

Congresbury. The Survey and the Parish

The Survey

The foundations of this book were laid over two years by members of Avon County Community Environment Scheme (ACCES), sponsored by Avon County Council and financed by the government through the Manpower Services Commission. Up to ten people, working as the equivalent of a small excavation team, were employed to examine all aspects of the landscape archaeology of the parish, supervised initially by Tim Downey and later, by the present author.

The work followed closely upon the publication of an earlier parish survey of Marshfield (Russett 1985), which had already established the basis for such a large scale examination of the landscape, the backbone of which lay in intensive fieldwalking. Congresbury was chosen on the basis of an approach from the local Parish Council and deemed suitable, not only because of its archaeological importance, which had already been ascertained through excavations of a post-Roman occupation site upon Cadbury Hill (Fowler et al. 1968-1973), but also because of the expressed good will of the local community, without whose co-operation, little would have been possible.

The aims of the survey were thus twofold. Both to compliment the work of previous archaeological excavations by examining the landscape as a whole. And also to involve the local community, to increase their awareness of the value of the historic environment of their parish. To this end, many more than the core team of workers have been involved in bringing the project to fruition. Whilst the survey by ACCES was concluded in 1988, continued work by the author and members of Congresbury Local History Society have considerably expanded upon the original scope of the survey.

The methodology of landscape archaeology is already well established (e.g. Russett 1985). Directed walking of both arable and pasture land, the controlled collection of artefacts (primarily pottery and flint) and the recording of all visible archaeological features, formed the basis of field survey upon which additional information could be superimposed.

Congresbury, being largely pastoral in nature, provided only limited opportunities in terms of artefact collection from ploughed fields although gardens were also examined when possible. Arable was initially line walked and positive artefact scatters were later subject to detailed grid walking. Pottery recovered from gardens was classified according to its state of preservation (either abraded or unabraded), quantity and the number of rim forms present. Prior occupation or features were assumed if the number of rim forms exceeded ten or if the ratio of recovered sherds to exposed soil area was sufficiently high.

All surviving earthworks within the parish were also surveyed at a scale of 1:500 or greater. Most were limited in extent and in being for the most part uninterpretable, not all are included here. Great use was thus made of aerial photographs, particularly those of the RAF post-war series of 1946-7, for which, complete coverage of Congresbury survives in Somerset

Local History Library. Other coverage utilised included the Avon County Council collection of the 1971 Hunting Surveys prints.

Documentation provided the final element of the survey to compliment the field work. Congresbury is notably well endowed with post-medieval documentation and in particular, a fine series of detailed estate maps (the de Wilstar survey), dating from the early eighteenth century. Although their coverage of the parish is not complete, earlier surveys and extant deeds (many from private sources) provided numerous links with the past.

The results of the survey form an archive, a summary of which preserved as part of the Avon County Sites and Monuments Record (ACSMR), a computerised record of all the available information. Artefacts recovered by the survey, together with all field records are to be deposited with Woodspring Museum in Weston-super-Mare, where they will ultimately be available for future research.

This publication is a synthesis of the collected data, presented as an historical commentary. It describes the potential path of Congresbury's landscape development, from prehistory through to 1842 when the Tithe Map presents the first pictorial overview of the entire parish. Research beyond this date, including industrial archaeology and World War 2 archaeology is not included here. Many of these topics being dealt with in detail by other Local History Group publications.

