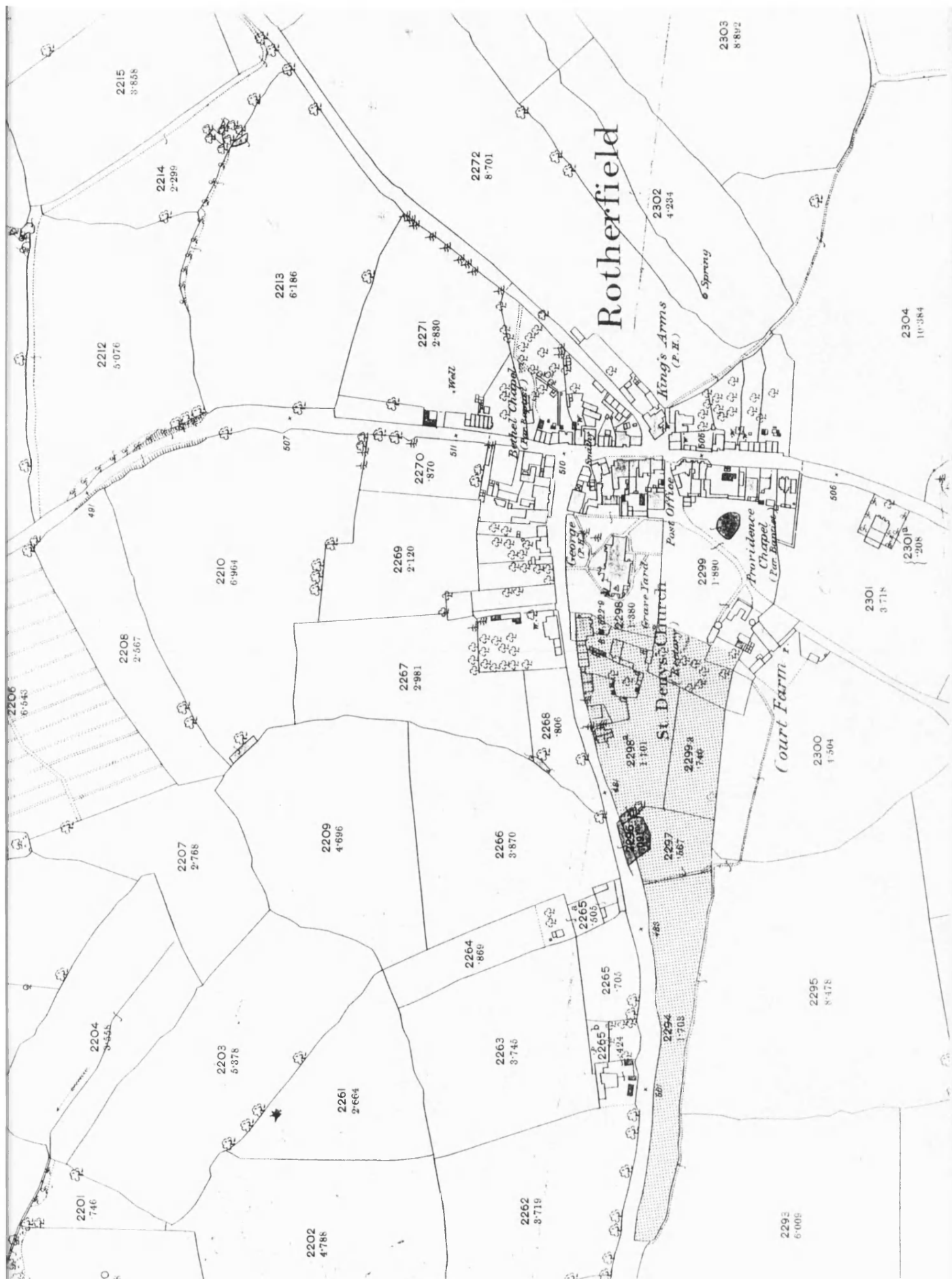


Fig. 26 The village of Rotherfield shown on the first-edition 25-inch Ordnance Survey map (reduced). The inferred purpresture is shown by tone.

The development of a village at Robertsbridge, like Rotherfield, was almost certainly initiated by the manorial lord. It is unlikely that there was a significant settlement at Robertsbridge when the monks chose the site for their monastery in c.1180. The Cistercians sought out remote, secluded locations for their religious houses, even if to achieve this it was necessary to move existing settlements.¹⁵ The formation of the village is likely to have taken place when the monastery was relocated at *Elham* in the Rother valley to the east. The grant of a market and fair in 1225 implies an interest in developing Robertsbridge as a commercial centre. The grant, made during Henry III's stay at the monastery in that year, was cancelled the following month, because it is said to have threatened existing markets in the neighbourhood. A new grant was made in 1253.¹⁶

Martin and Martin (née Mastin) have offered an interpretation of the growth of Robertsbridge based on an examination of the topographic evidence. They have argued that the original north-south road passed through the minor settlement at Salehurst, crossed the Rother and passed to the east and south of Robertsbridge village (fig. 27). The road system was first altered by constructing a link road to join Robertsbridge with the main route. Subsequently, a new crossing was built over the Rother north of Robertsbridge and this became the new main route, diverting traffic away from the settlement of Salehurst and leading to its decline. The eponymous Robertsbridge named after the founder of the abbey, was according to their interpretation not a bridge over the Rother, but across a minor stream, presumably Glottenham Stream to the west.¹⁷

A charter of the late 12th or early 13th century suggests a slightly different

¹⁵ C. Platt, *The Monastic Grange in Medieval England: A Reassessment* (1969), 93; R.A. Donkin, *The Cistercians: Studies in the Geography of Medieval England and Wales* (1978), 39-44.

¹⁶ *Survey of the Manor of Robertsbridge, 1567-70*, ed. R.H. D'Elboux, (Sussex Record Society 47 (1944)), 124. Henry III stayed at Robertsbridge on 25th January 1225, *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1216-25*, 505. *Rotuli Litterarum Clausarum*, ed. T.D. Hardy 2 (Record Commissioners, 1834), 14, 16; *Placita de Quo Warranto*, ed. W. Illingworth (Record Commissioners, 1818), 759-60; *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1461-7*, 408.

¹⁷ D. Martin and B. Mastin, *An Architectural History of Robertsbridge* (Hastings Area Archaeological Papers 5 (1974)), 4-6; D. Martin and B. Martin, 'An Architectural History of Northbridge and Salehurst Villages', *Historic Buildings in Eastern Sussex* 2 (i) (1980).

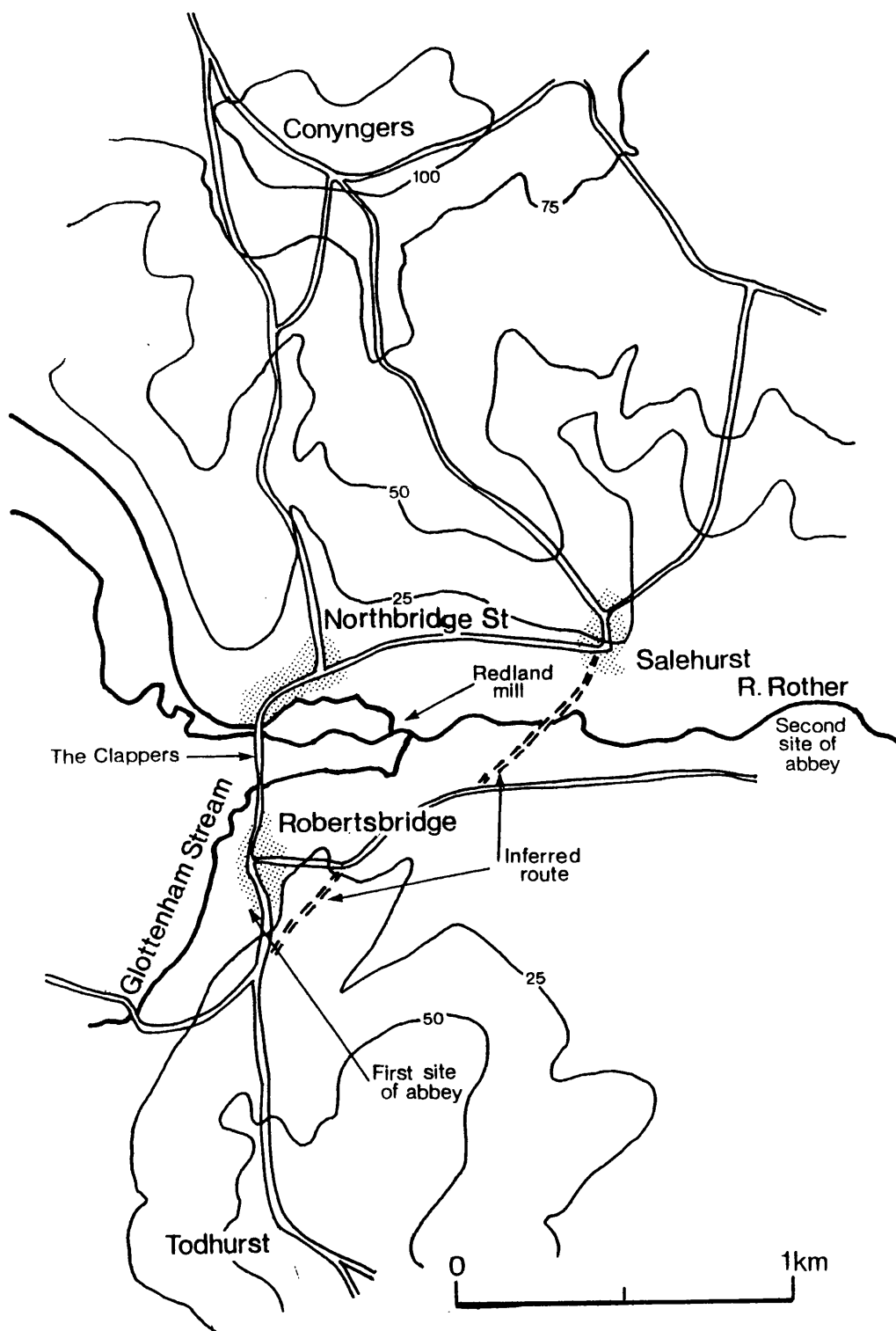


Fig. 27 Settlements and routeways in the Robertsbridge area.

interpretation of the evidence. Robert de Ockham granted Robertsbridge Abbey a pond on the Rother upstream of Redland mill lying *inter pirum et longum pontem*. The latter place might be translated either as 'the long bridge' or 'long causeway'. The pond was evidently connected with the mill, either supplying it directly, or feeding the mill pond. Whichever was the case, it must have been situated just above the mill, which was upstream from the bridge to the south-west of Salehurst, presumed by the Martins to be the original route across the Rother. The charter suggests that by the early 13th century there were two ways over the river, the 'long bridge' and the bridge near Salehurst, which still served a footpath in the 16th century. The *longus pons* is very likely to have been the crossing over the Rother, now called The Clappers, which traverses the valley on an embankment, perhaps the successor to the possible causeway of the charter.¹⁸ The two markets of Salehurst and Robertsbridge may therefore have grown up near to separate crossing points over the Rother valley.

The subsequent growth of Robertsbridge can be investigated using later rentals. The first is undated, but has been ascribed variously to c. 1225 and the period 1280 x 93. A subsequent rental of 1327 is clearly based upon it, for it mentions the heirs of tenants named in the first. On these grounds an attribution to the very end of the 13th or early years of the 14th century seems more likely. Chapman has proposed a date of 1280 x 93 for the undated rental, but this is not a *tempus a quo* as she suggests, but a *tempus post quem*. The rental must have been compiled before 1305 when John de Bugsell, mentioned among the tenants, had been succeeded by his son, Alan.¹⁹

The tenants of Robertsbridge manor are listed in the rentals under the headings of the townships into which the manor was divided. The tenants of 'Robertsbridge', therefore, did not necessarily hold land within the village, but in the borgh of that name. There are no rents of recurrent value which might suggest tenements of a standard size. Some of the tenants in the first rental had occupational names, including Walter Textor (Weaver), Henry and Robert Fuller and Henry Tincter (Dyer) who may

¹⁸ HEH BA Robertsbridge Box 1498, 1519; *Survey of the Manors of Robertsbridge, Sussex*, 137 for reference to Redland bay (mill dam); *Report of the Manuscripts of Lord De L'Isle and Dudley Preserved at Penshurst Place*, Historical Manuscripts Commission (report 77, vol. 1 (1925)), 129. A. Mawer and F.M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Sussex* 2 (English Place-Name Society 7) (1930), 459 identifies *Retherlonde* with Redland.

¹⁹ ESRO SHE 7/3; CKS U1475/M242; P.F. Brandon and B.M. Short, *The South East from AD 1000* (1990), 91; A. Chapman, *Granges and Other Landholdings of Robertsbridge Abbey* (1977), 46 n.; ESRO SHE 7/4; *Manuscripts Preserved at Penshurst Place*, 1, 129.

have been textile workers. Walter le Chaper, the heirs of Peter Faber (Smith) and Gilbert le Tornur are also mentioned. The form of the village, which lay on a spur above the river Rother, is suggested by tenants with the locative names, Lorethun ('Lower town'), Huytoun and Opeton ('High town' and 'Up town'). Clearly, Robertsbridge was a manufacturing and trading centre by c. 1300 and had very probably grown up in the previous 100 years.

The village of Salehurst lay a short distance down the Rother on the north bank of the river. It had been granted a market charter in 1253, the same year that the nearby village of Robertsbridge has also received a renewed charter. James de Etchingham claimed in 1349 that the construction of the dam across the Rother downstream at *Knellesflete* had restricted the movement of ships and caused the destruction of his 'market town' of Salehurst. The assertion was perhaps rhetorical for the village may already have been suffering from competition from Robertsbridge. A further settlement developed on the north side of the Rother valley at Northbridge Street, at the head of the causeway and bridge leading from Robertsbridge. Martin and Martin suggest that Northbridge Street may have grown as Salehurst declined, but there is too little evidence of the dates of the development of the two places to draw any firm conclusions. A fourth settlement in the same part of the Rother valley lay at Todhurst. In 1314 William de Etchingham granted to Robertsbridge Abbey part of the land of Todhurst to the south of the village and its tenants are entered upon the second rental of 1327. They are detailed in a further rent list of 1349, which shows that the land was held in a series of small parcels, none exceeding 2¼ acres. They paid rents of between 6d. and 12d. per acre, a rate somewhat higher than agricultural land, implying that it may have been a small settlement.²⁰

Burwash village lies astride one of the ridgetop routes across the Weald. Its lordship was divided between the manors of Burwash, Burghurst, Burwash Rectory, Woodknoll and St Giles, and consequently its development is difficult to trace. A market was granted in 1252 and there was certainly a village here in 1329, when seven houses in the *villa* of Burwash were granted to the manor of Woodknoll. Since a 14th-century deed lists the former tenants of the buildings, it is probably quoting an earlier document. A further house in the village was granted in 1343. There were at

²⁰ For the Salehurst market charter, see *Calendar of Charter Rolls* 1 (1226-57), 416. For the renewal of the Robertsbridge market charter, see note 17 above. CKS U1475/T264/448. On the location of Todhurst, see *Survey of the Manors of Robertsbridge*, 141, (no. 335). ESRO SHE 7/4, cf. SHE 7/3; CKS U1475/M257.

least eight stalls in the market place in 1423.²¹

The small settlement of Sedlescombe Street or *Iltonesbathe* was situated on the road to Hastings just north of the bridge over the River Brede. The western half was in Bricklehurst manor and the tenements on the east side of the road in Battle. In the mid-16th century the whole settlement comprised about 18 houses. It may have covered a similar area in 1433 when the survey of the Battle portion alone recorded 10 messuages and one garden with a further building. There were a similar number of tenements in c. 1310. The holdings were a regular size, each measuring one acre or a half, and had been cut out of the demesne field on the east called *Blakelond*. The evidence strongly suggests that Sedlescombe Street was a planned settlement established by Battle Abbey. The substantial rent of 3s. for a one-acre tenement indicates that these were not normal agricultural holdings and it has been argued that the livelihood of the settlement must have been based on trading or manufacture. Rents of 1s. 6d. and 3s. mentioned in the court rolls in the 1290s indicate that the tenements were already established. No settlement is mentioned in charters of the 1240s recording the acquisition of land by Battle Abbey. *Iltonesbathe* was evidently founded in the second half of the 13th century.²²

There is no sharp division between the smaller villages and larger hamlets. We cannot define any features, except size, to distinguish between the two, and it is rarely possible to define with any precision the number of buildings in a 14th-century Wealden settlement. If Taylor's definition of a village as 20 homesteads was adopted, it would probably be necessary to exclude all but the largest settlements.²³ Twelve

²¹ *Calendar of Close Rolls*, 1251-3, 82. I am grateful for information from David Martin on the manorial structure of Burwash. *The Chartulary of the High Church of Chichester*, ed. W.D. Peckham (Sussex Record Society 46 (1946)), 354; BL Lansdowne MS. 269, f. 90v.; ESRO ASH 198.

²² PRO E315/57, ff. 14r.-14v. The rental is undated, but has been attributed to c. 1310 by Searle, *Lordship and Community*, 174, n. 16. This date is supported by a court entry of 1301 which records that William Smith had entry to a curtilage in *Iltonesbathe*; he was holding the same land in the rental (HEH BA vol. 5, no. 222). PRO E315/56, ff. 5v.-8r.; D. Martin and B. Martin, 'A Specialized Building in Sedlescombe', *Historic Buildings in Eastern Sussex* 1 (3) (1979), 51-2. I owe the suggestion that this was a planned settlement to David Martin. Lincoln's Inn Library Hale MS. 87, ff. 56v.-58v.; HEH BA vol. 5, nos. 162, 163, 174.

²³ C.C. Taylor, *Village and Farmstead: A History of Rural Settlement in England* (1983), 15.

tenements is a more realistic minimum figure for a village in this area, and a hamlet may be defined as having between three and 11 holdings. It may be difficult to identify the small villages of the Weald, but it is even more so to recognise the hamlets. The places discussed below are only a small proportion of the many hamlets and minor settlements within the area. There were, in addition to the market villages in the eastern Weald, smaller trading places with only a few shops. Such centres may have had no permanent settlement, but served entirely for trade. The 1366 rental of Wartling manor does not suggest that there was a settlement at Dallington, and the first evidence for buildings there is a grant of land in 1383 to construct a stall on a piece of land measuring eight feet by 10 feet next to the churchyard. A shop place is mentioned there 50 years later. Brightling was a small settlement, described in 1472 as a *vicus* or hamlet. Two stalls are mentioned in Brightling in 1422-3, when one was no longer at rent and the other below the churchyard was paying a reduced rent, though there may have been other shops which paid sums included in the 'new rental', which no longer survives. The fair held there in the early 15th century produced a very small toll and was evidently of little commercial significance.²⁴

Many of the Wealden settlements lay on major roads and were often situated on higher ground above the crossing point of a stream or river. The larger centres of Robertsbridge, Northbridge Street and Sedlescombe Street have already been discussed, but some hamlets lay in similar positions. The hamlet or small village of Saltcote Street (Playden) lay either side of the road to the ferry over the channel of the River Rother and a chapel stood just beyond the west end of the settlement. The free tenements paid a rent of 4d or a multiple of that sum. A number of fishing boats were based at the hamlet.²⁵ Bodiam was situated on a road leading to a bridge over the Rother, a crossing point which had been used since the Roman period. Four or five long, regularly spaced tenement boundaries may be traced in the grass behind the 19th-century houses to the west of the castle. The pattern of tenements is shown on a map of 1672 and as late as the 19th century one tenement still preserved its original

²⁴ ESRO SHE 7/16; BL Add. Roll 32691, m. 5v.; BL Add. Roll. 32716, m. 4v.; ESRO AMS 6270/90/6; ESRO SAS/Box 4 unlisted roll 5; ESRO ASH 198, 200, 200A, BL Add. Roll 31359.

²⁵ G.D. Johnston, 'Ferries in Sussex [continued]', *Sussex Notes and Queries* 16 (1967), 307-8; *Sussex Topographical Surveys: Playden Parish* (1993) (Typescript in ESRO and Barbican House Library, Lewes); CKS U47/42/M12; A.J.F. Dulley, 'The Early History of the Rye Fishing Industry', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 107 (1969), 42, 56.

boundary, projecting into the open land surrounding Bodiam Castle.²⁶

The 'Gough' Map attributed to c. 1360 marks a settlement which is probably Boreham Street in Wartling on the road between Lewes and Winchelsea, on the ridge to the east of the crossing of Waller's Haven. A mid-13th-century rental of the lands of Bayham Abbey at Boreham and Rockland does not suggest that there was a trading or manufacturing settlement here and, although a market and Midsummer fair had been granted in 1226, the right had not been exercised when it was confirmed in 1326. A charter of 1319 mentions a tenement adjacent to the road at Boreham and may indicate a settlement. The hamlet may have been founded rather earlier, in 1272 when the abbot reduced the width of the road at Boreham and charged rents upon the land. There is no evidence that the settlement was ever more than a few houses with a chapel. A late 13th-century rental lists tenants with the surnames Baker, Weaver (two) and Skinner, which may indicate occupations.²⁷

Other hamlets grew up at the edge of common land. A map of c. 1630 shows Dale Hill in Ticehurst as a small cluster of buildings on the east side of the road from Ticehurst to Flimwell. Dale Hill was a detached part of the bishop of Chichester's manor of Bishopstone and tenements here are recorded in rentals of 1359 and 1379/80. Earlier charters show that there was a hamlet here in the late 13th or the early years of the 14th century comprising cottages with very small plots of land and others with substantial tenements. This pattern had arisen through the subdivision of the free holdings.²⁸ The hamlet of Cade Street to the north of Heathfield stood near the edge

²⁶ I.D. Margary, 'Roman Communication between Kent and the East Sussex Ironworks', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 86 (1947), 30; ESRO AMS 5691/3/1; ESRO BAT 4435 (26); C. Taylor *et al.*, 'Bodiam Castle, Sussex', *Medieval Archaeology* 34 (1990), 156-7.

²⁷ E.J.S. Parsons *The Map of Great Britain circa A.D. 1360 Known as the Gough Map: An Introduction to the Facsimile* (1958), 2, 16 n. 1; R.A. Pelham, 'Studies in the Historical Geography of Medieval Sussex', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 72 (1931), 182-4; BL Cotton MS. Otho A ii, ff. 73v., 75v., 77v.; ESRO AMS 5592/60; *Calendar of Close Rolls 1300-26*, 479; *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1324-27*, 176; *Rotuli Hundredorum* 2, 215; *Sussex Chantry Records, Extracted from Documents in the Public Record Office*, ed. J.E. Ray (Sussex Record Society 36 (1931)), 174.

²⁸ ESRO AMS 4614; WSRO Ep. VI/1/5, f. 140r.; WSRO Ep. VI/1/3, f. 158v. ('Rental of Tyresherssh'); *The Chartulary of the High Church of Chichester*, ed. W.D. Peckham (Sussex Record Society 46 (1946)), 354, nos. 1044-9; ESRO DUN 1/3, 2/3.

of a small common, though with more extensive areas of common land nearby, on a similar road leading through the centre of the Weald to Battle. It is first mentioned in 1288 and a rental of 1329/30 records three small tenements.²⁹

Many of the smaller settlements at the east end of Sussex had place-names with the suffix 'Street'. Sedlescombe Street, Boreham Street and Cade Street amongst others have already been mentioned. Icklesham Street recorded in 1497 was perhaps another minor settlement. The equivalent term for hamlets in the north of the Rape of Pevensey was 'Row'. Forest Row, apparently recorded by 1338, developed as a small settlement on a road leading southwards from East Grinstead towards Ashdown Forest. The settlement of Parrock Row in Hartfield is mentioned in 1295 and fieldwork has located the probable site of this deserted hamlet. Traces of buildings have been found extending along a road for nearly 100 metres and associated pottery suggests a 13th- to 16th-century date. Town Row in Rotherfield in the late 19th century was a crossroads with a few scattered houses. A rental of 1466 records two houses here on small plots of land, but the land had been held by 'cotmen' or cottagers and it is likely that the other closes here may have had further buildings deserted by the mid-15th century.³⁰

ORIGINS AND GROWTH

The discussion of villages and hamlets has distinguished two ways in which nucleated settlements may have originated. Some places developed spontaneously through the gradual development of houses at a convenient location, often around a church, on a busy road, or near a bridge or ferry, indeed, at any place which might attract passing trade. A second group of settlements were laid out by lords keen to attract tenants, establish a market and so increase their revenue. The reality was probably more

²⁹ Mawer and Stenton, *The Place-Names of Sussex* 2, 464 ; WSRO Ep. VI/1/5, ff. 138v.-139v.; WSRO Ep. VI/2/1, f. 39r.

³⁰ Northamptonshire Record Office FH 2585; P.F. Brandon, *The Sussex Landscape*, 102 citing PRO E372/182. PRO E372/182, m. 13r. mentions land at *Castetrowe*, but the reference to Forest Row has not been found. Ordnance Survey six-inch map Sussex XVII. C.F. Tebbutt, 'An Abandoned Medieval Industrial Site at Parrock, Hartfield', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 113 (1975), 146-51; Mawer and Stenton, *The Place-Names of Sussex* 2, 368. Tebbutt (in discussion) subsequently retracted his view that the site was an industrial settlement. ESRO SAS/Aber 68; ESRO GIL 32.

complex than these alternatives suggest. A lord might enclose common land on which a market had already developed, lay out plots for stalls which might in turn be occupied by permanent buildings. The resulting settlement would be neither wholly planned nor wholly organic, but the inadequacy of evidence prevents a more complete understanding of the processes of settlement nucleation.

A number of factors which encouraged settlement nucleation can, nevertheless, be identified. Seigneurial foundation evidently created many successful centres. The monks of Battle, who according to the monastic chronicle laid out a town at the abbey gates in the late 11th century, were copied on a smaller scale by other lords 150 years later.³¹ The attraction to a lord of establishing a nucleated settlement was the higher rents which might be charged from village tenements and stalls, and tolls from markets and fairs might generate further revenue. The regular plans of the village at Robertsbridge and the hamlets of Sedlescombe Street, Bodiam and Saltcote Street are very likely the result of seigneurial planning. The first three were very probably founded upon demesne land. By contrast, the land for the settlements of Boreham Street and Mayfield was obtained by encroachment upon the highways creating cramped sites. That emphasises the suggestion that the original intention of their lords was not to establish permanent settlements, but to create centres of trade. Some trading places like Wartling may never have grown beyond a series of booths occupied on market days.

Knowledge of the successful seigneurial foundations gives a partial view for, no doubt, many other settlements were established which failed to develop and reverted to fields. One possible such failed settlement is Langham's Farm Ashburnham shown on a 17th-century plan as three rectangular fields of exactly two acres and a fourth of 1½ acres. By the date of the map only one of the fields was still occupied by buildings.³² It was not sufficient simply to provide land for houses and stalls and expect them to flourish; most nucleated settlements in the Weald required a livelihood in addition to agriculture. Trade was the reason for most Wealden villages and hamlets, and a lord trying to establish a settlement might invest in a market charter. Craft manufacture may have been a significant part of the economy of some settlements. Heathfield's origins may have owed much to textile working, but in the larger trading centres a considerable variety of crafts was practised. The surnames of tenants in Robertsbridge around 1300 suggest the trades of fulling, smithing, weaving

³¹ *The Chronicle of Battle Abbey*, 50-1.

³² ESRO ASH L218. I owe the suggestion about Langham's Farm to Christopher Whittick.

and dying.

The location of trading settlements was very significant and those located away from important highways were seriously disadvantaged. It is improbable that Dallington to the south of the main road towards Battle, and Brightling to the north, could ever have developed into important centres of trade, though a few villages did flourish even though they were not situated on busy routes. Heathfield lay some distance from any significant highway, but was well situated for local textile working. The number of fulling mills in the vicinity suggests the importance of the craft in the area.

Conversely, a location on a major road was no guarantee of success. Boreham Street, for example, never developed beyond a few buildings, though it was more successful than nearby Wartling, which remained little more than cluster of stalls situated around a market place. Proximity to the manor houses of the large manorial households does not seem to have contributed significantly to the success of settlements, though the presence of the archbishop's palace may have aided the growth of Mayfield. The houses of some of the largest seigneurial families at Etchingham, Udimore, Mountfield, Crowhurst, Herstmonceux and Netherfield stood in isolation.

The villages and hamlets show a marked distribution towards the north-west of the Rape of Hastings (fig. 25). The towns of Hastings, Winchelsea and Rye in the south-eastern corner of the county evidently dominated trade and manufacturing in their vicinity to such a degree that they prevented the growth of rival markets. But settlements inland served the local needs of communities beyond easy travelling distance of the coastal ports. The accounts of the cellarer of Battle Abbey show the pattern of purchases of a large household. Everyday items were evidently bought in the town at the abbey gates, but other items were purchased elsewhere. Wine and fish were obtained from Hastings, Winchelsea and, to a lesser degree, Rye, and more exotic items were purchased in London. The only other recorded place regularly supplying the monks was Crowhurst where rabbits were bought, presumably from the parker who kept the warren there. Dyer has argued that the higher the social status of the consumer, the greater the distance of some markets from which they regularly obtained purchases. The small village and hamlet markets played no part in the supply of food to the abbey, but they are very likely to have served the peasants of the locality.³³

³³ *Accounts of the Cellarers of Battle Abbey 1275-1513*, ed. E. Searle and B. Ross (Sussex Record Society 65 (1967)); ESRO A2300 (Crowhurst court rolls), m. 8r. mentions a rabbit warren at Crowhurst. C.C. Dyer, 'The Consumer and the Market in the Later Middle Ages', *Economic History Review* 2nd series, 42 (1989), 305-27.

Expansion of population also encouraged settlement nucleation. The hamlets of Town Row, Dale Hill and Cade Street were situated on poor land, close to large commons. Settlements in these places developed on sub-divided tenements or assarted land to accommodate a growing population. The more successful survived the population contraction of the later 14th and early 15th century, but many others may have disappeared with little or no record.

The villages and hamlets of the eastern Sussex Weald were an important part of the economic system of the region from the late 13th century onwards serving as centres for craft manufacture and local trade. But measured in terms of their size and the proportion of the population which they housed, the rural nucleated settlements were of minor significance. The greater number of people continued to live in isolated houses in the countryside.

CHAPTER 6

LORDSHIP AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The High Weald, in common with many woodland areas in England, was predominantly a region of small manors with minor lords. The character of lordship, the high proportion of free tenants and the considerable degree of sub-infeudation produced a distinctive community with a large number of petty gentry in which the power and influence of the greater lords was limited. Previous studies have considered some aspects of Wealden society in relationship to selected estates, but the broader social structure of the *pays* remains to be examined.¹ The character of society may be examined in a number of different ways, through the pattern of land holding, the character of manors, the nature of lordship and the composition of the peasantry.

In 1320 the collectors of scutage for the Scottish war empanelled a jury to inquire into the holders of knights' fees within the Rape of Hastings. No such inquiry had apparently been held since 1210-12 for a list of fees of that date formed the basis of the new investigation. The jurors attempted to trace the descent of the fees and reported upon their holders, and on some sub-infeudations made during the previous hundred years.² That inquiry provides a useful starting point for the examination of the main holders of land in Hastings Rape.

The natural head of the local community was the lord of the honor of the rape, though by the later 13th century the influence in eastern Sussex of its holders had declined considerably. John de Brittany, who at the time of the 1320 inquisition held the rape, had only three manors in demesne, Burwash, Bivelham (Mayfield) and Crowhurst, amounting to 2½ fees; he was not among the larger landholders in the district. But landholding alone underestimates the income from his Sussex lordship. He also received revenue from the farm of Cooden (Bexhill), and from the pasture and other lands at Bulverhythe (St Leonards). As well as the considerable potential for wardships and escheats, his lordship also provided him with the profits from 9½

¹ F.R.H. Du Boulay, *The Lordship of Canterbury: An Essay on Medieval Society* (1966); E. Searle, *Lordship and Community: Battle Abbey and its Banlieu 1066-1538* (1974); N. Saul, *Scenes from Provincial Life: Knightly Families in Sussex 1280-1400* (1985).

² *The Red Book of the Exchequer*, ed. H. Hall (Rolls Series 99 (1896)), 2, 554-5, 623-4; PRO C145/83 (5), epitomised in *Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous* 2, 101-13.

of the 13 hundreds in the rape which owed suit to the lathe court and castle-ward payments in respect of Hastings. Former lords of the rape had also received lastage from the town of Old Winchelsea before it had disappeared beneath the sea in the late 13th century.³ The rape passed through the hands of a number of lords in the late 13th and 14th centuries. John of Gaunt, then a minor, was granted the Rape of Hastings in 1342 and building works between 1358 and 1360 at Crowhurst, potentially his main residence in the rape, and at Burwash, where the capital messuage had been become dilapidated, suggest that he may have intended playing a more active role in the local community. In the event his influence in the rape was brief for he resigned his lands to the Crown in 1372, receiving in exchange part of the Rape of Pevensey. The events in the latter rape showed, however, that had John wished to establish a position in the Sussex community, any assertion of lordship was likely to be resisted by the local gentry. The Rape of Hastings then passed to John de Montfort, Duke of Brittany, who visited Sussex about once a year during the 1370s, though by the end of the century the manor of Crowhurst was at farm.⁴

William de Etchingham was pre-eminent among the lay landholders of the Rape of Hastings in 1320 with six fees. He held the manors of Etchingham, Salehurst, Ockham (Salehurst), Mountfield and Udimore in demesne, and had sub-infeudated the manors of Bellhurst, Shoyswell, Kitchingham, Haremere and Iridge. During the 1310s William had got into very serious financial difficulties and the following years are marked by a series of sales of substantial pieces of his estate. In 1314 William de Etchingham granted his manor of Bryanston (Dorset) to his neighbour, Alan de Bugsell, and in the following year sold him the manor of Socknersh (Brightling) and the tenement of Darwell (Brightling). He sold 60 acres of land and meadow in Udimore and Rye, and in the same year 580 acres in Mountfield and Battle to Edmund Pashley. Land at Ockham (Salehurst) was granted to William de Ponte and William de Etchingham's substantial grants of land and rents in Salehurst to

³ PRO C135/ 40 (8); PRO C145/149 (15); PRO SC6/1116/9.

⁴ Saul, *Scenes from Provincial Life*, 60; *Victoria County History Sussex* 9, ed. L.F. Salzman (1937), 2-3; PRO C145/149 (15); *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1354-8*, 633; *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1358-61*, 119, 331; *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1364-7*, 33; *John of Gaunt's Register 1*, ed. S. Armitage-Smith (Camden Society 3rd series, 20 (1911)), 22, 23-4, 30; S. Walker, 'Lancaster v. Dallingridge: A Franchisal Dispute in Fourteenth Century Sussex', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 121 (1983), 87-94; N. Saul, 'Some Etchingham Ephemera or More Scenes from Provincial Life', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 127 (1989), 255; *Victoria County History of Sussex* 9, 79.

Robertsbridge Abbey made also in 1314 were probably made not only in return for the prayers mentioned in the charter. The grant of 60 acres of land and 100 acres of wood in Ticehurst made to William de Haremere seems to have comprised the core of his manor of Boarzell.⁵ Grants were made in 1316/17 to Nicholas de la Beche of the reversion of his manors of Beddingham, Peakdean (East Dean) and Mountfield, and also perhaps Old Court (Wartling) and Marsham (Fairlight) as security for a loan of more than 570 marks. William's heir Robert died with the debt of 242 marks still outstanding.⁶

Thomas de Hastings held 5¼ fees lying in and around the lowy of Battle at Netherfield, Eatonden (Mountfield), Catsfield, Ibrook (Netherfield), Baldslow (Ore) and *Herst* (Sedlescombe). He, like William de Etchingham, had serious financial problems and mortgaged first the manor of Netherfield and later the manor of Eatonden, and evidently also land in Ore to the Winchelsea merchant, Henry Finch. He was unable to redeem the mortgage and by 1349 Finch had taken possession of the land.⁷

The remainder of the gentry of Hastings Rape may be divided broadly into two parts, a small number of lords who gave scutage on three fees or more, and a large number of minor landholders with a manor or two amounting to a smaller number of fees. Among the first group may be numbered Giles de Brianson, who held the large manor of Wartling in hand and the sub-infeudated manors of Socknersh and Cowden (Wartling). He also held Bucksteep (Warbleton) of the manor of Warbleton. The brothers Nicholas and Richard Wardedieu held Bodiam in demesne in 1320 and the over-lordship of the manor of Penhurst for four fees. Baldwin de Stowe held the manor of Wilting for three fees. John de Munceus held the manors of Herstmonceux

⁵ Saul, *Scenes from Provincial Life*, 3, 25 n. 64; *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1313-17*, 161; ESRO AMS 5789/16; PRO C134/98 (2). *Feet of Fines from 1 Edward II to 24 Henry VII*, nos. 1421, 1422, 1432, 1472; *The Manor of Etchingham cum Salehurst*, ed. S.P. Vivian (Sussex Record Society 53 (1953)), 29; CKS U1475/T264/448; *Victoria County History of Sussex* 9, 254.

⁶ Nicholas de la Beche was the constable of the Tower of London: M. McKisack, *The Fourteenth Century 1307-1399* (1959), 168. *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem* 8, 415; *An Abstract of Feet of Fines Relating to the County of Sussex from 1 Edward II to 24 Henry VII*, ed. L.F. Salzman (Sussex Record Society 23 (1916)), 46, nos. 1462, 1464, 1568; PRO C131/3 (15); *Victoria County History of Sussex* 9, 177.

⁷ BL Add. Ch. 20116-7, 20121-2.

and Lordine (Ewhurst), and Bertrand de Monboucher had the manors of Hammerden (Ticehurst), Filsham and Cortesley (both in Hollington). William de Ore held the manors of Ore, Guestling and Bricklehurst (Ticehurst and Sedlescombe).⁸

Most of the minor lords listed in 1320 were either the heirs of the 1210-12 holders or tenants of the estates formerly held by Peter de Scotney, whose lands had escheated, or of the estate of Robert de Hastings. By the early 14th century Scotney's former sub-tenants held their land directly of John de Brittany. For example, the ancestors of Gilbert de Gensing had held the manor of Gensing (Hastings) of Peter de Scotney; in 1320 Gilbert answered directly for $\frac{1}{4}$ fee there.⁹

The 1320 list does not adequately reflect the number of minor lords and tenants. It gives, for example, little indication of the considerable importance of the wealthy merchant families of Rye and Winchelsea who had built up considerable holdings of land in the vicinity of the two ports. Only one of these is listed among the 1320 holders: Stephen Alard, a member of the prominent Winchelsea family of that name, who held $\frac{1}{2}$ fee in Stonelink, Covehurst (both Fairlight) and Broomhill. Since at least the early 13th century members of the Alard family and other 'barons' (burgesses) of the Cinque Ports had purchased land neighbouring the two towns and by the early 14th century were significant local landowners. But rather than buying lordships outright, their holdings were often assembled from numerous purchases of individual tenements which themselves owed rent and services to other lords.¹⁰ Robert Paulin, a leading merchant of Winchelsea and bailiff between 1317-24, held many pieces of land on the north side of Romney Marsh at Fairfield (Kent). He had been created custodian of the royal manor of Iden in 1289 and nine years later was granted the lordship for life. He was sufficiently wealthy to lend money to Matthew de Knelle in c. 1290, taking as security a moiety of his manor of Knelle (Beckley). Another baron, Henry de Rackele administered his disparate landholdings from his home in Rye. The rents were payable at his *aula*, and the 'lordship' became known as the manor of Hall. He was succeeded by John Paulin of Rye, who continued to add small pieces of property to the manor. Henry Paulin of Winchelsea purchased the more distant manor

⁸ Saul, *Scenes from Provincial Life*, 3; *Victoria County History of Sussex* 9.

⁹ *Victoria County History of Sussex* 9, 19.