The Parish

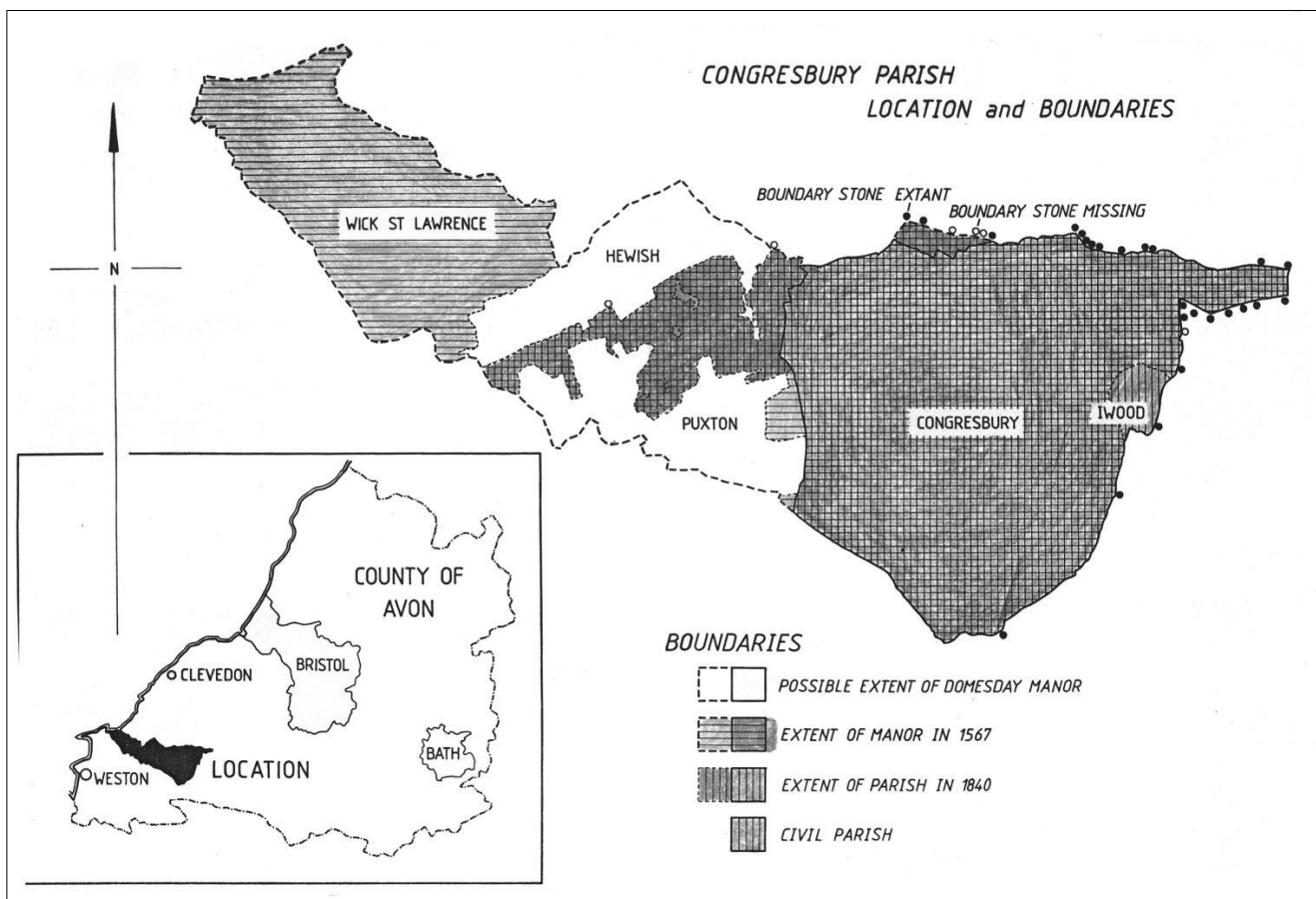


Fig I 1: Congresbury: location and boundaries

The 3000 acres of the modern civil parish of Congresbury are a poor reflection of the ecclesiastical parish of 1840 whose 4000 acres included much of that land which now forms the civil parish of Puxton. Defined by at least 2000 years of development, the boundaries of this ancient parish are by no means arbitrary and for such reasons of antiquity, it is this latter area whose landscape is here examined in detail.

Lying in the south-west quadrant of the modern County of Avon, but historically, part of north Somerset. The proximity of the parish to Weston-super-Mare and Bristol has led to a rapid expansion of the local population in recent years. From a relatively static figure of 2000 people between 1800 and 1960, the total, including those within that are of modern Puxton, now stands at around 3435. As a consequence, housing development has been rapid. However, its confinement to infilling within the existing village of Congresbury has not radically altered the structure of the settlement which still retains many of its medieval characteristics.

The vast bulk of the area is predominantly low lying, though topographically, surprisingly varied. The village of Congresbury itself, at its highest only 8m OD, lies astride the River Yeo on a low spur of Higher Estuarine Alluvium. To the west are the expansive and still flood susceptible moors and the area of scattered settlement known as 'The Marsh'. Neither rises above 6m OD and both are developed on clays of the Wentlloog Series overlying peats and deposits of Lower Estuarine Alluvium. Southwards from the village, isolated farmsteads atop low hills characterise the gently undulating landscape of Brinsea where Keuper and Tea

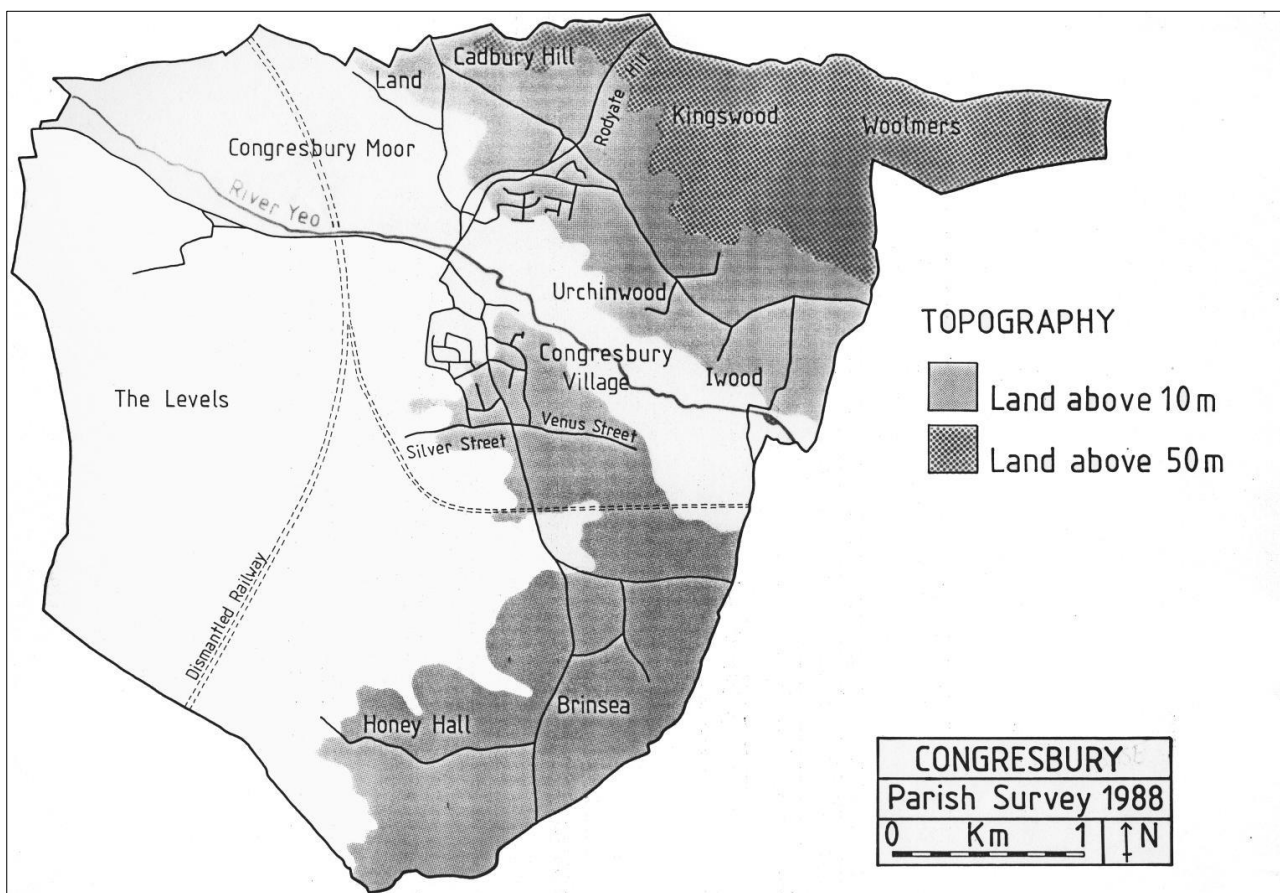


Fig I 2: Congresbury topography

gradually upwards into the Red Marls of the Vale of Wrington. Northwards, the land rises steeply towards the limestone plateau of Broadfield Down.

Excluding the built up area of the village, pastoral grassland dominates much of the landscape, although recent trends in agricultural policy and recreational development has seen the conversion of significant areas for leisure usage. However, grazing land still occupies some 50% of the acreage of the 1842 parish. Arable farming is confined largely to the higher and better drained soils to the east of the area, forming only 6% of the total area examined during the survey. The periodic reseeding of pasture providing the bulk of the available ploughland. Woodland forms the third major element of the modern landscape. Reflecting in its name the areas once royal association, the Kings Wood dominates the northern hill slopes of the parish.

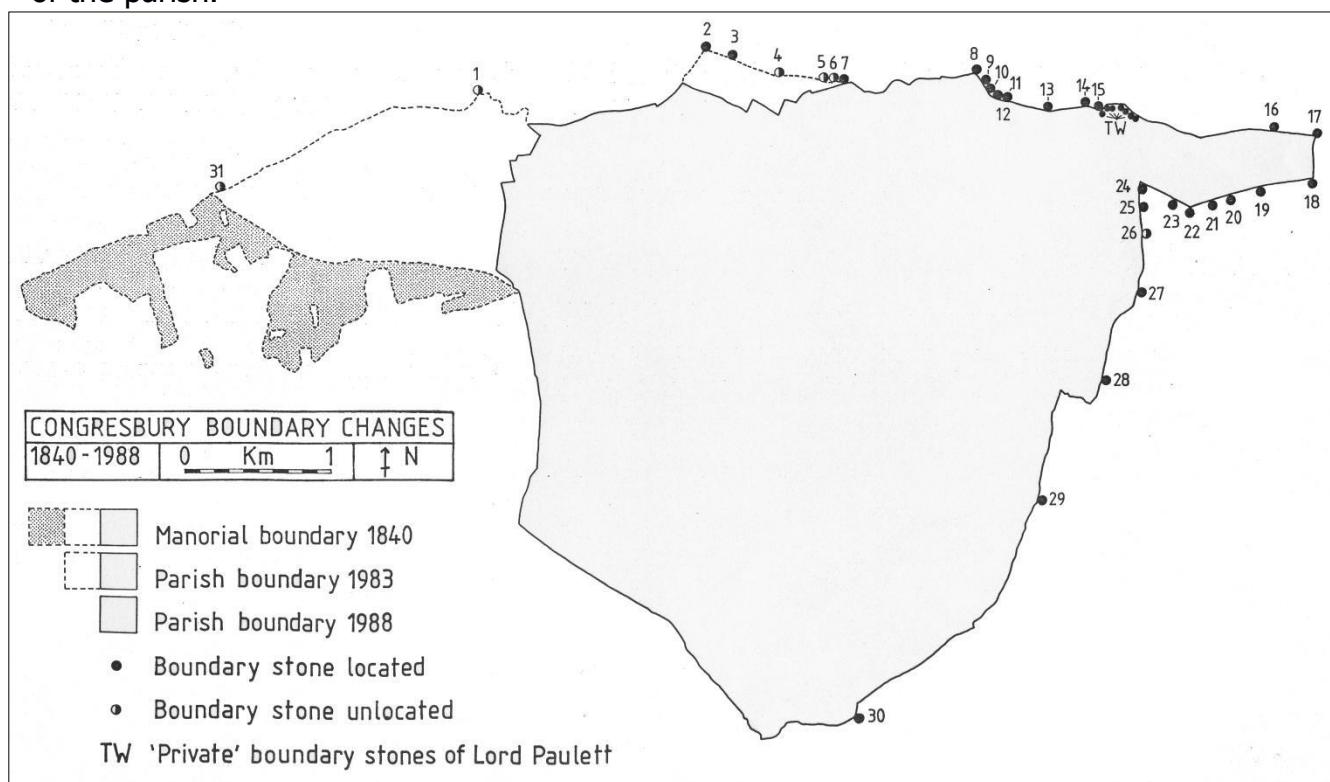


Fig I 3: Congresbury boundary changes 1840-1988

A Note on Maps

Maps comprised the principal tool of the Parish Survey both for documentary research and in the field. No apology is therefore made for the number included in this publication! Archaeological details such as earthwork surveys and find plots utilise the latest Ordnance Survey 1:25000, 1:10000 or 1:2500 scale plans as a base. However, the landscape has altered considerably since the turn of the century and modern surveys obscure much early detail. The base map on which the majority of reconstructions are plotted is thus the Ordnance Survey 25" First Edition of 1885, reduced to a metric scale.

Chapter 1: The Prehistoric Landscape

Early Prehistoric Landscapes

It will probably always remain unknown when modern man first settled in the area we now know as Congresbury. Evidence of human activity from Hyena Den at Wookey indicates his presence in the region between 75,000 and 10,000 years before present. His remains located with the bones of horse, woolly rhinoceros, giant elk and mammoth, suggesting occupation during the cold climatic conditions of the final glacial regime. However it was not until the retreat of the last major ice sheets that the unbroken settlement of the country first began.

Finds of Upper Paleolithic or Old Stone Age material from the Vale of Wrington and the surrounding hills mark the beginnings of a semi-permanent human presence from around 12,000 BC. Although evidence of these early landscapes has now been largely removed by erosion or subsequent activity, artefactual and environmental material preserved in undisturbed cave deposits on the fringes of the Congresbury area give some impression of the earliest human environments.

Aveline's Hole and Rowberrow Cavern on the northern scarp of Mendip may both have been occupied as transient encampments. Hunters exploiting the fauna which survived among a landscape of bare rock and tundra in the higher parts of the area or in the grass, sedge, willow and dwarf birch communities of the lowlands. Horse, red deer and reindeer are all represented in the cave deposits and probably roamed freely throughout the area between 12,000 and 9,000 BC. Human activity and occupation sites may well have been regulated by their seasonal migrations.