¹⁰ L.F. Salzman, 'Some Notes on the Family of Alard', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 61 (1920), 126-41; M.F. Gardiner, 'Medieval Farming and Flooding in the Brede Valley', in J. Eddison (ed.), *Romney Marsh: The Debatable Ground* (forthcoming).

of Westham, close to the port of Pevensey where the Alards also held land.¹¹ The money-lending activities of another Winchelsea merchant, Henry Finch have already been mentioned. He acquired the manors of Netherfield and Eatonden through default of the borrower, Thomas de Hastings. Finch also held the manor of Kitchenour (Beckley) to the north of Winchelsea. The Rye and Winchelsea merchant family of Pharon possessed land in the Brede valley adjoining the town from the mid-13th century. The Ambroys family of Rye held land in the hinterland of the town in the manors of Iden and Playden and likewise Richard de Portsmouth, a mayor of Rye, had land in Rye Foreign and Playden to the north and marshland at Cadborough to the west in addition to his lands in the town.¹² These families, having established their position as minor landowners, consolidated their status during the 14th century by marrying into the local gentry. Benedict Sely, the bailiff of Rye, married Joan, the daughter and co-heiress of Simon de Pebsham and widow of Richard de Herst of Horselunges (Hellingly). Petronilla, the daughter of John Andrew, a Winchelsea baron with lands on Walland Marsh and at Fairlight and Icklesham, married Robert de Etchingham, the second son of Sir William de Etchingham.¹³

The largest holders of land at the eastern end of the county were not the lay gentry or merchants, but clerics and religious houses. Though the archbishop of Canterbury held only a single manor, his lordship of South Malling stretched from Lewes to the

¹¹ ESRO DUN 54/2-4; PRO C133/71 (5); *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1257-1300*, 314; *ibid.* 1292-1301, 341; BL Add. Ch. 20046, 20147; ESRO A6153/8. ESRO AMS 5592/4, 5. Note also the purchases by James son of Paulin of land in *la More* near Iden, in 1284: ESRO AMS 2280-3. ESRO SAS/DR 81.

¹² PRO C145/149 (15); BL Add. Ch. 966, 967; ESRO A6153/5 (sub-infeudation by Pharon de Porta of land in Peasmarsh). Pharon John (sic) was mayor of Rye in 1304. Paul son of Robert who was mayor between 1316-23 was probably a member of the family: ESRO RYE 136/20, 49-58; BL Add. Ch. 959. For Ambroys, see BL Add. Ch. 969; PRO SC 11/661; ESRO AMS 4884, m. 1r., ESRO RYE 136/20, 21. For Richard de Portsmouth, see ESRO RYE 136/11, 14, 28, 67; ESRO AMS 4883, m. 6r.

¹³ W. Budgen, 'The Manor of Horselunges', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 66 (1925), 24n.; PRO SC6/1032/13. For holdings of Benedict Sely in Playden, see ESRO AMS 4885. Saul, *Scenes from Provincial Life*, 179; N. Saul, 'Glottenham and the Etchingham Family', in D. Martin, 'Three Moated Sites in North-East Sussex. Part 1: Glottenham', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 127 (1989), 90-91. For purchases by Edward, the son of John Andrew in Lydd, see ESRO RYE 136/18.

county boundary on the north covering a huge area. The abbot of Battle held lands of a similar size lying mainly around the abbey itself and at Barnhorne (Bexhill) nearer the coast. Robertsbridge Abbey, though less well endowed, had estates which included the manors of Robertsbridge, Playden and Lamberhurst on the Kent-Sussex border. Being a Cistercian house, it had granges close to the abbey at Park (Salehurst), and at Derne (Waldron), in the river valleys at Lamberhurst and Methersham (Beckley) and on the marshland at *Fother* (Pett) and Broomhill. The bishop of Chichester held the large manor of Bexhill and the Wealden outliers of his manor of Bishopstone at Heathfield and Turzes (Ticehurst).¹⁴

The 'centrifugal tendency' of feudalism,¹⁵ by which control over land tended to move outwards from the major lords to their sub-tenants, was particularly pronounced in the Weald. Without the assertion of strong lordship, many free tenants tended to develop a substantial degree of autonomy and were able to established their holdings as sub-manors.¹⁶ The intricacies of the hierarchy of lordship produced by that development were not addressed by the jurors of 1320, though they did lay bare the pattern of sub-tenancy on the manor of Bivelham. That manor had been held in 1210-12 by Gilbert de Balliol, but by 1320 it was in the hands of John de Brittany, the lord of the rape, and had been split into a manor held in demesne and 14 major freeholdings owing only service and suit of court. At least four of these holdings, and perhaps others, had developed into sub-manors.¹⁷

¹⁴ On the influence of the archbishop, see Saul, *Scenes from Provincial Life*, 38-41; for Battle, see E. Searle, *Lordship and Community: Battle Abbey and its Banlieu 1066-1538* (1974); for Robertsbridge see ESRO SHE 7/3, and for its granges see A. Chapman, *Granges and Other Landholdings of Robertsbridge Abbey* (1977); for the bishop of Chichester's estates in the Weald, see WSRO Ep. VI/1/3, ff. 155v.-164v.

¹⁵ The phrase is from C.C. Dyer, *Lords and Peasants in a Changing Society: The Estates of the Bishopric of Worcester, 680-1540* (1980), 48.

¹⁶ The most important study of English manorial structure, including small manors, is E.A. Kosminsky, *Studies in the Agrarian History of England in the Thirteenth Century* (1956), 68-151. J.Z. Titow, *English Rural Society 1200-1350* (1969), 19 notes that some individuals acquired tenants and behaved as manorial lords and in due course acquired a degree of recognition. For similar developments in Kent, see Du Boulay, *The Lordship of Canterbury*, 141.

¹⁷ PRO C145/83 (5). They were Baiden, Hawksden (Mayfield) and Moseham (Ticehurst, Wadhurst) (ESRO GLY 1117, 1117a) and Sharnden (ESRO AMS 5896/3) (Mayfield).

Several of the sub-infeudated holdings of the manor of Burwash, a demesne manor of the Rape of Hastings, had their origins in serjeanty tenures whose early holders owed personal services to the count of Eu. The 30 acres held by Ralph Forester for service in the Forest of Dallington became the core of the reputed manor of Fosters.¹⁸ Robert de Barroches held two virgates for keeping two brachets and four harriers and that land formed part of Basok's fee, which also included lands in Heathfield and Sedlescombe. Another virgate held by Reginald de Woodknolle formed the core of the manor of Woodknolle (Burwash). The manor of Burghurst seems to have originated in the half-hide of William de Burghurst and the tenement of Franchise developed from a mere 6 acres given for the serjeanty of summoning of the suitors to the lathe court.¹⁹

Sub-manors had developed similarly on the archbishop of Canterbury's extensive manor of South Malling. The c.1285 rental records that William Erche held land with a mill for the service of attending the beadle when summoning or distraining the lords of Horsted Keynes, Buckhurst and Isfield, and for the serjeanty of attending the archbishop's hunt 12 days a year. William and his son or father, Gilbert purchased land in Framfield and Mayfield and by the late 15th century, and probably before, these lands formed the manor of Arches.²⁰ William de Isted, another tenant giving hunting service, seems to have converted his tenement into a manor by the early 14th century. The sole evidence for a manor of Isted consists of three membranes of text. The first lists holdings in the manor of South Malling and is copied from the c.1285 rental. It records lands in the virgates of *Ryseden* and *Leneslye* in Wadhurst and other places in Mayfield. Although the membrane is unheaded, two of the tenants have the surname *de Isted* and it is evidently related to the second and third documents. These are copies of a rental of the holdings of William de Isted, and are identical except for deletions and minor differences of spelling. They bear the date 'August 4 E', suggesting either 1276, 1310 or 1330 although one of the two later dates is most likely on palaeographical grounds.²¹

¹⁸ *The Red Book of the Exchequer*, 2, 555, 624.

¹⁹ On Basok's fee see, ESRO ASH 206, ff. 37v.-38r. and Lincoln's Inn Library Hale MS. 87, f. 58r. *Victoria County History of Sussex* 9, 196, 198.

²⁰ *Custumal of the Sussex Manors of the Archbishop of Canterbury*, ed. B.C. Redwood and A.E. Wilson (Sussex Record Society 57 (1958)), 48, 66. Surrey Record Office 257/8/1, 257/9/1-4.

²¹ CKS U1402/M42. The 1498 rental gives no hint that Isted was a manor in its own right (ESRO

The Isted rental lists sub-tenants holding part of William's virgate and at Dudsland, Gatton and Edithescroft in Mayfield. The tenancy of the land by undersettles is unremarkable, for as the c.1285 rental shows, many of the free and customary holdings were sublet. Whereas the South Malling rental is concerned with the dues owed to the archbishop, that of Isted records those rendered to William. Some of the tenants of Isted gave work-services, for example harvesting, harrowing and carting wood, but others simply paid a money-rent for their lands. They were suitors at William's court at Isted, owed him relief on their lands and one of the tenants gave a heriot to which the others contributed. The South Malling rental shows that the duty of giving services to the over-lord was commonly transferred by tenants to their undersettles. The difference at Isted was that the undersettles also performed duties for William.

The tenurial structure of many sub-manors was more complex than that of Isted. Woodknolle grew out of a holding on the manor of Burwash and by 1347 its demesne comprised 200 acres of land, three acres of meadow, 10 acres of wood and a mill, together with the rents of tenants in Burwash. The latter had been obtained by purchasing tenements in Burwash village from the manor of Turzes and by the late 14th century the estate was described as a manor.²² The manor of Lundsford was extended in a similar way. The core of the manor was land held of the manor of Etchingham for one fee, but it also included land at Fair Ridge (Salehurst) held of the fee of Socknersh, which was itself held of the manor of Wartling. In addition to the lands held in lordship, the Lundsford family held many other tenements in the vicinity of Salehurst of other manors. The Lundsford chartulary, in which these are noted, must be considered representative of the purchases and sales evidently made by other minor gentry families, but not recorded in surviving records.²³

The manor of Burghurst exemplifies the way in which a lordship might be extended

AMS 5512, ff. 17v., 37r.). Kosminsky, *Studies in the Agrarian History of England*, 96 draws attention to the scarcity of evidence for small manors.

²² *The Red Book of the Exchequer*, 2, 624; *Feet of Fines from 1 Edward II to 24 Henry VII*, no. 2027; *The Chartulary of the High Church of Chichester*, ed. W.D. Peckham (Sussex Record Society 46 (1946)), 353-4; BL Lansdowne MS. 269, ff. 90r., 93r. (new foliation); cf. *Victoria County History Sussex* 9, 198.

²³ BL Lansdowne MS. 269, ff. 89v. - 93v. (new foliation).

into lands held of other manors. William de Burghurst held a half-hide of the count's manor of Burwash in 1210-12, for which he was liable only for scutage. Within 100 years it had been greatly enlarged, as an inquisition held on the death of Stephen de Burghurst showed. The core of the manor, including a demesne of 100 acres, lay in Burwash, but the other lands were scattered from Westham near Pevensey and Heathfield on the west to Peasmarsh to the east. The inquisition and a rent roll of c.1290 show that the greater part of the income of the manor was derived from dispersed free tenements held of other lords.²⁴ Most of the land in the Rape of Pevensey had been bought by Stephen's grandfather, Herbert de Burghurst before his death in 1256. These included Hedgeland (Westham) and *Smythyscroft* (Hailsham). He also enlarged the holdings of the manor in the Rape of Hastings and may have acquired the lands of Tottingworth and Milkhurst in Heathfield, which though held directly of the fee of Basok in the early 13th century, were by c.1290 in Burghurst manor. Herbert obtained the substantial tenement of Dudwell and the litigation which followed sheds light upon the means by which he assembled the lands of his manor. The tenement of Dudwell, about 100 acres in Burwash, had been granted to Robertsbridge Abbey in 1194 by Reginald de Ashburnham. William de Dudwell, who was presumably the tenant of the land, retained a life interest and leased the land to Herbert. On William's death the abbey tried to evict Herbert from the land, but the case was settled with the result that the tenement was held by the manor of Burghurst of the manor of Robertsbridge for a rent of 25s. Another tenement of the manor, Ricards Farm (Whatlington) was held of Hastings Priory. Herbert acquired the holding in the 1220s or shortly after, for he appears as a witness on grants of neighbouring lands.²⁵

²⁴ PRO C134/16 (2); CKS U386/M18. The rental is unidentified in the catalogue, but undoubtedly is of Burghurst and may be dated to shortly before 1298 when Robert de Pashley, a tenant, was already dead (*Victoria County History* 9, 254).

²⁵ An early 14th-century deed refers to rent from land at Hedgeland 'which Herbert de Burghurst used to pay', ESRO AMS 4950. *Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous*. 1, 483 (no. 1740); Bodleian Library MS. Sussex Ch. 6a. For purchases by Reginald de Burghurst in the Rape of Pevensey, see PRO DL42/112, ff. 60v.-61r. ESRO ASH 206, ff. 37v.-38r.; *Report on the Manuscripts of Lord De L'Isle and Dudley, Preserved at Penshurst Place*, Historical Manuscripts Commission (report 77, vol. 1 (1925)), 45; confirmation ESRO ASH A3; *Manuscripts Preserved at Penshurst Place*, 107; ESRO SHE 7/3; Lincoln's Inn Library Hale MS. 87, f. 58r. Herbert de Burghurst appears as a witness on grants in Whatlington and Sedlescombe (HEH BA 37/1248). See also HEH BA 40/1269.

Herbert de Burghurst was undoubtedly an important local figure and between 1215-17 and 1224-29 served as sheriff for Sussex and briefly in the 1233 as under-sheriff in the county. He evidently extended his manor by purchasing free tenements and incorporating them into his lordship. Within Herbert's lifetime it included holdings across East Sussex and by 1300, in addition to those tenements already mentioned, comprised lands in Ticehurst at *Ulecombe* and Quedley, in Heathfield at Beckington, Bigknoll and Stonehurst, in Burwash at Birchet, *Chalkesore*, Goodsoal, Shrub, *Wevelhurst*, *Witereshese* and Wolves and in Herstmonceux at Fareham. Though the greater part of the manor was formed of free tenements, there were customary tenants in Peasmarsh. A list of 1310 records rents resolute owed to the lords of no fewer than 12 manors.²⁶

The expanding boundaries of settlement in the Weald provided opportunities for the establishment of new manors. The tenement of Darwell lay on poor land at the edge of the Forest of Dallington. It was held in the late 13th century by William de Etchingham and an inquisition on his death in 1294 records no capital messuage, and demesne revenues from a wood and watermill only. The manor of Darwell was apparently created in 1315 when his son, William de Etchingham, granted the rents and services of his tenants and their lands, together with the nearby manor of Socknersh, to Alan de Bugsell; he died seised of Darwell seven years later. The lands were inherited by his son, also called Alan, who in 1350 divided the manor of Socknersh into three, selling one part to Richard Kenne. The manor of Darwell was probably conveyed with it, for on the membrane recording the first court of Kennes, a third part of the manor of Socknersh, are contemporary courts for Darwell manor. Its later history is also of interest, for in the first half of the 15th century marginal land in the vicinity fell out of cultivation and by the middle of the century there were only four tenants on the manor, then called Hollingrove, paying a rent totalling 5s. 6d. compared to 20 in 1315 who had given almost ten times that amount.²⁷

²⁶ Herbert son of Walter listed as sheriff in 1215-17 and 1224-29 can be identified as Herbert de Burghurst: *Lists of Sheriffs for England and Wales* (List and Index Society 9 (1898)), 141; HEH BA 40/1202. PRO C133/122 (9); PRO C134/16 (2); *Feet of Fines from 1 Edward II to 24 Henry VII*, nos. 1862, 1949, 2587; CKS U455/M50. By the late 15th century the lands in Peasmarsh had been separated and formed the manor called Vield *alias* Burcester (*Victoria County History of Sussex* 9, 158). PRO C134/16 (2).

²⁷ For the identification of Darwell with Hollingrove, note the reference to the manor of Hollingrove 'once Richard Kenne', ESRO AMS 5789/19; PRO C133/68 (7); ESRO AMS 5789/16; PRO C134/98 (2); HMAG HPL B14; BL Add. Ch. 13605; BL Add. Roll 32675; ESRO SAS Box 4 unlisted; P.F. Brandon, 'Medieval Clearances in the East Sussex Weald',

The growth of population and extension of cultivated land provided the spur for the creation of sub-manors on previously unoccupied marginal land. The name of the manor of *Conyngers* (Salehurst) suggests it was established on the site of a former rabbit warren (fig. 27) and at Iridge, a tenement nearby, many tenants were settled on small plots of land. Seventeen tenants and three buildings are recorded there in the early 15th century, but the field-names include *Hochouscroft* and *Syvyargarden* suggest that other houses had previously stood in the one- and two-acre closes.²⁸ The small manor of Todhurst (Salehurst) on the opposite side of the Rother valley granted by William de Etchingham to Robertsbridge Abbey in 1314 was similar. It consisted of 11 tenements, none larger than 2¼ acres.²⁹

The imposition of lordship upon lands held of other manors, practised so effectively by Herbert de Burghurst, is more familiar on religious estates. The manors of many monasteries were pieced together from lands obtained by pious grant and purchase. Robertsbridge Abbey was not endowed at its foundation with a manor, but created Robertsbridge manor from lands held of other lordships. The manor of Playden, also held by the abbey, was formed by amalgamating two separate manors and other tenements.³⁰ The extension of lordship on the bishop of Chichester's manor of Bexhill was rather different. Here the manor was 'enlarged' by taking in hand formerly sub-infeudated lands. The bishop in 1315 bought from John Somery the lordship of his tenants and ^{the} in following year purchased the Somery demesne and capital messuage, [<] and incorporated the whole into his manor. He also bought out the lands held of him by the Haringod family and in 1322 acquired from a clerk, William de Loppedelle, further lands of the manor.³¹

Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers 48 (1969), 142-3; BL Add. Roll 8140.

²⁸ ESRO DUN 54/5; *The Manor of Etchingham cum Salehurst*, 33-7; 89-90.

²⁹ CKS U1475 T264/448; CKS U1475/M257, which refers to the *court* of Todhurst. Todhurst was held of the fee of Ockham.

³⁰ The two manors were Playden and Moorbridge, ESRO AMS 4883, m. 4v.

³¹ *The Chartulary of the High Church of Chichester*, 356-8; WSRO Ep. VI/1/5 ff. 141r.-v.; WSRO Ep. VI/1/3 ff. 159r.-160v. For William de Loppedell, see J.C. Lobdell, 'A Note on the Career of William de Loppedell (fl. 1309-1331)', *Sussex Notes and Queries* 16 (1965), 145-7; *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1317-21*, 428. On an earlier attempt to bring the Haringod land back into the hands of the bishop, see *Royal and Other Historical Letters Illustrative of the Reign of Henry III*, ed. W.W. Shirley 1 (Rolls Series 27 (1862)), 493.

The patterns of lordship within the Wealden manors may be compared to a kaleidoscope: although the elements always remained the same, they might be arranged in numerous different combinations. A little more than 100 years after the 1320 inquest a further survey was made to identify the tenants in the Rape of Hastings holding by military service. The inquest was made to collect a feudal aid levied in 1428 at the rate of 6s. 8d. on each fee. All of the large and most of the small manors had by that date numerous sub-tenants holding fractions of knights' fees. The manors of Wartling and Socknersh (Brightling) held of John Pelham, the lord of the rape, for the service of 5½ fees were typical. The lord, Thomas Lewknor, was seised of just one fee, and the remaining 4½ fees were deemed to be held of him by 32 tenants. Similarly, Edmund de Knelle held just ¼ part of a fee for his part of the manor of Knelle and ten tenants held from him the remainder of the one fee with which the manor was charged. The tenorial character of these manors must have been similar to the pattern of holding at Bivelham described in the earlier 1320 inquiry, where a number of tenants held for an eighth or sixteenth part of a fee and one for a one hundred and twenty-eighth part. These minor tenements perhaps resembled the holding of Stephen de Hechton, who had just 30 acres of land in the manor of Playden for the service of a tenth part of a fee.³²

It would be wrong to exaggerate the centrifugal tendency, which drew free tenements apart from their lordships. Many tenements did remain attached to their manor, even though they were situated many miles away, though some remote holdings became, in effect, self-administering limbs of their home manor. The tenants at Foxham (Peasmarsh), a detached part of the manor of Herstmonceux, paid an annual sum to exempt themselves from attending court. Neif tenants were less likely than free tenants to be granted such exemption, for they were the source of greater profit for the court. Nevertheless, there were considerable difficulties in controlling distant customary holdings. When the villeins on the tithings at Telham and Uckham close to Battle and those at Barnhorne near the demesne farm gave fealty in 1311, the more distant tenants at Bucksteep (Warbleton) and Glasseye (Beckley) resisted, claiming they were of free status. It was often not easy to enforce suit by tenants reluctant to make the journey to attend and their goods could not be seized readily when they failed to appear. Battle manor, recognising this, compelled the attendance at the

³² *Feudal Aids* 5, 149-52; ESRO AMS 4884, mm. 13r. 18v. All tenants by knights' service were suitors at the lathe court of Hastings, *Lathe Court Rolls and Views of Frankpledge in the Rape of Hastings, A.D. 1387 to 1474*, ed. E.J. Courthope and B.E.R. Formoy (Sussex Record Society 37 (1934), xxii.

three-weekly courts of only two representatives from some of the more remote lands. Tenants of Wilting situated at a distance from the manor house paid to give suit of court only when the lord himself was present. On the manor of Playden the practice was to hold the sessions of the court on different parts of the manor. The court was generally held at Playden, but occasionally at Chitcombe in Brede where outlying lands were situated. Even so, the Chitcombe tenants became sufficiently independent to succeed in their claim to exemption from service as beadle or tithingman for the view of frankpledge in the Playden court.³³

Lordship on Wealden manors was weak and servile tenants owed lighter work-services and were less heavily burdened by feudal dues than their counterparts in the more anciently-settled areas of England.³⁴ The neifs in the Sussex Weald were largely free from onerous work services. The area of cultivated demesne land was not large in relation to the extent of land farmed by the tenants. In Rotherfield the demesne around the village was 276 acres in extent and there were a further 307 acres which had been assarted from the park at Eridge. The customary land, however, amounted to 2414 acres and the ancient freeholds to a further 844 acres. This was not exceptional; the demesne at Hammerden (Ticehurst) was a mere 336 acres compared to the 2339 acres held by tenants and at Bexhill the figures were 172 and 1845 acres respectively.³⁵

Very little of these areas of demesne was worked using labour services. The tenants at Rotherfield ploughed a total of 20 acres and did a limited amount of harrowing and weeding. No ploughing works were owed in Hammerden and only about 14 acres were harrowed by the tenants. At Burwash 21 acres were ploughed, at Bivelham six acres and at Crowhurst eight acres were ploughed and harrowed. The services of

³³ BL Add. Roll 31309; Harvard Law School manorial records 69; HEH BA vol. 5, no. 266; PRO E315/56, f. 47r.; BL Add. Roll 32669; ESRO AMS 4884, m. 17r.; ESRO AMS 4885, m. 9r.

³⁴ R.H. Hilton, *The English Peasantry in the Later Middle Ages* (1975), 118-28; B.K. Roberts, 'Historical Geography of Moated Homesteads in the Forest of Arden', *Transactions of the Birmingham and Warwickshire Archaeological Society* 88 (1978), 61-70; B.K. Roberts, 'A Study in Medieval Colonization in the Forest of Arden, Warwickshire', *Agricultural History Review* 16 (1968), 106-8.

³⁵ ESRO GIL 32; ESRO SAS/CO/D 3; *Thirteen Customals of the Sussex Manors of the Bishop of Chichester*, ed. W.D. Peckham (Sussex Record Society 31 (1925)), 133; WSRO Ep. VI/1/3, ff. 159r.-161v., 163r.-164v.

harvesting were equally small amounting to 42 works from all the tenants at Bivelham and a similar number were due on the manor of Brede.³⁶ The carriage of wood or other goods was a common service required of the tenants, and custumals often specified that transport-services to other manors within the estate might be demanded. There was no cultivated demesne in the bishop of Chichester's land at Heathfield, but the holders of yardlands gave carting services and might be required to carry timber to the episcopal manors of Bishopstone, Preston (near Brighton) and Bexhill. At Rotherfield the tenants could be required to take corn to the earl of Gloucester's manor at Tonbridge (Kent) and on Herstmonceux manor the tenants might have to go as far as Winchelsea, staying there overnight if necessary.³⁷

There was a pronounced contrast between the labour services on lands within the Weald and those further south, even within the confines of a single manor. South Malling was divided into two parts and the lands 'outside the wood' owed either two or three works per week throughout the year and a further number of boon works. The work services were much lighter within the Weald and comprised only seasonal labours. Each virgate in the Wadhurst and Mayfield vills of the manor owed 12 works a year, but by the late 14th century these had been commuted in the former place for ½d. each, and in the latter were of no net value and the tenants were no longer summoned to perform them. Similarly, at Alciston the long list of works performed by the villeins with land near the demesne bore little comparison with the light duties of those living in the Low Weald at Hays (Hellingly).³⁸

The manor of Battle was a notable exception to the otherwise prevalent pattern of small demesnes and light services. From the early 12th century the tenants had been burdened with week-work and gave five days labour one week in four and a carrying-service every Saturday. From the early days of the abbey these labour-services were demanded to cultivate the substantial demesne. The services were much the same in 1252 when a custumal defined the works more precisely, though by then the number of wists performing these duties had decreased. Firm lordship had been established at

³⁶ ESRO SAS/LB 34; ESRO SAS/CO/B 72; PRO C135/40 (8); HMAG JER collection unlisted (Brede account 1404-5).

³⁷ *Thirteen Custumals of the Bishop of Chichester*, 96; ESRO SAS/LB 34; ESRO SAS/C 250.

³⁸ *Custumal of the Sussex Manors of the Archbishop of Canterbury*, xxxiii, 79; Lambeth Palace Library ED 1900; *Custumals of Battle Abbey, in the Reigns of Edward I and Edward II, 1283-1312*, ed. S.R. Scargill-Bird (Camden Soc. 41 n.s. (1887)), 27-30, 38-9.

Battle from an early date and new settlers on the manor had had to accept the heavy service required by the monks.³⁹

Outside the lordship of Battle seigneurial control was only lightly exercised in the courts of Wealden manors. Scattered lands and a dispersed pattern of settlement made it difficult for the peasantry to be tightly controlled and exactions such as suit of mill were demanded on some manors only. The *principalia* lists elsewhere include hand-mills among the possessions of customary tenants, which may be an indication of their independence from the lord's mill.⁴⁰ The manor court played no part in managing agriculture, which was practised in separated closes rather than in open fields. Rents, once established, remained fixed, though their value was eroded by inflation. The effect of the declining value of rents is shown by the gradual increase in the amounts demanded from newly assarted land, which rose from 1d. per acre in the early 13th century to 4d. by the end of the century. Payments for relief were fixed by custom at a year's rent and entry fines remained moderate in spite of the demand for land.⁴¹

The relationship of the lord and his tenants may be investigated through the court rolls, though tensions within a manor are rarely evident until disputes broke out into open defiance or conflict. Most antagonisms were of a lower order, though it seems that presentments for slander were used as a way of bringing underlying discontent to a head. Three cases occur in the court of Wartling and give an insight into the attitudes of the tenants and peasants. In the first James de Cralle, a major free tenant, was distrained for hindering the work of the court and for not paying rent. For 18 months he did not attend the court and was found defective of law in his absence. Shortly after, James was accused of unjustly spreading rumours that the lord of the manor had sent men to lie in wait and assault him. The damage was assessed at £20,

³⁹ Searle, *Lordship and Community*, 59, 167-73.

⁴⁰ Suit of mill was demanded on the manors of Wartling (BL Add. Roll 32639), Hammerden (ESRO SAS/CO/B 1, m. 2r.), Bivelham (BL Add. Roll 31082) and Robertsbridge (CKS U1475/M237). *Principalia* lists mentioning hand-mills include BL Add. Rolls 31309, m. 4r., 31313, m. 1r., 32688, m. 2r. John Brokere, a neif in Crowhurst, also had a hand mill, ESRO A2300 (Crowhurst court rolls), m. 1r.

⁴¹ See p. 138. For entry fines elsewhere, see E. Miller and J. Hatcher (1978) *Medieval England: Rural Society and Economic Change, 1086-1348*, 46-7.

but it is unclear whether the fine was ever paid.⁴²

Three years later in 1308 James de Batsford, another of the major free tenants, was presented for malicious defamation. It was alleged that he had said that John de St Leger and his family were extortionate and had made complaints about castle-ward payments and other services. The particular cause of these remarks may have been the failure of John de Chilsham, a tenant and nephew of John de St Leger, to pay castle-ward and scutage, for an entry concerning non-payment immediately precedes the presentment of James de Batsford on the court rolls.⁴³

The Cralle and Batsford families were among the largest free tenants in the manor of Wartling and held land elsewhere in the vicinity. The manor court was an improbable place to attempt to sue such men, but the purpose may not have been to secure a conviction, but rather to bring their grievances to public notice and to reassert lordship. Underlying these two cases may be conflicts over lordship. James de Batsford was the holder of a number of tenements in Wartling and Herstmonceux, an estate later referred to as a manor, but remained a tenant of St Leger to whom he owed castle-ward and other services. James de Cralle was in a similar position and likewise may have resented the behaviour of the lord of Wartling.⁴⁴

The third episode of slander in Wartling occurred in 1343 when the neif tenants were charged to find those who were alleging that the lord was seeking to destroy his villeins by extortionate demands. The homage of neifs disingenuously replied that they were not guilty, but they suspected three tenants, whom they named. These three were among the largest landholders among the unfree tenants and may have been offered to answer the accusation of slander. The resolution of the case is not recorded. The background to the slander may lie as far back as 1339 when the villein tenants were tallaged, a rare happening, and were collectively charged a sum for the farm of the mill to exempt them from grinding their corn there. Manorial incidents were being collected with a greater rigour, inquiries were made into rights and duties and a new rental was compiled. In 1343 entry fines, previously fixed at a rate equal to one year's rent, and charges for custody of minors were increased. These may have

⁴² BL Add. Roll 32662, m. 3v., see also m. 5v.

⁴³ BL Add. Roll 32613, m. 3v.

⁴⁴ C.H.C. Whittick, 'Documentary Evidence', in O. Bedwin, 'The Excavation of Batsford Mill, Warbleton, East Sussex, 1978', *Medieval Archaeology* 24 (1980), 189.

been the immediate cause of the villeins' complaints.⁴⁵

Malicious gossip among the tenants was a means of reacting against what was perceived as unreasonable behaviour. In none of the Wartling cases is it certain that any person was fined and the presentment for slander may have sufficed to reaffirm the social order. Conversely, it reflects an awareness by the lord, or at least his steward, of the tenants' complaints. Affirmation of the social order and social proprieties seems to have been the purpose behind a case at Playden where Simon Bone and his brother Edmund were sued for taking $\frac{3}{4}$ acre of land from William, the rector. The land had earlier been leased by Edmund to William, but Simon, ignoring this agreement, had sown the land. Subsequently, Simon was found guilty of speaking ill of the rector and was fined, perhaps symbolically, a gallon of wine.⁴⁶

The social order was under increasing strain in the second half of the 14th century as neifs sought to assert their freedom in reaction to seigneurial exactions. These tensions contributed to the rising of 1381, though there were only limited disturbances that year on manors within the eastern Sussex Weald.⁴⁷ Discontent can, however, be detected throughout the South-East in the resistance to the authority of the manorial court. The events on the manor of Crowham seems to have been typical of other incidents in the region.⁴⁸ The court rolls from 1354 contain numerous presentments noting the failure by the beadles of the tithings of Crowham and Glasseye to execute distrains. In January that year the beadle, John Smith, was removed from office and John Viel elected in his place, but he seems to have done the job no better. In August 1355 Robert Janekyn was presented as beadle, but was not sworn and John Doun had to be elected in his place, though he too would not carry out his duties. Two months later John Adam was elected. In 1357 Stephen Malyne, who two years previous had paid to avoid the office, was serving as beadle, but failed

⁴⁵ BL Add. Roll 32644; 32639-43; 32603-4.

⁴⁶ ESRO AMS 4883, m. 6r.

⁴⁷ Saul, *Scenes from Provincial Life*, 81-2; Searle, *Lordship and Community*, 345-7. On resentment and resistance to seigneurial exactions, see C.C. Dyer, 'The Social and Economic Background to the Rural Revolt of 1381', in R.H. Hilton and T.H. Aston (eds), *The English Rising of 1381* (1984), 34-6.

⁴⁸ *Victoria County History of Sussex* 2, ed. W. Page (1907), 182; Du Boulay, *The Lordship of Canterbury*, 183-4, 188-9.

to do any of the duties. He would not take into the lord's hands his own land, which had been let without licence, nor that of others, and allowed his land to be harvested against the will of the lord. The problem continued that autumn when Martin Bressete was elected beadle, but evidently refused to serve and the homage paid 20s. to be discharged from choosing a reeve.⁴⁹

No rolls survive from Crowham manor for the period between 1357 and 1364, but there was continuing resistance when they resume. The lands of Robert Janekyn and Samson Ward were seized, because of their refusal to take neifs' oaths. The following year the former gave a fine to be exempt from his oath. No sum is noted on the roll and it seems that none was exacted, suggesting a complete capitulation by the lord to Janekyn's assertion of freedom. In 1365 Peter Gillingham struck the lord's beehive in an apparent act of vandalism and was not amerced, and a year later the homage failed to present that another neif tenant was purporting to hold his land freely.⁵⁰ Many of these offences were minor and normally would have been dealt with by the court, but collectively, they amount to stubborn and continuing resistance to seigneurial control and an almost complete breakdown of authority.

Opposition to seigneurial control is less evident on other manors where the resistance was less overt or less prolonged. It may be that some of the petty offences treated by the manor courts were intended as gestures of defiance. At Hammerden in 1403, Richard Taleho was reported to have cut three oaks and taken crops worth 39s. and stock from tenements which were seised in the lord's hands. A later court found he was leasing one of those tenements from which items had been removed. However, before this was presented, a note on the rolls described him as a 'rebel'. Yet in the same court the homage elected him beadle. We might interpret these events in a number of different ways, but must presume that his behaviour had given the manorial officials some reason for identifying him as a rebel.⁵¹

THE EVIDENCE OF POLL TAX RETURNS

Few 14th-century poll tax returns for Sussex have survived and most of the extant

⁴⁹ ESRO AMS 5686, mm. 7r.-8v.

⁵⁰ ESRO AMS 5686, mm. 9r.-9v.

⁵¹ ESRO SAS/CO/B 4, m. 1r.-v.

records concern vill in the centre of the county. A counterpart return for the vill of Udimore has been preserved among the manorial records, and there are damaged returns for the vills Glottenham, Fontridge, Iridge and Salehurst in Henhurst hundred, and Blackham and Faulkners vills in the hundred of Hartfield, all in eastern Sussex. None of the membranes is dated, but payments in the Udimore return are graduated according to occupation so must be from the assessments of 1379 or 1381. A total of 150 individuals are recorded, 71 males and 79 females, a ratio of sexes which is the reverse of the normal over-representation of men.⁵² The names on the return are listed by residence so that it may be estimated that the enumerated population lived in approximately 71 households. Of these, seventeen (24%) included a son or daughter over 14 or 15 years and/or a servant. Seven out of the 11 jurors (64%) had servants or resident offspring, a proportion notably greater than the average. This cannot be explained by the social composition of the jurors, which are fairly representative of the range of occupations, but suggests rather that the jurors declared, or were compelled to declare their full household, whilst elsewhere there was widespread evasion.⁵³

There were probably many more two-generation households than the returns suggest. Some sons and daughters were described as servants, but in other households in which the servant had the same surname as the couple in the preceding entry, it may be assumed they were related. Immature adults often worked as servants living with their employers until they were old enough to set up their own households.⁵⁴ Half of the servants who were attached to families were definitely related to their masters or were probably so, since they had the same surname, and that figure is likely to be an underestimate for some related servants may have had different names from their parents. There is little evidence that households included elderly relatives. John atte Watere, described as an old man who held land, lived alone with his wife. A ploughman, John Wymund, was unusual, for he lived with his mother and an

⁵² M.W. Beresford, *Lay Subsidies and Poll Taxes* (1963); HMAG JER collection unlisted; PRO SC12/15/80; PRO E179/189/35; Hilton, *English Peasantry in the Later Middle Ages*, 28

⁵³ For the problems of reconstructing households in this way, see L.R. Poos, *A Rural Society after the Black Death: Essex 1350-1525* (1991), 23, 295. For an example of evasion elsewhere see, R.H. Hilton, *Class Conflict and the Crisis of Feudalism* (1990 edition), 190; Hilton, *English Peasantry in the Later Middle Ages*, 32-4.

⁵⁴ R.M. Smith, 'Some Issues Concerning Families and their Property in Rural England 1250-1800', in R.M. Smith (ed.), *Land Kinship and Life-Cycle* (1984), 34; Poos, *A Rural Society after the Black Death*, 183-206.

apparently unrelated servant.

Table 6
Taxpayers by Social Category (per cent) in Poll Tax Returns

	Udimore⁺	Blackham
Artisans	8	20
Commoners	27	12
Labourers	26	13
Unmarried	20	33
Servants	19	22
Total number in sample	98	75

+ figures for Udimore exclude married women.

The household composition is less clear in the Henhurst and Hartfield returns, because the taxpayers are ordered by social status. The returns are undated, but presumably date from either 1379 or 1381. The only major landholder recorded in Henhurst hundred was William de Etchingham, though his main residence at Mountfield was in the adjoining hundred of Netherfield. There were also six esquires or minor gentry in Henhurst. The occupation of only one artisan, John Lunsford, a carpenter, is stated and servants are rarely identified, though the two servants of Simon Colet, an artisan are distinguished.

In Blackham vill in Hartfield the 75 tax-payers are listed under the headings of commoners, artisans, unmarried, labourers and servants. Females are notably under-represented, and if married, were evidently included in their husbands' payment. A considerable proportion, one third (25) of all those enumerated were unmarried, but were not servants. Artisans and servants each made up about one fifth of the tax-payers (15 and 16 respectively). Five of the artisans were associated with trades connected with wood. There were three carpenters, a cooper and a woodman. Those connected with clothing were a weaver, three tailors and a haberdasher. There were in addition two thatchers, a butcher, a stonehealer (i.e. stone mason), and a man described as a labourer but included among the artisans.

By categorising the tax-payers described in Udimore under the headings used in the Blackham returns, the composition of the two populations may be compared. Married women and females described as commoners, and holders of land or ploughmen (*carrucarii*) in the Udimore return have been excluded for the purpose of comparison. The numbers recorded are not large and it would not be justified to attribute too much significance to them, especially given the probable level of evasion and the inconsistencies of classification. The figures broadly show a level of agreement with the unmarried individuals, who may have either been widowed or not yet married, and servants forming between a third and a half of the population. Labourers who worked on others' lands made up in the region of a fifth of the tax-payers.

PART 3

Inheritance, Life Cycle and Rural Society

CHAPTER 7

PATTERNS OF INHERITANCE IN THE EASTERN SUSSEX WEALD

Inheritance is central to the study of patterns of settlement, tenure and social structure. Inheritance practices determine the transmission of land from one generation to the next and have a direct influence upon the place of residence of heirs and non-inheriting siblings. The patterns of kinship linking groups within society are likely to be closely connected with inheritance behaviour. An understanding of a society's norms of inheritance is therefore of crucial importance in the interpretation of that society.¹

In spite of the importance of the subject, the operation of inheritance in Anglo-Saxon society remains poorly understood. The evidence from pre-Conquest sources is ambiguous, but tends to favour the view that some types of land were divided partly between male heirs; it has been argued that *folcland*, for example, was inherited in this manner.² The clearest evidence of Anglo-Saxon inheritance may, however, be gleaned from sources dating to immediately after the Conquest which record the earlier practice. When, for example, William I assured the burgesses of London that pre-Conquest laws would continue to be recognised, he stated that 'every child shall be his father's heir after his father's day', an apparent reference to partible inheritance within the city.³

¹ E. Leach, *Pul Eliya, a Village in Ceylon: A Study of Land Tenure and Kinship* (1961), 11. The anthropological literature on inheritance is extensive.

² B.S. Phillpotts, *Kindred and Clan in the Middle Ages and After* (1913), 205-44; L. Lancaster, 'Kinship in Anglo-Saxon Society', *British Journal of Sociology* 9 (1958), 230-50, 359-77; R.J. Faith, 'Peasant Families and Inheritance Customs in Medieval England', *Agricultural History Review* 14 (1966), 79-81; T.M. Charles-Edwards, 'Kinship, Status and the Origins of the Hide', *Past and Present* 56 (1972), 3-33; H.R. Loyn, 'Kinship in Anglo-Saxon England', *Anglo-Saxon England* 3 (1974), 187-209; P. Wormald, 'The Age of Bede and Aethelbald', in J. Campbell (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxons* (1982), 97.