Throughout the Mesolithic period which occupied the following 5,000 years, the landscape continued to evolve. Still no evidence of human activity from this period has been recovered from Congresbury but artefacts of this time span are widely distributed across the surrounding Mendips. Maturing soils and climatic improvement encouraged the development of extensive pine and birch woodland after about 8,300 BC. Grasslands, which may well have occupied valley floors probably supported larger mammals such as aurochs, deer and wild pig. Sea level rises during the 7th millennium BC finally isolated Britain from continental Europe and increased the diversity of habitats available to the migratory hunter-gatherer societies of the Severn Valley. Evidence from the Somerset Levels suggests the formation of extensive areas of lowland reed fen as waterlogging increased, whilst intertidal salt marsh established behind a newly emergent coastline. Such a situation may also have prevailed towards the western end of the Vale of Wrington where extensive peat deposits lie sealed beneath later marine alluvium.

The Neolithic Landscape

The advent of settled agriculture and permanent occupation that differentiate the Neolithic from earlier periods have left no obvious trace in the modern landscape of the present parish. The primary evidence for human activity within the Congresbury area from the 4th millennium BC until c2,500 BC lies in the recovery of a limited number of flint artefacts from the surface of disturbed ground and a small number derived from excavations upon Cadbury Hill. Useful comparisons may however be made between the landscape to the south of the Mendips and that of Congresbury itself in order to assess the potential nature of Neolithic occupation and exploitation.

The waterlogged peats of the Somerset Levels have provided considerable information with regards environmental conditions and human activity throughout the Neolithic period. Woodland of ash, oak, alder, elm and hazel had replaced the early climax woodlands by 4,500 BC and probably dominated valley slopes and uplands. The tidal salt-marsh and estuarine reed swamps of the Mesolithic were by 3,600 BC, replaced by fenwood of alder and birch. This in turn by 3,000 BC had been drowned by increased flooding. The accumulated decaying remains developing into a raised bog landscape supporting a flora of Sphagnum moss, heather and cotton grass from which the modern peat deposits are derived. Congresbury may well have lain at the interface of a similar environment. Peat deposits sealed by only a shallow depth of later estuarine alluvium, underlie the moors west of Brinsey, whilst riverine clays seal similar deposits adjacent to the River Yeo. However, the considerable depth of estuarine clays of the Wentlloo Formation at the western fringes of the parish suggest that Congresbury may well have been subject to a greater marine influence during the Neolithic.

The active management of woodland adjacent to the Somerset Levels is attested by the timbers used in the construction of the Sweet Track, c4,000 BC. Pollen analysis suggests that substantial inroads into the early forest cover of the uplands did not occur until the mid third millennium. However, finds of fragmentary or complete flint axes are widespread throughout the area, at least two being recovered during the excavations of Cadbury Hill (Rahtz et al. 1992: 103), and it is possible that these are indicative of the extensive phase of forest clearance which began around 2,750 BC (Beckett & Hibbert. 1978). Evidence from the Levels points to the development of a pastoral economy with cereal cultivation at this time, supplemented by hunting and gathering activities. Congresbury, potentially situated at the interface of a number of varied environments may thus have offered a prime location for settlement.

The evidence however is limited. Flints from Cadbury Hill may be indicative of temporary settlement (Rahtz et al. 1992) and two pottery sherds, of a cup and bowl, recovered from The Lyes suggest the possibility of middle Neolithic settlement in the near vicinity (Darvill 1987: 15). Flints found during the parish survey and recognisably Neolithic in character, in the main comprised leaf shaped arrowheads, probably strays,

lost during hunting. In only one field, on the eastern margins of the parish was a vague concentration of flint artefacts, possibly dating from the later Neolithic, discernible. Here an awl or keeled flake, a number of burnt blades and several heavily patinated scrapers were broadly distributed over a substantial area with no recognisable focus.

In view of subsequent human activity and the time scale involved, the absence of any positive evidence of Neolithic settlement without excavation, is unsurprising. Even on nearby excavated sites such as Sandford Hill, evidence of occupation was limited to a low level flint scatter and a small number of pottery sherds. However, at Chew Park, occupation debris and post holes representing a small, circular building were found beneath the wall of a later Roman Villa. The varied situation of these two sites, together with the evidence from the Somerset Levels serves primarily to indicate the increasing usage of a variety of landscapes during the Neolithic period.

Towards the end of the Neolithic both environmental and social change are evidenced from a number of sources. Studies of buried soils and pollen analysis have indicated that from around the middle of the third millennium BC, forest clearances regenerated. On the Somerset Levels woodland had closed in by 2,400 BC. The reasons for this remain unknown but suggest both changes in subsistence and a declining population possibly encouraged by change in the political organisation of society. Early Neolithic Congresbury lay within the influence of a culture responsible for the construction of chambered long barrows such as the now destroyed Fairy Toot at Butcombe. The distribution of such tombs pointing to a power base in the Cotswold-Severn area. By the later Neolithic, the focus of power had swung eastwards to Wessex, marked by changes in cultural artefacts and a new tradition in monument building. Henges such as Gorsey Bigbury and round barrows containing objects derived from the Wessex cultural tradition, indicate new religious and social groupings. The density of these monuments suggesting that the Mendips may well have become a political area in it's own right.

The Bronze Age Landscape

Throughout the Bronze Age, the Somerset Levels continue to provide reasonable evidence of wide scale environmental change, whilst excavations at Brean Down have yielded a more intimate knowledge of the local environment. Surviving field monuments on the hills surrounding Congresbury point to continued social and economic changes that may be reflected in the increased number of flint artefacts characteristic of the Bronze Age found within the parish.

Evidence from the Somerset Levels indicates that by the early second millennium, forest regeneration adjacent to the levels had been halted and then reversed. At Brean Down, evidence of soil erosion at this time may suggest a renewal of settlement and cultivation on a site previously occupied in the Neolithic. Early Bronze Age finds of

pottery, flint and bronze implements are widespread on the Mendips where the clustering of barrow cemeteries and the distribution of particular artifact forms suggests the development of small, localised prestige groups (Ellison 1982: 47).