³ *Select Charters and Other Illustrations of English Constitutional History to the Reign of Edward I*, ed. W. Stubbs (1913, 9th edition), 97; *English Historical Documents 1042-1189*, ed. D.C. Douglas and G.W. Greenaway (1981 edition), 1012.

Domesday Book has also been used as a source of evidence for Old English inheritance, though there are considerable problems in comprehending its terminology. Some manors were said to be held 'in parage' (*in paragio*) and, though the meaning of the term is not entirely clear, it does seem to be connected with partible inheritance. Maitland concluded that land in parage was held by co-heirs and had not been partitioned, and the entries for Gatcombe (Isle of Wight) and elsewhere support that interpretation. Round and others argued, however, that parage implied not simply that the land was subject to partible inheritance, but was also a type of tenure. We may not assume, therefore, that all holders of land in parage were necessarily related for they are commonly not described as brothers or relations, but simply as thanes, freemen or just as men.⁴ Equally, it may not be assumed that all joint tenants were necessarily related, though clearly sometimes they were. The two thanes who held Clapton in Somerset in the time of King Edward might not be identified as relations, were it not for Exon Domesday (*Liber Exoniensis*) which adds they held it in parage and were brothers.⁵

Entries recording tenure by groups of brothers provide more certain evidence of partible division among heirs, and where in 1086 the vill remained in the hands of the descendants of the pre-Conquest holder, it may be possible to identify the partible division of the land. At Hanger in Hampshire, for example, the sons of Godric Malf held the land formerly in the possession of their father, and the four Englishman holding nearby Over Wallop were brothers occupying a single hide which had once been their father's. Though brothers are the most common relationship mentioned, a man and his nephew occur as the holders of land at Nettlestone in the Isle of Wight, implying a similar partible division.⁶ The entry for Thames Ditton in Surrey is more explicit and records that the land was divided between two brothers on the death of their father. There is evidence elsewhere that land was divided equally between the

⁴ F.W. Maitland, *Domesday Book and Beyond* (1897, reprinted 1987), 145-6; DB i, 52b; P. Vinogradoff, *English Society in the Eleventh Century: Essays in English Mediaeval History* (1908), 245-50; *Victoria County History of Hampshire* 1, ed. H.A. Doubleday (1900), 441-2; F. Pollock and F.W. Maitland, *The History of English Law before the Time of Edward I* (2nd edition, 1898), 264.

⁵ DB i, 92b; *Liber Exoniensis* (printed in *Libri Censualis, vocati Domesday-Book, Additamenta ex Codic. Antiquiss.*, ed. H. Ellis (Record Commissioners, 1816), 258), f. 278a.

⁶ DB i, 50a, 53b.

heirs. The entry in Exon Domesday indicates that four brothers held three hides at Stoke sub Hamdon (Somerset) and that each of them had three virgates.⁷

Partible inheritance among male heirs was the common, indeed perhaps the normal, way in which land was transmitted among the Anglo-Saxons in the 11th century; by the later 13th century partibility between male heirs was rare among free tenants and uncommon for customary tenants. In 200 years there had been a complete change in the pattern of inheritance of land.⁸ The transformation has been attributed to the change in custom introduced by the Normans after 1066. As Holt has succinctly stated,

The social conventions of the Anglo-Saxons allowed, even required the testamentary distribution of land throughout the kin: the social conventions of the Normans did not..... Very soon primogeniture became the rule.⁹

Impartible inheritance, like many new practices, probably permeated downwards through society from the higher social levels. There was an obvious value for the holders of military fees in having a single heir, and one moreover that had reached his majority when his father died. Nevertheless, it took sometime for primogeniture to be accepted among holders of knights' fees in a society used to dividing the patrimony. Some land held by knight-service in the first half of the 12th century continued to be divided partibly, though by the fourth quarter of the century primogeniture had become the established rule among holders of land for military service.¹⁰

⁷ DB i, 32a, 92a; Liber Exoniensis (printed in *Libri Censualis*, 247), f. 267b.

⁸ J.C. Holt, 'Feudal Society and the Family in Early Medieval England: I The Revolution of 1066', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 5th series, 32 (1982), 198-201; Faith, 'Peasant Families and Inheritance Customs', 78-86.

⁹ J.C. Holt, 'Feudal Society and the Family in Early Medieval England: II. Notions of Patrimony', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 5th series, 33 (1983), 197-8, 212-3.

¹⁰ M. Chibnall, *Anglo-Norman England 1066-1166* (1986), 174-6; D.J.H. Michelmores, 'Township and Tenure', in M.L. Faull and S.A. Moorhouse (eds), *West Yorkshire: an Archaeological Survey to A.D. 1500* (1981) 2, 244.

PARTIBLE INHERITANCE AMONG FREE TENANTS IN SUSSEX

The innovation of undivided inheritance or unigeniture took longer to become established in the lower levels of society. Among the free peasantry partible inheritance had become uncommon by the early 13th century, but the practice of division persisted in a few areas of England, particularly East Anglia and the South-East.¹¹ The Custumal of Kent, a formal statement of practices in that county, was according to tradition issued in 1293 at the Eyre of Kent and stated that all land, except land held by military service, was to be inherited partibly. This was a codification of the customs, which though long established in Kent, were increasingly out of line with the practice elsewhere.¹²

Most free land in Sussex was inherited by the eldest son by the 13th century. Occasional references, however, indicate that in areas of the Weald some free tenements continued to be inherited partibly. An early 13th-century rental records two brothers who held land of Bayham Abbey at *Strode* in Wartling paid an equal rent. It seems likely that the holding had been divided between them on the death of their father. A later rental dating to the middle of the century shows their descendants still had the same holdings and the land had not been further divided between their heirs. Similarly, land at Kitchingham (Etchingham) was given by three brothers, William, Thomas and Henry, the sons of Peter de Kitchingham in 1242 to Combwell Priory (Kent). The charter records that their father had granted out the land for an annual payment of 2d. which after his death was received by the three sons. Partible inheritance was common among free tenants in the area around Rye and persisted there until at least 1300. The three sons of William de Pypenisell inherited two acres of land in Cadborough Marsh to the west of Rye. Two of the sons, Richard and William the younger, subsequently relinquished their interests in the land to Henry their brother, though William the younger retained the land adjoining, which he had evidently acquired separately.¹³ A court case of the mid-13th century describes a

¹¹ Faith, 'Peasant Families and Inheritance Customs', 81, 93-4; H.E. Hallam, *Rural England 1066-1348* (1981), 68-74, 91-3, 121, 140, 163-4, 211-4; B. Dodwell, 'Holdings and Inheritance in Medieval East Anglia', *Economic History Review* 2nd series, 20 (1967), 53-66.

¹² F. Hull, 'The Custumal of Kent', *Archaeologia Cantiana* 72 (1958), 148-59; F. Hull, 'John de Berwyke and the Consuetudines Kancie', *Archaeologia Cantiana* 96 (1980), 1-16; N. Neilson, 'Custom and the Common Law in Kent', *Harvard Law Review*. 38 (1924-5), 482-98.

¹³ BL Cotton MS. Otho A ii, ff. 27v. (no. 140), 73v.; BL Add. MS. 6037, f. 93; BL Harl. Ch. 78 I 32; ESRO RYE 136/11, 12. For other examples of partible inheritance in the Rye area, see BL

slightly different pattern of inheritance. It was related that John, count of Eu (1140-70 or 1201-7) had granted to Levesont, his hunter, some assart lands in Burwash. After the death of Levesont the land was divided partly between two of his sons so that they had 32 acres each. To compensate the third son, the count gave him a further grant of 60 acres.¹⁴

The practice of partible inheritance, though persisting among free tenants in some areas of eastern Sussex as late as the last decades of the 13th century and even into the early 14th century, was clearly in decline. The descendants of the de Strode brothers at Wartling do not seem to have continued dividing the land between their heirs, and the land of Levesont in Burwash, though initially split between two of his sons, was not further subdivided thereafter. When the history of this land was related in 1262, the three tenants were the descendants of the three sons of Levesont and it seems that the common law practice of primogeniture had replaced partible inheritance.

Post mortem division of land between sons declined, but some land continued to be divided *inter vivos*. The injustice of granting the patrimonial inheritance to one of the sibling group, when all were equally deserving, encouraged grants of land to be made to non-inheriting offspring.¹⁵ Before his death in c. 1245 Adam de Cobford gave portions of his holding in Waldron to his sons. His heir was evidently Robert who later confirmed his father's grants to Robertsbridge Abbey. He received part of Adam's land 'for his maintenance during his [Adam's] pleasure without any charter', that is, while his father was still alive. The other sons, Hugh certainly, and Geoffrey possibly, were also given portions of the holding by Adam, and even Robert's son, Roger, was granted 10 acres with a large house on his grandfather's tenement. The division of property extended laterally to Adam's sister who was given a dowry of land on her marriage.¹⁶ Land held by Alice de Somery in Bexhill was similarly divided *ante mortem* in the late 12th or early 13th century. She had received five virgates and

Add. Ch. 962, 965.

¹⁴ PRO JUST 1/912A, mm. 5r., 16r.

¹⁵ J. Goody, 'Introduction', in J. Goody, J. Thirsk and E.P. Thompson (eds), *Family and Inheritance: Rural Society in Western Europe 1200-1800* (1976), 5.

¹⁶ *Report on the Manuscripts of Lord De L'Isle and Dudley Preserved at Penshurst Place*, Historical Manuscripts Commission (report 77, vol. 1 (1925)), 99-100.

15 acres of marshland from her father on her marriage. She divided that dowry between her two sons so that one, Samfrid, received two virgates and the other, William, the remainder. The division did not continue with the following generation for on the death of William his land was inherited by the eldest of his sons, Warner; the second son, Robert apparently received nothing. There is no record of the transmission of the land of Alice's husband, Warner de Somery.¹⁷ *Inter vivos* division continued among more wealthy tenants into the 14th century and beyond. Gilbert de Wigsell granted his land at Wigsell (Salehurst) in 1304 to his brother, Henry, who held the adjoining land. The two had been granted their land by their father, John, who was perhaps influenced by the practice of gavelkind, which applied to the land in the adjoining county immediately beyond his tenement on the other side of the Kent Water.¹⁸

The principal of unigeniture had become firmly established during the 13th century among free tenants in most of eastern Sussex, but some continued to provide at least some land for their younger sons and, if possible, dowries of land for their daughters. That was often managed, either by buying extra land for the purpose, or making a minor grant of some peripheral land and so keeping the tenement largely intact.¹⁹

INHERITANCE AMONG CUSTOMARY TENANTS IN SUSSEX

According to medieval legal theory customary tenants could inherit neither goods nor land. Villeins were unable to transmit land or property to their successors for all their possessions were the property of the lord of manor and therefore could not be inherited. Yet as Hyams has commented,

most peasants, whatever their status, enjoyed in practice a large measure of heritability... The gap between legal theory and the life of the countryside is

¹⁷ HEH BA vol. 29, ff. 130v.-132v.; Lincoln's Inn Library Hale MS. 87, ff. 66v.-68r. A grant of a corrody to Samfrid and his wife Alice by Battle Abbey was confirmed by Alice, countess of Eu in her widowhood, which can therefore be attributed to 1219 x 25 (*Victoria County History of Sussex* 9, ed. L.F. Salzman (1937), 2).

¹⁸ College of Arms Ch. 120; BL Harl. Ch. 80 I 33.

¹⁹ For the purchase of land for non-inheriting heirs and for the provision of dowries, see pp. 246.

wider here than at any other point in the system.²⁰

Legal theory notwithstanding, the reality was that inheritance customs were established and enforced by manorial courts. The practice of customary inheritance mirrored the developments in the upper levels of society, and during the late 12th and early 13th century unigeniture replaced partibility on many manors. Partible inheritance found among the tenants holding lands for works on the Midlands manors of the bishop of Worcester in c.1170 had disappeared a century or so later. A similar transition is likely on the manors of Westminster Abbey, where unigeniture was established as the custom at Feering in Essex by c.1225.²¹

The spread of unigeniture among the customary tenants in eastern Sussex is undocumented for it took place before the earliest court rolls which survive only from the late 13th century. It may indeed have been well advanced by the first quarter of the 13th century. A case was heard in 1225 to determine whether five tenants on an unnamed Sussex manor were free or villein. Among the arguments adduced was the tenants' practice of inheritance. It was argued that they were unfree, because the youngest son inherited the land, 'as other villeins of the lordship'. Servile tenure was therefore already firmly associated with ultimogeniture and free tenure with primogeniture.²²

The inheritance custom on the majority of manors in Sussex in the 14th century was ultimogeniture or Borough English, by which the youngest son alone inherited the land or, in default of male heirs, the tenement was generally divided between all the daughters. The practice of partible inheritance persisted on a small group of manors, which mostly lay in the north-east of the county, an area which Jolliffe recognised had settlement and inheritance practices similar to those in Kent and was typical, he

²⁰ P.R. Hyams, *Kings, Lords and Peasants in Medieval England: The Common Law of Villeinage in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (1980), 68-70.

²¹ C.C. Dyer, *Lords and Peasants in a Changing Society: the Estates of the Bishopric of Worcester, 680-1540* (1980), 86, 106; B. Harvey, *Westminster Abbey and its Estates in the Middle Ages* (1977), 211.

²² *Curia Regis Rolls* 12, 67. On similar cases, see R.H. Hilton, 'Freedom and Villeinage in England', *Past and Present* 31 (1965), 14-9. On the name 'Borough English', see Pollock and Maitland, *The History of English Law before the Time of Edward I*, 2, 279.

thought, of 'Jutish' custom.²³ The evidence for partible inheritance needs, however, to be considered critically. Jolliffe seems to have assumed that tenants with the same surname holding lands together were necessarily related. Surnames alone provide an insufficient means of recognising relationships because of the well known mutability of medieval names. Many surnames were locative, and even unrelated individuals who held land in the same area might bear the same name. The only secure means of identifying inheritances customs is from the evidence of court rolls. Occasionally, the custom was declared by the homage of the court, usually as a consequence of disputed inheritance, but more often it must be inferred from the way in which land descended. The manors on which two or more sons have been found inheriting their father's holding are listed in Table 7. Manors with Borough English have also been noted, though later evidence suggests these were much more common than the examples noted here (Table 8).²⁴

The customs of partible inheritance found on a few manors, and of Borough English, which occurred almost everywhere else in Sussex, seem to indicate two firmly contrasting systems of descent. But it has long been recognised that the two customs have many elements in common. Both Borough English and the Kentish rule of gavelkind emphasise the portion to be given to the youngest son. According to the rules of the latter, although the messuage was to be divided between all sons, the parental home should go to the youngest. The special role of the youngest son was also recognised when the inheritance was small. Holdings of less than five acres on certain manors in Kent were not divided at inheritance, but descended whole to the youngest son, a practice which prevented the excessive partition of land.²⁵ The custom is also found on the Sussex manor of Bivelham, where the land was

²³ G.R. Corner, 'On the Custom of Borough English, as Existing in the County of Sussex', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 6 (1853), 164-89; W.D. Peckham, 'The Custom of Borough English', *Sussex Notes and Queries* 2 (1928), 57-8; J.E.A. Jolliffe, *Pre-Feudal England: The Jutes* (1933), 77.

²⁴ Corner, 'On the Custom of Borough English'.

²⁵ Pollock and Maitland, *The History of English Law*, 2, 271, 280; Faith, 'Peasant Families and Inheritance Customs', 83; C.I. Elton, *The Tenures of Kent* (1867), 166, 171-4; *Statutes of the Realm* 1 (Record Commissioners, 1810), ed. A. Luders *et al.*, 224; Corner, 'On the Custom of Borough English', 172.

Table 7

MANORS WITH PARTIBLE INHERITANCE IN EASTERN SUSSEX

(Not all the following places lie within the area of fig. 28.)

Alciston - Buckholt (Hellingly): ESRO SAS/G18/6b, m. 3v. and see text.

Battle - Glasseye (Beckley): HEH BA vol. 5, nos. 118, 689, 1463-4.

Bivelham (Mayfield): BL Add. Roll 31098.

Brede: HMAG JER collection (unlisted) court rolls.

Crowham (Westfield): ESRO AMS 5686, m. 2.

Hammerden (Ticehurst): ESRO SAS/CO/B 1, m. 2r.

Herstmonceux - Foxham (Peasmarsh): ESRO SAS/Budgen 5.

Morley (Peasmarsh): ESRO SAS/CO/B 3, m. 1r.

Playden: ESRO AMS 4883, m. 10v.

Udimore: HMAG JER collection (unlisted) court rolls.

Table 8

MANORS WITH ULTIMOGENITURE (BOROUGH ENGLISH)
IN EASTERN SUSSEX

(Not all the following places lie within the area of fig. 28.)

Alciston - at Alciston: ESRO SAS/G18/2 (Custom stated in case concerning the heir of Adam ate Wyke)

Battle - in lowy: Searle, *Lordship and Community*, 111.

Battle - Bucksteep (Warbleton): BL Add. Roll 31310, m. 6r.

Chalvington: ESRO SAS/CH 226.

Crowhurst: When John Nattelegh died in 1392 his 24-week old son, William inherited. He died shortly after and the land was inherited by William's brother, John, who was three years old demonstrating that the custom was Borough English: ESRO A2300 (Crowhurst court rolls), mm. 3r., 4r.

Dewlands (Rotherfield) (Eldest son inherited assart land): ESRO A2805.

Herstmonceux: ESRO SAS/Budgen 5.

Laughton: M. Clough, *The Estates of the Pelham Family in East Sussex before 1500* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 1956), 221.

Robertsbridge: CKS U1475/M237.

Rotherfield (The eldest son inherited land held by assart tenure): ESRO SAS/LB34; ESRO SAS/Aber 1271/4.

South Malling (If the tenant entered assart first then all land was inherited by his eldest son, if yardland then by his youngest: *Custumals of the Sussex Manors of the Archbishop of Canterbury* (Sussex Record Society 57 (1958)), ed. B.C. Redwood and A.E. Wilson, 142.

Wartling: BL Add. Roll 31509, m. 1v.

otherwise inherited partly. Thomas, the youngest son of Agnes Heryng inherited her entire holding of one acre on her death in 1414.²⁶

One of effects of the customs of Borough English, and also to some degree of gavelkind, in favouring the youngest son was that the heirs were often minors at the death of their father. Wardship was therefore common and often lasted for a number of years. The holding and guardianship of the heir was often granted to the mother, if alive. She commonly held half the land as her widow's bench and half in wardship. On some manors in the East Sussex Weald wardship was granted to the mother of the heir either without a fine or for a nominal sum, and in default of the mother, it went to the closest non-inheriting relation, called in Kent the 'procheyn amy'. The age of majority for customary tenants on the Sussex manors, as elsewhere in England, was 15 years old. The point at which the heir took control of the holding could consequently be delayed for many years. In these circumstances it seems likely that older brothers could often have been involved in the working of the tenement before it passed to their youngest brother.²⁷

The rules of inheritance, even on manors with the custom of Borough English, may have operated to produce a form of *de facto* partibility. The custom of the manor of Rotherfield was Borough English, but land held by assart tenure passed to the eldest son at the father's death. The widow had no right of bench in the assart land, but took the whole of the customary land as a dower portion. The custom in the manor of Warbleton was similar. If a rationale may be discerned for these rules, it was that the customary land formed the core of the tenement and should pass to the main heir. Any other land, for example land acquired by assart, might go to support another son. This interpretation is supported by a somewhat similar division of land between the inheriting sons found on the Northamptonshire manor of Brigstock and elsewhere in Rockingham Forest in Northamptonshire, where considerable areas were assarted. All the land that the father had inherited descended to the youngest son, but

²⁶ BL Add. Roll 31097.

²⁷ T. Robinson, *The Common Law of Kent or The Customs of Gavelkind* (3rd edition, 1822), 237-9. On the age of majority, see for example, BL Add Roll 31310, m. 1r.; ESRO A2300 (Crowhurst court rolls), 13v.; Searle, *Lordship and Community*, 112; F.R.H. Du Boulay, *The Lordship of Canterbury: An Essay in Medieval Society*, 145. On the results of Borough English, see below, pp. 227; Faith, 'Peasant Families and Inheritance Customs', 83;  Raftis, *Tenure and Mobility: Studies in the Social History of the English Medieval Village* (1974), 56; Pollock and Maitland, *The History of English Law* 2, 280.

Table 9

PROPORTION OF TENEMENT GRANTED AS WIDOW'S BENCH
ON MANORS IN EASTERN SUSSEX

Battle - in the lowy - Half: HEH BA vol. 5, no. 65.

Brede - Half: HMAG JER collection (unlisted), Bundle B, court of 15th April 1378

Crowham - Half: ESRO AMS 5686, m. 5.

Herstmonceux - Half: ESRO SAS/Budgen 10.

Rotherfield - All of the land held in ferlings, but none of the land held by assart
tenure: ESRO SAS/LB34; ESRO SAS/Aber 1271/4.

South Malling - All the yardland as a bench, but only one third of assart land:
Customals of the Sussex Manors of the Archbishop of Canterbury, 142.

Udimore - Half: HMAG JER collection (unlisted), court of 29th June 1313

any land that had been acquired during the father's lifetime was received by the eldest son.²⁸

The customs on the manor of South Malling resembled those in the adjoining manor of Rotherfield. In both the widow received the whole of the customary land as her bench. In South Malling, however, the division of land between sons which might have occurred in Rotherfield was anticipated and prevented. The descent of the land in South Malling depended upon whether the tenant had first acquired land of assart or customary tenure. Even in a mixed holding, had assart land been the first to be acquired, the eldest son would inherit. If, on the contrary, the tenant had entered customary land first, then the younger son inherited the whole. Similar customs applied on the nearby manor of Maresfield. That unusual rule has no clear rationale, but might have developed as a means of prevent that division of patrimony which must have taken place in Rotherfield.²⁹

THE PATTERN OF INHERITANCE CUSTOMS

It might seem capricious that on adjacent manors variously the youngest son, the eldest son or all sons might inherit their fathers' land. Earlier interpretations have sought to attribute the diversity of customs to the settlement of England in the Anglo-Saxon period by different ethnic groups. But as has already been shown, it has not been possible to trace the customs of Borough English and primogeniture back beyond the 11th century, and no convincing link can be made between areas of settlement and particular customs of inheritance.³⁰ Faith, in an alternative view of the

²⁸ ESRO SAS LB 34; Corner, 'On the Custom of Borough English', 176; J. Bennett, *Women in the English Medieval Countryside: Gender and Household in Brigstock before the Plague* (1987), 11, 14-5.

²⁹ *Customals of the Sussex Manors of the Archbishop of Canterbury* (Sussex Record Society 57 (1958)), ed. B.C. Redwood and A.E. Wilson, 142. It should be noted, however, that the statement of customs survives only as a 17th-century text and, though it purports to be a copy of a document of 1329/30, it uses the terminology of a later period. Corner, 'On the Custom of Borough English', 176.

³⁰ Jolliffe, *Pre-Feudal England*; G.C. Homans, 'The Frisians in East Anglia', *Economic History Review* 2nd series, 10 (1957), 189-206; G.C. Homans, 'The Explanation of English Regional Differences', *Past and Present* 42 (1969), 18-34; Faith, 'Peasant Families and Inheritance Customs', 78-9.

development of inheritance customs, proposes that the practice of partibility was replaced during the 12th and early 13th century by unigeniture. Unigeniture permeated down the social scale eventually reaching the manorial courts, where the response was mixed.³¹ In some areas it was resisted and partibility remained, but elsewhere different forms of unigeniture were adopted. The consequent variations in custom may be seen as the product of different strategies of inheritance. Families sought various means to reconcile the claims of all the offspring with the need to avoid continuing division of the patrimony which, in due course, would ultimately reduce holdings to an insufficient size. As the population expanded rapidly after the Conquest, it became increasingly necessary to confront these contradictory aims. A charter of 1276 from Kent raised precisely this problem. The tenants, noting that a sub-divided tenement could not support any of the co-heirs, petitioned for a change in inheritance of the land from gavelkind to primogeniture.³²

The adoption of different customs of inheritance, however, was not random, but, as the pattern in southern England shows, had a strong regional dimension. Partible inheritance was quite common in Suffolk and Norfolk, testamentary unigeniture, that is the bequest of the land by the father to one heir, is found extensively in the Chilterns, gavelkind is found in Kent and Borough English is general elsewhere in the South-East.³³ The distribution of customs in Sussex may be interpreted as part of that regional pattern. Partible inheritance was generally found towards the north-eastern corner of Sussex, an area adjacent to Kent where the rules of gavelkind applied (fig. 28). Further away from Kent the custom in Sussex was Borough English, which also occurred extensively in Surrey and Hampshire. The north-east of Sussex is therefore a transitional area on the boundary between the partible inheritance of Kent and Borough English elsewhere.³⁴

³¹ Hyams, *Kings, Lords and Peasants*, 77n.

³² Robinson, *The Common Law of Kent*, 76.

³³ G.C. Homans, *English Villagers of the Thirteenth Century* (1941), 116-7, 127-32; D. Roden, 'Inheritance Customs and Succession to Land in the Chiltern Hills in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries', *Journal of British Studies* 7 (1967), 1-11; A.E. Levett, *Studies in Manorial History* (1938), 208ff.; H.E. Malden, 'Notes on Some Farms in Capel', *Surrey Archaeological Collections* 33 (1920), 84; Faith, 'Peasant Families and Inheritance Customs', 82-3, 95.

³⁴ Jolliffe, *Pre-Feudal England*, 79-80.

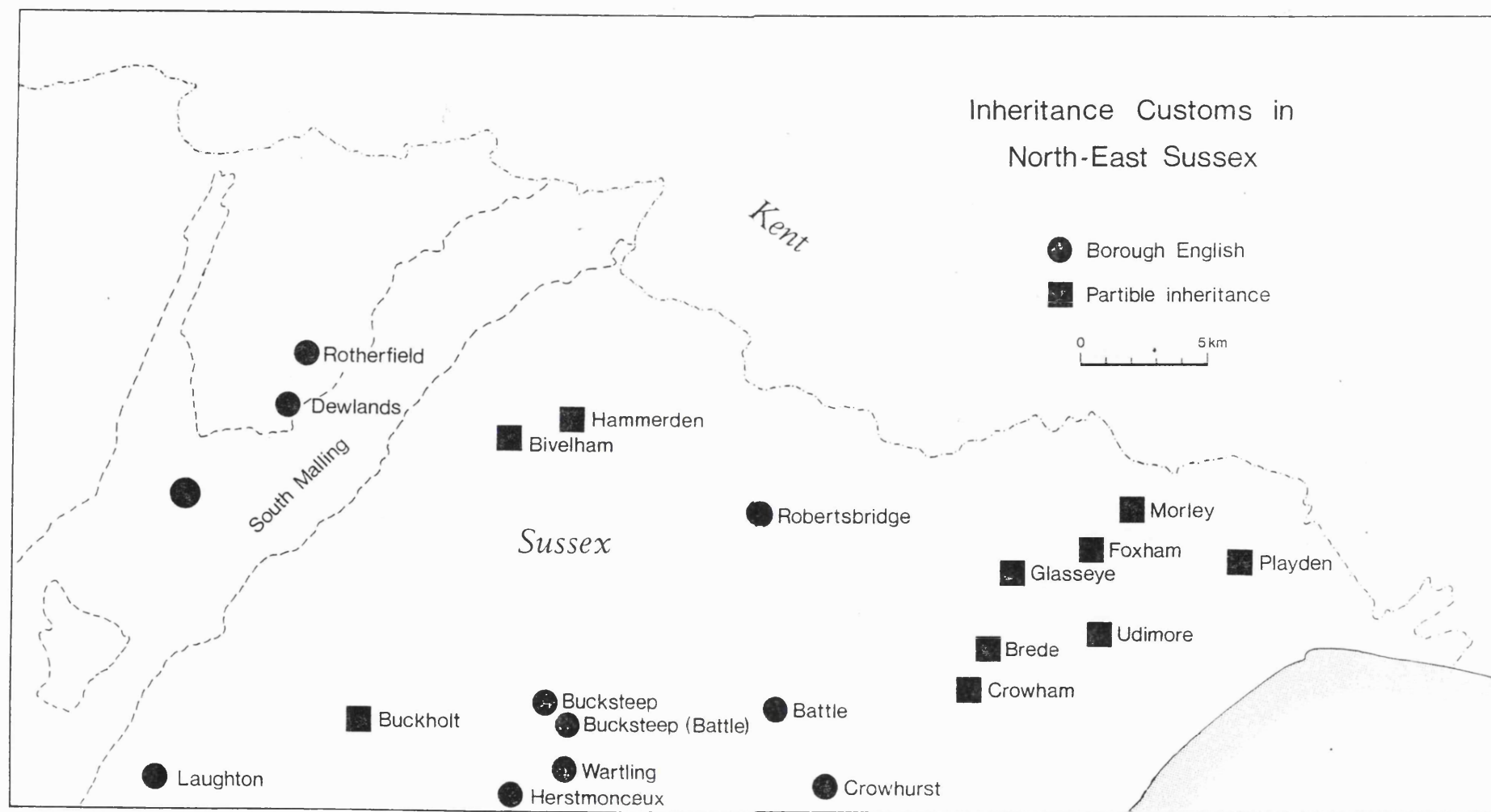


Fig. 28 Inheritance customs in north-east Sussex.

Within the area of mixed inheritance practice in the north-east corner of Sussex lordship does not seem to have been the main determinant. Within a single lordship different practices were found. Borough English was the custom on the manor of Robertsbridge, but on the manor of Playden, also held by the Robertsbridge Abbey, customary land was inherited partibly. Even within a single manor different customs could prevail. The lands in the south of Herstmonceux manor were subject to ultimogeniture, while tenants at Foxham (Peasmarsh), who attended the same court, were declared to have partible inheritance and divided their land between all the sons. Similarly, the tenants of the Battle manor at Glasseye (near to Foxham) divided the land partibly, although the general custom of the lordship was Borough English.³⁵

Only a single example of partible inheritance has been found outside the north-east corner of Sussex, at Buckholt, otherwise called Hays, in Hellingly. This was a detached part of the Battle Abbey manor of Alciston and with the lands nearby at Starnash formed a separate borgh or township. The custumal of c. 1310 lists the holders of land and mentions some of the relationships of the tenants.³⁶ One customary wist was held by Walter de la Hese and Ralph his brother, who paid rent and gave services jointly. William Harding and Ralph his brother held a second wist, and though paying rent separately, gave services together. A third wist was held by Ralph, and Harvey de la Hese who likewise gave their services jointly and, though they bore the same surname, were not certainly related. A court roll of 1349 confirms that the land at Buckholt was inherited partibly. On the death of Henry Cokenore he was succeeded by his two sons and heirs, Adam Hokehese and John. At Alciston itself, by contrast, the c. 1310 custumal records no examples of brothers holding land together and the custom presented by the court in 1278 was that the land was inherited by the last born son or daughter of the first wife, the custom of Borough

³⁵ A. Mawer and F.M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Sussex* (1930) 2, 502 suggest Foxham lay in Crowhurst, but cite no evidence in support of this. Stephen de Foxham was taxed in 1296 in the borghs of Hope and Wivelridge in Goldspur hundred (*The Three Earliest Subsidies for the County of Sussex*, ed. W. Hudson (Sussex Record Society 10 (1910)), 14). This suggests that Foxham was in Peasmarsh, near to the other outlying pieces of the manor of Herstmonceux (ESRO A4307, ff. 52r., 53r., 54r.).

³⁶ PRO E315/57, ff. 27v.-28r., printed in *Custumals of Battle Abbey, in the reigns of Edward I and Edward II*, ed. S.R. Scargill-Bird (Camden Society new series, 41 (1887)), 38-9. On the date, see Searle, *Lordship and Community*, 174.

English.³⁷

Lordship, though it may not have determined the custom of inheritance in many cases, did have some influence. Homans noted that unigeniture was broadly associated with the areas of open-field agriculture where seigneurial control was strong. Partible inheritance occurred in areas of weaker lordship, where labour services were light or non-existent and agriculture was practised in severalty. He suggested that the inheritance of the tenement by a single son, whether by eldest or youngest, was preferred by the lord of the manor. Unigeniture avoided the partition of land which made rents and services difficult to collect, and lords may have intervened to ensure that holdings were not divided partly between heirs.³⁸ It is notable that wherever in Sussex different inheritance customs were found within the same lordship or the same single manor, Borough English was usually the custom on lands near the centre of the manor and partible inheritance on the more remote tenements. Thus at Buckholt, Foxham and Glasseye inheritance was partible, but the youngest son inherited on the lands around the heads of their respective manors of Alciston, Herstmonceux and Battle. In all these places the tenants of lands nearest to the *curia* owed labour services on the demesne, and the lord may have had a particular interest in ensuring that the tenants owing these duties could be identified. Labour services were lighter or non-existent on the more distant lands and lords may have seen no advantage in the abolition of partible inheritance.³⁹

The pattern of inheritance customs in Sussex may therefore be identified as the product of a number of factors. The predominant influence in inheritance was regional practice. Manorial courts were inclined to follow the customs which obtained elsewhere in the district. This was tempered on some manors, or parts of manors, by the interests of the lords, who preferred unigeniture. Underlying the general regional trends, particular local practices have been discerned. The manors of Rotherfield, Maresfield, South Malling and Warbleton had an unusual approach to the descent of assart and customary land and also to the portion given as the widow's

³⁷ ESRO SAS/G18/6b, m. 3v.; G18/2

³⁸ G.C. Homans, 'The Rural Sociology of Medieval England', *Past and Present* 4 (1953), 40-1; Harvey, *Westminster Abbey and its Estates*, 302; E. King, *Peterborough Abbey 1086-1310: A Study in the Land Market* (1973), 119; Pollock and Maitland, *The History of English Law*, 2, 271, 280, 282-3.

³⁹ On seigneurial control, see pp. 176-9.

bench. The first three of these lay close to one another and Warbleton only a little further away to the south-east. Their customs were confined to the one locality.⁴⁰

JOINT INHERITANCE

The practice of partibility created many problems in the division of patrimony for the inheriting heirs. The co-heirs might chose to split up the land. They could either divide it into groups of fields to create blocks of equal size, or they might apportion each field between the heirs. Alternatively, they might adopt other strategies to avoid dividing the patrimony. The co-heirs might relinquish their shares to one of their number who would then take possession of the entire holding. This was the option chosen at Cadborough Marsh (Rye) by the sons of William de Pypenisell. Similarly, the four brothers of Richard Thomas leased him for a period of 60 years from 1319 their interest in the land near Rye they had inherited from their father.⁴¹ Finally, the tenement could be held in common by the inheriting brothers and either let to a third party or worked jointly by them. The sons of Peter de Kitchingham adopted the former course and rented out their father's holding and divided the income. Some rentals record groups of brothers holding land together, paying a common rent and giving services collectively. The example of the brothers at Buckholt has already been mentioned. Land held in this way may have been cultivated jointly, though often, where there is other evidence, it is apparent that the land was divided into separate parcels and cultivated separately.⁴²

Joint tenure by co-heirs might suggest varying degrees of collective behaviour. These may be listed in order of increasing communalism:

- i) payment of a common rent and services;
- ii) possession of shares held in a common holding;

⁴⁰ For details of widow's bench, see Table 9.

⁴¹ BL Add. Ch. 962. A.R.H. Baker, 'Some Fields and Farms in Medieval Kent', *Archaeologia Cantiana* 80 (1965), 158-9.

⁴² Cf. Baker, *ibid.*, 166. Dodwell, 'Holdings and Inheritance in Medieval East Anglia', 60; and see also Chapter 4 above.

iii) cultivation of the land in common;

iv) joint residency in a single household or common messuage.

(i) Tenure of holdings by groups of tenants was common in parts of England, particularly in areas of partible inheritance. Examples are known from East Anglia and Kent and occurrences in the Sussex Weald have been discussed above.⁴³ Joint tenancy was not, however, restricted to manors where partibility was practised. At Rotherfield, a manor with the custom of Borough English, the 1346/7 rental lists under the name of the ferlings a number of tenants who contributed to common rents and services of the tenement. Other examples have also been mentioned.⁴⁴

(ii) The payment of a common rent did not necessarily imply any other form of joint action, but instances of tenants holding shares in a common tenement are much less frequent. These are not tenements which have been split into fractions by partible inheritance, but holdings in which the heirs continue to hold the land as a common whole. Joint possession of land in Kent usually occurred during one stage of the life cycle, in the short period after inheritance of the land. Later the patrimony was divided or some of the heirs relinquished their claims. The same seems to have been true in East Anglia, the other main area of partible inheritance in southern England. A survey of the manor of Redgrave in Suffolk in 1289 recorded that between 24 and 40 per cent of the total customary land was held jointly by sets of siblings. Yet the association between co-heirs seems to have been primarily tenorial for sibling groups rarely acted as sellers of land and more rarely still as purchasers. Siblings sometimes acted together in court cases, though this was mostly in the years immediately after their inheritance.⁴⁵

⁴³ Dodwell, 'Holdings and Inheritance in Medieval East Anglia', 59; H.E. Hallam, 'Some Thirteenth-Century Censuses', *Economic History Review* 2nd series, 10 (1958), 344-6; Du Boulay, *The Lordship of Canterbury*, 147-8; A.R.H. Baker, 'Open Fields and Partible Inheritance on a Kent Manor', *Economic History Review* 2nd series, 17 (1964), 1-23.

⁴⁴ ESRO SAS/LB34.

⁴⁵ Du Boulay, *The Lordship of Canterbury*, 147-8; Dodwell, 'Holdings and Inheritance in Medieval East Anglia', 60; J. Williamson, 'Norfolk: Thirteenth Century', in P.D.A. Harvey (ed.), *The Peasant Land Market in Medieval England* (1984), 46-7; R.M. Smith, 'Families and their Land in an Area of Partible Inheritance: Redgrave, Suffolk 1260-1320', in R.M. Smith (ed.), *Land, Kinship and Life-Cycle* (1984), 146, 186, 191.

The most informative evidence for the practice of joint tenure in Sussex is a collection of early 13th-century charters of land at Broomhill. These charters refer to an area beyond the Weald in Walland Marsh at the eastern extremity of the county. Marsh lands here were inned (enclosed) from the sea during the late 12th century by a tenant named Dudman. After his death each area of inned land was inherited partly by his three sons and later these portions descended in turn to the 11 grandsons. In the early 13th century the abbeys of Robertsbridge and Battle began to purchase pieces of the land from the descendants of Dudman and references in the charters allow the family to be reconstructed as far as the fourth generation and cast considerable light on their tenure of land.⁴⁶

The descendants of Dudman were known to their neighbours as the 'Men of Broomhill' and seem to have been treated by others, and acted themselves, as a collective group. They alienated and received land jointly, and prosecuted court proceedings together; they were even acknowledged as joint parties in a fine.⁴⁷ Phrases from the charters suggest that members of the family considered themselves to be shareholders with interests in the whole area of land and not individual tenants. In c. 1220 Adam son of Eilwin, a grandson of Dudman, sought to sell a third of the marsh called *Spikespich* to Robertsbridge Abbey. This land was held by Adam himself, his brothers and his nephews. Sub-tenants held this piece of marsh from Adam and his relations collectively. Adam commenced by warranting to his nephews, the sons of his deceased brother, Robert, land or rents in exchange to the value which they had in *Spikespich* contingent upon the sale (fig. 29). A similar agreement was made with his three surviving brothers and only then was he able to conclude the sale of the third share of the marsh to Robertsbridge. In a final charter Thomas, William and Austin, the brothers of Adam, confirmed the sale and released their interest in the third of the marsh to Robertsbridge.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ M.F. Gardiner, 'Medieval Settlement and Society in the Broomhill Area and Excavations at Broomhill Church', in J. Eddison and C. Green (eds), *Romney Marsh: Evolution, Occupation, Reclamation* (OUCA monograph 24 (1988)), 112-9.

⁴⁷ HEH BA vol. 29, f. 30r.-31r.; Lincoln's Inn Library Hale MS. 87, f. 50v.; *Manuscripts Preserved at Penshurst Place* 1, 75; *An Abstract of Feet of Fines ... From 2 Richard I to 33 Henry III* (Sussex Record Society 2 (1902)), ed. L.F. Salzman, 21, 22; *Curia Regis Rolls* 1, 467; 5, 202-3.