Major changes are observable in the organisation of the landscape after around 1,500 BC. Widespread areas of open land were enclosed into extensive clusters of small, square or rectangular fields. Although undated, potential examples of such systems survive upon Brean Down, Middle Hope and Bleadon Hill. Within Kings Wood, linear stone banks described as enclosing several acres, were noted by Colonel Long writing in the 19th century. During the course of the parish survey, a number of substantial, though discontinuous banks were recorded towards the western side of this woodland, but as yet remain unsurveyed in any detail due to impenetrable vegetation. The banks, which stand up to 1m in height and 3m in width, may well represent field boundaries associated with cultivation, being comprised of loose stone possibly cleared from land required for arable.

Evidence from Brean Down and the Somerset Levels further suggests a strong marine influence in the area. The silty clays of the Wentloog Formation continued to develop under the brackish waters of estuarine salt marshes, subject to occasional marine transgressions. Such marshes probably extended inland for considerable distances. But despite substantial marine incursions which led to the deposition of marine sediments as far inland as Glastonbury around the beginning of the first millennium BC (Housley 1988), they were not without value. Most probably, the marshes would have provided an extensive, if seasonal grazing resource. Flint scrapers and knives dominate the Bronze Age assemblage from Congresbury suggesting butchery and hide processing to be common and probably widespread activities within the area at this time.

The identification of potential settlement within Congresbury rests solely with concentrations of surface artefacts. Whilst several fields produced significant numbers of worked flints, in only one incidence was the distribution of a character and localisation sufficient to suggest heightened activity

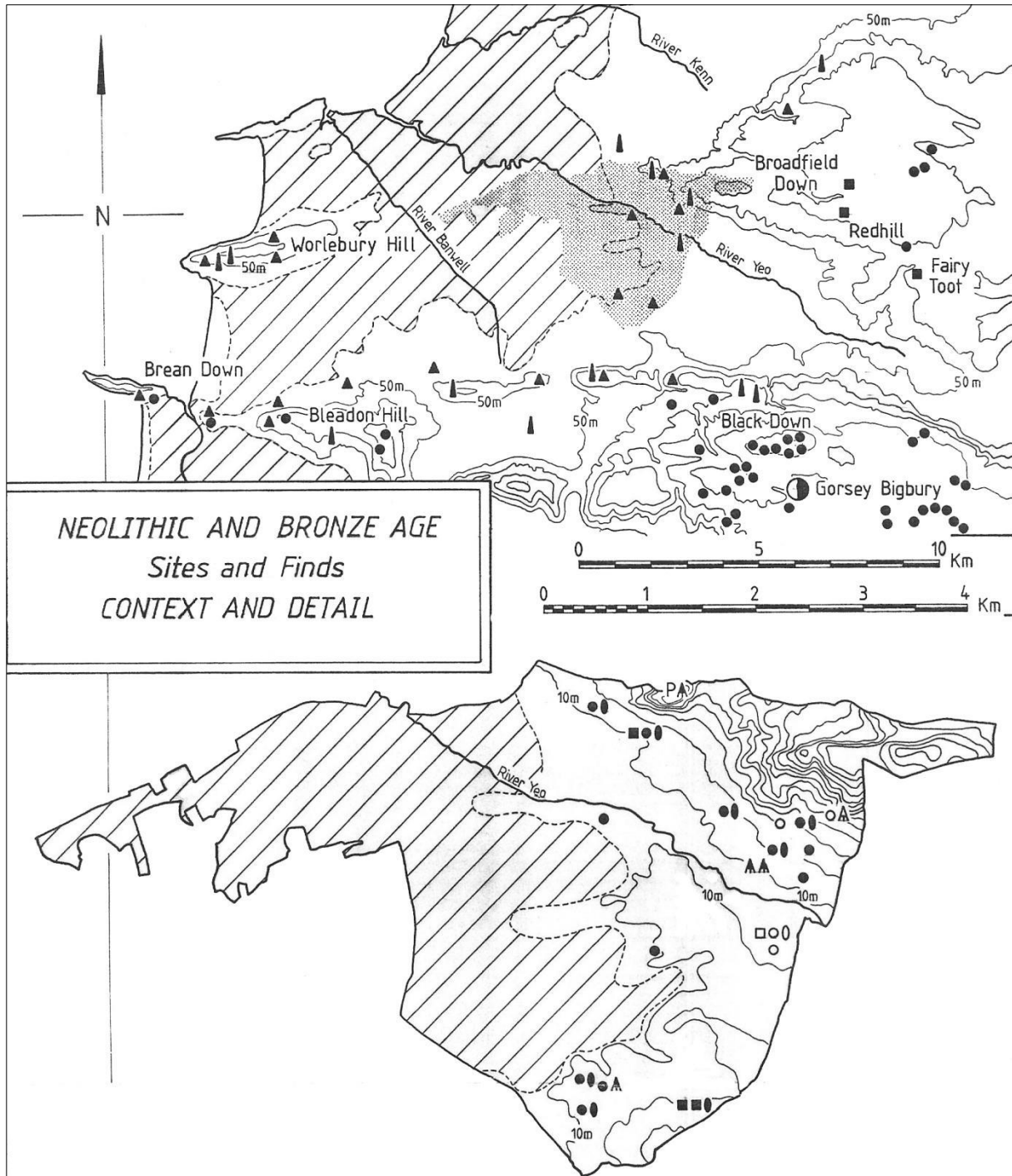


Fig 1: Neolithic and Bronze Age Congresbury and area

Flint cores and waste from this site inferring that at a minimum, active tool production was concentrated here. Elsewhere within the parish, flint distributions are more likely to reflect the pattern of archaeological fieldwork rather than the true dispersal of Bronze Age settlement!

Although no metalwork of the period has been located within Congresbury, several bronze implements have been recovered from the surrounding area. Bronze battle-axes and spears, besides representing items of status and power, also reflect the increasingly unstable nature of later Bronze Age society, a fact emphasised by the defensive enclosure of settlements elsewhere at this time. Expansionary trends of the earlier part of the period appear to have suffered major reversals after 1,000 BC. Upland field systems were abandoned in the face of increasing soil erosion and climatic deterioration. Relative over-population causing increasing pressure on land and resources led to further stress. The small number of barbed and tanged arrowheads recovered within the parish provide insufficient evidence to suggest the episodic internecine warfare which is known to have occurred elsewhere at this time. However, it is from this background that the society which constructed the Cadbury hillfort may well have emerged.