⁴⁸ Gardiner, 'Medieval Settlement and Society in the Broomhill Area', 112-9; PRO E315/18, f. 29v.

This complicated procedure suggests that the land remained as a joint possession. The sale of land required that all the tenants with interests had to be compensated before agreement could be concluded. A similar approach to the possession of land is expressed in a charter issued a few years later. John Roger, a member of the fourth generation of the Men of Broomhill, described his land in *Spikespich* as 'all his holding in that marsh which he held by right of inheritance *contra coparticipes meos* (against my co-parceners)'. The last phrase is also used by Thomas, son of Eilwin in the third generation who describes other land as a fifteenth of the whole tenure which he held '*contra omnes coparticipes eiusdem terre de Promhell*', with the implication that individual holdings were already conceived as portions held out of a common whole.⁴⁹ A similar idea appears to underlie the description of land granted to Robertsbridge Abbey by Thomas and Gilbert de Sedlescombe. This was identified as a fourth part of a third share of the marsh of *Spikespich*, likewise identifying it as a fraction of the complete holding. The mill on the marsh at Broomhill was also divided in a similar way between the descendants of Dudman so that his heirs held shares in it.⁵⁰

Not all the land of the Men of Broomhill was held in this way. Some areas of the marsh had been partitioned, for charters refer to a rent given by Richard Butcher of Winchelsea to John, son of Roger de Broomhill. John evidently held the land individually and it adjoined fields held by his brother, William. Similarly, Roger son of Robert leased land from his nephews Thomas and Gilbert de Sedlescombe, implying that the interests of the third generation had also been divided up, though parts were still held jointly by the fourth generation.⁵¹

Charters issued by the Men of Broomhill make frequent reference to the relationships of the grantees to the other parties to the agreement and the witness lists similarly identify brothers and sons. Nephews are also mentioned, but cousins are not specifically recorded in surviving charters, though sometimes they may be inferred.

⁴⁹ BL Campbell Ch. XXVII, 26; *Manuscripts Preserved at Penshurst Place* 1, 72.

⁵⁰ *Manuscripts Preserved at Penshurst Place* 1, 72, 74-5.

⁵¹ For references to shares, see *Manuscripts Preserved at Penshurst Place* 1, 74. *Ibid.*, 1, 75 and the same piece of land is referred to in BL Campbell Ch. XXVI, 15. BL Campbell Ch. XXV, 24; XXVII, 16.

The Men of Broomhill

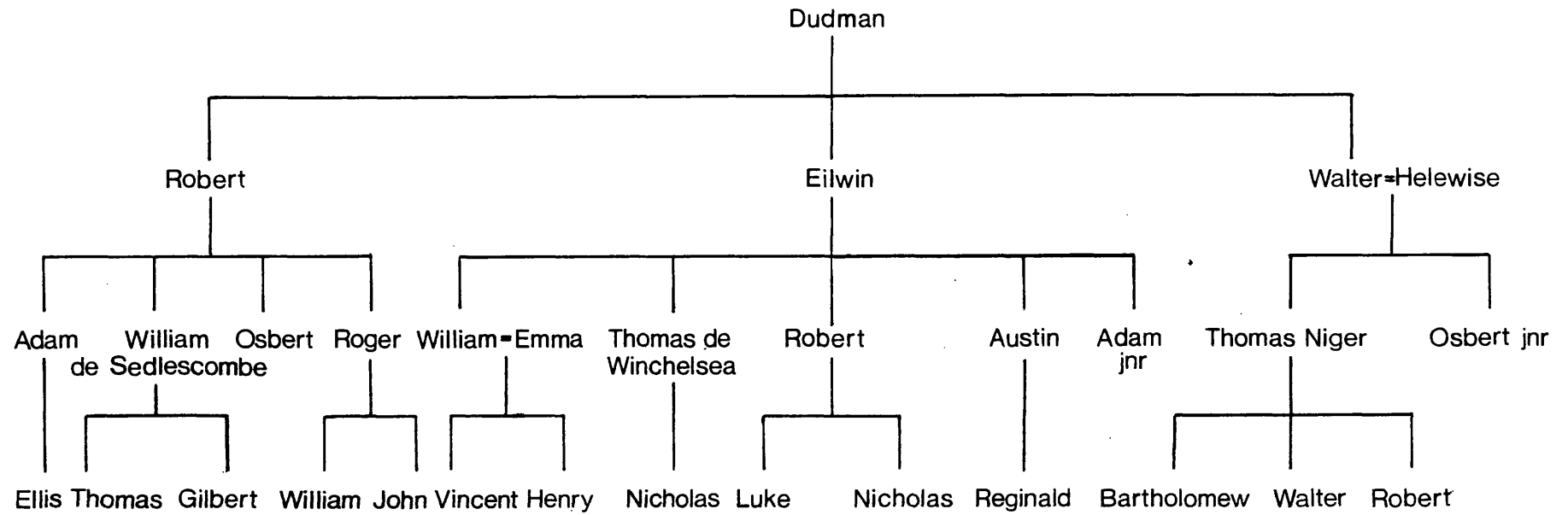


Fig. 29 The Men of Broomhill.

These references may suggest the affinity within the Men of Broomhill was not undifferentiated. Those closer in blood were treated separately from more distant relatives. In the sale of *Spikespich* discussed above, Adam son of Eilwin dealt with his three brothers collectively, but concluded a separate agreement with his two nephews, the sons of his deceased fourth brother.

(iii) The third level of communal action, which has been identified as typifying joint tenure, is the cultivation of the tenement in common. This is not necessarily the same as co-aration, which implies only a joint use of resources for ploughing. Joint cultivation was the common working of land and a subsequent division of the produce. There is good evidence for co-aration by which cultivators might contribute animals to a plough-team, but very little for joint cultivation.⁵² The peasants at Martham in Norfolk, a manor with partible inheritance, who held a plot of six acres and apparently divided the sheaves between them after the harvest, seem to have been unusual.⁵³ There is, of course, no reason why common cultivation should be recorded for it was a private agreement and would only come to the notice of the manor if it broke down and the dispute was taken to court. Yet the infrequency of such cases can only suggest that the practice was indeed rare.

(iv) Co-residency may be identified as a fourth level of common behaviour. The evidence of most sources is in agreement and suggests that joint households were almost never found in medieval England. A household usually comprised the parents, their children, and occasionally an aged relative. Examples of *frèreche*, or households of brothers living and working the land together seem to be virtually unknown, though brothers might occupy the same household for a short period at one stage in the life-cycle.⁵⁴ The Custumal of Kent which records the rules of gavelkind notes that when the holding was equally divided between all sons, the father's messuage should remain to the youngest: the other sons presumably built new houses elsewhere. The charters of Broomhill show exactly this pattern. The houses of the Men are mentioned in the bounds of land and were dispersed across the marshland as separate

⁵² Homans, *English Villagers of the Thirteenth Century*, 75-80; W.O. Ault, *Open-Field Farming in Medieval England* (1972), 20-2; A.R.H. Baker, 'Field Systems of Southeast England', 412-3.

⁵³ G.C. Coulton, *The Medieval Village* (1925), 4.

⁵⁴ J. Krause, 'The Medieval Household: Large or Small?', *Economic History Review* 2nd series, 9 (1957), 420-32; Hallam, 'Some Thirteenth-Century Censuses', 353; Z. Razi, *Life, Marriage and Death in a Medieval Parish* (1980), 71-86.

farmsteads. On smaller holdings the effect would be to produce a cluster of houses held by brothers and cousins.⁵⁵

CONCLUSION

Sufficient evidence has been advanced to show that in the 13th century land was held by joint tenure in some parts of England. It has also been argued that partible inheritance, which was widespread among the peasantry during the first hundred years after the Norman Conquest, had been replaced in most areas half a century later. A possible corollary of these two observations is that joint tenure was once more common and may have declined with the spread of unigeniture. Recently, Harvey has hypothesised a similar pattern of development. He has suggested that before the 13th century land may have been held by named tenants for the purpose of enrolment, but was considered the possession of all members of a family, or was held with the expectation that the named tenant would support his co-parceners. Specific inheritance customs may have been introduced for peasant holdings only in the late 12th and 13th century, when land was attributed to individual tenants responsible for rendering the obligations of their holding.⁵⁶

The evidence for this is tenuous, but it is a pattern which is notably similar to that outlined in Chapter Four above. Rents and services given at first by virgates with unnamed tenants, or by groups of tenants, not all of whom were named, were replaced by those ascribed to individuals. Duties and liabilities moved from ill-defined groups to named holders. It may be that the virgates and wists of the Weald were based upon the lands held by an extended family group. This would be consistent with the evidence from Kent where family holdings seem to have been yokes, or multiples or fractions of them.⁵⁷ To demonstrate joint tenure it would be necessary to show either that the land was farmed collectively by such families, or that the members of the family considered that they held shares out of a common virgate or yoke. For these there is very little specific evidence.

⁵⁵ Broomhill: *Manuscripts Preserved at Penshurst Place* 1, 72; BL Campbell Ch. XXVII, 4, 16. See pp. 224.

⁵⁶ P.D.A. Harvey, 'Introduction' and 'Conclusion', in P.D.A. Harvey (ed.), *The Peasant Land Market in Medieval England* (1984), 17-9, 353-4.

⁵⁷ Baker, 'Some Fields and Farms in Medieval Kent', 165.

If Harvey's hypothesis is correct, joint tenure would have been in decline by the early years of the 13th century, and evidence for it must be sought in the small number of manorial records or charters of the twelfth-century or earlier. At present Broomhill is one of the few places where joint tenure seems probable, but changes were occurring in the early 13th century even there. Broomhill seems to stand half way between undifferentiated joint tenure and individualistic partible inheritance: the land was neither held entirely by individuals, nor entirely by the family group. The rent was not given by individuals, nor by all the Men collectively. That joint tenure was widespread before 1200 must remain unproven. It is an attractive hypothesis since it could explain much that is otherwise obscure about the social structure of communities in this period and help to cast light on the development of settlement in the Weald.

CHAPTER 8

SETTLEMENT AND SOCIETY IN WARTLING AND AREA 1300-1420

PART 1: SETTLEMENT AND INHERITANCE

Courts rolls provide a unique insight into the lives of medieval peasants. At the manorial court the deaths of tenants and entrance of holders were presented, sales of free and neif land and leases of customary land were enrolled. Petty claims were pursued among neighbours for breaching agreements, for debts and for straying animals. Pannage dues were given and fines were paid to graze animals on the demesne and cut wood on neif land. So many aspects of rural life came within the purview of the manor court that its records enable a detailed examination of peasant life and have been widely used in studies of the countryside.¹

The court rolls of the manor of Wartling in the British Library are the most complete such surviving group for the area studied. There are a few further rolls in the East Sussex Record Office² and the information on the Wartling area may be supplemented by court rolls from the adjacent manors of Herstmonceux, Bucksteep, Wilting and the Battle Abbey lands at Bucksteep.³ There is a single medieval rental for Wartling of

¹ E.g. J.M. Bennett, *Women in the Medieval English Countryside: Gender and Household in Brigstock before the Plague* (1987); B.M.S. Campbell, 'Population Pressure, Inheritance and the Land Market in a Fourteenth-Century Peasant Community', in R.M. Smith (ed.), *Land, Kinship and Life-Cycle* (1984), 87-134; E.B. DeWindt, *Land and People in Holywell-cum-Neddingworth* (1972); P.D.A. Harvey (ed.), *The Peasant Land Market in Medieval England* (1984); C. Howell, *Land, Family and Inheritance in Transition: Kibworth Harcourt 1280-1700* (1983); A.J. Raftis, *Tenure and Mobility: Studies in the Social History of the Medieval English Village*; Z. Razi, *Life, Marriage and Death in a Medieval Parish* (1980); R.M. Smith, 'Families and their Land in an Area of Partible Inheritance: Redgrave, Suffolk 1260-1320', in R.M. Smith (ed.), *Land, Kinship and Life-Cycle* (1984), 135-95.

² BL Add. Rolls 31311, 31315, 31502-14, 32599-617, 32619-24, 32626-54, 32656-7, 32659, 32662-8, 32670, 32672-98, 32700-06, 32708-18; ESRO ASH L1597-8.

³ For Herstmonceux, see ESRO SAS/Budgen 1-20, Harvard Law School manorial documents 68-78, Bodleian Library MS. Rolls, Sussex 5, British Library Egerton Roll 8837-8. For the manor of Bucksteep, see BL Add. Rolls 31309-31313, 32604-605, 32643, 32647, 32674-5, 32678, ESRO ASH L1597-8. For Wilting, see BL Add. Rolls 32669, 32737. For Battle Abbey

1366, for Herstmonceux attributable to c.1336, for Bucksteep in 1375 and for the Battle Abbey lands in Bucksteep 1408 x 27 and late 15th century.⁴ To these manorial documents may be added charters for land in the area.⁵ There is a good group of charters for Wilsons Farm in Ashburnham, which lies next to the manor of Wartling.⁶

The main series of court rolls for Wartling begin in 1303, though there are two earlier rolls for 1274-75. The records are not consecutive from 1303 and there are gaps particularly for the years 1311-17, 1319-21, 1336, 1356-57, 1359, 1371, 1379-81, 1390-93, 1403, 1407, 1414-17 and 1419-20, a total of 31 years for the period 1303-1420. Coverage of the adjacent manors is less complete. For Herstmonceux rolls survive for the years 1379-92, though the series is by no means continuous, and some rolls from the period 1327-46. The records of Bucksteep are less complete still, though the rolls from the first two decades of the 14th century are of particular interest. Transactions relating to the Battle Abbey lands are recorded in a 16th-century epitome of the monastic court rolls.

These sources allow a tract of countryside lying within a number of lordships to be examined in considerable detail. Some free tenants held land in more than one manor; tenants of Bucksteep manor and the Battle Abbey holdings also held land in Wartling manor.⁷ Tenants of Herstmonceux are rarely found with land in other manors. For a more complete picture it would be necessary to look beyond, at the manor of Warbleton which lay to the west of Bucksteep and to the manors of Hazelden, Burwash and Burghurst to the north of Wartling, though very few medieval records are known for these.⁸

lands at Bucksteep see HEH BA vol. 5.

⁴ Wartling: ESRO SHE 7/16. Herstmonceux: ESRO SAS/C 250. Bucksteep ESRO SHE 3/3. Battle lands at Bucksteep: HEH BA 950, BA 952; PRO E315/56, ff. 45r.-47r.

⁵ BL Add. Roll 31309; ESRO AMS 5647.

⁶ PRO C146/3223, 3296, 3378, 3467, 3469-70, 3685, 3804, 3815, 3826, 3855, 3996, 4126, 4145, 4202, 4268, 4271, 4382, 4429, 4432-3, 4500, 4522, 4552-3, 4598, 4604, 4606, 4624, 4933, 4946, 4952, 5527, 5761, 5766, 5773, 6576, 6965, 7294, 7425, 7582, 7587, 7656, 7663, 8120, 9500, 9568, 9941, 11235.

⁷ E.g. BL Add. Rolls 32635; 32674, m. 2r.

⁸ One medieval court roll of the manor of Burwash survives for the period considered here, BL

The method used in this examination was to consider all available court rolls for the period up to 1420. Every reference to land sales, purchases, leases, disputes concerning land or buildings, deaths, wardship, marriages and inheritance was noted. These references were indexed under the names of the tenants and the place-name of the tenement, if given. Family trees were then compiled for the frequently mentioned families and these genealogies related to the lands they held.

Razi has argued that only by undertaking comprehensive family reconstitution is it possible to consider reliably the nature of family-land relationships. He has demonstrated how this might be done in his study of the demography of the manor of Halesowen in the West Midlands. He noted every reference to every individual, not only those relating directly to the tenure of land. Dyer in commenting on the work of Razi has suggested that less rigorous forms of analysis, which may be the only methods possible with incomplete documentation, do have a role in the study of trends.⁹ A broader, though more superficial analysis has been made here since the purpose was not a study of a single manor, but the identification of general patterns. In the final chapter, an attempt has been made to determine which trends are found more widely in the eastern Sussex Weald.

During the course of the study of Wartling it became apparent that the economic relationships of tenants were also significant, but because references to, for example, court cases concerning debt and trespass had not been systematically recorded, these patterns of association could not be studied in detail. In the examination of the Herstmonceux court rolls all the entries on the court rolls were indexed and it is therefore possible to augment the Wartling evidence.

Add. Roll 31315. There are no surviving medieval rolls for the other manors.

⁹ Razi, *Life, Marriage and Death*; Z. Razi, 'The Erosion of the Family-Land Bond in the Late Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries: A Methodological Note', in R.M. Smith (ed.), *Land, Kinship and Life-Cycle*, 295-304; C.C. Dyer, 'Changes in the Link Between Families and Land in the West Midlands in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries', in *ibid.*, 305-11.

THE CHARACTER OF SETTLEMENT

The later medieval manor of Wartling comprised a group of lands brought together after the Norman Conquest and not derived from a single Anglo-Saxon estate. In 1086 Wartling was held by William, the progenitor of the St Leger family which held the manor until 1326.¹⁰ That William cannot be distinguished with certainty from the other Domesday tenants of that name, though he is likely to be the William who held land at nearby Dallington and at an unnamed place in Foxearle hundred. A man named William, perhaps the same person, also held half a hide in the hundred of Henhurst which encompassed the vill of Socknersh. These holdings closely correspond to the location of the lands of the manor of Wartling in the 14th century.¹¹ The manor was thus formed from lands held by four different Anglo-Saxon tenants. In the 13th century Brooksmarle (Burwash) was added to the manor, when it was granted to Sibyl, daughter of Simon de Etchingham and the wife of William de St Leger.¹²

The manor of Bucksteep was created out of lands in Warbleton manor in 1265 when a grant was made to Agnes, probably the daughter of Thomas de Warbleton and to Geoffrey de St Leger, her husband.¹³ The manor subsequently descended with the other St Leger manor of Wartling and courts for the two manors were occasionally enrolled on the same membrane.¹⁴

The greater part of the land within these manors was situated on the sands and clays which lie between the alluvium of the reclaimed lands of Pevensey Marsh and the exposed ridges of the High Weald to the north. The lordships of Wartling and Herstmonceux extended southwards on to the marshland, where part of the demesne lands were situated. In Herstmonceux the greater part of the demesne and certainly the most productive lands lay in the marsh, though from the 1330s onwards these were liable to serious flooding. The demesne on the higher ground was not

¹⁰ DB i, 18a; *Victoria County History of Sussex* 9, ed. L.F. Salzman (1937), 138.

¹¹ DB i, 18b, 19b.

¹² BL Add. Roll 31309, m. 1r.

¹³ *Victoria County History of Sussex* 9, 207; PRO JUST 1/914, m. 12r.

¹⁴ E.g. BL Add. Roll 32604.

particularly fertile. Both Wartling and Herstmonceux manors had large parks above the marsh and areas within these were also cultivated.¹⁵

The best land was probably on the sides of the gently sloping valleys overlooking the streams draining into Pevensey Marsh. The land here was not so steep that it could not be ploughed, nor was it as infertile as the higher ground further north. The relative fertility of the land may be suggested by the sub-division of tenements into very small pieces. Many of the wealthy tenants also had holdings situated here. On the northern side of the manor was a high ridge of Ashdown Sand productive of poor soils. The field-names *Doune atte Grene* and *Geresdoune* from this area suggest the character of the land.¹⁶

In the south of Wartling and Herstmonceux manors the area of common land was limited, which may explain the very frequent fines paid by tenants for having their animals on the lords' lands. It was usually, but not invariably, the minor tenants who paid for this. Since the same tenants paid fines in successive years, it seems likely these had the character of licence payments to permit the practice.¹⁷

No single document records the size of the holdings in either Wartling or Herstmonceux, but it is possible to derive this information in part from the rentals and in part from incidental references in the court rolls. The area of 67 per cent of all tenements in Wartling in 1366 may be ascertained. Where a tenant held two or more pieces of land, these have been counted together. The evidence for holding area in Herstmonceux is less satisfactory. The size of tenements is often noted in the entries in 1379 when the tenants gave fealty and this evidence may be augmented by other references in the court rolls, by the incomplete rental of c.1336 and with the additional information given in the assignment of dower of 1359 based on the same document.¹⁸ The holdings grouped by size have been plotted on fig. 30, but the figures given there must be treated with caution. The sizes of larger holdings are recorded less frequently. The large number of cottages assumed to be without land in Herstmonceux may be exaggerated, because the area of land attached to one third of

¹⁵ PRO C135/151 (14); BL Add. Roll 32721.

¹⁶ BL Add. Rolls 31504, m. 4v., 32135.

¹⁷ E.g. Harvard Law School manorial records 68. For later evidence of the extent of waste, see ESRO CHR 18/18 and 19.

¹⁸ PRO C135/151 (14).

these is not known. Some tenants, though recorded in the court rolls as cottagers, may have had holdings larger than one acre.

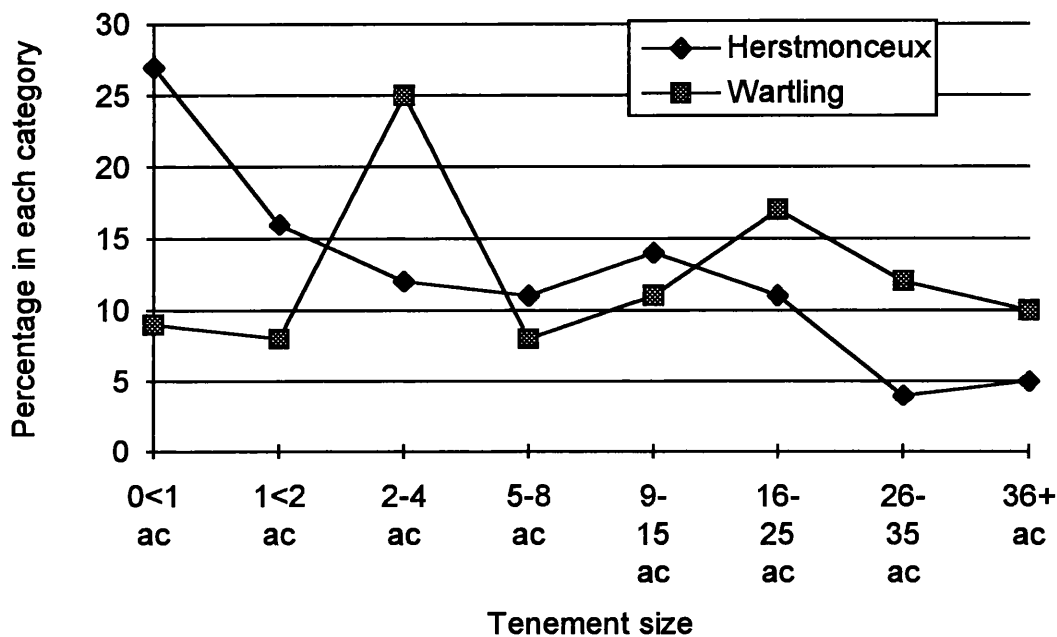


Fig. 30 Tenement size distribution for Wartling and Herstmonceux manors in the mid-14th century.

Smallholders, those with four acres or less, made up a significant number of the tenants on both manors in the mid-14th century. They accounted for about the half the total number of holdings. The proportion of these tenants was greater in Herstmonceux than in Wartling and their mean holding size was smaller, though this apparent difference may be the product of some of the assumptions already discussed. A second peak in the graphs occurs for the middle-size holdings. At Herstmonceux these are tenements between nine and 15 acres, but at Wartling the modal area held by middling peasants was greater. Many of the tenements of this size in Wartling had been formed by the purchase or inheritance of separate pieces of land to create what was termed in the rolls 'diverse tenements'. About one in four of the tenants

mentioned in the 1366 rental had holdings assembled in this way.

The graphs suggest that the holdings in the Wartling area may be divided into three groups. The first two of these correspond to peaks on the graphs. The smallholders have already been defined as those with four acres or less. The second group are the middling tenants. The boundary between the more wealthy middling tenants and the major landholders is somewhat arbitrary, but inspection of the figures suggests 25 acres to be a reasonable division. The middle category covers a rather large range for the tenants with between five and 25 acres, though most lie towards the middle of this range. A third group are the major landholders set apart on the grounds of the size of their tenements.

The larger tenements held by the most wealthy freeholders lay mostly on the west and south-west side of the lordships of Herstmonceux and Wartling. Cowbeech was one of the largest holdings and is described in 1317 when on the death of Ralph atte Beech a dower portion was assigned to his widow. The messuage consisted of a gatehouse, hallhouse, detached kitchen and barn with 56 acres of land in Wartling manor and 42 acres in Herstmonceux, and a considerable area of woodland. The quasi-manorial status of the tenement indicated by the possession of a watermill and dove cot. The land in Herstmonceux is shown in a later rental to have been at Blackford and immediately to the south of it lay the substantial holding at Peelridge held by Simon atte Beech, another member of the family.¹⁹

The lands of the Cralle family lay to the north of Blackford and stretched from the tenement of Cralle in Warbleton as far as Horeham and included land at Cowbeech.²⁰ The lands of a third family, the Batsfords, lay around the farm of that name. They gradually enlarged their holdings during the 14th century through purchase and inheritance. Batsford Farm itself comprised three separate tenements which had been amalgamated. They held Clippenham Farm of Herstmonceux manor by the time of the c.1336 rental and later obtained the holding of Trulilows. Part of Stonelands Farm in Bucksteep manor was in the hands of the family by 1353 and a portion of Lemons Farm was probably acquired by John de Batsford in 1351 with the inheritance of the lands of John Fisher.²¹ By the early 15th century the Batsford estate was extensive

¹⁹ BL Add. Roll 31504, m. 10; ESRO A4307; HEH BA 521.

²⁰ *Victoria County History of Sussex* 9, 207; ESRO SAS/C 250.

²¹ BL Add. Roll 32621, m. 4r.; ESRO SAS/C 250. John Fisher had married the granddaughter of John Lemon. His land was inherited by John de Batsford in 1351 (BL Add. Roll 32657, m. 6v.).

comprising, according to an inquisition made on the death of Margery, widow of William de Batsford, about 420 acres in Wartling, Dallington, Warbleton and Herstmonceux, 42 acres in Hailsham, 11s. 6d. rent in the manor of Rockland and 250 acres in Pevensey Marsh. In the late 15th century these lands were called the manor of Batsford. Further afield, the Batsfords also had lands in Ewhurst, Bexhill and during the 1360s William de Batsford was the farmer of Brede manor when it was in the king's hands as the property of an alien priory.²²

The tenement or manor of Cowden lay on the east of the lands of Batsford. It was held of the manor of Wartling for the nominal rent of 1d. by a branch of the St Leger family. John Cowden, the lord of that manor witnessed charters between 1315 and 1328 by that name or as John St Leger.²³ He was evidently not the person of the same name who was lord of Wartling manor in the early 14th century. A water mill is mentioned there in 1323 and it seems to be referred to as a manor first in 1400.²⁴

These large manorial or quasi-manorial holdings on the peripheries of Wartling, Herstmonceux and Warbleton manors were the results of successful purchases, marriages and capital accumulation. But not all the large families prospered. The Chilsham family appeared to have been expanding their lands at the beginning of the 14th century, but they failed to maintain their position and a 100 years later much of the land had passed out of the family. William de Chilsham already held the tenement of *Sunnore* when in c.1300 he married Petronilla, the sister of John de St Leger, lord of Wartling manor. John granted to William de Chilsham lands at *Illingleygh*, adjacent to Chilsham, evidently as a dowry. Later William received a further two acres there, but by 1316 had sold off his land at *Sunnore* and another large

Two years later, however, he sold most of the holding, a messuage and 40 acres (BL Add. Roll 32659, m. 4r.).

²² PRO C137/58 (24); ESRO AMS 5592/1, 2; C.H.C. Whittick, 'Documentary Evidence', in O. Bedwin, 'The Excavation of Batsford Mill, Warbleton, East Sussex, 1978', *Medieval Archaeology* 24 (1980), 189; *Calendar of Charter Rolls 1389-92*, 76; WSRO Ep. VI/1/3. ff. 159r.-160r.; PRO SC6/1021/5.

²³ ESRO SHE 7/16; PRO C146/3378, 3826, 3855, 4522, 3469, 5773. William son of John de St Leger of Cowden inherited the St Leger arms, ESRO AMS 5789.

²⁴ Cf. *Victoria County History of Sussex* 9, 138 refers to John de Cowden and William his son; PRO C146/5773; BL Add. Roll 31513, m. 4v.

tenement.²⁵ The family kept the tenement at *Illingleygh*, which was later referred to as the tenement of Chilsham, but did not increase their land. Chilsham was held for 21 years in wardship between 1367 and 1388 during the minority/the heir, John de Chilsham. Joan, who must have been the wife of John or his daughter inherited the land and married Robert Okebourne who died seised of the land in 1413.²⁶

The tenements of Cowbeech, Cowden, Batsford and Chilsham were particularly extensive, but other moderately large tenements had evidently been sub-divided before the beginning of the 14th century. Agnes atte Hole, who died in 1310, held an area of 30 acres later referred to as *Hole* tenement. Nearby, or adjacent, was a 24-acre tenement called *Holelond*.²⁷ Similar pairs of place-names are also found in the tenements of *Grene* and *Grenelond* and *Halle* and *Hallond*. There is no direct evidence to link these pairs except for their proximity and similarity of names, yet it is likely that these tenements were once single holdings which were later divided. The area of the tenements of *Halle* and *Hallond* together was 46 acres and that of *Hole* and *Holelond* was 54 acres.

The average size of holdings in Bucksteep was probably larger than the mean sizes in either Wartling or Herstmonceux. Of the 48 holdings listed on the 1375 Bucksteep manorial rental, the size of only one quarter of these is mentioned in references in the court rolls. These 12 holdings had an average area of 25 acres, and even if the exceptionally large 80-acre tenement of *Bredherst* is excluded, the average of the remaining 11 was still 20 acres. The tenements of Battle Abbey at Bucksteep were also of considerable area, typically about 30 acres, and those holdings in the part of the manor of Wartling which lay in the parish of Dallington were significantly larger than the tenements further south in the manor.²⁸ The poor soils developed on the Ashdown Sands on the edge of the Forest Ridges were of low fertility and the larger holdings may have compensated for the lower yields.

Many of the middle-sized and smaller holdings in Wartling were formed by the fragmentation of larger tenements. The 1366 rental brackets together groups of

²⁵ BL Add Rolls 32613, mm. 3v., 5r.; 31309, m. 13; 31503, m. 4r.

²⁶ ESRO SHE 7/16; BL Add. Rolls 32675, m. 7r.; 32965, m. 5v.; 32716, m. 5r.

²⁷ BL Add. Rolls 32615, m. 3v.; 32633; ESRO SHE 7/16.

²⁸ ESRO SHE 3/3; PRO E315/56, ff. 45r.-47r.; HEH BA vol. 5, nos. 872, 1480.

tenants and records the name of a previous tenant who had once held all the holding. The division of larger holdings took place throughout the first half of the 14th century. Partition between heiresses led to the division of *Hallonde* tenement into three parts in 1327 and of the land of Robert Cok into two in 1349.²⁹ Other holdings were divided by sale creating smaller holdings tenements and sites for cottages. The process of sub-division may followed most closely on the tenement of Tilley (*Tonlegh*). The holding comprised 42 acres and lay on gently sloping land in the south of the manor. In 1318 it was recalled that it had once all been held by Simon de Tilley, though it was then divided between more than 11 tenants.³⁰ An active land market had reduced the holding to parcels with an average area of four acres. One of the pieces, just an acre in extent and described as recently built upon, was held by William Rabet who was an 'hereditary parcener' of the original Simon. By 1342 there were 15 tenants at Tilley and in 1366, even after the first two waves of the plague had reduced the population on the manor, there were still 13 tenants (fig. 31).³¹

The 1366 rental shows that the tenement was divided with equal numbers of smallholders who possessed only a field of an acre or two, and more prosperous tenants who had bought a field or a few fields to supplement their holding elsewhere. In addition to the principal messuage, there were at least five other houses on the tenement, each with its own smallholding. One of these was held by Stephen Tutt who had been a tenant at Tilley since before 1342. He, or a similarly named heir, died in 1387 holding a cottage, garden and croft of land which was then divided between his daughters. One of the daughters, Julia, and her husband, William Bridge, took the house and one rood of land, possibly the garden. The remaining two acres were taken by the second daughter Joan, and her husband.³²

²⁹ BL Add. Rolls 32628; 32657, m. 1r.

³⁰ BL Add. Roll 31504, m. 5r.

³¹ BL Add. Roll 32642, m. 2v.; ESRO SHE 7/16. BL Add. Roll 32691, m. 7r. refers to the 'second pestilence', that of 1361-2.

³² BL Add. Rolls 32642, m. 2v.; 32695, m. 2v., 4r.

LAND AT TILLEY

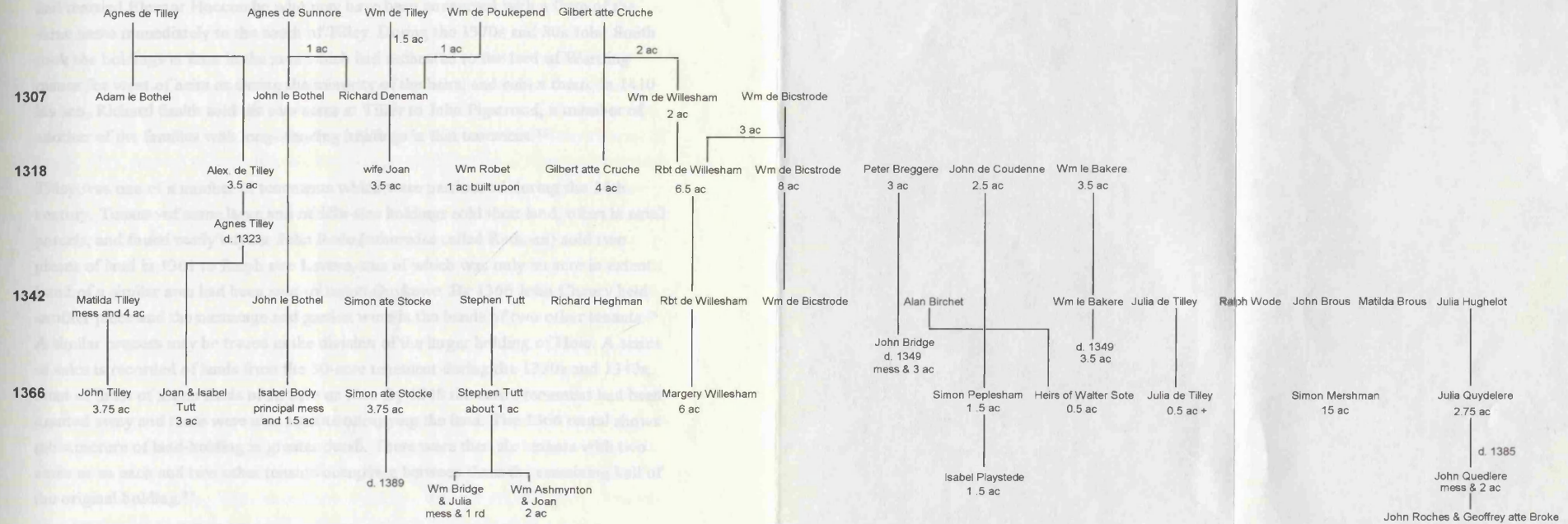


Fig. 31 The descent of land in the tenement of Tilley.

The Bridge family themselves had held land at Tilley since at least 1318 and their name was evidently derived from their place of residence near Tilley Bridge.³³ The marriage of Julia Tutt to William Bridge was between neighbours and social equals for both were minor smallholders.³⁴ Nothing is known of the family of Joan Tutt's husband, William Ashmynton, for no other tenants with this surname are recorded in the area. That couple held the two acres they had inherited until 1395 when it was sold to John Smith. Smith's purpose in obtaining land at Tilley was not to provide a smallholding for himself. He was amassing land in the area probably to lease it. He had married Eleanor Hoccombe who may have been connected with a farm of the same name immediately to the south of Tilley. During the 1370s and 80s John Smith took the holdings at farm in the area which had escheated to the lord of Wartling manor for want of heirs or during the minority of the heirs, and sublet them. In 1410 his son, Richard Smith sold the two acres at Tilley to John Pigstrood, a member of another of the families with long-standing holdings in that tenement.³⁵

Tilley was one of a number of tenements which were partitioned during the 14th century. Tenants of some large and middle-size holdings sold their land, often in small parcels, and found ready buyers. John Rede (otherwise called Redman) sold two pieces of land in 1361 to Ralph atte Levere, one of which was only an acre in extent. Land of a similar area had been sold to Isabel Quykewe. By 1366 John Chaury held another piece and the messuage and garden were in the hands of two other tenants.³⁶ A similar process may be traced in the division of the larger holding of Hole. A series of sales is recorded of lands from the 30-acre tenement during the 1330s and 1340s, most of them of single fields of an acre or two. By 1348 the entire tenement had been granted away and there were nine tenants occupying the land. The 1366 rental shows the structure of land-holding in greater detail. There were then six tenants with two acres or so each and two other tenants occupying between them the remaining half of the original holding.³⁷

³³ On such names, see A. Mawer and F.M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Sussex* 1 (1929), 35 and R. McKinley, *The Surnames of Sussex* (English Surnames Series 5 (1988)), 152-161.

³⁴ For the Breggere family landholdings, see BL Add. Roll 32657, m. 1r.

³⁵ BL Add. Rolls 32703; 32674, m. 2r.; 32685, m. 2v.; 32691, m. 1v.; 32712, m. 4r.; 31513, m. 2v.

³⁶ BL Add. Roll 32666; ESRO SHE 7/16.

³⁷ BL Add. Rolls 32633; 32601; 32637; 32638; 32605; 32653; 32654; ESRO SHE 7/16.

Another means by which tenements were sub-divided was through grants for a house and small garden to non-inheriting members of the family. Amongst those to whom John atte Hole had granted part of the tenement was his sister Alice, her son and two daughters. They were given just a $\frac{1}{4}$ acre on the condition that a building was erected on the land.³⁸ William Payn gave a cottage and one rood in Herstmonceux to his sister Isabel and in 1341 Adam Capel granted to John Capel a similar area of land in Bucksteep 'to be built on' and $\frac{3}{4}$ of an acre which was to be held for the period of his life.³⁹

The land of the Capel family in Bucksteep, unlike the Hole tenement which was a substantial holding, was only a few fields amounting to a total area of six acres. Robert le Capel died in c.1283 leaving his wife Eloise and three sons. By the custom of inheritance the youngest son, Stephen, would have taken the land when he came of age in 1301, less the widow's bench which was retained by Eloise. However, he chose to sell his right in the land to one of his elder brothers, Philip. Philip and his mother lived apart in separate buildings, for in 1307 Eloise sued her son for coming to her house and claiming entry with 'contemptible words'. There was a further house on this small tenement occupied by the third brother Thomas, who was sued by Eloise in the same year for constructing his building partly within her garden. By the mid-14th century, therefore, in addition to the original messuage, two further houses stood on the small Capel tenement.⁴⁰

Many of the small pieces of land sold provided sites for cottages. Some pieces of neif land were granted on the specific condition that a house was constructed there. William le Young agreed to build within two years on a croft of land he purchased in Dallington. He paid a high entry fine of 20s., because he came from outside the manor and agreed to perform the services owed by a neif and pay tallage.⁴¹ The acute land-hunger of the early 14th century placed the lord of the manor in a strong position. Higher rents and work-services were demanded of new cottagers. When in

³⁸ BL Add. Roll 32633.

³⁹ Harvard Law School manorial records 69; BL Add. Roll 31312. On grants of land to non-inheriting relatives, see Z. Razi, 'The Myth of the Immutable English Family', *Past and Present* 140 (1993), 10.

⁴⁰ BL Add. Roll 31309, mm. 9r., 3r.

⁴¹ BL Add. Roll 32613, m. 2r.