The Iron Age Landscape

The development of defended enclosures in the later Bronze Age reached its zenith in the mid first millennium BC. Hillforts of the early Iron Age located at Worlebury, Banwell Brean and Congresbury itself dominating the landscape at the western end of the Vale of Wrington. It remains unclear to what extent these structures owe their origins to pre-existing settlements, though direct evidence of Bronze Age activity is apparent at Worlebury and Brean, no confirmation of earlier, permanent occupation has been derived from either Banwell or Cadbury Hill.

Limited excavations in 1959 dated the earliest occupation of Cadbury Hill to around 650 BC. There is however no evidence to suggest that the site was defended at this time. Within the immediate area, other known settlements of the early Iron Age located at Pagans Hill, Butcombe and Chew Park, would seem to have been established as open farmsteads. However Cadbury's naturally defensive location on a steep promontory, may indicate the early significance of the site as one of particularly high status.

Whilst it remains unknown when the first defensive enclosure upon Cadbury Hill was constructed, or if the surviving fortifications represent a single phase of development, excavations of other Somerset hillforts point to a period of rampart building in the mid 5th century BC. Enclosing an area of 3.5 ha., Cadbury's defenses comprise a low, stone built inner rampart slightly set back from the steep slopes on its northern and western sides, which may well have been surmounted by a wooden palisade. The incomplete remains of a secondary defensive ditch are traceable along its western and northern

flanks. To its east, a series of more elaborate ditches, possibly flanked at one time by structures described by the original excavators as 'guard towers' defined an early entrance. Here, the enclosure was most vulnerable and easily approachable.

Internally, a number of Iron Age features were partially excavated including the foundations of several circular huts. Finds included over 400 sherds of early Iron Age pottery, the bones of cattle, sheep, pig and goat and a hoard of 324 sling stones. Few firm conclusions can be drawn from the limited extent of these excavations, though parallels may be drawn between Cadbury and other more intensively examined hillforts of this period.

The precise role of hillforts in the organisation of Iron Age society is unclear, however the expenditure of manpower and resources in their construction is a significant indication of their status as a focus of power in the community. The spacing of each relative to others suggests their location within well defined territories, the hypothetical extent of that surrounding Cadbury being defined by a Thiessen polygon in Fig 2 below.

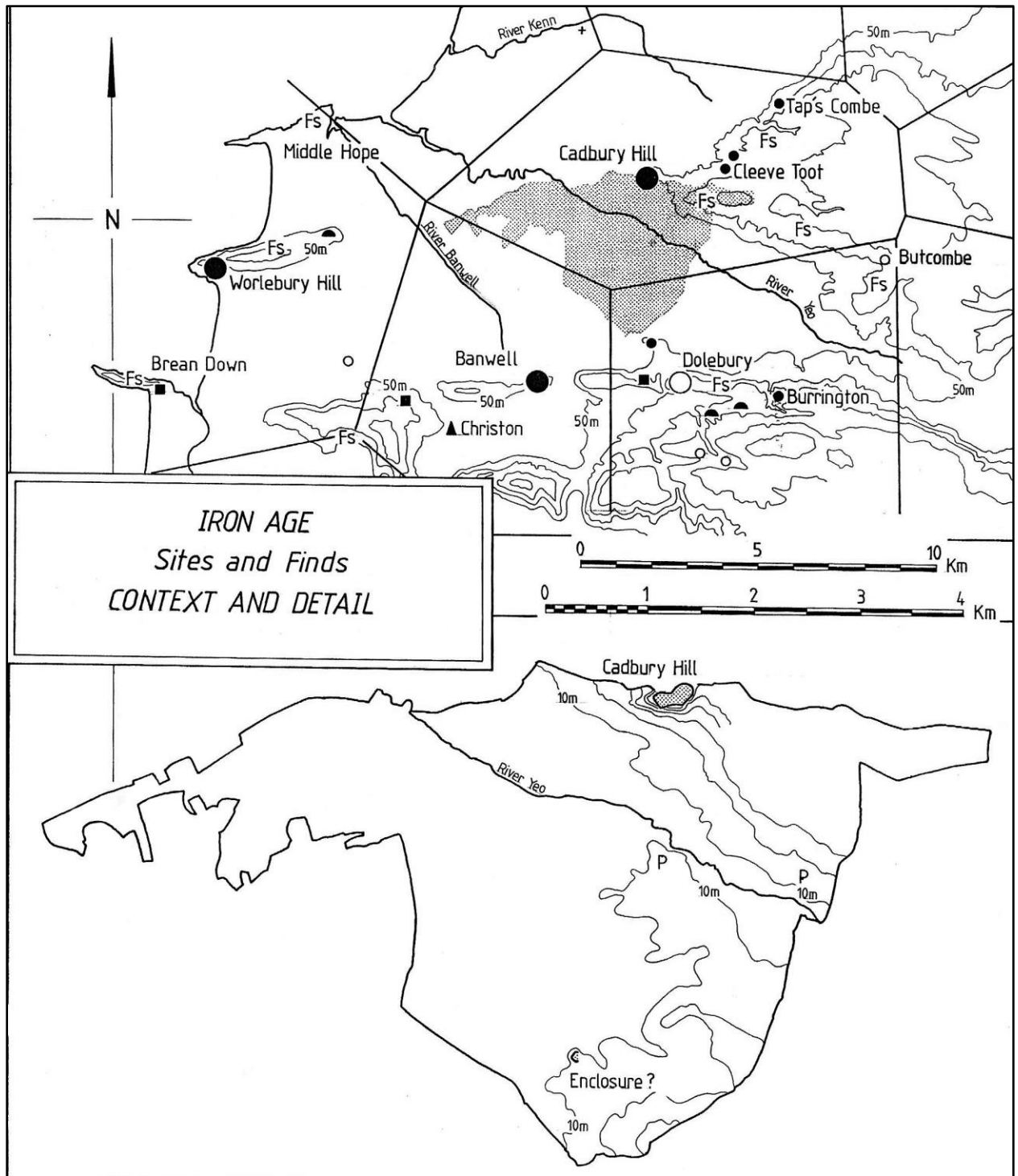


Fig 2: Iron age Congresbury and context

Internal evidence both from excavated structures and visible earthworks suggests that Cadbury Hill may have supported a population of up to 200 people, however with the exception of material derived from the excavated hut circles, there is little indication of the internal economy of the settlement.