1311 William atte Hole granted two acres to Alan de Hoccombe nothing was subtracted from the William's rent. Alan was to pay 12d. rent and one boon work in autumn for his new tenement and he agreed to build upon the land.⁴²

The partition of some tenements through sales thus created small clusters of buildings. These groups of cottages on sub-divided tenements often lasted only until the later part of the 14th century when, as the population started to fall, the lands were again engrossed and the buildings abandoned or demolished. The majority of the population lived in dispersed farms. There is no reason to believe, as has been suggested, that Herstmonceux is the site of a deserted medieval village. Bucksteep chapel also stood in isolation and was surrounded by pasture land.⁴³

LAND TENURE

In the early 14th century the pattern of land holding in the Wartling area was changing rapidly as tenements were divided through sales. The manorial officials had some difficulty in tracing the rents owed by the lands of sub-divided holdings. The tenement of Tilley was often mentioned in court rolls as the bailiff sought to follow the complexities of its division amongst tenants. The duty of apportioning rent between lands of a divided tenement in Wartling was generally placed on the tenants who had to agree among themselves and certify the results in court, but occasionally the reeve determined the allocation of rent.⁴⁴ New rentals were made at frequent intervals to maintain a record of the rents of lands and tenants. Entries in the court rolls mention the preparation of new rentals by the homage in Wartling manor in 1327 and in Herstmonceux in 1383 and there are extant rentals for the two manors for 1366 and c.1336 respectively.⁴⁵ The rental for Wartling is itself based on an earlier record, which, from internal evidence, must have been compiled in 1334/5.⁴⁶

⁴² BL Add. Roll 32617.

⁴³ G.R. Burleigh, 'An Introduction to Deserted Medieval Villages in East Sussex', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 111 (1973), 68; ESRO SHE 3/3.

⁴⁴ BL Add. Rolls 31504, m. 4v.; 32666; 32613, m. 2r.

⁴⁵ BL Add. Roll 32628; ESRO SAS/Budgen 17; ESRO SHE 7/16; ESRO SAS/C 250.

⁴⁶ A *terminus post quem* for the earlier rental is given by the admission of John atte Compe in 1334 (BL Add. Roll 32653).

Land sales during the 14th century almost entirely erased the evidence of the earlier land units. These are barely identifiable in the 1366 rental, though earlier court rolls refer to *tenementa operabilia* and record that they had paid a rent of 4s. Some pieces of customary land in 1366 paid rents either of this value or fractions of it. Another entry refers to ~~3~~ three pieces of land containing 16 acres paying a rent of 4s. as bordland, which may have been the same.⁴⁷ Labour services, presumably given by the holders of the *tenementa*, were demanded in 1274 and boon works are mentioned in the 1310s. The jury compiling the rental of 1327 were asked to record the works and services, though there is no evidence that they were still given. An early 14th-century account gives the value of works as 43s. 4d., though the figure included the value of hen rents.⁴⁸ Exceptionally, work services were mentioned as late as 1412, but this was evidently a quotation of an earlier court entry and there is no evidence that these duties were still performed.⁴⁹

The Herstmonceux rental mentions *werkklonds* and *gavellonds* among the customary holdings and lists the services due from each. Wists are also referred to in the court rolls. These units too seem to have virtually disappeared by the 14th century. It is not certain if the services were still demanded, or enumerated only to prevent them from lapsing entirely. The court rolls contain only a single reference to an unperformed labour service which may indeed suggest that generally they were no longer performed.⁵⁰ The work services on Bucksteep manor had been much heavier, for though never itemised, they were commuted for substantial money payments. Richard Russell held a messuage and about 30 acres in 1303 for a rent of 18d., but paid in addition 2s.10d. for works. On his death some years later these sums had been consolidated into a single payment and something similar must have happened in other tenements, for in the 1375 list of rents there is no indication of these earlier

⁴⁷ BL Add. Rolls 32610, m. 3r.; 33615, m. 3r. On bordland, see A.J.L. Winchester, 'The Distribution and Significance of 'Bordland' in Medieval Britain', *Agricultural History Review* 34 (1986), 129-39.

⁴⁸ BL Add. Rolls 32609, m. 2r.; 32617; 31504, m. 2v.; 32721.

⁴⁹ BL Add. Roll 32716, m. 2v.

⁵⁰ ESRO SAS/Budgen 7, 14.

labour dues or of their value.⁵¹

Labour services had never been exacted from free land and the greater part of all land in the Wartling area was held by free tenure. At least half the total acreage of the manor of Wartling itself was free and the proportion was probably similar in Herstmonceux manor. At Bucksteep only six out of 52 tenements were held by neif tenants. All tenants on the Battle lands at Bucksteep claimed to be free in 1311, though this was not recognised by the abbot and according to marginal notes on the rental of 1433 three tenements were held 'by the roll' and were therefore customary holdings.⁵²

WIDOWS AND HEIRS

The custom of inheritance on the manors of Wartling, Bucksteep, Herstmonceux and on the Battle Abbey lands nearby was Borough English.⁵³ The widow, if she survived her husband, received half the tenement as her bench, and if the heir was under age, she usually took the other half to hold during his or her minority.⁵⁴ The age of majority on these manors, as elsewhere, was 15 years, so that it was not unusual for the widow to continue in possession of the entire holding, sometimes for many years after the husband's death.⁵⁵ A widow could re-marry and did not forfeit her bench, though in some instances she paid a fine for this privilege.⁵⁶

In the second half of the 14th century the Borough English custom of inheritance by daughters as coparceners in default of male heirs was thrown into doubt. The court at

⁵¹ BL Add. Rolls 31309, m. 8r.; 31310, m. 5r.; ESRO SHE 3/3

⁵² HEH BA vol. 5, nos. 266, 277; PRO E315/56, ff. 45v., 47v.

⁵³ BL Add. Roll 31509, m. 1v.; ESRO SAS/Budgen 5.

⁵⁴ ESRO D507; ESRO SAS/Budgen 1; ESRO SAS/Budgen 11; G.C. Homans, *English Villagers of the Thirteenth Century* (1942), 181.

⁵⁵ ESRO SAS/Budgen 17

⁵⁶ HEH BA vol. 5, nos. 147, 150; ESRO SAS/Budgen 14. For a payment of a fine by a widow to hold a bench after remarrying, see BL Add. Roll 32689.

Herstmonceux in 1381 declared that the youngest daughter alone was the heir, which was contrary to previous practice. In 1402 the Wartling court decided that an elder sister had no right of inheritance, though it supported its judgement with inappropriate precedents. Similarly, the Battle court restricted the right of inheritance to the youngest daughter in 1393, though only 13 years later the same tenement was to be inherited partly by her four daughters.⁵⁷ Searle has viewed the fluidity of custom in the late 14th century as symptomatic of a loss of collective memory and lack of will to defend ancient rights. Alternatively, this may be interpreted as a reflection of the ability of medieval communities to remake custom to suit changed circumstances. Manorial customary law was not a fixed ~~a~~ rigid set of rules, but a changing body of practice. Though it derived its legitimacy from past usage, the memory of past practice might change as the needs of society altered.⁵⁸ The resistance to partible division of inheritance by female heirs in the late 14th century may be placed in the context of changes in the availability of land. As the population declined and land might be obtained more readily, females were no longer so dependent upon the patrimony. Daughters could reasonably expect to marry a husband who had acquired, or might purchase, property. Lands which had once been sub-divided through sale or inheritance earlier in the century were being engrossed and we may see in this change of custom an antipathy by medieval communities to the further, and unnecessary, partition of tenements.⁵⁹

Land on free tenements was inherited according to the common law rule of primogeniture and the widow received only a third as her dower portion. If the heir was under age the remainder was seized in the lord's hands and custody of it was sold, though not always to the widow. On the death of William le Thetcher in 1327, the tenement was divided into two parts. His widow Rose took a barn, part of the garden planted with apple trees and certain lands, while custody of the remaining two-thirds of the land was sold to another tenant.⁶⁰ The age of majority was 21 years,

⁵⁷ Harvard Law School manorial records 73; BL Add. Roll 31514, m. 1r.; HEH BA vol. 5, nos. 872, 878, 886, 900, 1092, 1096, 1129, 1401.

⁵⁸ Searle, *Lordship and Community*, 360; M.T. Clanchy, 'Remembering the Past and the Good Old Law', *History* 55 (1970), 165-76; L. Bonfield and L.R. Poos, 'The Development of the Deathbed Transfer in Medieval English Manor Courts', *Cambridge Law Journal* 67 (1988), 414-5 cite similar 'developments' of custom.

⁵⁹ For further evidence of avoidance of the partible inheritance elsewhere, see Chapter 10.

⁶⁰ ESRO SAS/Budgen 1.

so that land might be divided for many years. Reference has already been made to the tenement of Chilsham, which was held in custody for 21 years. Similarly, the heir of John atte Stocke was only five years old when his father died and John's widow paid a fine/have custody of the land for 17 years until the heir came of age.⁶¹ The effect of the rules of free bench and of dower was to secure the interests of the older generation against their offspring. Inheritance was delayed, even though the land might be in the hands of an ageing tenant incapable of working it. Even when the heir reached the age of majority, full inheritance could still be deferred if the widow or, in those cases when the rule of *Lex Anglie* applied, the widower was still alive.⁶²

It is possible to study the operation of inheritance custom or inheritance law in the Wartling area by considering the frequency of various outcomes after the death of the landholder. The most common pattern on the death of a male tenant would be the division of the tenement between the male heir and the tenant's widow, or the inheritance of the entire holding by an heir whose mother had predeceased her husband. Other, less common, outcomes would be the inheritance of the holding outside the nuclear family, for example by sisters or brothers of the tenant, or by a niece or nephew should the tenant die without children. In certain cases the land might be held jointly by both husband and wife, and on the death of the former the widow would inherit all. Alternatively, the tenement might have been the wife's inheritance and be taken *per legem Anglie* on her death by her husband for life.

The pattern of descent on death of tenants between 1300 and the advent of the Black Death in 1349 is shown in Table 10. The analysis shows that heirs were under age in about one third of cases (2.2 and 2.3). The tenement remained undivided in the majority of these instances as wardship and bench were both in the hands of the widow. The result was also the same whenever the land was held jointly by the tenant and his wife and when there were no offspring. Thus in a total of 40% of inheritances the widow would be in possession of the whole tenement, at least until the heir reach the age of majority (2.2, 2.4, 4).

These figures may be compared with the events on the death of the landholder in the period 1370-1420 (Table 11). Two new possibilities have to be considered here. The

⁶¹ BL Add. Rolls 32713, m. 4r.; 32657, m. 1r.; 32674, m. 2r.; above p. 220.

⁶² Homans, *English Villagers*, 186.

TABLE 10

Descent of Land in the Manors of Wartling, Herstmonceux,
Bucksteep and the Battle lands at Bucksteep, 1300-49

1. Father dies predeceased by his wife		Total 32%
1.1 son inherits	31%	
1.2 daughter(s) inherits	1%	
2. Father dies and wife is alive		Total 43%
2.1 heir is of age	5%	
2.2 heir is under age, wardship by mother	27%	
2.3 heir is under age, wardship by another	8%	
2.4 no offspring, widow alone inherits	3%	
3. Inheritance by related heir outside nuclear family	10%	
4. Joint tenure	10%	
5. Wife dies, the land was her inheritance and rules of <i>Lex Anglie</i> apply	1%	

(number of cases = 113)

TABLE 11

Descent of Land in the Manors of Wartling, Herstmonceux,
Bucksteep and the Battle lands at Bucksteep, 1370-1420

1. Father dies predeceased by his wife		Total 24%
1.1 son inherits	12%	
1.2 daughter(s) inherits	12%	
2. Father dies and wife is alive		Total 26%
2.1 heir is of age	10%	
2.2 heir is under age, wardship by mother	10%	
2.3 heir is under age, wardship by another	4%	
2.4 no offspring, widow alone inherits	2%	
3. Related heir outside nuclear family	6%	
4. Joint tenure	15%	
5. Wife dies, the land was her inheritance and rules of <i>Lex Anglie</i> apply	4%	
6. Land descends by settlement or is held by feoffees	16%	
7. No heirs	9%	

(number of cases = 136)

usual rules of inheritance were increasingly circumvented by various legal devices. Villein tenants might make what was the customary equivalent of a common law settlement or might use a surrender on their death-bed to bequeath their land. Free tenants might create feoffees or might settle their land. Joint tenure by the husband and wife increased slightly during this period and became another means of directing, at least temporarily, the inheritance of land. It may be that the greater use of these devices led to a decline in wardship: the proportion of under-age heirs during this period fell by about a half, and the proportion of widows inheriting land as a bench or dower portion also declined.

Women holding land, either in their own right or as a bench or in wardship, formed a significant proportion of the tenants. Bennett has estimated that on many manors between 10 and 15 per cent of holdings were in the hands of women.⁶³ In Wartling about 15 per cent of the tenants named on the 1366 rental were women and at least a further two per cent of holdings were held by women in wardship. The number of pieces held in wardship was small, for this was only a temporary state which came to an end when the heir came of age and claimed his or her share. The length of wardship may be calculated for 11 free and customary tenements in the period 1300-49 and for seven tenements in the period 1370-1420. The mean length of wardship for the first half of the 14th century was 12 years and for the later period was 13 years. These long periods of wardship for customary tenants were the consequence of the custom of Borough English.

When the heir reached the age of majority informal or formal agreements may have been made between the widow and the inheriting son or daughter, either to divide the tenement, or for the heir to work the entire holding. Such agreements within a family are rarely recorded on the court rolls, but are suggested by two disputes in Bucksteep. On the death of Robert le Fullere in 1320 his land was inherited by his widow, Mabel and his daughter Julia who then married Alan de Bucksteep. The new husband quarrelled with his mother-in-law claiming that she had withheld from him one half of the house in which presumably the daughter, mother-in-law and he would have lived. He also claimed grazing land, and an axe and mattock she had agreed to give him. The last two were evidently his portion of the moveable goods which came to him as his wife's inheritance. An agreement was reached by which Mabel surrendered her portion of the land in return for an annual rent and the beadle was to oversee a compromise concerning the tools and the half-share of the house. In a further case Alice Capel gave up all the land she had held in dower since the death of

⁶³ Bennett, *Women in the Medieval English Countryside* 144, 279 n. 10.

her husband 20 years before to her son and heir Adam, in return for a rent payment.⁶⁴

The voluntary surrender of land by the widow to the heir suggests more amicable arrangements. Emma atte Stocke, Agnes Caterman and Agnes de Batsford inherited the whole tenement from their husbands, but granted their heirs half of the holding some years before their deaths. Though the fields given by Emma to her son Hamond are detailed in the court entry, there is no certainty that any of these tenements were in fact divided. It is more likely that the tenement was worked as a whole and the profits split. Both before and after Agnes de Batsford granted half her tenement to her son Richard, the two seem to have exploited the tenement jointly. They leased the land together and were presented for illicitly cutting wood for sale on the tenement.⁶⁵

The Wartling court took a close interest in the custody of lands and buildings by widows and their ability to maintain the tenement. Agnes de Batsford was presented for holding an old bakehouse, which was ruined because of its rotten timber, and the house of Agnes atte Felde had a defective roof which she was unable to repair because of her infirmity. Tenements which could not be worked by widows were seized. The land of Mabel Beneitt was taken into the lord's hands for this reason and granted to her son on the condition that he allow her food until the end of her life.⁶⁶ From the 1360s with a reduced demand for land and fewer tenants willing to take the lands remaining in the lord's hands, the court was less prompt in insisting that widows should maintain their holdings. Mabel atte Hole was presented for a period of ten years in the Wartling court for her ruinous buildings before the land was finally seized in 1387. It was then granted to another tenant on the condition that he feed and clothe Mabel.⁶⁷

Comparison of Tables 10 and 11 shows other trends in the patterns of land inheritance. Leaving aside for a moment cases nos. 6 and 7, the most notable difference is the greater chance daughters stood of inheriting their male tenants' holding in the period after 1370, a consequence of the reduced number of surviving male offspring reaching the age of majority. The tenement was inherited by the

⁶⁴ BL Add. Rolls 31310, mm. 3v., 4r.; 32604.

⁶⁵ BL Add. Rolls 31504, m. 4v.; 32621, m. 1r.; 32628; 32521, m. 2v.

⁶⁶ BL Add. Rolls 32621, m. 1v.; 32620, m. 4v. 32617; 32623, m. 2r.

⁶⁷ BL Add. Rolls 32689; 32695, m. 2r.

tenant's daughter in half of all cases in which the male landholder had died and had been predeceased by his wife (1.2). However, in those cases when the male tenant died, the wife was alive and the heir was under age (2.2), 12 heirs were male compared to two females. These two trends might be reconciled if there was a very high mortality rate among children. This would have reduced the number reaching the age of majority and consequently led to more nearly equal numbers of sons and daughters entering into the tenement when they came of age. Contemporary accounts of the plague and demographic analysis of the court rolls of Halesowen in the West Midlands provide some support for this conjecture.⁶⁸ An effect of a greater number of female landholders is also seen in the slight increase in the cases of succession *per legem Anglie* (5).

The final aspect apparent from the pattern of the descent of land in the Wartling area is the substantial increase in the number of tenants who died without any heirs. This was a consequence of increased mortality in the later 14th and 15th century. Associated with this was the development of legal devices to direct the inheritance of land, which have already been mentioned. These were of value not only to childless tenants, but were increasingly used to make bequests of land to those who were not heirs by custom.⁶⁹ Joint tenure by husband and wife grew in popularity in the later 14th century as a means of avoiding wardship on the death of the husband and the possible division of the tenement. The widow of Hamond atte Stocke, for example, had to purchase the farm of half of his tenement which had fallen into the hands of the lord after her husband's death because they had no surviving heirs.⁷⁰ Husband and wife might ensure their joint tenancy of free land, either by purchasing it or inheriting it together, or by means of a temporary grant to feoffees who re-granted it to the couple. Two examples may demonstrate a grant to temporary feoffees. In 1389 Alan Mardore granted his lands to John Russell and John atte Stocke, his neighbours, and two courts later he and his wife received the lands back again.⁷¹ At a court in April 1405 Thomas atte Beech and Simon Sinderford did fealty for the land of William

⁶⁸ Razi, *Life, Marriage and Death in a Medieval Parish*, 129.

⁶⁹ Cf. B.M.S. Campbell, 'Population Pressure, Inheritance and the Land Market in a Fourteenth-Century Peasant Community', in R.M. Smith (ed.), *Land, Kinship and Life-Cycle*, 125-6.

⁷⁰ BL Add. Roll 32686.

⁷¹ BL Add. Roll 32696, mm. 5r. 6v. For joint purchase, see ESRO ASH L1597, m. 6r. and BL Add. Roll 32712, m. 3v.

Studding, but in November that year William in turn did fealty for land obtained from these feoffees and presumably created a settlement.⁷²

An alternative and more flexible means of directing inheritance was the creation of standing feoffees. This not only enabled the land to be devised by will, but also allowed the feudal incidents, including wardship, to be circumvented.⁷³ Feoffees are first recorded in Wartling in the 1370s, but became common only in the first decade of the 15th century. The creation of feoffees to uses initially grew out of a type of death-bed grant reflecting an uncertainty about its employment.⁷⁴ Robert Austen gave his land to feoffees in 1396 less than a month before his death and others likewise deferred the creation of feoffees until death was imminent.⁷⁵ Not only tenants, but also manorial courts were rather doubtful about this novel legal device. At the courts of Herstmonceux in 1385 and Wartling in 1413 it was claimed that the creation of feoffees was intended to defraud the lord of his rights to wardship, though both seem to have ultimately accepted its validity. The court at Herstmonceux, nevertheless, obtained a payment for heriot.⁷⁶ Perhaps as a consequence, even simple grants of land might be regarded suspiciously. One entry in the Herstmonceux rolls notes that a tenant did not have to give a heriot, because he acquired the tenement long before the previous holder's death.⁷⁷

The court rolls do, nevertheless, contain many examples of feoffees to uses. Simon Rabat and John Iwood who did fealty for the land of John Rabat in 1405 were clearly

⁷² BL Add. Rolls 32712, m. 1v.; 32713, m. 1v.

⁷³ On feoffees to uses, see J.M.W. Bean, 'Landlords', in E. Miller (ed.), *Agrarian History of England and Wales*, 3 (1348-1500) (1990), 551-3; J.M.W. Bean, *The Decline of English Feudalism 1215-1540* (1968), 104-179.

⁷⁴ BL Add. Rolls 32681; PRO C146/4202; /4952. For the latter, see also BL Add. Rolls 31510; 32688, m. 2r.

⁷⁵ BL Add. Roll 32706. See also Reginald Longe (BL Add. Roll 32714) and John Rabat (ESRO ASH L1597, m. 1v.; BL Add. Roll 32714, m. 1r.).

⁷⁶ Harvard Law School manorial records 76; BL Add. Rolls 32714, m. 2v.; 32716, mm. 2v., 3v.

⁷⁷ ESRO SAS/Budgen 15.

feoffees for the latter was still occupying his land on his death three years.⁷⁸ Stephen Waller granted all his lands and tenements to Robert Whiberd and Thomas atte Levere. On the death of the latter the land was granted to Adam Iwood, who was a major landholder in the area, Robert Redyng and John Waller, the son and heir of Stephen to augment the number of feoffees.⁷⁹ Similarly, John Baron and John, vicar of Wartling who took the land of John Hocok on his death in 1420 were evidently feoffees as they are also described as executors. The land descended to Janyn Hocok who died in 1433.⁸⁰ The intention of some enfeoffments is not always apparent. John Colbrond and John Clevere produced a charter after the death of William Sompter showing that they had been enfeoffed with his 12-acre tenement. Both had acted as feoffees for others and it is probable that they were serving as such for William, but it remains a possibility that they had purchased the entail of his land.⁸¹

Comparable devices were available to the tenants of customary land. They could obtain joint tenure by surrendering the land to the lord, who in turn granted it back to the use of two tenants, who might be the husband and wife, or the father and his son. Alternatively the land could be granted back with remainder to a third party.⁸² Another device available to tenant tenants was the death-bed transfer of land. This was a surrender of land to take effect after death to parties not necessarily present made out of court, but in front of a manorial official and witnesses. It was to all intents and purposes a bequest of land by will.⁸³ Neither the creation of settlements, nor death-bed transfers necessarily avoided the payment of a heriot and relief; their value was to allow the tenants to determine their heirs outside the rules of customary law.

In the Wartling area during the period up to 1420 considered here, death-bed surrenders were not employed widely, though settlements by customary tenants were more common. As always the courts were suspicious of the novel procedures. In

⁷⁸ BL Add. Roll 32713, m. 1r.; ESRO ASH L1597, m. 1v.

⁷⁹ BL Add. Roll 32716, m. 4r.

⁸⁰ BL Add. Roll 32718; ESRO AMS 6270/90, m. 4v.

⁸¹ BL Add. Roll 32716, m. 4v.

⁸² Cf. B. Harvey, *Westminster Abbey and its Estates in the Middle Ages* (1977), 280-3.

⁸³ Bonfield and Poos, 'The Development of Deathbed Transfer', 417.

1412 the Bucksteep court stated that Robert Degher had been granted the reversion of his father's tenement to avoid giving heriot and relief. The two had colluded, the court said, for the father had received the profit of the tenement during his life time.⁸⁴ Notwithstanding this, a number of settlements were effected in the Bucksteep court in the decade after 1410. The possibilities of this type of agreement are exemplified by a surrender of Richard Bucksteep. He surrendered to the use of his son John his messuage and four pieces of land, but retained two crofts and a meadow, though these were to revert to John on his death. In the meantime Richard was to serve as beadle for the whole tenement.⁸⁵ The arrangement were a type of retirement agreement, by which the father reduced his interest in the land in favour of his son.⁸⁶

A single example of a death-bed surrender is recorded in the surviving Bucksteep court rolls. The court initially referred the surrender to the lord suggesting that similar agreements had not been made previously, but in the following court the deceased's wife and son were able to do fealty and were granted entry according to the terms of the transfer. Two of the witnesses of the surrender then took the land to farm, presumably because the son was a juvenile. If this surmise is correct, the agreement avoided the need to purchase wardship and allowed the dying tenant to bequeath his holding and probably to make arrangements for the farming of the land after his death.⁸⁷

Manorial courts assimilated the customary law procedure of death-bed transfer, and even the common law device of enfeoffment to uses with varying degrees of alacrity.⁸⁸ The growth of these practices at the end of the 14th and in the early 15th century seems to reflect a growing desire by tenants to bequeath their lands to others apart from their customary and common law heirs. It is necessary to stress in conclusion that the creation of settlements for customary tenements was not a kind of copyhold for lives, as some have interpreted similar practices elsewhere, nor were

⁸⁴ ESRO ASH L1598, m. 6r.; BL Add. Roll 31313, m. 3r.

⁸⁵ ESRO ASH L1598, m. 6r.

⁸⁶ For similar reduction in holding size at the end of a tenant's life, see C.C. Dyer, *Lords and Peasants in a Changing Society: The Estates of the Bishopric of Worcester, 680-1540*, 306-7.

⁸⁷ BL Add. Roll 31313, m. 3r.

⁸⁸ Bonfield and Poos, 'The Development of Deathbed Transfer', 418.

they a means of ensuring inheritance by tenants for life.⁸⁹ They were simply a means of bequeathing land.

⁸⁹ R.M. Faith, 'Berkshire: Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries', in P.D.A. Harvey (ed.), *The Peasant Land Market in Medieval England* (1984), 140-1; Harvey, *Westminster Abbey and its Estates*, 28.

CHAPTER 9

SETTLEMENT AND SOCIETY IN WARTLING AND AREA

1300-1420

PART 2: THE LAND MARKET AND SOCIAL RELATIONS

THE LAND MARKET

Inheritance was only one of the ways in which land passed from tenant to tenant. *Inter-vivos* transfers, both permanent by sale, or temporary through leasing, were also important. There were few restrictions in customary law to prevent or discourage the sale or leasing of land on the manors in the Wartling area. Villeins were not, of course, permitted to buy lands outside the lordship and had to purchase free land through the manorial court and not independently by charter.¹ Conversely, some entries in the court rolls reflect seigniorial concern at the possession of customary land by freemen. Lists were compiled in 1304 and in 1355 of freemen holding customary land in Wartling. In Herstmonceux two free tenants were required to find pledges to ensure they would give the services owed by customary holders before they were admitted to a customary tenement and an inquiry was held on Wartling manor to determine whether a neif tenant was eligible to inherit land, because she had married a freeman.² Entry fines were moderate and relief was fixed by custom at a sum equal to a year's rent. Higher entry fines were charged only on land sales which were not covered by manorial custom. When Robert de Woodsell who was a freeman and an *alienus* (from outside the manor) purchased a customary tenement in Wartling, he was charged the very large sum of 50s. to continue to hold it and to permit its inheritance by his eldest son, a neif.³

Leases of customary land and all sales of land, both free and neif, were presented in

¹ The land obtained by Richard ate Felde, a Wartling neif, in Burwash manor was seized (BL Add. Roll 32623, m. 2r.). BL Add. Roll 32629; 32630.

² BL Add. Rolls 32611, m. 2r.; 32659, m. 1v.; ESRO D507; BL Add. Roll 32629.

³ E.g. When James de Studding (*Stodden*) died his son paid 5s. 4½d. relief which was equal to one year's rent (BL Add. Roll 32654; ESRO SHE 7/16). For Robert de Woodsell, see BL Add. Roll 32653.

court. The Wartling court rolls thus allow figures to be compiled which summarise the nature of the land market in the period from 1300. Absolute numbers of sales and leases, and of acreages transferred cannot be compared because of the unequal survival of court rolls, but the figures may be expressed in terms of the averages per court session and mean area of transactions (Table 12). In a limited number of cases details of the acreage sold or leased and the period of the lease has not been entered. Where this information cannot be ascertained by reference to other entries, they have been excluded from the averages. In the calculation of average area leased and sold per court session, it has been necessary to assume for the small number of entries without record of area that the figures were the same as the mean of the recorded entries.

Table 12

Number of Land Sales and Average Area in Wartling Manor

	Sales per court	Average Area of Sale (in acres)
1300-09	0.54	4.9
1310-19	0.59	3.9
1320-29	0.47	6.2
1330-39	0.52	5.8
1340-49	0.44	3.0
1360-69	0.46	5.4
1370-79	0.16	11.1
1380-89	0.64	7.4
1390-99	0.43	6.6
1400-09	0.36	4.2
1410-19	0.50	11.9

The figures derived from the court rolls are based on the assumption that the entries are a complete record for no allowance can be made for leases or land sales which were made secretly and not presented, though these certainly did occur. When detected, tenants were presented for leasing without licence, but an unknown number of cases were not found. On a manor as extensive as Wartling and with holdings in

severalty, short leases of small acreages might be successfully concealed.⁴

Leases on the three manors in the early 14th century were of standard form. The lessor granted the land on the condition that it should be marled and in return for a payment of a proportion of the crops; land was rarely leased for a money rent. The proportion of the tithe taken was usually a reciprocal of the number of years of the lease. The lessor continued to do all services due from the land and was responsible for fencing it. The right of herbage was often reserved by the lessor, suggesting that most land was leased for cultivation rather than pasture.⁵

Table 13

Average Length of Leases in Wartling Manor in Years

1300-09	9.4
1310-19	11.4
1320-29	8.0
1330-39	9.0
1340-49	10.0
1360-69	2.3
1370-79	2.8
1380-89	13.0

In the half-century before the Black Death, recorded leases were normally for long periods. The modal length of leases in the manors of Wartling, Herstmonceux and Bucksteep in the first half of the 14th century was 10 years (Table 13). The mean length of leases in Wartling was of the same order and varied little during this period. Leases were rarely, if ever, renewed on expiry. Many of the peasants appear more than once, either as lessors or lessees, for land was generally let in small parcels amounting to a field or two. Richard Russell who held a tenement of 30 acres in

⁴ E.g. Adam ate Felde was detected leasing one acre of land without a licence in 1304 (BL Add. Roll 32662, m. 5v.).

⁵ See p. 116. Cf. R.J. Faith, 'Berkshire: Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries', in P.D.A. Harvey (ed.), *The Peasant Land Market in Medieval England* (1984), 127, n. 18.

Bucksteep let two acres in 1315, another acre in 1316, but he also leased out a larger block of 10 acres in the latter year. Similarly, between 1337 and 1339 William Stot took three leases on an area totalling 5¼ acres and leased a further field of unstated size and one acre of woodland.⁶

Some leases may have been made to increase or reduce the area of land worked according to the needs of a family or individual during the course of the developmental cycle. The adaptation of the cultivated area to family labour and consumption levels has been postulated by Chayanov and historians have sought to find evidence for this practice in the behaviour of English medieval communities.⁷ Leasing behaviour was poorly adapted to follow the fluctuations in the developmental cycle of families because of the long terms of most agreements. Leases made towards the end of a lessor's life posed little problem, because such a contract was terminated by death, but many leases were contracted earlier in the life-cycle. The lease locked the parties into a long agreement. In most cases the contracts seem to have run their full course, for there are very few cases of lessees trying to terminate the agreement or sub-letting their land.⁸

Postan has noted that lessors often included widows, the aged and single women.⁹ In Wartling Matilda Creep (*Crepe*), widowed the previous year, let an acre of her land to a neighbour in 1311.¹⁰ Agnes atte Felde inherited a messuage and 20 acres of land

⁶ BL Add. Rolls 31310, mm. 6r., 6v.; 32637-8.

⁷ A.V. Chayanov, *The Theory of Peasant Economy* (ed. D. Thorner, B. Kerblay and R.E.F. Smith) (1966). For a critical comments on Chayanov's theory in the context of medieval England, see R.M. Smith, 'Some Issues Concerning Families and their Property in Rural England 1250-1800', in R.M. Smith (ed.), *Land, Kinship and Life-Cycle* (1984), 11-2.

⁸ After one year of a 13-year lease Ellis de Gill and William Morkoc tried to claim that they had taken one acre rather than the seven acres stated in the agreement, apparently in an attempt to reduce their commitment (BL Add. Roll 31310, mm. 3r., 7r.). Simon Birchet assigned the lease of a field called *Northfeld* which still had six years of the lease to run (BL Add. Roll 31312).

⁹ M.M. Postan, 'The Charters of Villeins', in *Essays on Medieval Agriculture and General Problems of the Medieval Economy* (1973), 116.

¹⁰ BL Add. Rolls 32615, mm. 4v., 5r.

in 1311 from her brother. She was a spinster and seven years later she began to lease portions of her holding, granting out seven acres and later another 2½ acres. The seven acres were subsequently sold to the tenant who had taken it on lease. It is probable that she had become unable to work all her substantial holding, for by 1320 she was incapable of even maintaining the house in which she lived.¹¹

A second category of lessors, not identified by Postan, were those who had just inherited land. Roger Tilley (*Tonlegh*) took a lease of a few acres at *Holebrok* in 1330 to augment the land he was buying nearby called *Twyneslond*. When three years later he inherited 24 acres from his mother, he was able to grant some of the newly acquired land on lease.¹² Similar behaviour can be traced in the Berd family. Roger le Berd unexpectedly inherited his father-in-law's land. He had already acquired land by taking another tenement to farm and therefore had surplus land to lease. When he died in 1348, his son continued this policy and on inheritance immediately leased land, including some of the fields which his father had let previously.¹³

A further group of lessors were impoverished tenants forced to let their land to improve their financial situation. Leases made under these circumstances often preceded the sale of part of the tenement. Richard de Batsford leased land in 1330 in return for a cash payment, but within two years the remainder of the tenement had been sold.¹⁴ The lease of Agnes atte Felde which preceded a sale has been mentioned above. Parts of Hole tenement, which has already been discussed, were also leased for a period and then were sold off piecemeal during the 1330s.¹⁵

A small number of leases were contracted between members of families, though it is not always possible to distinguish the relationships of the parties. The lease of three acres by Richard de Studding to Thomas de Studding was probably a contract between two people with the same locative surname; there is no known family association and the lease was made at a time when Richard was also letting out other

¹¹ BL Add. Rolls 32615, m. 5r.; 31504, mm. 2v., 4r., 4v.

¹² BL Add. Rolls 32630; 32599, m. 1v.; 32633; 32634.

¹³ BL Add. Rolls 32623; 32630; 32637; 32654.

¹⁴ BL Add. Rolls 32630; 32631, m. 2v.

¹⁵ BL Add. Roll 32630.; see page 223 above.

land.¹⁶ However, the grant of three acres by Roger de Blakestead to his newly acquired son-in-law for 16 years, and a lease of 10 acres by John Jacob to his brother Simon, were between relations. Both these two leases were unusual, in the first case because of the length of the term, and in the second because of the large area of land granted and the condition that the lessee should be responsible for the customary dues.¹⁷

For the lessor, letting land was a means of retaining tenure and enjoying some of its benefits while not directly working it; for the lessee, land was taken to be cultivated, often because he or she had little or no other land. Some lessees took land while they waited to inherit their parent's land, for example Roger Tilley discussed above, or because the lessee was without expectation of inheritance, but the social circumstances of most lessees are not clear from the court rolls.

Leasing practice changed entirely in the years immediately following the Black Death. Figures have not been compiled for the decade 1350-59, because there is an inadequate number of court rolls. Land was let in the following two decades for shorter periods: many leases were for five years or less (Table 13). This cautious behaviour is also reflected in the smaller area of land let in the period 1360-69, though in the following decade larger areas were leased. The total area of land leased in the second half of the 14th century never reached even the rather moderate levels of the earlier 14th century, and so little land was being let out by the late part of the century that average figures are of little significance.

The average term of leases increased from the 1380s and the conditions of the leases changed. A typical example from this period was a lease for 20 years of a garden, two crofts and half a marsh with reeds. The lessee undertook to be responsible for all the rents and services due and paid a sum to the lessor in addition.¹⁸ At the end of the 14th century, the conditions and lengths of terms of leases by tenants were similar to those in contemporary agreements by manorial lords to let to farm escheated land. In the period after 1349, not only the holders of many tenements but all their heirs died from the plague. After the heirs of vacant tenements had been sought in three courts, the holdings escheated to the lord and were farmed out. Escheated land was granted

¹⁶ BL Add. Roll 32615, m. 2v.

¹⁷ BL Add. Rolls 32617; 32610, m. 3r.

¹⁸ BL Add. Roll 32696, m. 1r.

for short periods in the years immediately after the Black Death, though subsequently for longer terms. *Creppeslond* in Dallington escheated on the death of John Birchet and was granted out in 1349 for eight years. When this expired, the grant was renewed for a further 20 years. Before that term had run its course the tenant died and it was then granted to John atte Stocke, whose father had in 1343 sold it to John Birchet.¹⁹ It was common by the 1380s for escheated tenements to be granted for life terms. The tenants agreed to give the ancient rent and services and to pay additional sums, which in many cases nearly doubled the dues paid. The rent on a tenement farmed by Robert atte Berghe, for example, was increased from 4s. 4d. to 8s.²⁰

By the 1380s, tenant lessors were in competition with the lord of the manor to find takers for surplus land. Leases made by tenants began to imitate the longer terms of grants of escheated lands and also to resemble them in the conditions under which they were let. The payment of rents and services, for example, were usually transferred to the lessee. A typical lease was that made in 1388-9 by Julia atte Standard, who leased land to three tenants, two of them for a period of 20 years and the third for life. The tenants became responsible for the rents and services due and paid Julia an annual sum for the lands.²¹

The land market too shows a clear distinction between the first and second halves of the 14th century. At the opening of the century the number of sales was small and the total acreage limited; the most common size of land sold was about two or three acres and whole tenements rarely changed hands (Table 12). Complete holdings were transferred only in particular circumstances. The surrender by Matilda de Collingham of a tenement in Wartling to Simon atte Stocke was connected with their marriage. The grant of a cottage and five acres by Richard atte Welle to his brother John in 1321 transferred the patrimonial inheritance; Richard then left the manor and a few years later paid chevage to live in the Rape of Pevensey.²² A number of sales of smaller plots also took place between tenants with the same surname. Some of these

¹⁹ BL Add. Rolls 32657, m. 6r.; 32663, m. 1v.; 32676, m. 1v.; 32643.

²⁰ BL Add. Roll 32713, m. 3v.

²¹ BL Add. Roll 32696, mm. 1r., 4v.

²² BL Add. Roll 32662, m. 3r. Evidence of the marriage of Simon atte Stocke and Matilda de Collingham is to be found in BL Add. Rolls 32632; 32634. BL Add. Rolls 32620, m. 2r.; 31503, m. 1r.; 32623, m. 2r.

may have been between neighbours bearing a common locative surname, but unrelated by birth. If, however, it is assumed that those with the same surname were related, exactly one third of all transfers of land in Wartling made before 1349 were within the family. The proportion was similar in Bucksteep and Herstmonceux manors. On the one hand that figure clearly over-estimates the importance of land transfers between relations for the assumption is not justified, and on the other many interfamilial sales may have been made between relations with different surnames. It is not possible to give accurate figures for the importance of sales of land between without thorough family reconstitution. Nevertheless, the figures given suggest the general importance of this type of land sale.²³

Half of the all the land transferred between (assumed) relations were grants of land by parents to their children. These grants were usually of a few fields, occasionally of half of the tenement, but rarely of all the holding. Some of the grants simply anticipated the inheritance by the heir; they relieved the ageing parent from the need to work all the land, pay the rents and perform the services due on it. Grants by widows to their sons have already been discussed. Other grants allowed the children to hold some land without having to wait for their parents' death. Only the more wealthy tenants could afford to grant their offspring land in this way. Robert Pechard transferred to his daughter the land he had bought from his father-in-law, together with pasture, two animals and 6s. rent from a tenant, creating a very substantial dowry. At the same time he granted his tenement to his two sons.²⁴ Similarly, Simon Longe gave eight acres to his younger son William in 1330 and five years later three fields to the elder son Robert, though he still retained some land in his own hands. The motives of Simon Longe are obscure, for it was alleged after his death that he had rescinded his enfeoffment of Robert and given the land to William. Other grants were made as part of marriage settlements. Robert de Wilson granted 6 acres to his son on his marriage to Matilda, the daughter of his neighbour, Thomas de Wilson. At the same time Thomas granted Matilda a tenement he had inherited from his brother.²⁵

²³ BL Add. Roll 32615, m. 2v. For a consideration of the general problems of identifying land transmission between kin, see Z. Razi, 'The Erosion of the Family-Land Bond in the Late Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries: A Methodological Note', in R.M. Smith (ed.), *Land, Kinship and Life-Cycle* (1984), 295-304.

²⁴ BL Add. Rolls 31504, m. 9r.; 32600.

²⁵ BL Add. Rolls 32630; 32635; 32605. PRO C146/3826, 3855.

A further large group of transactions in land were associated with the sub-division of tenements. In Wartling these account for a further fifth of all sales. The examples of Hole and Tilley tenements have already been cited and the rental of 1366 shows that a number of other holdings had been similarly divided.²⁶ The descent of land in Tilley suggest that, once a tenement had begun to be broken up, the land was often sold on and might be further sub-divided. A comparison of the tenants at Tilley in 1318 and those in 1342 emphasises how much change had taken place. At the former date, nine tenants held an average of 4½ acres, but by 1342 their number had increased to 15 with a mean holding size of less than three acres.²⁷

Conversely, sales allowed some tenants to increase their holdings by purchase and to create new tenements. The court rolls of Wartling refer to tenements assembled from a number of other holdings as 'diverse tenements', though in the period before 1350 these were not common. John Robat managed to construct a 'diverse tenement' by purchase. By 1327 he had bought lands from Robert Jekyn, John de Etchingham and Alice, daughter of Robert atte Frith. The tenement he assembled was less heterogeneous than this might suggest, for the land of Alice atte Frith had itself been previously bought from Robert Jekyn.²⁸

The land market in the Wartling area in the period before 1350 did not effect a wide-scale redistribution of land, for the number of transactions was not large and the area of individual grants was small. Grants were often exchanges of land within families. The amount of land available for sale beyond the confines of the family group was restricted and it was rarely possible, even through a number of purchases, to build up substantial holdings as the rarity of diverse tenements suggests. Larger tenements tended to be divided into parts and were replaced by a number of smaller holdings. Only the very largest tenants were able to continue to expand their holdings. The morcellation of tenements is a feature apparent throughout England during this period, though there seem to be significant variations in the level of sales within families. In central southern England, there is some evidence that many of the transactions were between relations, though in East Anglia the proportion may have

²⁶ See pp. 221-3.

²⁷ BL Add. Rolls 31504, m. 5r.; 32642, m. 2v.

²⁸ BL Add. Rolls 31505; 32628. For the land of Alice atte Frith bought by her father from Robert Jekyn, see BL Add. Roll 32613, m. 4r.

been smaller.²⁹

One of the effects of the land market, although not significant in terms of the total area transferred, was that it enabled non-inheriting peasants to obtain sufficient land for a cottage. Grants of small parcels of land to relations have already been considered, and a common condition imposed on many land sales was that a building should be constructed on the holding within a limited time. It is evident that a number of buildings were erected on divided tenements even when this requirement was not imposed.³⁰

The land market after 1350 was different in character and is more difficult to analyse. In the decade 1370-9 the number of sales in Wartling declined considerably, though the average area per sale was much higher than in the first half of the century, perhaps distorted by the small number of transactions. During 1380s the number of pieces of land sold grew considerably and the mean area remained high. During the first decade of the 15th century both the number of sales and the average area declined, suggesting a recession in the land market. These fluctuations are not easy to understand and there is little evidence from elsewhere with which they may be compared. They do not appear to be synchronous with the variations on the Norfolk manor of Martham, where transactions flourished from the 1370s until a lull between 1393 and 1398.³¹

During the first two decades of the 15th century there was a growth in the number of legal settlements which were effected. In this period replacement rates in some areas fell below one and many tenants approached old age without surviving offspring.³²

²⁹ P.D.A. Harvey, 'Conclusions', in P.D.A. Harvey (ed.), *The Peasant Land Market in Medieval England* (1984), 341; Smith, 'Some Issues Concerning Families and their Property', 19-21; R. Faith, 'Berkshire: Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries', 132.

³⁰ See above, p. 224; BL Add. Rolls 32613, m. 2r.; 32617; 32653; ESRO SAS/Budgen 8.

³¹ B.M.S. Campbell, 'Population Pressure, Inheritance and the Land Market in a Fourteenth-Century Peasant Community', in R.M. Smith (ed.), *Land, Kinship and Life-Cycle* (1984), 107-25.

³² For a discussion of replacement rates, see J. Hatcher, *Plague, Population and the English Economy 1348-1530* (1977), 26-30. E.g. Isabel Okebourne, BL Add. Roll 32718. See also Chapter 8 above.

Tenants without heirs might provide for their old age by leasing their land for life with a grant of the remainder to the tenant. Alice, widow of John Buckholt, leased her land to John Crouchere who on her death received the remainder.³³ Tenants with heirs might use grants in tail to bequeath their lands. Isabel atte Halle had a son and heir by her first husband William atte Halle, and he received his father's land on her death, but she granted the remainder of the land inherited from her second husband to Thomas Birchet.³⁴ The nature of the court roll entries obscures the character of some grants of entail and their nature is only apparent on the death of the settlor when the purchaser claimed the land.

SETTLEMENT AND SOCIETY

Two strands of thought may be identified running through the study of English rural communities. The two are distinguished by fundamental differences of ideology which inform their techniques of examination and the perception of the distribution of power within local communities.

Hilton and his followers have argued that, notwithstanding differences in wealth and status, the tenants within a lordship formed a single community. They were brought together by their joint interest in the farming and regulation of the open fields, a type of land management which necessitated co-operative behaviour. Co-operation and the avoidance of conflict between wealthy freeholders and the smallholders to their mutual advantage was more important than the differences within the village community. According to this view, tenants were also united by their common class interest in resisting seigneurial exactions. Such disputes as arose within a community were essentially between individuals and did not spring from class antagonisms. Members of a community often lived together in a single village and were in daily contact. The clerks of the court rolls could use the term 'neighbours' as a synonym for 'community'.³⁵

³³ BL Add. Roll 32716, m. 2r.

³⁴ BL Add. Roll 32716, mm. 2r., 2v., 3r., 4r.; 32717, m. 3r.

³⁵ R.H. Hilton, *A Medieval Society: The West Midlands at the End of the Thirteenth Century* (1966), 150-3; Z. Razi, 'Family, Land and Village Community in Later Medieval England', *Past and Present* 93 (1981), 3-36; R.H. Hilton, 'Medieval Peasants: Any Lessons?', in *Class Conflict and the Crisis of Feudalism: Essays in Medieval Social History* (1990: 2nd edn), 44-5.

Members of the Toronto School have rejected this analysis. They have identified social divisions within the peasantry which separated those holding more land from those with less. The lord of the manor sought to assert his position over the lesser tenants by allying with the prominent families in the manor, those families which served regularly on juries and held manorial office. According to this interpretation, the lines of class consciousness ran not between the lord and his tenants, but between the wealthy free tenants, who identified more closely with the interests of the lord, and the other peasants excluded from positions of power within the community.³⁶

A third approach to the study of communities, which makes fewer assumptions about the nature of power, has been employed by R.M. Smith and Bennett. They have examined the patterns of interactions between individuals and considered their economic status only as a secondary factor. Smith has used the technique of network analysis, sometimes employed in the study of contemporary and ethnic communities, to examine the relationships in the Suffolk manor of Redgrave. Bennett adopted a similar approach to consider the changing role of women in the manor of Brigstock in Northamptonshire. By listing all the associations between individuals, including law suits, land transactions and the giving of pledges recorded in the court rolls, patterns of association could be identified. The manorial court embraced so many aspects of life that a great number of the relationships within a community are likely to be detectable by network analysis.³⁷

A somewhat similar approach has been adopted for the analysis of the Wartling area. The interactions between individuals were noted and the patterns of association

³⁶ E. Britton, *The Community of the Vill: Study in the History of Family and Village Life in Fourteenth-Century England* (1977), 4-14, 244n.; E.B. DeWindt, *Land and People in Holywell-cum-Needlingworth: Structures of Tenure and Patterns of Social Organisation in an East Midlands Village 1252-1457* (1972), 242 ff. For a critique of the Toronto School's model, see Z. Razi, 'The Toronto School's Reconstruction of Medieval Peasant Society: A Critical View', *Past and Present* 85 (1979), 141-57. For further discussion of the issues and problems on both sides, see R.M. Smith, 'Modernization' and Corporate Medieval Village Community in England: Some Sceptical Reflections', in A.R.H. Baker and D. Gregory (eds), *Explorations in Historical Geography: Interpretative Essays* (1984), 156-60.

³⁷ R.M. Smith, 'Kin and Neighbours in a Thirteenth-Century Suffolk Community', *Journal of Family History* 4 (1979), 219-56; J.M. Bennett, *Women in the Medieval English Countryside: Gender and Household in Brigstock Before the Plague* (1987), 129-39, 217-22.

examined. For reasons already discussed, the type of thorough-going analysis undertaken by Smith could not be used here and the analysis adopted is qualitative rather than quantitative.³⁸ The manors of Wartling and Herstmonceux were quite unlike the Midlands manors examined by Hilton and the Toronto historians, as has already been shown. These Sussex manors not only extended over a large area, but their constituent parts were also separated by considerable distances. The settlements around Wartling and Dallington churches were small and most of the population lived in isolated farms. The manor was not a strong unifying factor because of its limited influence over the matters of agricultural organisation. The inhabitants of remote tithings, such as Foxham (Beckley or Peasmarshe) 17 miles (25 km) away, regularly obtained exemption from attendance at court at Herstmonceux on account of the distance and might have little contact with other tenants in the manor. Tenants of Wilting manor holding land in the Wartling area were excused suit of court for an indefinite period, until the lord should visit the district. The manor of Wartling was divided into a number of tithings: five are listed in the roll of 1397. There were, therefore, few unifying elements to hold together tenants so widely dispersed.³⁹

Service as a pledge and delivering essoins in the manorial court has been used as an indication of the association of individuals. A person required to produce surety for the payment of a fine, appearance in court or the performance of a certain obligation had to find one or more individuals prepared to serve as pledges. Pledges could be fined if the promised action was not carried out. In the manors examined in the Midlands it has been noted that manorial officials, and particularly the more wealthy tenants, acted as pledges more frequently than other peasants. Reciprocal pledging, A pledging for B and then B for A, was rare. This has led Pimsler to suggest that pledging was not a service given freely by members within a community, because of the risk of default and consequent fine. He has speculated that payments may have been made by those who wished to find a pledge.⁴⁰

³⁸ The limitations of the evidence extracted from the Wartling court rolls are noted on p. 214 above.

³⁹ See above, pp. 150, 159; ESRO SAS/Budgen 10; BL Add. Roll 32669. BL Add. Roll 32707 lists the tithings as Wartling, Windmill Hill, Socknersh, Cowbeech and Dallington.

⁴⁰ J.A. Raftis, *Tenure and Mobility: Studies in the Social History of the Medieval English village* (1964), 101-4; Britton, *The Community of the Vill*, 103-8; DeWindt, *Land and People in Holywell-cum-Needlingworth*, 242-63; M. Pimsler, 'Solidarity in the Medieval Village? The Evidence of the Personal Pledge at Elton, Huntingdonshire', *Journal of British Studies* 17 (1977), 1-11.

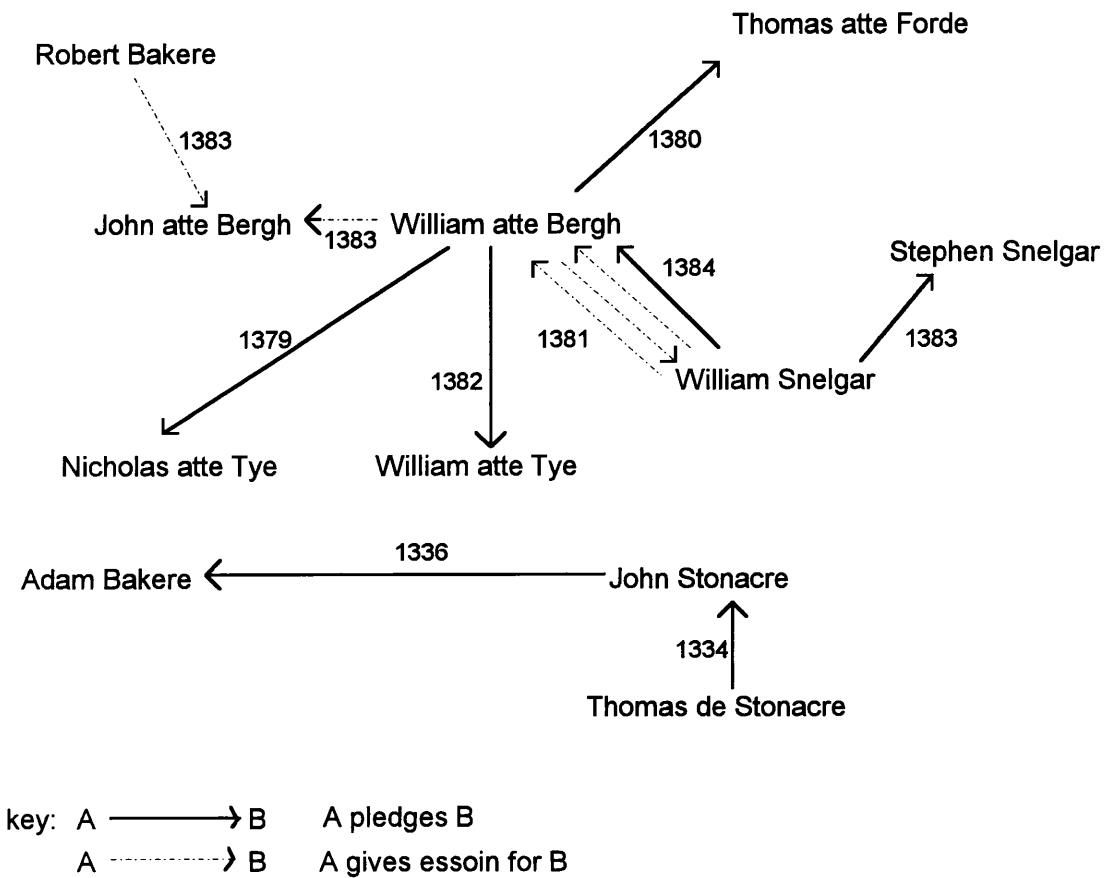
No penalty was likely to be incurred by a person giving an essoin at court. The individual who wished to be excused must, however, have always been keen to ensure that a reliable individual delivered the essoin to avoid a fine for default of suit. To this extent essoins may be a better indicator of social relations. In some cases the relationship between the person delivering the essoin and the excused is evident. In the manors considered here, essoins were often given by members of a family, often by a son for his father. They might also be delivered by a sub-tenant for the tenant or by servants for their employer.⁴¹ Occasionally, two tenants might deliver essoins alternately for each other as John atte Beech and Thomas Thatcher did at Herstmonceux court between 1381 and 1384.⁴²

The practice of pledging on the Wealden manors did not resemble the pattern on the Midland manors. Wealthy tenants acted more frequently as givers of pledges than other peasants, but only a few seem to have served very often. It was more common for tenants to give both pledges and essoins for their neighbours. A study of the givers of pledges and essoins allows communities of neighbours who acted for one another to be identified. One such group is illustrated in fig. 32. This shows members of six families who lived at the south-west corner of Herstmonceux manor. The arrows show the essoins and pledges given: thus, Robert Bakere is indicated delivering an essoin for John atte Bergh. The exact boundaries of their tenements are not known, but the general positions of five of them can be inferred from the names of the holdings in a 17th-century survey. Tenants in the 13th and 14th century often gave their names to, or took them from, their tenements and their personal names are reflected in the place-names recorded in a survey 300 years later.⁴³ From that record it is apparent that the tenements called *Snelgates*, *Birgs* and *Bakers* were adjacent. Tye House lay a short distance to the south and the tenement called *Foords* closeby to the south-east.

⁴¹ A fine might be given for delivering a false essoin, *Select Pleas in Manorial and Other Seignorial Courts* 1, ed. F.W. Maitland (Selden Society 2 (1889)), 66-7. Examples of essoins given by members of families include Harvard Law School manorial records 68; BL Add. Roll 32662, m. 4r., and by sub-tenants, ESRO D507.

⁴² Harvard Law School manorial records 73; 74; 75; ESRO SAS/Budgen 15; 16; 17.

⁴³ ESRO A 4307. For locative surnames, see R.A. McKinley, *The Surnames of Sussex* (English Surnames Series 5 (1988)), 91-129, especially 123.



Robert le Bakere

1346 leases land with John de Stonacre

William atte Bergh

1334 starts suit against Margery de Stonacre for trespass

Thomas ate Forde

1383 hold land next to the tenement of William Snelgar the younger

Thomas de Stonacre

1337 marries Alice Bakere

Thomas atte Tye

1367 creates William his son and William atte Bergh feoffees of all his land

sources: BL Add. Rolls 32676, m 3r.; 32681; Harvard Law School manorial records 75

Fig. 32 A community in Herstmonceux.

Pledges and essoins were just one manifestation of a broader network of economic and social links which bound neighbours together, as the lower part of fig. 32 indicates. For example, the Stonacre and Bakere families were connected by marriage.⁴⁴ Links between tenants were reflected in loans of goods and money. The disputes between the Nichola atte Tye and William Mot the elder suggest the type of exchanges that might be made. In 1379 Nichola atte Tye prosecuted John Hosyere^z and William Mot for debt. The case was concluded by a compromise. Two years later, however, William Mot claimed that Nichola owed him for the loan of 1½ quarters of door nails borrowed by her son. Moreover, she also owed him 10s. for the hire of a building for five years and he claimed she had impoverished a close of his land. The court found against her on the first two complaints, though not on the third. Loans such as these were unlikely to be recorded unless a dispute arose over repayment. The pleas for unrepaid debts and goods not returned must therefore stand for many loans which were concluded amicably.⁴⁵

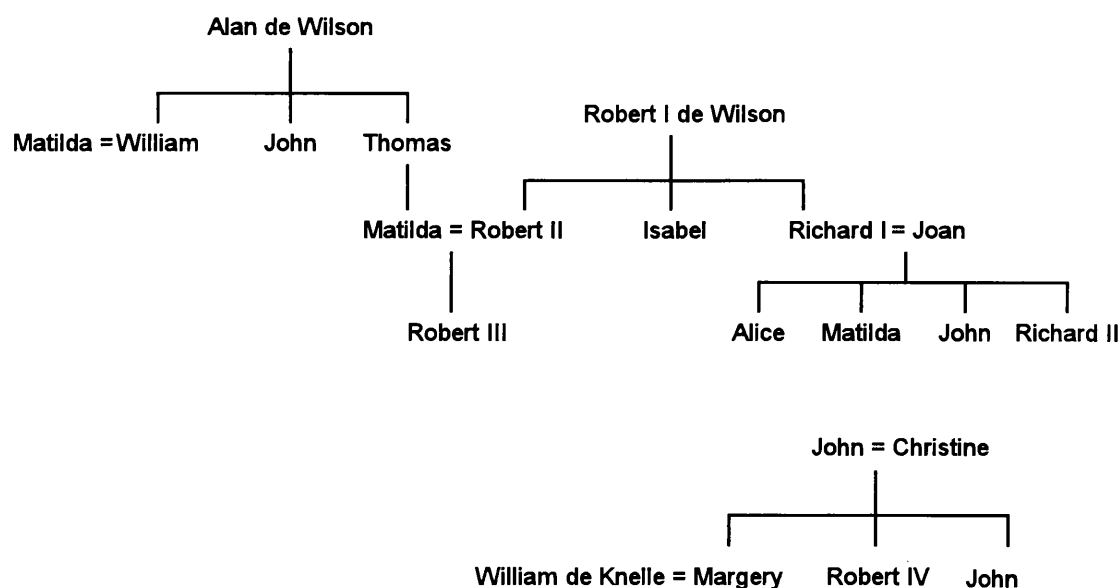


Fig. 33 The genealogy of tenants at Wilsons Farm.

It is useful to consider a second area in detail to examine the character of patterns of association within neighbourhood groups. Wilsons Farm (*Willesham*) in Ashburnham

⁴⁴ BL Add. Roll 32676, m. 3r.

⁴⁵ ESRO SAS/Budgen 14; Harvard Law School manorial records 73; 74. R.H. Hilton, *The English Peasantry in the Later Middle Ages* (1975), 44-7.

has been chosen, because of the exceptional number of surviving charters. It lies adjacent to Tilley in Wartling which is well covered by surviving court rolls. These two sources provide complementary evidence about the character of a neighbourhood community. Figs. 33 and 34 attempt to summarise the relationships between tenants living at Tilley on the eastern edge of Wartling and at Wilsons in Ashburnham. Within Wilsons there was a family or families bearing the same locative surname. Charters make reference to two messuages on the land called Wilsons, both held by sons of Robert (I). They lay along the road between Wilson's Cross and Boreham Street. The more northerly farmstead was held by Richard (I) and around it lay the land of his sons and daughters. His brother, Robert (II) was in possession of the second messuage. During the 1320s and early 1330s the latter extended his holding to the south, while at the same time Richard (I) was selling his land, including his house and garden.⁴⁶ Two branches of the Wilson family were united by the marriage in 1315 of Robert (II) to Matilda, the daughter of Thomas. Matilda brought a dowry of the tenement her father had inherited after the death of his brother William, and Robert (II) was granted six acres by his father in a charter issued on the same day.⁴⁷

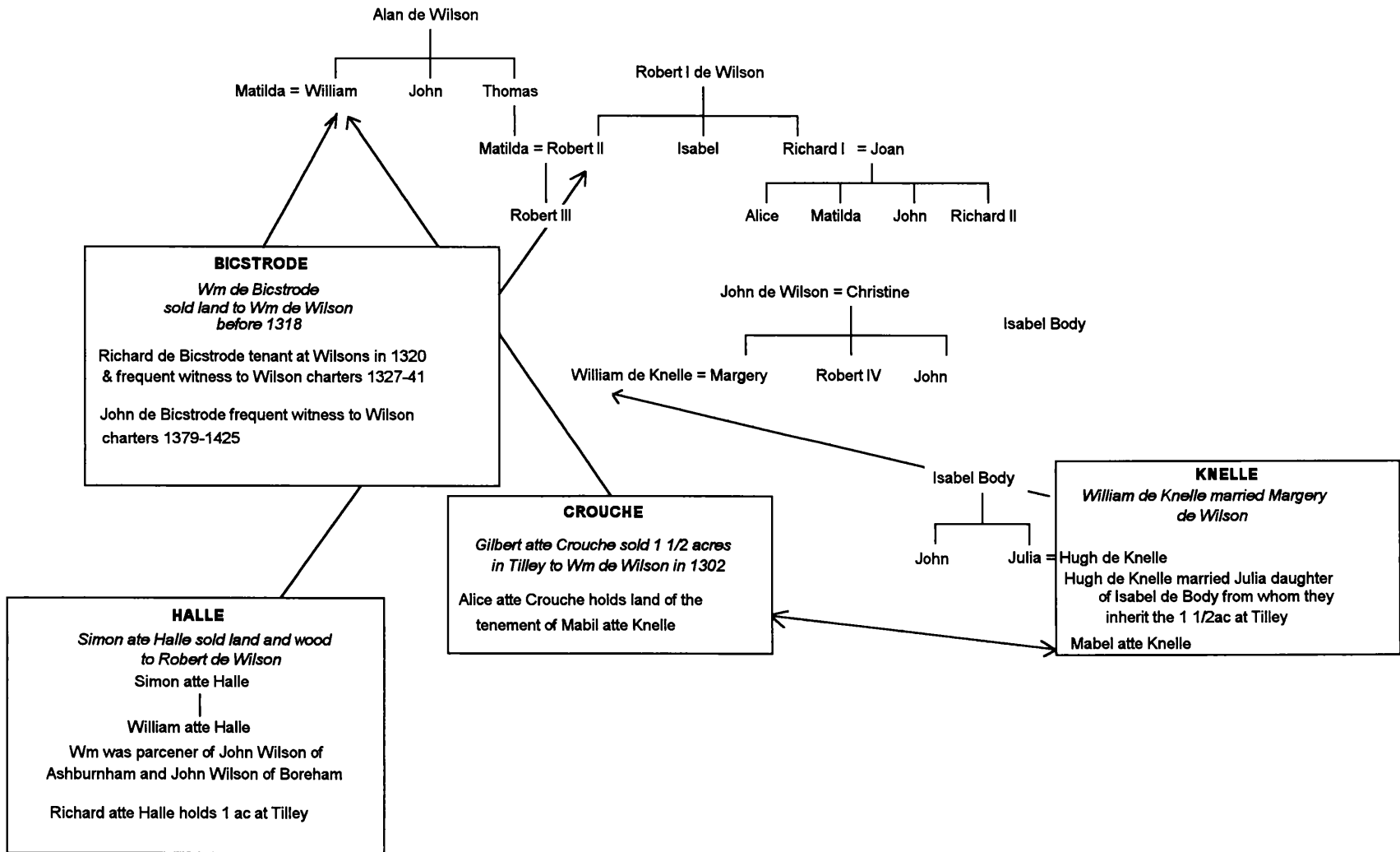
Many other tenants held land at Wilsons, some of whom also had fields in the adjoining tenement of Tilley. The tenants of Tilley are shown in fig. 31 and many of the same people also occur in fig. 34 which indicates their inter-relationships. Many of these occur among the lists of witnesses on the Wilson charters. Almost all the witnesses can be identified as near or more distant neighbours and the same individuals recur on many charters. The act of coming together to observe the issue of a charter must have been a fairly frequent event among such a community.⁴⁸ Though the Wilson charters are a rare survival of deeds belonging to middling

⁴⁶ PRO C146/4522; 3469; 5773; 4604; 3378; 4946; 4472; 9500.

⁴⁷ PRO C146/3826; 3855.

⁴⁸ Bennett and Saul make a similar point about the witnessing of charters among the gentry, M.J. Bennett, *Community, Class and Careerism: Cheshire and Lancashire Society in the Age of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (1983), 32; N. Saul, *Scenes from Provincial Life: Knightly Families in Sussex 1280-1400* (1986), 1. S.M. Wright, *The Derbyshire Gentry in the Fifteenth Century* (Derbyshire Record Society 8 (1983)), 56, however, suggests that the witnesses did not necessarily attend the issue of charters in person.

Fig. 34 Interaction between tenants of Tilley and Wilsons Farm.



peasants and smallholders, it was normal from at least the early 14th century for freeholders to have groups of charters recording their title.⁴⁹

Marriage was one of the major bonds tying communities of neighbours together. Matrimonial ties ran between the families at Wilsons and Tilley. The links tying together branches of the Wilson ~~have~~ family have already been mentioned. In addition, Margery Wilson was married to William de Knelle, a tenant at Tilley. Hugh de Knelle, a holder of land at Tilley was married to Julia the daughter of Isabel Body the holder of the principal messuage at Tilley. Richard atte Halle was the husband of Isabel Tilley and held one acre at Tilley. The Halle family evidently held land locally and Simon atte Halle sold two pieces of woodland to Robert (II) in 1321 and 1323. His son, or grandson William is described as a parcener of John Wilson of Ashburnham and John Wilson of Boreham.⁵⁰

The inhabitants of the scattered farmsteads in Wartling and Herstmonceux created social networks with their near neighbours in the absence of any strong central institution which might have fostered broader contacts. Though the manorial courts periodically brought together all the tenants, the peasants did ~~have~~ ^{not} have a strong interest in the regulation of common affairs which might have created wider associations. On open-field manors the necessity of controlling the use of the land provided a unifying force, but in the Weald the holdings in severalty created only a need to associate with immediate neighbours who held adjoining land.⁵¹ The vicinal perspective of the peasants in the Wartling area was perpetuated over generations by local marriages and by the pattern of land purchases. Tenants tended to purchase land close to their own holdings, and very rarely seem to have sought to buy land further away. No wider contacts were made. The location of land, the social contacts cemented by ties

⁴⁹ Free tenants had to present their charters in court after purchasing land (BL Add. Roll 32662, m. 5v.). In an unusual case, charters belonging to William Tristram were copied on to the Wartling court rolls. They were issued by William de St Leger and therefore must date from the mid-13th century (BL Add. Roll 32615, m. 1r.; *Victoria County History of Sussex* 9, ed. L.F. Salzman (1937), 138).

⁵⁰ BL Add. Rolls 32672; 32695, m. 6r.; 32657, m. 1r.; PRO C146/3469, 5773; BL Add. Roll 32695, m. 3v.

⁵¹ Smith makes a similar point about the relationship of power and level of external relationships within a village, Smith, 'Modernization' and the Corporate Medieval Village Community', 149-50.

of blood and marriage and economic links were all focused within a small area. The very narrow field of activity of tenants encouraged little movement into other areas, though it would be wrong to imagine these communities of neighbours as closed, endogamous groups. Rather they were a series of overlapping networks. The limits of the groups shown in figs. 32 and 34 are, in part, artificial. The boundaries of the neighbourhood groups were diffuse rather than sharp. The groups described might be expanded to include other families in the vicinity. Members of the Prinkle family, who held land near to Tilley and occur frequently as witnesses in the Wilson charters, might, for example, have been included.⁵² A corollary of the high level of interaction within the neighbourhood groups was that many disputes arose between their members. William Jamyn and Stephen Farham both held land at Chilsham and were neighbours.⁵³ The former claimed that Stephen Farham's pigs had damaged his pasture and in a second case had trampled his beans and that he had taken his apples. At about the same time Stephen Farham prosecuted William for a debt of 40d. for two cows, for destroying his beans and another crop.⁵⁴

Social class was of some significance in defining neighbourhood groups. To the east of the tenement of Tilley lay the sub-manor Cowden. The lord of Cowden until about 1328 was John de Cowden, alias St Leger. He also held a few acres in Tilley and headed the list of witnesses to many of the Wilson charters.⁵⁵ He had died by 1332 and a pair of charters exchanging land in 1333 were witnessed by John de Ashburnham, the lord of the manor in which part of Wilsons Farm lay.⁵⁶ Simon de Pebsham (*Peplesham*), a later lord of Cowden, and the lord of two other manors, appeared as a witness in a charter of 1362, but between 1375 and 1379 Thomas de Pebsham, who was evidently a relation and presumably resident at Cowden, acted as witness.⁵⁷ The tenants of Wilsons could therefore draw upon the major free tenant in

⁵² Thomas Prinkle took the wardship of John, son of Isabel Body and held his land at farm during the boy's minority, BL Add. Roll 32696, m. 3r. ESRO AMS 5647/4.

⁵³ BL Add. Roll 32684, m. 4v.; ESRO SAS/Budgen 16; 17.

⁵⁴ Harvard Law School manorial records 73; ESRO SAS/Budgen 15; 16; 17.

⁵⁵ PRO C146/3378; BL Add. Roll 31504, m. 5r.

⁵⁶ *Victoria County History of Sussex* 9, 127; PRO C146/4472; 4946.

⁵⁷ *Victoria County History of Sussex* 9, 91, 119; PRO C146/4598, 3470, 4268, 3296.

the area, and occasionally upon the local lords, to head the list of witnesses of their charters, but there is little evidence that these men were members of the local community in other respects.

The tenants of the larger holdings formed a separate community, which was not so closely defined by geography. Some of the families of this class holding land in Wartling and Herstmonceux have already been mentioned. The members of these families were franklins holding only large free tenements, others were minor gentry with a manor or two, though it is often difficult ~~to~~ to determine the exact status of individuals without evidence of their income, or with only incomplete evidence of the land they held.⁵⁸ These families tended to be closely related by marriage. For example, Margery the daughter of Simon de Pebsham of Cowden married first Robert Cralle and after his death married William Batsford.⁵⁹ They were also connected by marriage with the lords of Wartling and Herstmonceux. William de Chilsham, a Wartling tenant, was the son-in-law of Geoffrey de St Leger, the lord of Wartling. The Cowden family were a branch of the St Legers and William Batsford's daughter Elizabeth was married to William Fiennes of Herstmonceux.⁶⁰

Saul has observed that 14th-century society in eastern Sussex was remarkably fluid. The links created by tenure and locality were more important than social differentiation. For in addition to marriage, other networks of association tied together the families of franklins and the minor gentry. John atte Beech was essoined in 1343 and 1346 by his near neighbour at Horham, Adam de Cralle. Adam gave an essoin for Thomas de Horham. In the following generation John atte Beech the younger gave essoin for Simon Horham, an act which was reciprocated. He also

⁵⁸ On franklins, see Hilton, *The English Peasantry in the Later Middle Ages*, 25-7; C.C. Dyer, *Standards of Living in England c. 1200-1520* (1989), 11; J.M.W. Bean, 'Landlords', in E. Miller (ed.), *Agrarian History of England and Wales, 3 (1348-1500)* (1990), 538; N. Saul, 'The Social Status of Chaucer's Franklin: A Reconsideration', *Medium Aevum* 52 (1983), 10-26.

⁵⁹ BL Add. Roll 32713, m. 1v.; J.E. Ray, 'The Church of SS. Peter and Paul, Bexhill', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 53 (1910), 80.

⁶⁰ BL Add. Roll 32613, m. 3v.; C.E.D. Davidson-Houston, 'Sussex Monumental Brasses, Part 3', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 78 (1937), 87-9. E. Searle, *Lordship and Community: Battle Abbey and its Banlieu 1066-1538* (1974), 165-6 comments on the intermarriage of major free tenants and gentry.

acted as pledge for Simon.⁶¹ Thomas Thatcher who held 18 acres of land at Cowbeech in the same area gave essoins for Simon Horham on a number of occasions and took it in turns to essoin and be essoined by John atte Beech.⁶² The members of this circle of associates also acted as feoffees for one another. Thomas atte Beech was a feoffee of his neighbour, William Studding. William Batsford and Thomas de Pebsham acted as feoffees for the tenement at Pechards for Margery Playsted, who was presumably a relation of Stephen Playsted, the lord of Cowden manor in the late 14th century.⁶³ Adam Iwood and Thomas de Pebsham were among the feoffees to whom Thomas atte Beech conveyed his land in 1418 and the former also acted as a feoffee for land held in the manor of Wartling by Roger de Fiennes, the lord of Herstmonceux.⁶⁴

Further analysis is necessary to determine the composition of these neighbourhood groups, to consider how open they were to outsiders and how their character changed. It is, however, appropriate here to comment on the changing character of social relationships in the late 14th and early 15th century. The incidence of pledging declined considerably on the manors of Herstmonceux and Wartling by the 1380s. This decrease has been noted on manors in the Midlands where it has been associated with a growth in trespassing and with a possible decline in co-operation between peasants in the second half of the 14th century.⁶⁵ In Herstmonceux not only did the cases of trespass increase, but the court was hearing a growing number of cases of all kinds. For a short period it became the forum in which tensions within the community were expressed.

There seems to have been a decline in the cohesion of communities throughout

⁶¹ Saul, *Scenes from Provincial Life*, 66; ESRO SAS/Budgen 10; 13; 16; 17; Harvard Law School manorial records 72.

⁶² ESRO SAS/Budgen 14; Harvard Law School manorial records 74; 75; ESRO SAS/Budgen 16; 17.

⁶³ BL Add. Rolls 32712, m. 1v.; 32691, m. 3v.; *Victoria County History of Sussex* 9, 138-9.

⁶⁴ ESRO T266/14; HEH BA 521; ESRO ASH L1598, m. 2r.

⁶⁵ DeWindt, *Land and People in Holywell-cum-Needingworth*, 263; Britton, *The Community of the Vill*, 108; C.C. Dyer, *Lords and Peasants in a Changing Society: The Estates of The Bishopric of Worcester, 680-1540* (1980), 266-7.

England and a growing number of conflicts reached the manorial court. The appearance of written by-laws during the 15th century may suggest a need to formalise rules and to regulate behaviour no longer restrained by community *mores*.⁶⁶ The decline of the community might also be seen in the growing number of tenants prepared to pay considerable sums of money to be excused service as manorial officials and attendance at court. This avoidance of service, particularly in the years 1370-81 has, however, been associated with the social unrest of the period and the unwillingness of the tenants to serve in administrative positions.⁶⁷ By the early 15th century manorial courts were generally ceasing to be very effective in deterring and punishing offenders. At the nearby manor of Crowhurst the number of new pleas brought to court fell from an annual average of four in the period 1385-93 to only one or two by the early 15th century. Tenants evidently sought other means of redress.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Dyer, *Lords and Peasants in a Changing Society*, 368-9; W.O. Ault, *Open-Field Farming in Medieval England: A Study of Village By-Laws* (1972), 65.

⁶⁷ BL Add. Roll 31508; 32681; 32686; 32691, m. 1r.; 32965, m. 5v.; Bodleian Library MS. Rolls Sussex 5; Harvard Law School manorial records 76. C.C. Dyer, 'The Social and Economic Background to the Rural Revolt of 1381', in R.H. Hilton and T.H. Aston (eds), *The English Rising of 1381* (1984), 33.

⁶⁸ J.S. Beckerman, Customary Law in English Manorial Courts in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1972), 114-6; Dyer, *Lords and Peasants in a Changing Society*, 266-7; ESRO A2300 (Crowhurst court rolls), mm. 1-13.

CHAPTER 10

SETTLEMENT AND SOCIETY IN THE EASTERN SUSSEX WEALD, 1300-1420: THE EVIDENCE OF OTHER MANORS

The records surviving for the manors of Wartling and Herstmonceux are exceptionally complete and no other manor in eastern Sussex has such extensive documentation. The type of detailed analysis possible with very full manorial records cannot be undertaken elsewhere, though it is possible to identify patterns of tenure, inheritance and land sales and social structure and compare these with the two manors already discussed.

All the extant records of the manors of Crowhurst, Bivelham, Hammerden, Playden and Crowham dating to before 1420 were examined. The first two of these manors were held in the 14th century by the dukes of Brittany. These manors, together with Burwash, were held in demesne by the lords of Hastings Rape and among the duties of their tenants were services associated with its administration.¹ The court rolls of Crowhurst manor are intermittent from 1385 and nearly continuous from Michaelmas 1398. A rental of 1440 shows, unusually, that most of the tenements were customary. The rolls of Bivelham survive from 1393 with a single roll from the year 1388-9.² The large manor of Hammerden in Ticehurst escheated on the execution of Walter de Scotney in 1259 and was granted in c.1310 to Bertram de Monboucher. It descended in that family until 1426. Court rolls survive only from the years 1317-18, 1379-80, 1400-5, 1416-17 and 1420.³ The lordship of Playden comprised scattered lands in Rye Foreign, Peasmarsh, Brede and Beckley parishes, tenements in Rye town, as well as lands in Playden. The manor originated in lands given to the abbey of Tréport in 1107. These were later sold to Robertsbridge Abbey which purchased or was granted

¹ *Victoria County History of Sussex* 9, ed. L.F. Salzman (1937), 3, 79.

² ESRO A2300 (Crowhurst court rolls), mm. 1-25 and (Crowhurst records, unlisted) rental of 19 Henry VI; BL Add. Rolls 31080-31102.

³ *Victoria County History of Sussex* 9, 83, 255; ESRO SAS/CO/B 1-5.

in free alms further lands in the vicinity.⁴ In the early part of the 14th century courts were held at two separate manors, Playden and Moorbridge, but these were amalgamated sometime after 1321. The majority of the tenements were servile and the custom of inheritance was partible. The court rolls survive from 1301 until 1327 with some breaks, and there are later courts covering the years 1332, 1356-61, 1365-71, 1385-89, 1399-1402 and 1404-18.⁵ The small manors of Crowham and Glasseye were held by Hugh de Pebsham and his descendants, though for at least part of the 14th century the former was at farm. The court rolls are intermittent and cover a period of about 12 years between 1327 and 1375.⁶

The records of other manors consulted include Bishopstone, Sharnden, Hollingrove, Burwash, Brede and Udimore. The lands of Bishopstone's Wealden outlier at Heathfield could not be clearly separated from those near the coast. These records were therefore only sampled.⁷ Court rolls from the manor of Sharnden survive for 18 years in the period 1349 to 1420, from Hollingrove for 1350 alone and from Burwash for 1402-3.⁸ The rolls of the manors of Brede and Udimore cover a greater period, but because of their number and length, they were not all examined. The Brede rolls for 1348 and 1370-1 were examined in detail, and those from 1377 to 1406 more superficially. The Udimore courts for the periods 1311-3, 1317, 1322-3, 1349-50 were studied.⁹ The court records studied provide a cross-section of manors of

⁴ *Victoria County History of Sussex* 9, 161; CKS U47/42/M12 (other copies are CKS U1475/M255 and ESRO AMS 4892). ESRO AMS 4885, m. 2r. mentions tenements in Rye town. Grants to Robertsbridge abbey are recorded in *Report on the Manuscripts of Lord De L'Isle and Dudley Preserved at Penshurst Place*, Historical Manuscripts Commission (report 77, vol. 1 (1925)), 45.

⁵ ESRO AMS 4884, m. 18r. is the last court of a separate manor of Moorbridge. The court rolls of Playden are ESRO AMS 4883-6.

⁶ *Victoria County History of Sussex* 9, 91; ESRO AMS 5686, m. 1v.

⁷ BL Add. Rolls 31237, 31241-2 were examined.