Although the hillforts dominated the landscape of the Early Iron Age, other forms of hilltop enclosure probably co-existed with these structures and lowland settlement was almost certainly widespread. Within Kings Wood, a series of embanked enclosures have been located overlooking the narrow combes above Woodlands and Bickley, the latter containing a number of rock-cut structures that may indicate settlement. It is also possible that the field systems mentioned in relation to the Bronze Age landscape were reutilised or actually created during this period.

Evidence of lowland settlement within Congresbury is limited, but finds of Iron Age pottery during housing developments in The Lyes and several sherds located amongst a Romano-British pottery scatter in Iwood and at Woodlands may indicate potential occupation sites. Recent work has produced evidence of Iron Age settlement on the clay levels to the south of the Mendips (Broomhead 1992: 139), and the possibility of occupation on the clay levels to the north cannot be ignored. As in the Bronze Age, the extensive salt-marshes at the western end of the Vale of Wrington probably provided a valuable grazing resource for the cattle whose bones were preserved on Cadbury Hill. Salt production too was to become a notable feature of the Iron Age economy and it seems likely that these coastal marshes were well utilised at this time.

Whilst aggression and warfare may well have been central to social relationships in the later Iron Age, there is no positive indication that the abandonment of Cadbury Hill, sometime between the 4th and 3rd centuries BC, was as a direct result of aggressive activity. Although Worlebury was refortified at around the same time, the population of Cadbury may simply have been absorbed into a larger political unit. Northern Somerset at this time formed part of the tribal area of the Dobunni, among whom the abandonment of hillforts paralleled the development of settlement at important lowland route nodes. In view of Congresbury's later position as the focus of an intensive Romano-British pottery industry, the development of long distance trade may in part account for the hillforts eventual demise.

Chapter 2: The Romano-British Landscape

The Roman invasion and occupation of the country have frequently been seen as marking only a brief interlude in the long term development of the landscape. Whilst much of the Vale of Wrington was probably well utilised prior to the Roman conquest, the introduction of new agricultural technology, a stable administration and a large military market, led to a greater spread of settlement, agricultural investment and exploitation. However much of the activity during this period may be seen as the intensification of pre-existing processes, and although many new elements become visible in the archaeological record, the most profound and long lasting changes are perhaps the least visible. Little is known about the structure of landholding and local civil administration, but it is possible that their influence conditioned the shape of the subsequent political landscape and determined the extent of the later manor and parish.

It is as yet unclear precisely when the romanisation of the area first began. Contacts between south-eastern Britain and the expanding Roman empire are known to have been commonplace in the 2nd century BC and by the end of the 1st century BC, trade with Rome was probably widespread throughout much of the south. The Dobunni of northern Somerset however, would appear to have been hostile towards Rome (Costen 1992: 23). The rapid completion of the Fosse Way through eastern Somerset, following the invasion of AD 43, may indicate the roadways major purpose was to provide a strategic rear route for the movement of troops and supplies behind the area of active campaigning to the west (Jones & Mattingly 1990: 93-4). By AD 49, pigs of lead from mines at Charterhouse were already being exported and the existence here of a fort and small town (possibly called *Vebriacum*, Rivet & Smith 1979) suggests that the occupation of the area was probably complete by this date.

The immediate impact of the invasion upon the indigenous population may be reflected in the construction of a large, timbered building at Chew Park (now beneath Chew Valley Lake). Dated to the mid first century, this structure has been considered to represent a Tribute Barn where the native population may have been obliged to buy and sell their produce. Also in the Chew Valley, ditch digging episodes on native farmsteads at the same time would seem to herald an intensification of agricultural activity (Rahtz & Greenfield 1977). However the farmsteads themselves were little altered and the local population was probably absorbed fairly rapidly into the new social order.

Substantial evidence of early occupation within Congresbury is lacking. No structures of the early Roman period have been located and the majority of pottery and coinage found within the parish dates from the second century or later. On only two sites, at Honey Hall and Iwood Lane, was pottery of the first century identifiable. Both produced limited numbers of sherds from the first century kilns at Shepton Mallet and small quantities of Samian imported from Gaul. Despite this lack of evidence and the limited correlation between finds of Iron Age pottery and established Roman settlement it seems probable that existing occupation was widespread. Although the rash of sites identifiable from later pottery scatters may represent a substantial increase in settlement, many may well have been founded upon established occupation sites.

Without excavation, little can be discerned about the nature of local occupation, although at least 7 sites can be confirmed.