⁸ ESRO AMS 5896/3; ESRO SAS Box 4 (unlisted), rolls 1 and 4; BL Add. Roll 31315.

⁹ The unlisted Brede and Udimore rolls are in the JER collection at Hastings Museum and Art Gallery. Further Brede court rolls are in the Public Record Office, PRO SC2/205/59, 60. The following, also for Brede, were not examined PRO SC2/205/61, 206/1

different sizes and within various lordships across the eastern High Weald and there is no reason to think that they are not representative of the area as a whole.

THE CHARACTER OF SETTLEMENT

The analysis of tenements in the manors of Wartling and Herstmonceux suggested that they might be divided into three broad groups according to their acreage. A similar analysis of tenement size distribution is possible for lands held by the bishop of Chichester at Heathfield and at Bexhill. Two 14th-century rentals for both places allow changes in the size distribution of land-holdings to be traced, although some caution is necessary when comparing the records. The population of Heathfield is likely to have fallen between the date of the first rental made in 1329/30 and the second of 1379/80 due to the outbreak of the Black Death, but this is not apparent from the two documents which record a similar number of tenants.¹⁰ The 1329/30 list, however, omits tenants holding only a cottage or messuage. The 1379/80 rental is more comprehensive; it lists holdings and buildings without land, and also distinguishes between messuages and cottages. The proportion of cottagers holding less than one acre is therefore much smaller than in the earlier record. The graphs of tenement size distribution show a broadly similar picture at both dates (fig. 35). There are peaks in the distribution for holdings between two and four acres, a feature also identified in the Wartling rent list of 1366. The later Heathfield rental reveals an increased proportion of larger tenements. Thirty years after the beginning of the Black Death a greater proportion of tenants held land in the range 16 to 35 acres than before, representing a rise in the average tenement size.

The 1379 Bexhill rental was compiled by jurors using earlier records.¹¹ Most of the entries also mention one, and sometimes two, previous tenants. One of the sources used to draw up the record was an earlier, undated rental, which still survives. The undated list is later than a charter of 1315 which lists the names of tenants on one part of the manor. About one third of the 1315 tenants still held their land when the rental was compiled, the remainder had been sold or inherited.¹² On this basis the

¹⁰ WSRO Ep. VI/1/3, ff. 155v.-158r.; Ep. VI/1/5, ff. 138r.-139v. The information given in an earlier custumal of 1253 x 62 (WSRO Ep. VI/1/5, ff. 88v.-90r.) is not susceptible to similar analysis.

¹¹ WSRO Ep. VI/1/3, ff. 159r.-161v., 163r.-164v.

¹² WSRO Ep. VI/1/5, ff. 141r.-143v.; *The Chartulary of the High Church of Chichester*, ed. W.D. Peckham (Sussex Record Society 46 (1946)), 356-7.

rental is ascribed to c. 1325, although it could be contemporary with the 1329/30 Heathfield list. The basis of the 1379 record was a list of wists and this provided the framework, or rather a Procrustean bed, into which the record of holdings were fitted. Many of the tenements comprised single wists with an area of about 30 acres, and consequently there may have been a significant under-numeration of smallholders holding fractions of a wist, which were not noted separately. This suspicion is reinforced when the rental is compared with one of 1307 for the adjoining manor of Barnhorne where there were a considerable number of cottagers with less than two acres.¹³

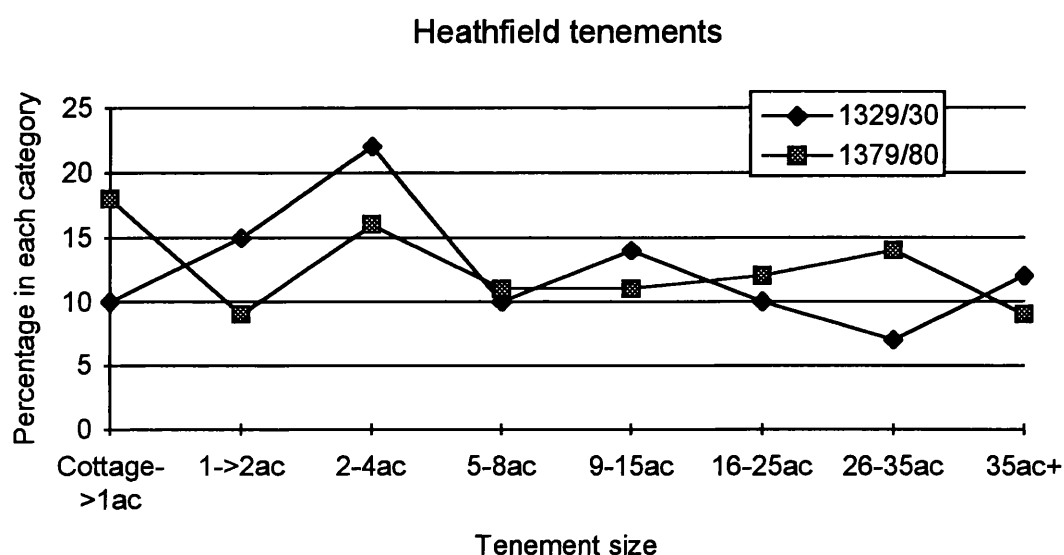


Fig. 35 Tenement size distribution in Heathfield.

Comparison of the graphs of the distribution of tenement sizes in Bexhill shows some interesting patterns (fig. 36). In c.1325 there were a small number of smallholders with tenements less than two acres and a substantial number in the range two to four acres. Many tenants held a single wist measuring about 30 acres and consequently there is a second peak on the graph for holdings of this size. By 1379 the proportion of smallholders with less than four acres had decreased and the number of tenants in the range five to eight acres had grown suggesting that cottagers had ameliorated their position by obtaining additional small areas of land. In all the classes above that

¹³ *Custumals of Battle Abbey, in the Reigns of Edward I and II, 1283-1312*, ed. S.R. Scargill-Bird (Camden Society 41 (1887)), 22-3, 24-5.

size the proportions of tenants had increased slightly or were equal to the number in c.1325.¹⁴

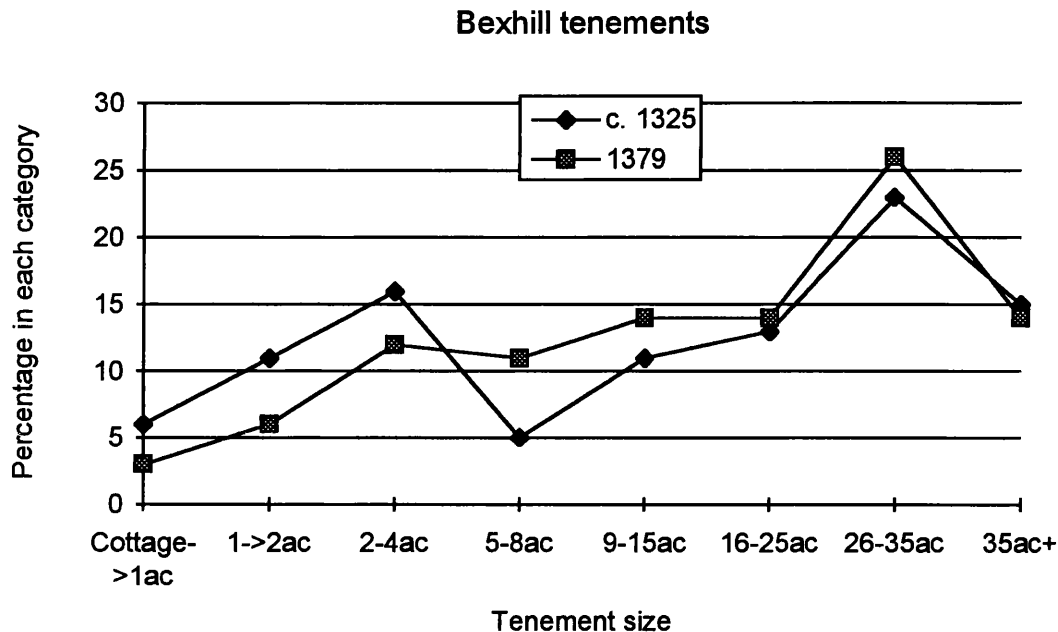


Fig. 36 Tenement size distribution in Bexhill manor.

The conclusions drawn from these rentals needs to be tempered with an understanding of their limitations. Rentals were lists of tenants' liability to pay for land held directly from the lord. They rarely record the many tenants of tenants or 'undersettles', who paid no rent directly to the lord and were consequently of less interest to the manorial officials.¹⁵ Undersettles were probably found on all or most manors, though it is rarely possible to determine the proportion of the total population which these represent. The custumal of South Malling of c.1285, however, does record both the tenants' holdings and the lands let to sub-tenants. The

¹⁴ For comparable analyses of holdings in Essex, see L.R. Poos, *A Rural Society after the Black Death: Essex 1350-1525* (1991), 15-19.

¹⁵ The term 'undersettles' was used occasionally in manorial documents, though it has not been found in sources consulted for eastern Sussex. It has been given currency among medieval historians by usage by G.C. Homans, *English Villagers of the Thirteenth Century* (1942), 211 and E.A. Kosminsky, *Studies in the Agrarian History of England in the Thirteenth Century* (1956), 79. On undersettles see, M.M. Postan, *Essays on Medieval Agriculture and General Problems of the Medieval Economy* (1973), 121-2.

reason for this may be deduced from internal evidence: all the undersettles with houses on lands within the manor were liable to pay hen-rents for the use of the common land.¹⁶ The rental should allow an accurate determination of the land held directly and that rented out. The sub-tenants of land held by other manors of South Malling, for example by Lewes Priory, Robertsbridge Abbey, Andrew de Sackville, Sir Roger de Leukenore, and Sir Thomas de Marines are not recorded and for the purpose of this analysis these holdings are excluded.

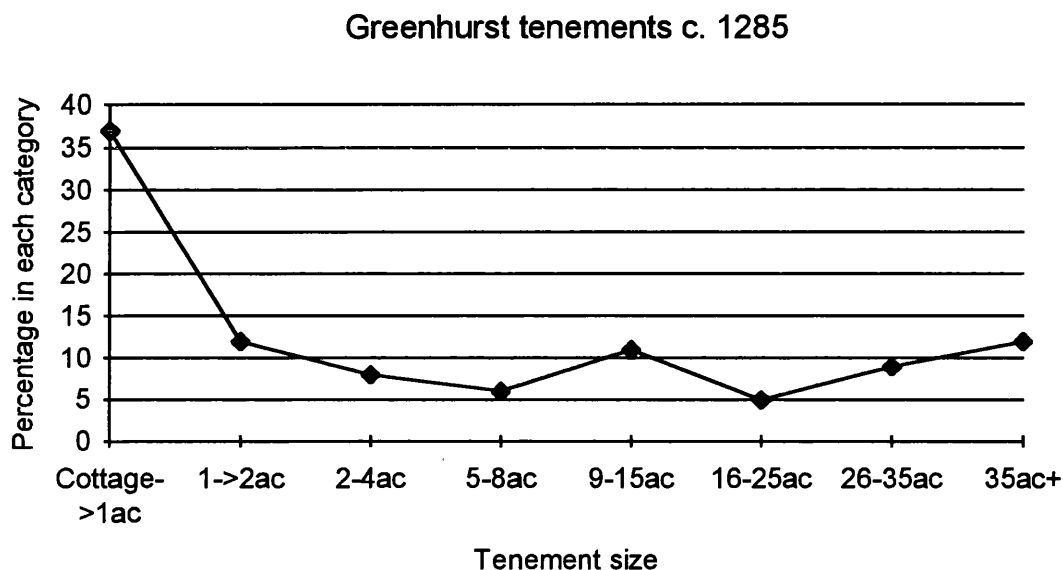


Fig. 37 Tenement size distribution in the Greenhurst borgh of South Malling manor.

The township of Greenhurst lying to the north and south of the common land of Crowborough Down may be considered as a sample area.¹⁷ Tenants and undersettles with land mainly or wholly within the township were counted and a total of 84 individuals were identified, of which 41 (49%) were undersettles holding no land directly of the lord. The total area of land held by each tenant and undersettle was then calculated and from this the area sub-let was deducted and to this the amount sub-rented was added. The resulting figure gives the net total held in hand by each individual. The results show that nearly one half of the 84 tenants held less than two

¹⁶ *Custumals of the Sussex Manors of the Archbishop of Canterbury*, ed. B.C. Redwood and A.E. Wilson (Sussex Record Society 57 (1958)), 53, 66, 81.

¹⁷ On the common here, see *ibid.*, 84.

acres, and of these the majority had no land at all apart from the sites of their houses (fig. 37). The remainder of the graph is broadly similar to those already discussed. A peak occurs among those with between nine and 15 acres implying a distinct group of middling tenants and there is also a significant number of tenants with holdings greater than 35 acres.

An analysis by Lowerson of Wadhurst township, also in the manor of South Malling, has provided similar results and suggests a common pattern in the High Wealden borghs of the manor.¹⁸ Postan's suggestion that sub-tenancies were less common on manors with large areas of colonizable waste is not supported by these studies.¹⁹ Common land was readily available for assarting within this area of South Malling manor, but smallholders lacked either the resources or the will to take in new areas of land. This may be compared with the pattern of medieval assarting within the manor of Wakefield in Yorkshire, one of the few places where the practice has been studied in depth. The poor there do not seem to have had the capital to invest in the clearance and preparation of what was probably fairly poor agricultural land.²⁰ The landless tenants and smallholders of South Malling evidently made a living by grazing their animals on the extensive common land and selling their labour to their neighbours and, during harvest time, to manors in the south of the county.²¹

The manor of South Malling and those of Bishopstone, including Heathfield, and probably Bexhill, practised ultimogeniture. There are few rentals for manors practising partible inheritance. The custom on Iden manor may have been partible. Many of the adjoining manors practised partible inheritance and at Iden a number of the holdings were held by pairs of tenants and some had been divided into two halves, but the evidence is not conclusive in the absence of any court rolls. A rental of 1285

¹⁸ J. Lowerson (for the Wadhurst History Group), *Within the Wood: Medieval Wadhurst* (University of Sussex CCE occasional paper 19 (1983)), 12; H.E. Hallam, *Rural England 1066-1348* (1981), 92.

¹⁹ Postan, *Essays on Medieval Agriculture and General Problems of the Medieval Economy*, 122.

²⁰ M. Stinson, 'Assarting and Poverty in Early-Fourteenth-Century Western Yorkshire', *Landscape History* 5 (1983), 64-6.

²¹ P.F. Brandon, 'Demesne Arable Farming in Coastal Sussex during the Later Middle Ages', *Agricultural History Review* 19 (1971), 118.

lists 33 customary tenants.²² In the calculations of tenement-size distribution, pairs of tenants with a single holding have been counted separately and the individuals assumed to have held half of the combined acreage. The graph (fig. 38) shows a distribution broadly comparable to the pattern at Heathfield in 1329/30. The main differences are a significantly greater number of cottagers at Iden, a category under-represented in the Heathfield rental, and a larger proportion of tenants with holdings in the two- to four-acre class. It would be wrong to over-emphasise this difference given the limited data. A more significant contrast may be the total absence of holdings over 25 acres.

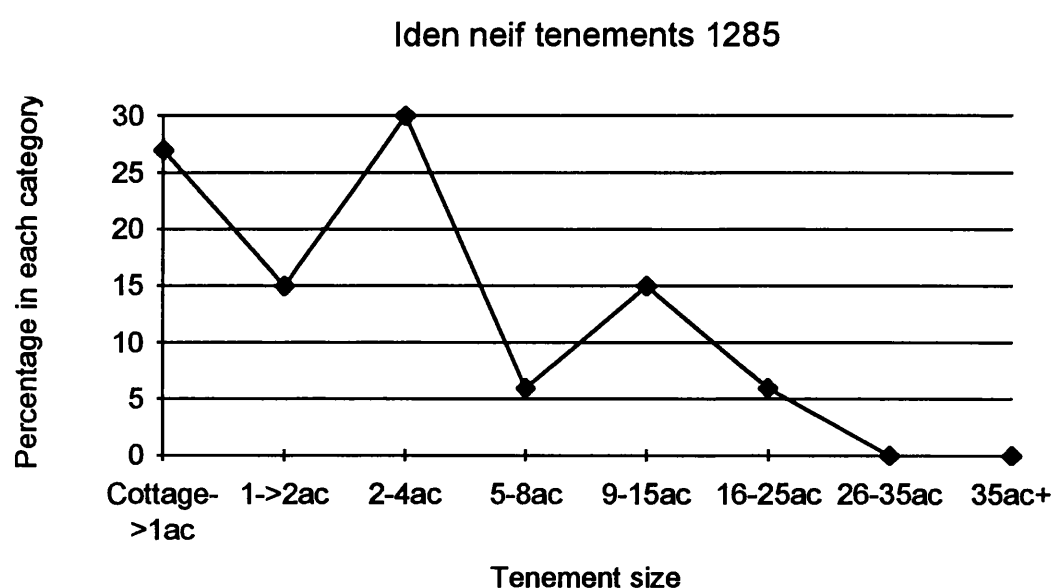


Fig. 38 Tenement size distribution in Iden manor.

The custom of inheritance on Crowham manor was also partible. A rental attributable to 1354 x 57 contains no details of the size of landholdings, though for 26 out of the 44 tenements these may be determined from the court rolls (fig. 39).²³ Half of the tenements of known area were customary, and though divided between all male heirs, their mean size was no smaller than the free holdings.²⁴ Again the evidence available is limited, but there are significant differences from the other manors: there were

²² PRO SC11/661.

²³ ESRO AMS 5442/1, dated by reference to ESRO AMS 5686.

²⁴ It is possible that the free tenements at Crowham were also divided partibly. See Chapter 7 for evidence of this practice in the vicinity of Rye.

surprisingly few smallholders in Crowham in the 1350, and, as at Iden, there were no large tenements.

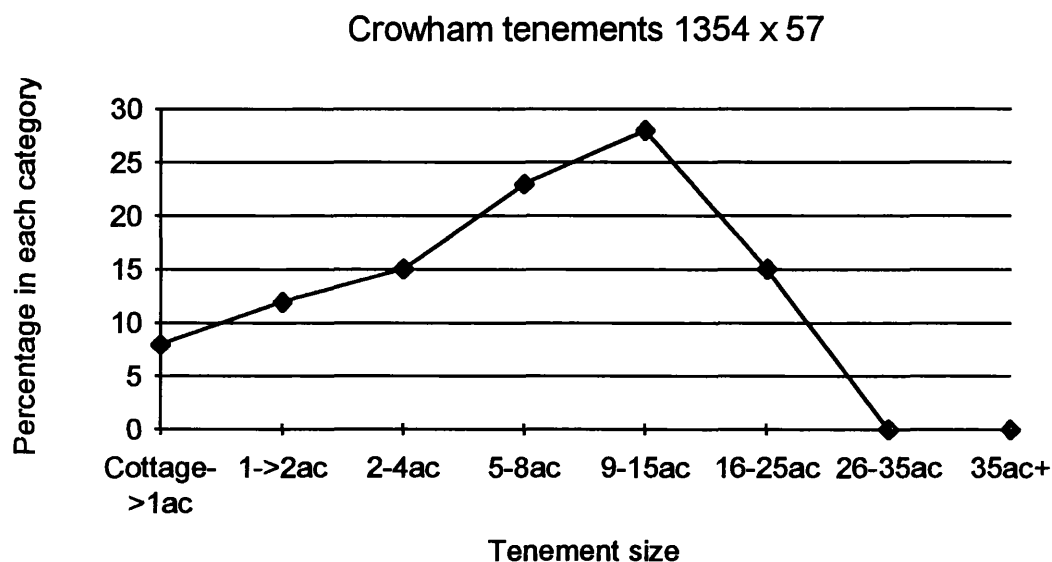


Fig. 39 Tenement size distribution in Crowham manor.

The court rolls for another manor with partible inheritance, Playden, present a quite different picture, though not one which is susceptible to quantification. In the early 14th century most of the tenements were very small, indeed few of the neif holdings were much larger than a two or three fields. The holding of William Henry was typical of many. He had three acres in two fields which lay between the land of two brothers on one side, William's garden on another and the land of John le Wever on the third. The latter land may have been the one rood John had formerly bought from William. In addition, William had one acre of pasture and a rood of land, which was perhaps the garden already mentioned.²⁵ It is probable that William was living on the margin of subsistence for he had to use his land as security for repaying the costs, first of buying a cow, and subsequently of four bushels of wheat. He was evidently forced to adopt this strategy by an absence of capital. William Henry, and others like him, had considerably less land than the minimum required to support a family.²⁶

²⁵ ESRO AMS 4884 mm. 16v., 18r., 14v., 13r.

²⁶ For calculations on the requirements of land to support a family, see H.S. Bennett, *Life on the English Manor: A Study of Peasant Conditions, 1150-1400* (1960 edition), 95; R.H. Hilton, *A Medieval Society: The West Midlands at the End of the Thirteenth Century* (1983 edition), 114, 122; Kosminsky, *Studies in the Agrarian History of England*, 230-40; J.Z. Titow, *English* 270

The evidence from South Malling manor has suggested that, as in many other areas of England, the smallholder was the most common type of tenant in Weald in the early 14th century. There is some evidence from elsewhere in the country that this group was growing in size.²⁷ Certainly in Wartling it has been shown that in the first half of the century many of the larger tenements were divided up, either temporarily by leasing, or permanently by land-sale. The lands of *Brene* tenement at Chitcombe (Brede) may serve as an example for others. Parts of the tenement were sold, including half an acre called *Brenewysse*, a piece named *Brenestun* and about nine acres in two parcels.²⁸ In 1316 the holder Adam Brene was presented as unable to maintain his buildings and the tenement was seized. The land remaining to him amounted to more than 10 acres, but subsequent inquiries revealed that other parts of the tenement had been leased by sub-tenants from Adam.²⁹ On the other hand, the holding of Gilbert de Winchester was divided by a combination of partible inheritance and sale. Gilbert held 16 acres of arable and one rood of meadow, which was first split between his two sons and heirs and was subsequently divided further when the widow of one of the sons sold part.³⁰

Purchasers of customary land on Playden manor in the first decade of the 14th century were required to construct a house on their holding, if none existed. The court evidently considered that these pieces of land were bought to form smallholdings, but the presentments of defaulters suggest that some tenants lived elsewhere. Since the tenants were neifs, it is improbable that they had houses on adjoining manors; they apparently continued to live in shared accommodation or in cottages until they could afford to construct new houses on their holdings. Most tenants do not recur among the court records after their initial presentment and may have erected houses upon their tenements, though Roger le Palmer, who purchased

Rural Society 1200-1350 (1969), 89-90.

²⁷ C.C. Dyer, *Lords and Peasants in a Changing Society: The Estates of the Bishopric of Worcester, 680-1540* (1980), 300; Kosminsky, *Studies in the Agrarian History of England*, 220-4; Poos, *A Rural Society after the Black Death*, 17.

²⁸ ESRO AMS 4883 mm. 2v., 10v.; 4884 m. 9r.

²⁹ ESRO AMS 4884 mm. 12r., 73r.

³⁰ ESRO AMS 4883, m. 13r.; 4884, m. 7r.

land in 1307 with that condition, had not constructed a building there on his death two years later.³¹

In the second half of the 14th century the demand for land began to wane. The effect of this, as the rentals of Heathfield and Bexhill have suggested, was that tenements were enlarged by the purchase of nearby fields. Increasing numbers of buildings began to become dilapidated from 1370 onwards as their tenants failed to maintain structures for which they had no use. The lords were initially reluctant to allow buildings to fall into disrepair or be demolished, perhaps concerned that a reduced number of houses might imperil any possibility of increasing the number of tenants in the future. Presentments made in Herstmonceux court in 1380 recorded ruinous buildings on 30 tenements. Some of these were minor structures, including cottages and detached kitchens, but on other tenements all the buildings were abandoned as the land was farmed from elsewhere.³² The pattern was similar at Crowhurst where the buildings presented for repair were often those on leased tenements. The lessee continued to reside in his own house and merely extended his cultivated land. As a consequence, a common condition inserted into leases was an obligation to maintain the buildings.

It was not possible to insist that all buildings were preserved in the longer term. Even the repaired buildings were liable to deteriorate unless they continued to be maintained. The tenement of Agnes Bone in Playden, ruinous in 1387 and subsequently repaired, was again presented for repair in 1409.³³ When it became apparent that the population level showed little sign of recovery, fines to move, convert or demolish surplus buildings were a useful source of revenue. A tenant at Heathfield gave a fine to remove a kitchen and rebuild it on another tenement, but it was not maintained and became rotten.³⁴ Another tenant nearby took down a barn and built two privies (*domus necessariorum*) with the timber.³⁵ During the late 14th and 15th century many buildings were demolished or fell down. The great storm of

³¹ E.g. ESRO AMS 4883 mm. 2v., 3r. ESRO AMS 4883, m. 10v.; AMS, 4884, m. 20v.

³² ESRO SAS/Budgen 14.

³³ ESRO AMS 4885 mm. 9r., 8v.; AMS 4886, m. 3r. and 5r.

³⁴ BL Add Roll 31252, m. 1v.

³⁵ BL Add Roll 31242.

15th January 1362, which stripped the roofs from the manorial buildings at Icklesham rectory, also blew down other, less well maintained buildings.³⁶ The accounts of the manor of Udimore record the sale of timber from an old building 'blown down by the wind'.³⁷ Increasingly, the homage's opinion of the need for buildings upon a tenement was used to determine whether houses and other structures might be demolished.³⁸ When a request was made for a licence for demolition, neighbours were questioned in court to determine whether the tenement contained sufficient buildings. From the 1380s there are a growing number of references to the sites of former buildings. The bounds of the former site of a cottage in Framfield enclosed by a hedge and ditch revealed that it had stood in a row of similar buildings. A century later a survey of lands in the same manor of South Malling listed many sites 'sometime built upon'.³⁹

INHERITANCE AND THE DESCENT OF LAND

Life-cycle and inheritance in the Wartling area were examined by considering the events which followed the death of holders of land. The evidence for inheritance on other manors is less good and the figures need to be treated more cautiously. Four manors outside the Wartling area, Crowham, Crowhurst, Playden and Hammerden, have reasonable sets of surviving court rolls from which the patterns of heirship may be examined. The details of inheritance after 27 deaths was recorded in the period before the advent of the Black Death and there is evidence for more than twice that number for the subsequent period, 1355-1420.

The pattern in these manors in the pre-Black Death period broadly resembles that in Wartling (Table 14). The only significant difference is the three cases (11 per cent) in which the husband died leaving orphans (1.3) and it is perhaps notable that a similar proportion is also found in the second period. But after the Black Death the differences between the two areas are greater. The periods considered in Tables 11

³⁶ C.E. Britton, *A Metrological Chronology to A.D. 1450* (1937), 70-1; HEH BA 466.

³⁷ HMAG JER collection (Udimore account roll, unlisted).

³⁸ BL Add Rolls 31484, 31082, 31114.

³⁹ Lambeth Palace Library ED 1078; ESRO AMS 5512.

Table 14

Descent of Land in the Manors of

Crowham, Crowhurst, Playden and Hammerden, 1300-49

1. Father dies predeceased by his wife		Total 48%
1.1 son inherits	30%	
1.2 daughter(s) inherits	7%	
1.3 wardship of heirs	11%	
2. Father dies and wife is alive		Total 30%
2.1 heir is of age	4%	
2.2 heir is under age, wardship by mother	19%	
2.3 heir is under age, wardship by another	0%	
2.4 no offspring, widow alone inherits	2%	
3. Inheritance by related heir outside nuclear family	7%	
4. Joint tenure	4%	
5. Wife dies, the land was her inheritance and rules of <i>Lex Anglie</i> apply	0%	

(number of cases = 27)

and 15 are not identical, but that does not account for all the variations. A significantly larger number of male tenants survived their wives (1) and consequently a smaller number of wives outlived their husbands (2). A smaller proportion of the land in the four manors descended by death-bed surrenders, remainders or was held by feoffees. These devices grew in popularity at the end of the 14th and in the early 15th century as tenants sought to circumvent the operation of the customary rules of inheritance and the spread of evidence may explain that differences between the Wartling area and elsewhere.

Some courts accepted the devices to avoid customary rules more readily than others. The court at Crowhurst took a conservative view of surrenders made *in extremis*. Before John Mellond died in 1410 he surrendered his tenement into the hands of the beadle to the use of his wife Alice with remainder to his son William. This was evidently accepted, for it merely created a joint enfeoffment, which was not unusual on the manor, and also confirmed the descent of the land to his customary heir, William.⁴⁰ Later the same year William Natle, before his death, surrendered part of his land to his wife Margaret and part to his son William, who was under age. He also granted a meadow to John, his uncle, who was not a customary heir. The land was seized and remained in the lord's hands for two years until the beneficiaries received their portions.⁴¹ The court at Crowhurst attempted to preserve its customs of inheritance and was reluctant to accept these new devices. Only two settlements are recorded in Crowhurst before 1420 and both concerned land passed between close relations. In the first, two brothers exchanged the remainder of their lands, and in the second, a wife was granted the remainder of the land of her husband.⁴²

The practice at Crowhurst contrasts with the frequent use of settlements on the manor of Hammerden (Ticehurst). The custom of inheritance at Hammerden was partible and remainders were used to circumvent the division of the patrimony. From the 1380s, the earliest surviving records after the Black Death, the court rolls contain numerous such grants.⁴³ On Playden manor, where the custom was similar,

⁴⁰ ESRO A2300 (Crowhurst court rolls), m. 17r.

⁴¹ ESRO A2300 (Crowhurst court rolls), mm. 17v., 20r.

⁴² ESRO A2300 (Crowhurst court rolls), mm. 2v., 21r.

⁴³ ESRO SAS/CO/B 1, m. 1.

Table 15

Descent of Land in the Manors of

Crowham, Crowhurst, Playden and Hammerden, 1355-1420

1. Father dies predeceased by his wife		Total 44%
1.1 son inherits	24%	
1.2 daughter(s) inherits	11%	
1.3 wardship of heirs	9%	
2. Father dies and wife is alive		Total 13%
2.1 heir is of age	2%	
2.2 heir is under age, wardship by mother	7%	
2.4 no offspring, widow alone inherits	4%	
3. Related heir outside nuclear family	16%	
4. Joint tenure	15%	
5. Wife dies, the land was her inheritance and rules of <i>Lex Anglie</i> apply	5%	
6. Land descends by reversionary agreement or is held by feoffees	7%	
7. No heirs	7%	

(number of cases = 55)

TABLE 16

Number of Sons Inheriting Customary Tenements on
Manors with Partible Inheritance

	Number of sons					Total
	0	1	2	3	4	
1301-10	2	3	6	-	1	12
1311-20	3	2	2	2	-	9
1321-30	5	3	1	1	-	10
1331-40	-	2	1	-	1	4
1341-49	-	1	2	-	-	3
Black Death (1349-50)	9	4	2	-	-	15
1351-60	3	-	-	-	-	3
1361-70	3	4	1	1	-	9
1371-80	-	1	1	-	1	3
1381-90	1	2	-	-	-	3
1391-1400	-	1	1	-	-	2
1401-1410	4	3	1	-	-	8
1411-1420	1	3	-	-	-	4

(manors of Brede, Crowham, Hammerden, Playden, Udimore)

both death-bed surrenders and remainders were accepted by the court from the 1370s onwards. John Becke granted one of his sons the reversion of his land and apparently left the other nothing. The court also accepted surrenders made out of court and later presented by the beadle, and also a type of joint enfeoffment.⁴⁴ Thomas Sottene and Agnes his wife surrendered their land to the use of themselves, their heir Thomas and also to Thomas Oxenbridge. This seems to have succeeded in creating an arrangement for the customary holding similar to an enfeoffment for uses for free land. Oxenbridge, who was a member of a major landowning family in the district, was evidently to serve in effect as a feoffee. Presumably the heir Thomas was a minor and this arrangement ensured that his land did not fall into the hands of the lord in the event of both parents dying before he came of age.⁴⁵ The same practice is mentioned in a list of customs of South Malling manor purporting to date from 1330/31, though surviving only in a late 16th-century copy. The custom states that copyhold tenants and holders of assart land might create feoffees giving a reasonable fine and paying relief, and after might make a will.⁴⁶

The incidence of partible inheritance of land, which some of these devices were intended to circumvent, became less common as the population declined in the second half of the 14th century. Table 16 shows the number of sons inheriting customary land by decade on manors practising partibility. In the period 1301-20 about half the tenements were inherited by two or more sons, but by the 1360s tenants were much less likely to be succeeded by more than one male offspring. Crude male replacement rates, the number of sons succeeding their father, may be calculated from these figures.⁴⁷ In the period 1301-49 the rate was 1.37. That figure

⁴⁴ ESRO AMS 4885, m. 7r. and for the entry of John son of John Becke, m. 9r.

⁴⁵ ESRO AMS 4886, mm. 3v., 5v.

⁴⁶ *Custumals of the Sussex Manors of the Archbishop of Canterbury*, 141 (no. 24).

⁴⁷ See on replacement rates, S. Thrupp, 'The Problem of Replacement Rates in Late Medieval English Population', *Economic History Review* 2nd series, 18 (1965), 101-19 and on the problem of the use of such measure, L.R. Poos and R.M. Smith, 'Legal Windows onto Historical Populations? Recent Research on Demography and the Manor Court in Medieval England', *Law and History Review* 2 (1984), 139, R.M. Smith, 'Demographic Developments in Rural England 1300-48: A Survey', in B.M.S. Campbell (ed.), *Before the Black Death: Studies in the 'Crisis of the Early Fourteenth Century'* (1991), 45-6.

is considerably greater than those estimated by Campbell and Razi from more abundant data, though the latter's calculation was based on different assumptions and may not be strictly comparable. The rates here, however, are likely to be distorted by the spread of the evidence available, for the rate did not stay constant throughout period. Razi suggested that the rate at Halesowen in the West Midlands actually dipped below one in the period 1310-19 and indeed the same seems to have happened in the Weald between 1321-30.⁴⁸ The crude figure for the period 1351-1420 in the Weald is 0.91, which is also substantially greater than Razi's value for the period 1350-1400 of 0.70.⁴⁹ Similar doubts must apply to this figure too. Yet there remained in the late 14th century a small, but sizeable proportion of tenements which continued to be partitioned between two or more heirs.

Manorial courts enforced the custom of inheritance most rigorously in the early part of the 14th century at the time when the effects of partible inheritance were felt most strongly. The court at Hammerden refused to accept Julia le Werth's attempt to avoid partition after her death by a grant of her tenement to one of her sons. It reinstated the rights of the other three sons, even though two of them had previously relinquished their claim. The division of land and goods could be very contentious. After the death of Adam atte Birchette his three sons disputed the ownership of a spur and three seams of oats and were unable to agree upon the division of the land. Eventually, a jury appointed by the court had to partition the holding. After the tenement had been split up, one of the sons surrendered to his brother an inherited building and a bakehouse, reducing the sub-division.⁵⁰ Where this did not happen, a family with many progeny might in a few generations be reduced to poverty. Two brothers, Bartholomew and Henry Smothe, inherited a messuage and two acres at Udimore. Bartholomew died in 1313 leaving a widow and a single son to inherit half a messuage and one acre. His brother who died four years later left a widow and two daughters with property of a similar size. The small tenement was consequently divided within two generations into three parts, in addition to the widows' portions.⁵¹

⁴⁸ B.M.S. Campbell, 'Population Pressure, Inheritance and the Land Market in a Fourteenth-Century Peasant Community', in R.M. Smith (ed.), *Land, Kinship and Life-Cycle*, 98; Z. Razi, *Life, Marriage and Death in a Medieval Parish* (1980), 33.

⁴⁹ Razi, *Life, Marriage and Death in a Medieval Parish*, 119.

⁵⁰ ESRO SAS/CO/B 1, 2.

⁵¹ HMAG JER collection (Udimore court rolls, unlisted).

The various measures, both temporary and longer term, to avoid the partition of land and goods have been considered in earlier chapters.⁵² The heirs might surrender their shares to one of their number, or they could allow one of the heirs, or a third party to work the land, while reserving their interest. It was always desirable to avoid the partition of tenements, and as the demand for land fell in the second half of the 14th century alternative arrangements became common. Brothers on the manors of Bivelham and Hammerden by the end of the century often sold their shares to one of their siblings,⁵³ but by 1420 there was such an abundance of land on the latter manor that many tenements lay in the lord's hands for want of tenants.⁵⁴ The descent of the land of Heriland de Burne in Playden manor is of particular interest, because it reflects the attitudes of the heirs and the court to a division of land. On his death in 1332 the court found that two of his four sons had left the lordship to live in Folkington, near Eastbourne. Reginald, a third son lived nearby at Tillingham (Peasmarsh) and though he gave up his own right, he reserved the claim of his son, William. The land was inherited by the fourth son, Ralph. In 1352 William sought to assert his claim to a share of the tenement, but in a judgement, which owed more to natural justice than legal argument, the court determined that the land should continue to be held by Ralph de Burne. But it awarded to William all moveable goods, including the corn then growing in the fields, to compensate him for his share. The court preserved the tenement intact, but recognised the right of William's claim.⁵⁵

THE LAND MARKET

The poor survival of court rolls for many of the manors outside the Wartling area does not allow detailed analysis of the character of the land market, though some general trends may be discerned. In the period up to 1349 the market in land was

⁵² Chapters 7 and 8.

⁵³ ESRO SAS/CO/B 5, see the courts of the penultimate day of April 10 Henry V (29th April 1422), and feast of Simon and Jude ap. 4 Henry V (28th October 1416); BL Add. Roll 31099.

⁵⁴ ESRO SAS/CO/B 5.

⁵⁵ ESRO AMS 4885, mm. 4r., 1v. On similar such fair, but non-legalistic decisions, see L. Bonfield, 'The Nature of Customary Law in the Manor Courts of Medieval England', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31 (1989), 514-34.

small-scale, with only a moderate number of transactions recorded and most sales were rarely more than a field or two. The average size of land sold in the manor of Playden in the period 1302 to 1327 was two acres.⁵⁶ In the years immediately following 1315 there was a considerable increase in the number of sales. Elsewhere in England a similar rise in the level of activity in the land market has been identified. The agrarian crisis which began in 1315 with the failure of crops is likely to have been most severely felt by smallholders who had little surplus even in normal years. Poor crops and high corn prices forced these small tenants to sell or lease their land, and to borrow money to purchase food.⁵⁷ The extent of the famine in the Weald remain unexplored. According to Kershaw oats, the mainstay of Wealden agriculture, was the only cereal not affected by the harvest failures in 1315 and 1316, and therefore the area may have been hit less hard than elsewhere. However, the price of oats rose during the famine period, albeit not as sharply as other cereals.⁵⁸

In Playden the number of land sales trebled in number during the agrarian crisis and there was a corresponding rise in the number of leases. Vendors of land were often forced to sell a series of parcels. John Homwode sold a croft to Richard Quinterel and two crofts in Robert Becke in 1316 and the following year he sold the remainder of the rest of his tenement. Similarly, John le Wever sold a cottage and land in 1315 and the other part of his land in 1317. He did not leave the manor and in the 1320s his son, John began purchasing land to replace these sales.⁵⁹ Many of these sales may have been connected with debt. William Godelef who sold two crofts in 1316 was subsequently sued for a debt and there was a general increase in the number of such actions on the manors of Playden and Hammerden.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ ESRO AMS 4883; AMS 4884.

⁵⁷ Postan, *Essays on Medieval Agriculture and General Problems of the Medieval Economy*, 169 and n. 32; Titow, *English Rural Society 1200-1350*, 98; Campbell, 'Population Pressure, Inheritance and the Land Market', 114; Razi, *Life, Marriage and Death in a Medieval Parish*, 41, who also notes a rise in cases of debt.

⁵⁸ I. Kershaw, 'The Great Famine and Agrarian Crisis in England 1315-1322', in R.H. Hilton (ed.), *Peasants Knights and Heretics: Studies in Medieval English Social History* (1976), 98. D.L. Farmer, 'Prices and Wages', in H.E. Hallam, (ed.), *Agrarian History of England and Wales*, 2 (1042-1350) (1988), 735, fig. 7.3.

⁵⁹ ESRO AMS 4884, mm. 19r., 1r., 18v., 17v., 14v.

⁶⁰ ESRO AMS 4884, m. 1r.; ESRO SAS/CO/B 1, m. 2, B 2.

For every sale or lease of land there was a purchaser or lessee able to take advantage of the difficult condition of agriculture in the crisis years. The pattern of purchase during this period was similar to that throughout the first half of the 14th century. Tenants added a few acres to their land by acquiring a field or two from their less fortunate neighbours. Roger atte Fenne, who in 1309 had purchased a messuage and one acre on Playden manor from Robert le Couper, bought a further half acre from the sons of Robert Chitcombe (*alias* atte Fenne) in 1316. The following year four acres were purchased for John de Grove, a minor, by his father to endow him with land before he came into his inheritance. A few tenants exploited the situation more comprehensively. Daniel de Keliferthe leased nearly 10 acres from three tenants in 1315 and further land in 1317.⁶¹ These accumulations of land were comparatively small and, unlike the later 14th century, there is no evidence that the more wealthy tenants were able to assemble substantial holdings from the odd parcels sold by their poorer neighbours.

Only a small area of land was let by peasants before 1349 on the manor of Playden, the sole manor for which there are a sufficient number of court rolls to draw meaningful conclusions. Most of the parcels let were single fields of two or three acres and the periods of the leases rarely exceeded six years. The few agreements for longer periods were related to the particular circumstances of the lessors. The one acre John le Wever let to his brother Gervase for 14 years was part of the tenement which they had inherited jointly. Robert Quinterel let his land for 11 years, but he was a minor and was unlikely to have worked the land himself. The longest term was a lease of 16 years made by Ralph de Burne, who let nine acres of land and one of wood to Richard de Portsmouth, a free tenant with major holdings in the area.⁶²

The circumstances under which other leases were contracted are similar to those already discussed for the Wartling area. Leases were made by widows, the aged and the poor. Leasing sometimes preceded the sale of land: Thomas Henholt let five acres to his son in 1325, but was also selling parcels of his tenement. On Playden manor the division of land through partible inheritance created another group of lessees, heirs who let their portion of the patrimony to their brothers. William le Gold, for example, let two crofts, his inheritance, to his brother Richard.

⁶¹ ESRO AMS 4884, mm. 20v., 1r., 9r., 3r.

⁶² ESRO AMS 4883, m. 6r.; ESRO RYE 136/44; cf. RYE 136/182.

Otherwise, lessors were almost invariably neighbours hoping to acquire land or add a few acres to their holdings. John Homwode let three acres to Richard Bennett in 1301. Richard was clearly seeking to obtain land, for two years later he bought a tenement of seven acres nearby. When the lease expired John Homwode re-let this land and further pieces to other tenants, including Robert Becke. Becke held the land of Homwode for three years and when the term ended he leased further land from Richard Quinterel.⁶³

The land available to tenants in the first half of the 14th century was also increased by the leasing of some demesnes. At Hammerden the whole demesne was leased in a single block in 1317, but on other manors it was let in smaller parcels. Peripheral areas of Udimore demesne were leased in the 1320s for short periods, and at Rotherfield it had been let in small parcels to tenants by 1346/7.⁶⁴ The monks of Battle Abbey took the first steps to leasing the demesne at Marley by letting 200 acres of land between 1310 and 1321, though it was not until after 1360 that large-scale leasing of the demesne began. The demesne at Moorbridge in Playden had been granted out to tenants who are described as holding pieces of land *supra Cortlonde*.⁶⁵

The advent of the Black Death was followed by a major redistribution of land. Some existing tenants found that they had inherited further land from their deceased relations and others acquired land through marriage with heiresses. On the manor of Crowham, though there was an increase in the number of leases, each area leased remained rarely larger than an acre or two. Limited evidence suggests that immediately after 1349 some longer leases lasting 10 years or more were contracted, but by the 1360s the terms of leases had declined again and were rarely greater than six years. The nature of the land market changed again in the late 14th century as the balance of available land and demand altered. Leasing declined in frequency towards the end of the century as more land was available for sale. Other means also became available to allow tenants to benefit from their land without working it themselves. Retirement agreements and sales providing for payment in instalments throughout the life of the vendor were among the options. The figures from the manor of Crowhurst from 1385 show a progressive decline in the number of leases contracted, or perhaps

⁶³ ESRO AMS 4884, mm. 14r., 13r.

⁶⁴ ESRO SAS/CO/B 2; HMAG JER collection (Udimore court rolls, unlisted); ESRO SAS/LB 34.

⁶⁵ E. Searle, *Lordship and Community: Battle Abbey and its Banlieu, 1066-1538* (1974), 324; ESRO AMS 4884, mm 1r., 18r.

enrolled (Table 17). Leases made during this period are of two kinds, small areas let for seven years or less and larger pieces of land granted for longer terms. As in Wartling, the burden of paying rent and giving services was transferred to the lessee who, as noted above, generally also had to maintain the buildings on the tenement.

Table 17
Leases Enrolled in Crowhurst Manor, 1385-1419

	Leases	Court sessions	Number of leases per court
1385-89	4	12	0.33
1390-99	4	20	0.20
1400-09	5	40	0.13
1410-19	2	27	0.07

Sales of land remained fairly steady throughout the late 14th and early 15th century. In Crowhurst the number of sales per court session stayed almost constant between 1385 and 1409 at about 0.4 and rose insignificantly to 0.56 in the following decade. Land sales on this manor and elsewhere may be divided into two. Rather like leases, there was a brisk market in odd acres of land - a single field or two - and a distinct group of sales involving complete tenements with their buildings. The nature of trade in small pieces of land can be illustrated by the transactions of William Kyng in Crowhurst. Before his death in 1418 he was active in purchasing small plots of land. He exchanged land with his brother John in 1389 and in the same year bought two crofts (4 acres) from his relation Walter Kyng. He bought further pieces of land in 1391 and 1402 and sold a piece of land in 1404.⁶⁶

Purchasers such as William Kyng were trying to augment and consolidate their holdings, but the ready market in land also allowed tenants to purchase larger

⁶⁶ ESRO A2300 (Crowhurst court rolls), mm. 2v., 2r., 10r, 12r.

holdings which might be sold off as opportunity arose. Gervase Tomkyn was a frequent buyer and seller of land in Crowhurst, acting in effect as a small-scale speculator. In 1392 he bought the tenement of Nicholas Crul, but divided it up and sold parcels in 1400, 1401 and 1415. Tomkyn purchased a tenement called 'Master William' with John Mellonde in 1393 and obtained further land there in 1410 from the lord. In a similar way he bought a cottage and land from the lord in 1415, but three years later sold it with additional land.⁶⁷ William ate Watere speculated in land in Hammerden manor where he both purchased, sold and leased. In 1400, for example, he bought one field from Richard atte Doune and another from Thomas Kenward and then leased both fields to the latter. Most of his transactions concerned a few fields only and he leased for short periods, typically five years.⁶⁸

The trade in larger holdings was of a different character. In the late 14th and early 15th century complete or substantial parts of tenements were offered for sale by heirless couples commonly after inheritance, or as part of a retirement agreement by widows or widowers without descendants. Thomas Mone inherited the tenement called *le Teghe* in Crowhurst on the death of his father and immediately leased it to William Fyssh. His mother disputed her dower portion, but later surrendered it to Thomas and William Fyssh, who was the tenant of half of the holding at his death in 1410.⁶⁹ Some tenements were sold because their holders had no surviving children. It has been argued that the population around 1400 may have included a substantial number of ageing and heirless tenants.⁷⁰ Retirement agreements were increasingly recorded on the court rolls. Such arrangements were unlikely to have been entirely novel, but must previously have been transacted, or perhaps recorded, in a less formal fashion. The agreements often state that the retired party was to be given adequate food and ale, and list the rooms or buildings to be used. Joan Williams gave up half her house in Hammerden and all her land, except six acres, half of the garden and the smaller barn. She retained the use of the bakehouse and was given an allowance of fuel. In return she received a quarterly payment. Connora Brok in Bivelham

⁶⁷ ESRO A2300 (Crowhurst court rolls), mm. 3r., 5r., 9r., 9v., 17r., 22r.

⁶⁸ ESRO SAS/CO/B 3; B 1, m. 3r; B 4, mm. 2v., 3r. For details of accumulators of land in the later 15th century, see M. Mate, 'The East Sussex Land Market and Agrarian Class Structure in the Late Middle Ages', *Past and Present* 139 (1993), 55-6.

⁶⁹ ESRO A2300 (Crowhurst court rolls), mm. 2r., 2v., 11r., 17r.

⁷⁰ See above, Chapter 9.

(Mayfield) reserved possession of a small brass pan, a silver spoon and her clothes. She appointed four neighbours to act as arbitrators in event of dispute with John Rychevyle who took over her lands and house.⁷¹ Not all such agreements were made by widows, as examples from the Wartling area have shown. John Water, another Bivelham tenant granted his land and tenement to his son in return for an annual payment and food and ale, but retained one chamber and a garden for his own use.⁷² Retirement arrangements have been discussed by Smith who notes that the recorded examples represent only the more affluent tenants. The retirement practices of smallholders are less clear. Tenants of larger holdings who 'retired' often continued to cultivate reduced areas of land and it is possible that some smallholders may have worked their plots until their deaths.⁷³

Leasing of demesne land increased in the 1360s and 1370s in the Sussex Weald, as elsewhere. The monks of Battle Abbey, who had farmed out the pasture land at Marley for seasonal terms before 1359, began to increase the length of the leases or to demise it heritably. At Udimore the pattern was similar. The acreage at farm greatly increased from 1369 and replaced the seasonal or annual sales of pasture. Though up to 180 acres of land were still worked by the lord before a break in the series of accounts in 1371, when they resume in 1380 the total had fallen to 40 acres. This may have been due partly to the inundation of part of the Brede valley by the sea. On the opposite side of the valley on the small Battle Abbey manor of Icklesham Rectory, almost the entire demesne was let from 1379; only the woodland remained in hand.⁷⁴

COMMUNITY AND CONFLICT

Local communities, brought together by sales of land, leases and loans, and

⁷¹ ESRO SAS/CO/B 1, m. 1r.; BL Add Roll. 31093.

⁷² BL Add. Roll 31093.

⁷³ R.M. Smith, 'Rooms, Relatives and Residential Arrangements: Some Evidence in Manor Court Rolls 1250-1500', *Medieval Village Research Group Annual Report* 30 (1982), 34-5.

⁷⁴ Searle, *Lordship and Community*, 324; HMAG JER collection (Udimore account rolls, unlisted); M.F. Gardiner, 'Medieval Farming and Flooding in the Brede Valley', in J. Eddison (ed.), *Romney Marsh: The Debatable Ground* (forthcoming); HEH BA 459, 453.

reinforced by ties of marriage, have already been identified in the Wartling area. Similar networks of association would inevitably have been found elsewhere in the Weald. Common interest in maintaining hedges to prevent straying animals, in scouring drainage channels in the river valleys and in rights of access over land would of necessity have produced action by neighbouring tenants which went unrecorded. Such interaction between neighbours was written down, either when to do so assisted the lord in the exercise or maintenance of his jurisdiction, or when private agreements failed and the parties took legal action. For example, Robert Prodel began five actions against John Crowhurst in Crowham court in 1335. He claimed that John's cow and horses had strayed into his pasture and that John had carried faggots over his land, incidents which had arisen from the proximity of their holdings. He also claimed 7d. given in a loan and the use of two oxen which they had purchased jointly. All this evidence suggests that the two neighbours had acted closely together before falling out.⁷⁵

Claims and counter-claims of trespass and damage by straying animals were commonly brought to court when neighbours disagreed over other matters. Such cases seem to have been the means of expressing more general resentments for the events often dated back many years. William Parkyn was charged by three of his neighbours at Crowham and fined for 12 complaints of straying animals, some of which had taken place up to four years previously; one had continued for four years. He was also accused of animal maiming, theft of wood and failure to maintain his ditches. He responded with claims of trespass and other complaints against these neighbours.⁷⁶ It is hardly possible to discern what lay behind such a rash of pleas and what prompted concerted action by William Parkyn's neighbours, but the fact that many of the cases related to previous events suggests that most cases of trespass had been settled by goodwill rather than in court.

If the maintenance of boundaries, or failure to do so, was the common currency of neighbourly intercourse, then evidence of closer association must be sought in other areas. Joint leasing or purchase of land might suggest a deeper relationship. Only a small proportion of leases were made by two or more people, and these joint lessors were sometimes related. For example, Alice Colny leased land and wood near Robertsbridge to Thomas de Wynkeham and Robert his brother.⁷⁷ It is not clear how

⁷⁵ ESRO AMS 5686, m. 2r.

⁷⁶ ESRO AMS 5686 m. 10r.-v.

⁷⁷ CKS U1475/M237. For other examples, see ESRO AMS 5686 m. 3r. and BL Add. Roll 31310, 287

the land so leased was managed in practice; the two lessees could have cultivated the land together, or may have divided it between themselves and cultivated it separately. The benefits of a joint lease to the lessees are also not apparent, and evidently they were not sufficient as to encourage its wider use. Land purchase by two tenants, often brothers, was more common. The land of Thomas Stonehurst in Bivelham manor (Mayfield and Wadhurst) was bought by William Kynch and Nicholas his brother in 1417. The two apparently continued to hold the tenement jointly for a few years, for they acted together in the sale of part of the land in 1420. By 1432 the remaining land had been divided, for Nicholas sold a further part alone, either because he was the sole survivor, or because the two had partitioned the land. Ralph and Robert de Chitcombe who bought land from Adam Brene in 1315 were also brothers and Richard and John atte Forde who purchased a messuage in Heathfield village in 1378 may have been related.⁷⁸

Joint purchasers were not always related, but sometimes formed temporary associations for the purpose. Roger Filsham and John Hogge bought the land of Nicholas Crul at Crowhurst in 1385 and granted him possession of it for life. After his death in 1392 the land was sold and the two men do not subsequently appear on the rolls of Crowhurst manor. John Hogge was described as 'of Hastings', suggesting that he may have been a burgess purchasing land in a nearby manor as an investment, or perhaps a financier who had loaned money to Roger Filsham and was enrolled as tenant to obtain security. John Coggere and John Chaloner who bought the land of William Dosy in Bivelham may have acted together for similar reasons. William Dosy may have been intent upon selling for he had repeatedly been presented for default of suit of court and had refused to take his oath as a customary tenant. After the sale he left the manor and was declared a fugitive neif. The background of John Chaloner is not clear, but John Coggere held extensive lands elsewhere in Mayfield and in neighbouring Heathfield.⁷⁹

These purchasers of land may have become joint tenants, either to enable them to buy land which could not afford singly, or to spread the risk of their speculation, or to obtain security for a loan. The arrangement was for a brief period and there is no

mm. 6v., 7r.; ESRO AMS 4884, m. 20r.

⁷⁸ BL Add. Rolls 31099, 31102, 31107; ESRO AMS 4884, m. 9r.; BL Add. Roll 31237m. 2r.

⁷⁹ ESRO A2300 (Crowhurst court rolls), mm. 1r., 3r.; BL Add. Rolls 31080-3; WSRO Ep. VI/1/3, f. 156r.-v.; ESRO GLY 1117.

evidence that joint purchase, either by brothers or by unrelated individuals, was followed by a common usage of the land. But longer-term co-operation did take place between tenants with land in the same tenement. They were brought together by the joint obligations to pay rent and give services already discussed. Although these dues were levied increasingly upon individuals, some joint renders persisted. By the late 14th century Richard and John Bridge, and John Colyere paid their rents separately in Heathfield, but gave a joint payment to commute the common service of carting of one load of heath. Co-parceners at Chitcombe (Brede) combined in the same way to pay Romescot (Peter's Pence).⁸⁰ The custom of partible inheritance, where it operated, tended to produce neighbours and parceners who were also brothers or otherwise related. For example, in 1366 Stephen Cadham and John Quinterel sued Giles Quinterel for not paying his third of the rent for his portion of their Playden tenement. Giles had not contributed to the rent for the previous five years during which time payment was made by his parceners. John and Giles Quinterel were related and Stephen Cadham had married Joan Quinterel. They held a tenement which had belonged to Hugh Quinterel (fl. 1300-05, but dead before 1309).⁸¹

There was a considerable degree of co-operation between relations who often acted jointly to advance their interests. As other studies have found, brothers found it convenient to work their holding jointly in the immediate aftermath of their parents' death, but this did not continue in the longer term. The action brought by Roger de Northynne against his relation Simon de Northynne, reflects the progression from joint to divided holdings. Roger claimed that Simon had withheld two pieces of land (apparently in Westfield) which were his part of the tenement, but the defendant replied that 'at the time the tenement was between the two as parceners and that Roger had his share'. Here a tenement which had been held jointly was later split. Similarly, the association between the sons of Robert de Chitcombe gradually faded in the years after his death in 1309. Before 1316 his three sons acted together to sell some of their inheritance, but five years later the holding had been partitioned. Walter, one of the three, acted alone to sue a neighbour, William Henry, for a defective enclosure allowing animals to stray on to his land. In 1323 Stephen, another of the sons, sold land in his own right, confirming that a division had been made.

⁸⁰ BL Add. Roll 31237, m. 1r.; WSRO Ep. VI/1/5, f. 88v. , printed as *Thirteen Custumals of the Sussex Manors of the Bishop of Chichester*, ed. W.D. Peckham (Sussex Record Society 31 (1925)), 96; ESRO AMS 4883, m. 13v.

⁸¹ ESRO AMS 4885, m. 6v.; AMS 4883, mm. 2r., 11r.; AMS 4884, m. 21r.

Nevertheless, the three acted together in 1322 to attempt to recover land from William Henry.⁸² The qualitative evidence presented here is less satisfactory than the quantitative data Smith was able to adduce, but does support the conclusions reached by him and others concerning 'joint-family organisation'.⁸³ Brothers rarely acted together to lease land, and joint purchases of land were uncommon. Joint tenure of land by co-heirs, and not merely that engendered by seigneurial exactions, was a temporary affair which lasted for a brief period after inheritance and was later dissolved.

The links created by neighbours were probably as important over a period of years, or more so, than ties of blood. In many cases, as has been shown, neighbours may have been relations. To examine these patterns of association further an area on the north edge of the Playden manor may be examined. Some of the families in this area also held land in the adjoining manors of Iden and Kitchenour, though in the absence of court rolls for the latter few details are known.⁸⁴ The general location of some of the holdings in Playden may be ascertained from a rental of 1567 which mentions a holding called Quinterels to the east of tenements called Bonesland and Brykstones. The first two of these were evidently named after the Quinterel and Bone families; the latter seems to have been approximately the same size and paid a similar rent to the tenement held by Gilbert de Winchester in 1305.⁸⁵ Other families who held land in this area were called Gold, Grove and Revere. The latter derived their name from the tenement called *Eure*, which was so named from its situation on the edge of the cliff above the marshland.⁸⁶

⁸² CKS U1475/M237; ESRO AMS 4884, mm. 20r., 1r. and 18r., 17v., 17r.

⁸³ R.M. Smith, 'Families and their Land in an Area of Partible Inheritance: Redgrave, Suffolk 1260-1320', in R.M. Smith (ed.), *Land, Kinship and Life-Cycle*, 98 Z. Razi, *Life, Marriage and Death in a Medieval Parish* (1980), 189-93.

⁸⁴ PRO SC11/661: Samson Bone, Philip Gold, Jordan Quinterel, Lovekin Smothego, Luke de Winchester in Iden were evidently related to tenants with the same surnames in Playden. Hamond le Cutler was presented in the court at Playden in 1321 for filling in the ditch between the lordship and that of Kitchenour where he had assarted land; ESRO AMS 4884, m. 18r.

⁸⁵ CKS U47/42/M12; ESRO AMS 4883, m. 13r.

⁸⁶ *Eure* derives from OE **yfer*, 'edge or brow of a hill', A.H. Smith, *English Place-Name Elements* 2 (1956), s.v. *yfer*. A. Mawer and F.M. Stenton, *Place-Names of Sussex* 2 (1930), 476 tentatively suggests *Eure* lay in Mountfield, but *Manuscripts of Lord De L'Isle and*

The links between the families may be most clearly demonstrated in tabular form. Figure 40 is in three parts. The first shows two families trees, which indicate the ties of marriage linking the Gold and Quinterel families and the division and recombination of the land of the heirs of Philip Gold. In the second part the interrelationships between six families recorded in the court rolls from 1300 to 1324 are summarised. These relationships include sales of land, complaints and pledges. The relationship of these six to the Grove, Homvile, Homwode, Keliferthe, Opeclive and Stabler families who lived in the vicinity is also shown. The final part shows a diagrammatic plan of the locations of the lands held by some of these families.

Court rolls show that the vast majority of contacts were made between neighbours. Though tenants inevitably came into conflict with their neighbours over damage caused by straying animals, they turned to the very same people when they required a pledge, or wished to sell or lease land. Playden was not a large manor and consequently the range of individuals from which pledges might be chosen was limited. Nevertheless, the tenants from the Playden tithing very rarely pledged for those in the Chitcombe tithing, and vice versa. Indeed, John Quinterel was the only individual who seems to have formed connections in both places. There is some evidence that marriage partners were chosen from amongst neighbours. Clarissa the daughter of Robert de Quinterel married John Gold. The locative surnames of Thomas atte Revere who married Joan atte Revere may suggest that this was also a local match, but a number of other marriage partners cannot be identified and may be outsiders.⁸⁷

The patterns of land purchase and social contact may also be examined in the court rolls of Crowhurst manor. John Kyng held a tenement on that manor inherited from his father near to the river later called Powdermill Stream and on the west by the tenement of William atte Holme.⁸⁸ Between that tenement and the river lay the land

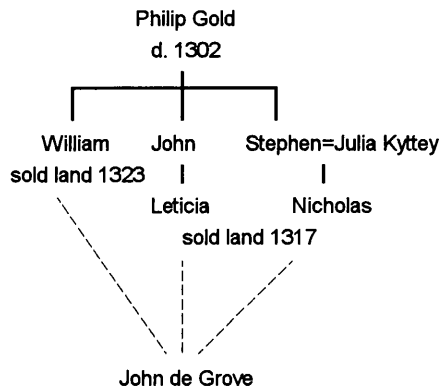
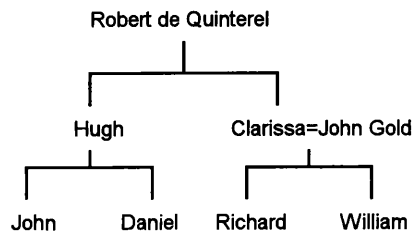
Dudley, Historical Manuscripts Commission 1, 53, 57 which refers to land below *Eure* and the boundary of the stream running from Rye to Moorbridge confirms the identification here. Moorbridge was part of the manor of Playden.

⁸⁷ ESRO AMS 4883, m. 11r. Joan held the tenement at *Eure* or *Revere*.

⁸⁸ I am indebted to unpublished work by David Martin, a copy of which has been deposited in the East Sussex Record Office, for the location of these holdings.

A Community in Playden

Some Family Relationships



Interrelationships Within the Community

BECK

John

1301 pl. Ralph Gold
 1302 pl. Robert Beck
 1303 pl. Gilbert de Winchester
 1305 pl. Robert & Stephen sons
 of Gilbert de Winchester;
 John & Daniel Quinterel
 1307 pl. William Beck, ?his son;
 has custody of John Quinterel
 1332 John Beck and Jordan de Quinterel

Ralph

1305 pl. John & Daniel Quinterel

Robert

1300 pl. Hugh Quinterel
 1302 pl. John Beck; William, his
 brother
 1303 pl. Simon Bone
 1305 pl. Robert and Stephen sons
 of Gilbert de Winchester;
 Thomas atte Revere
 1306 pl. John Beck
 1308 pl. Stephen Hornvile
 1317 pl. John Grove; Luke
 Stabler
 1321 pl. Robert atte Revere
 1323 pl. John Quinterel

William

1303 pl. John Beck; Simon Bone
 1315 sells land to John, his brother; leases
 land to Daniel Keliferthe

BONE

Edmund

1315 pl. Simon Bone

James

1317 leases land to Daniel Keliferthe

Samson

1302 pl. Julia Kyttey
 1332 pl. John Beck; William Beck; Elena de la Morbregg

Simon

1303 sowed land of his brother Edmund
 1315 prosecutes John Quinterel for trespass
 1321 sold land to his brother, Adam

GOLD

John

1315 leases land to Stephen his father

Matilda

1309 leases land to Ralph & Thomas Gold

Nicholas (Kyttey)

1317 with Leticia Gold sells land to John de Grove

Richard

1300 prosecutes Alice Quinterel for trespass

William

1309 leases two fields to Richard Gold
 1323 sells land to John de Grove

GROVE

John

1317 has granted Amy de Homvile
dower in land of John de Homvile
1323 exchanges land with Daniel
Quinterel

REVERE

Henry (son of Robert)

1325 prosecutes Robert Beck & Thomas
atte Revere for detaining land

Luke

1316 prosecutes Jordan Quinterel for occupy-
ing land beyond term of lease

Osbert

1315 leases land to Daniel Keliferthe

Robert

1302 persuades Gilbert de Winchester, juror
to favour his son

QUINTEREL

Daniel and John

1305 prosecute Richard Gold, Richard and William,
sons of Philip for detention of land

Daniel

1323 pl. John Quinterel; exchanges land with
John de Grove

Joan (mother of Julia)

1306 sells land to Robert Becke

John

1301 pl. Alice Quinterel
1302 pl. Luke atte Revere
1303 pl. Simon Bone; Gilbert de Winchester; Luke
atte Revere
1307 pl. Constance Quinterel
1308 was guardian of heirs of Hugh Quinterel
1315 prosecutes Simon Bone for trespass

Julia

1302 case against Luke atte Revere

Richard

1308 leases land to Robert Beck

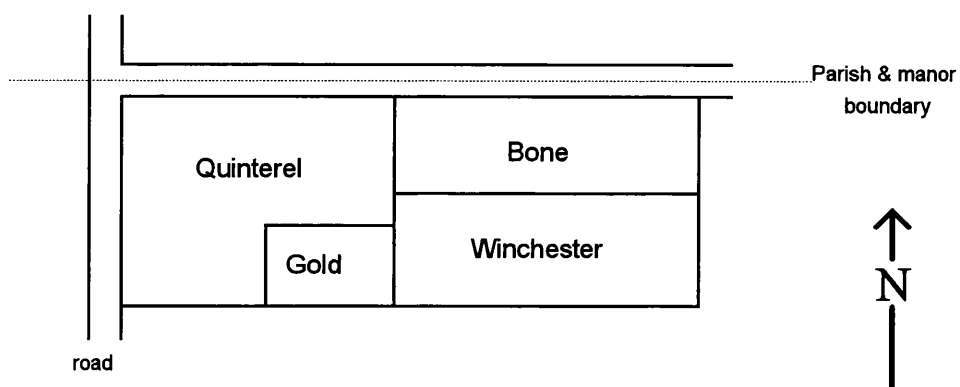
Robert

1324 sells land to Adam Bone

Abbreviations: d. - died

pl. - gives pledge for

Diagrammatic Location Plan



Sources: ESRO AMS 4883-4; CKS U1475/M255

Fig. 40 A community in Playden.

of John Jakeman who held land called *Kyngyscroft* and other fields which had once been held by John Kyng the elder.⁸⁹ John Jakeman was referred to on one occasion as Jakeman Kyng, apparently because of the name of his tenement. In 1386 William Kyng, who was the brother of John Kyng and also held some land here, bought a licence with John Jakeman to cut one acre of ash and alder for faggots. Both John Jakeman and John Kyng had dealings with their neighbour William atte Holme. John Jakeman sued William for his dog which had hurt one of his sheep and John Kyng was sued by William for a debt of outstanding rent for land he had leased.⁹⁰

The network of contacts established by John Kyng was centred upon his immediate neighbours and it was to these that he leased and sold land. He leased one parcel of land to William Natle who lived at *Twynham* to the south, and a few years later exchanged small plots with him.⁹¹ With the reduced demand for land in the first half of the 15th century many tenants sought to enlarge their holdings and sought land around their existing fields. The pattern of purchases shows that few sought tenements elsewhere. The four largest holders of land in the 1440 Crowhurst rental had all inherited part of their lands, either directly or through their wives.⁹² These hereditary lands were augmented by purchasing adjoining lands to create larger farms.⁹³ The redundant buildings on the component holdings were then demolished or

⁸⁹ For the position of the tenement by the stream, see ESRO A2300 (Crowhurst court rolls), m. 15r.; for *Kyngyscroft* and other lands see *ibid.*, mm. 21r., 24v.

⁹⁰ ESRO A2300 (Crowhurst court rolls), mm. 2v., 1v., 3r., 11r.

⁹¹ ESRO A2300 (Crowhurst court rolls), mm. 9r., 12r., 20r. David Martin's reconstruction of the land around Hye House and immediately south of John Kyng's tenement has also been used.

⁹² ESRO A2300 (Crowhurst records, unlisted), rental of 19 Henry VI. John Newman inherited *John Kyngs* and *Bartelotts* from his wife Matilda, who had formerly been married to John Kyng, BL Add. Roll 31487. John Hunt had inherited *Groundily* from Agatha Mone, his grandmother, ESRO A2300 (Crowhurst court rolls), m. 1v.; BL Add. Roll 31487. John Adam had inherited *Brook* from his namesake who married Alice, the heir of William atte Brok in 1404, ESRO A2300 (Crowhurst court rolls), m. 12v. John Natele had evidently inherited *Parnelnatle*, though the descent of the various tenements called Natele is obscure.

⁹³ For example, John Adam bought *Swynham* from John Chesman in 1412, ESRO A2300 (Crowhurst court rolls), m. 20r.

moved and the agricultural operation concentrated in a single farm.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ BL Add. Roll 31484; ESRO A2300 (Crowhurst court rolls), m. 27b r. Adam Foghel granted his lands to William Marchaunt on his death bed. William was granted a licence to cut wood there and remove the buildings.

CONCLUSION

The aim of the foregoing study has been to explain the development of medieval rural settlement in part of the eastern Sussex High Weald. It has been argued that settlement evolution cannot be interpreted simply as an economic or geographic process; social factors were of no less significance. It has been necessary to examine the local economy, the environment, and both the relationship between the lord and his peasants, and the patterns within and between the families who occupied the land.

The study began by placing the development of settlement in the eastern Sussex Weald within a broader framework. To do this it was necessary to examine critically the methods of reconstructing pre-Conquest administrative geography. Some of the approaches used in studies of other areas of England were found to be of doubtful validity, and more rigorous analysis has been advocated. The administrative structure of Anglo-Saxon Sussex has been reconstructed only in part, but that has been sufficient to suggest the direction of settlement evolution. It has been argued that the system of land usage at the west and east ends of Sussex differed from the remainder of the county. Transhumance and other forms of exploitation by the coastal settlements contributed to the occupation of most of the Weald, but at the western end there was only a small area of poorer soils. In the east, on the other hand, there was no contrasting area of better soils and the place-names and pattern of later manors show little evidence of transhumance.

The broad framework of settlement was established by the Conquest, or very shortly after. Most churches in the High Weald of eastern Sussex had been founded by that time, even in the more remote parts, and the area was probably no less well settled than the adjoining area of Kent. Indeed, the Domesday survey allows the area of cultivated land around Battle to be estimated, albeit approximately. The character of the 11th- and early 12th-century communities in the Weald remains largely obscure. It seems likely that the virgates, wists or ferlings were not for the most part brought into being by the lord and his officials, but were based upon the holdings of the communities which farmed the land. These tenurial units may reflect both the form of the early division of the land within the Weald and the character of the groups that settled that land. Some tentative suggestions about the nature of such groups were presented in Chapter 7. Joint tenure, which still persisted at Broomhill on Walland Marsh at the beginning of the 13th century, may have been common in the High Weald at an earlier date; a number of strands of evidence have suggested that groups, rather than individual tenants were of importance.

The increase in the type and quantity of documentary evidence from the late 13th century enables a much more detailed study to be made. It has been possible to establish the outlines of the rural economy of the region, though the extent to which non-agricultural activities, including craftwork and wood-cutting, contributed to peasant income is more difficult to ascertain. The character of the non-agrarian economy of the region is complex. The natural resources of water-power, wood, iron ore, clay and sand seem to have been under-utilised; cloth production seems to have been surprisingly important in an area not notable for sheep grazing.

Craftwork was one of the factors favouring the growth of nucleated settlements in the later 13th century. A distinction has been made between the coastal towns of Rye, Winchelsea, Hastings and Pevensey which developed in, or shortly after, the 11th century, and the small inland trading centres which emerged 200 years later. The villages in the Weald of eastern Sussex never outgrew their origins as purely local centres, for the nature of the economy was such that it could sustain few larger inland trading settlements. Either little trade took place in the inland areas, or it was conducted by less formal means, perhaps through personal contact, and the wealth did not accrue to the village settlements and encourage their expansion.

The seigneurial contribution to the foundation of these trading villages has been emphasised, but lords otherwise exercised relatively little influence on settlement development. The character of settlement owed more to the nature of the social structure and the economy. Wealden society was not rigidly stratified. There was a continuous spectrum running from the landless cottagers at the bottom of the hierarchy to the greater manorial lords at the top, and considerable social mobility. The social boundaries consequently were often blurred. The gap separating a villein from a free tenant was not large, and during the 14th and early 15th century the disadvantages of villein status were gradually reduced. Some tenants, particularly merchants from the port towns who had purchased land in the countryside nearby, might be more wealthy than the lords from whom they held the land. The gentry of eastern Sussex were an open elite which could be entered by both wealthy merchants and tenants who had improved their position through land-purchase.

By the 14th century the pattern of Wealden settlement was changing. A rising population led to the fragmentation of medium-sized and larger holdings and created an active land market. Numerous small farms and cottages were constructed on plots of land. By the 1370s, however, the trend was reversed. The population began to decline allowing tenants to enlarge their holdings, and buildings were abandoned. Manorial courts reflected that development favouring the consolidation of the land and acting against the division of holdings. A number of legal devices were permitted

to circumvent customary rules of inheritance and prevent the division of holdings between heirs and between heiresses. Newly-introduced legal procedures have been identified which effectively allowed tenants, both free and customary, to bequeath land to their successors.

Settlement was predominantly dispersed and, because there were no open fields, peasants were not brought together through the manorial court to regulate communal agriculture. The two factors did not encourage the formation of a wide circle of social contacts. Instead, the closest association was usually between neighbours and these local ties were often consolidated by marriage, creating a society which was local in its sphere of activity. Only the upper levels of society seem to have adopted a more wide-ranging perspective.

This study began with an acknowledgement of the contribution made by Jolliffe to the methodology of settlement analysis. In seeking to understand the pattern and the causes of settlement change, the central concern of this study, it has been necessary to examine some of the subjects touched upon by Jolliffe and to cast the net wider still in the search for explanations. Settlement may have seemed rather remote from the matter of some of the preceding chapters, because it has been viewed not as the subject of study, but the object of analysis. The interpretation of settlement lies not in an examination of its form and location, but in locating it within its social and economic context. The chapters above have approached the study of settlement tangentially. In doing so they have cast some light upon a medieval society with distinctive features in a relatively little studied area of England.

Appendix 1

Wealden Outliers in the Rape of Pevensey

Manor	Location of Outlying Lands	Source
Berwick	Ersham (Hailsham), Boship Fm, Broads Fm, Knightsbridge (Hellingly)	ESRO SAS/G 17/34.
Bishopstone	Hempstead (Arlington), Turzes, Wreckery (Burwash), Beckington, Heathfield, Nettlesworth, Tottingworth (Heathfield), Horsebridge (Hellingly), Dale Hill (Ticehurst)	WSRO Ep. VI/1/3, ff 151r., 155v.-158v.; Ep. VI/1/5, f. 148v.
Chalvington	<i>Pithouse</i> , Scallow Bridge, Sinderford (Waldron)	ESRO SAS/CH 92, 93, 215, 216
Eastbourne (Clopham)	<i>Potmans Acre</i> (Chalvington)	ESRO SAS/CP 91, 105
Eastbourne (Rodmill-Beverington)	One tenement in Arlington, Bentley Wood (E. Hoathly), Hawkes (Hailsham), Hackhurst, Perryland (Hellingly)	ESRO SAS/CP 96, 97
Heighton St Clere	Land in E. Hoathly, Etchingly Wood (Waldron)	ESRO A2327/1/4/30
Jevington	Chiddingly Park, Amberstone (Hailsham), <i>Ramshurst</i> (Hellingly)	ESRO SAS/CP 197, 198, 201; ESRO A2327/1/4/30
Laughton	Hawkhurst (E. Hoathly), extensive area in Waldron	<i>Custumals of the Manors of Laughton, Willingdon and Goring</i> , 1-22; ESRO A2327/1/4/30
Westdean	Lands adjoining South Common (Hailsham)	ESRO SAS/M 682
Willingdon	Finches (Chiddingly), 15ac in Hailsham, <i>Pankhurst</i> (Heathfield), Broads Fm, Hale Green, <i>Herwood</i> , Hoathbush Fm, Lea Bridge, Peke House (Hellingly)	ESRO ADA 73, 240.
Wilmington	Groveland and <i>Somerheath</i> (Hailsham), <i>Frithland</i> (Heathfield)	ESRO SAS/CP 218, 220

Appendix 2

The Bounds of the Lowy of Battle

The bounds of the lowy of Battle are given in the Chronicle and were apparently established during the abbacy of Ralph de Caen (1107-24).¹ They describe the boundary of the lowy travelling in a clockwise direction. Later sources allow the identification of the boundaries of Battle manor, and suggest the location of land purchased subsequent to the initial endowment. The map of the manor of Battle made in 1724 is particularly important for the identification of places and boundaries.²

South side

Leaving Bathurst to the east the boundary of the lowy is next to the land of Robert le Boeuf, passes by the land of Roger Moin up to and including Hecilande and by the land of William son of Robert son of Guy and the land of Crowhurst

Bathurst Wood is mentioned in an early 12th-century survey of the demesne. Further land at Bathurst was purchased by the abbey during the early 13th century from Ingram de Crowhurst, Reginald de Berneval and Walter, son of Robert le Boeuf.³ The land of Roger Moin was Wilting manor. The location of *Hecilande* is shown on the map of 1724. Hedgeland was a wood within the lowy. A holding is recorded here in the 1433 survey of Battle Abbey.⁴ The land of William son of Robert son of Guy has not been identified. The edge of Crowhurst manor followed the stream on the north side of Fore Wood. It was part of that wood, presumably, which was exchanged by the abbey for a wist of land shortly after the formation of the lowy.⁵

¹ *The Chronicle of Battle Abbey*, ed. E. Searle (1980), 60, n. 1.

² ESRO BAT 4421.

³ Lincoln's Inn Library Hale MS. 87, ff. 61r.-62r.

⁴ *Chronicle of Battle Abbey*, 51, n. 3; ESRO BAT 39, f. 30 which is a copy of PRO E315/56.

⁵ *Chronicle of Battle Abbey*, 48-9.

West side

It passes beside the land of Catsfield and by Puchehole to Westbece by the land of Bodeham

The manor of Catsfield lay just beyond the manor of Battle to the south-west. In the early 14th century Battle purchased tenements in Catsfield to create a park at Broomham. *Puchehole* is perhaps the same as the tenement of Pookhold shown on the 1724 map, although its position well inside the probable boundary of the lowy is difficult to explain. A manor of West Beech is mentioned in a deed of 1487.⁶ The land of *Bodeham* is an outlying part of the Bodiam manor, which lay adjacent to the Battle Abbey lands.⁷

North side

From that point it passes beside the land of Eatenden

The demesne of Eatenden manor is recorded in a detailed survey of c.1650.⁸

East side

From that point the boundary passes beside the land of Whatlington and the land of Wicham and beside Sedlescombe and so returns to the first boundary mark leaving Bodeherst to the east

In the early and mid-13th century Battle Abbey bought a considerable area of land in the valley of River Line held of the lordships of Whatlington, Wickham and Sedlescombe. Among these was the land of *Cornore* (Cornhoar Barn) in the manor of Whatlington.⁹ The tenements of *Cornhore* and *Week*, evidently a former part of the lordship of Wickham, are shown on a map of 1724. These were outside the lowy, the

⁶ Searle, *Lordship and Community*, 160; HEH BA 54/903.

⁷ ESRO AMS 5691/3/2.

⁸ ESRO ASH 579; ESRO A2300/6.

⁹ HEH BA 40/1174. The grantor, Thomas de Haremere, held part of the manor of Whatlington of William de Etchingham, HEH BA 39/955.

boundary of which must have followed the edge of Battle parish passing to the north of Petley Wood.

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