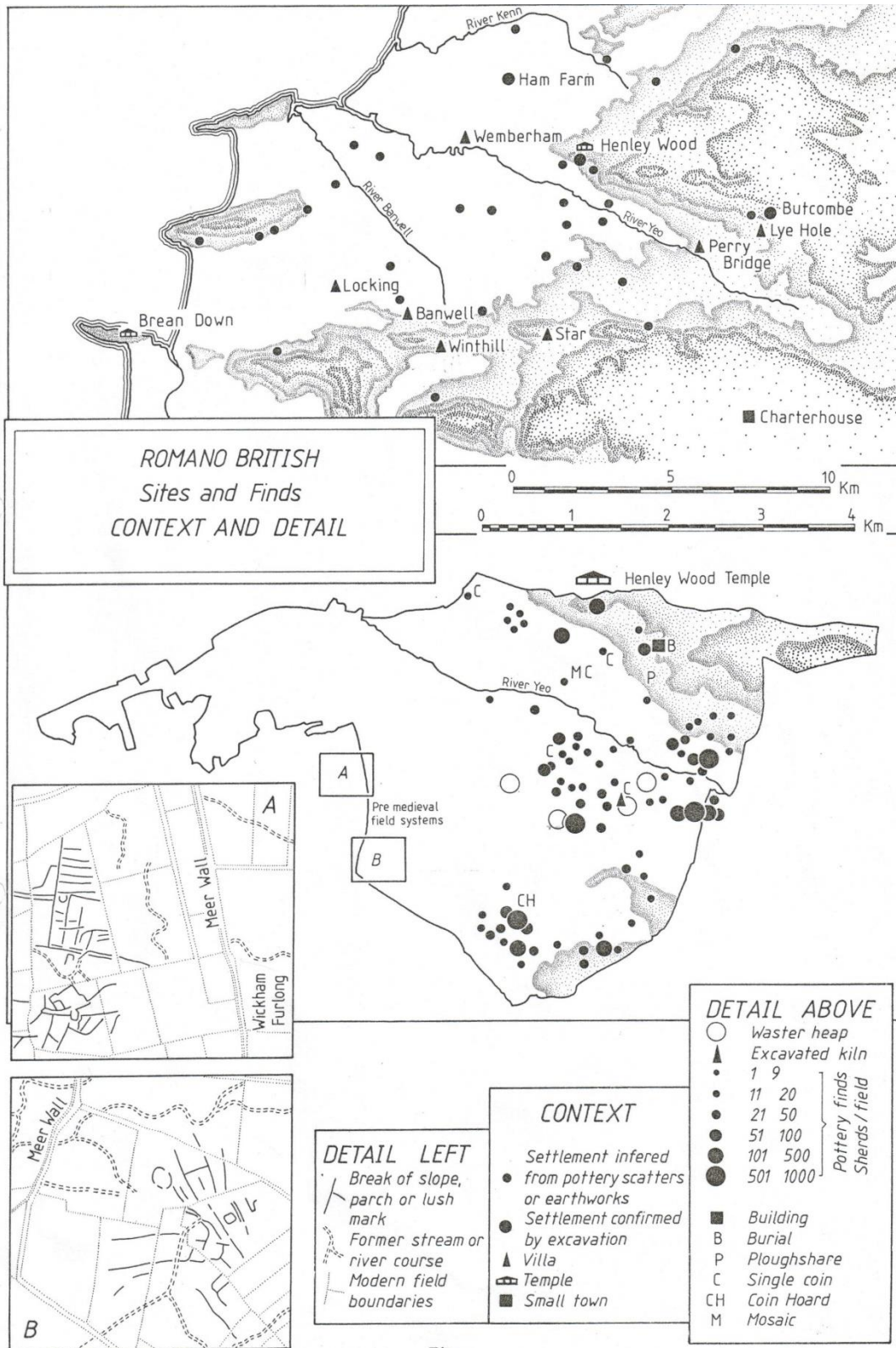


Fig 3: The Roman landscape of Congresbury and context

Whilst the existence of a substantial industrial settlement may possibly be inferred from a wide but localised distribution of pottery kiln waster heaps, most occupation was undoubtedly agricultural. Honing stones were the most common artefact, apart from pottery, recovered during the course of the parish survey. Quern fragments implying grain milling occurred with limited frequency and a ploughshare from Sharpham Cottage testifies to arable cultivation. In common with other romanised sites such as Row of Ashes farm at Butcombe, native circular, timber dwellings were probably replaced by rectangular, stone built structures. Heavy stone and fragmentary scatters of pennant roof tile have been located on all the identified Romano-British occupation sites within the parish. Most may well have been similar to the small, rectangular, two roomed building discovered (but now lost) near Woodlands in the 19th century.

With only limited amounts of ploughland available for examination, the full extent of Romano-British settlement is difficult to determine. Random finds in unploughed areas strongly suggest that a number of sites await discovery. An absence of Romano-British material from the western half of the parish is almost certainly misleading. Numerous isolated finds from the moorland to the west of Congresbury suggests an equally intensive usage of these areas. Romano-British settlement and corn driers have been found on Kenn Moor to the north and both field names and aerial photographic evidence point to pre-medieval settlement on the western fringes of Congresbury itself. In the south-western corner of the parish, a series of circular enclosures and a small, regular field system, clearly visible from the air (CPE/UK 2472. No.4039), is overlain by later fields whose origins are almost certainly medieval or earlier (see Chapter 5). In Puxton, a series of sub-rectangular enclosures and possible building platforms lie adjacent to fields within Congresbury bearing the name Wickham Furlong. Limited quantities of Romano-British material have been recovered from this area and the intimate connection between the *wickham* field name and Romano-British occupation has recently been discussed in detail by Costen (Costen 1992: 58).

The siting of such settlements suggests that sea defences and river embankments, unknown in the area prior to the Roman occupation, had probably been established at an early date. No structural evidence of Roman engineering has been identified along the adjacent coastline, but Romano-British material from the lowlands of Kewstoke and Wick-St-Lawrence would tend to indicate potentially extensive reclamation of areas that in the Iron Age were almost certainly estuarine saltmarsh.

Contextually, the pattern of identified settlement would appear to fit well into that already established for the Vale of Wrington, one of villa estates supported most probably by tenanted rural farmsteads. By the third century, a substantial villa had replaced previous occupation adjacent to the tidal River Yeo at Wemberham (now in Yatton). However, whilst the Wemberham villa is certainly of a scale and adornment to suggest it's position as a focus of aristocratic power in the area, it's relationship to other elements of the romanised landscape is unclear.

Industrial activity in the form of pottery manufacture was widespread within the area of the present village from the mid third century. The approximate location of a number of kilns being determinable from the identification of discarded waste. Excavated evidence

suggests a seasonal, but substantial scale of manufacture supplying an extensive market, with products of the Congresbury kilns being widely distributed throughout the area. Sherds of Congresbury type fabrics occur throughout the Vale of Wrington, as far north as Sea Mills on the River Avon and in many localities to the south of the Mendips. Much of this material was probably distributed by river and coastal traffic. Docking facilities were recorded at Wemberham and the possibility of a small port located within Congresbury cannot be ignored.

The widespread distribution of local pottery throughout the modern village presents difficulties in differentiating occupation sites. However, the distribution of non-indigenous pottery, though not of substantial quantity, would seem to indicate a potential clustering of settlement in this area. A number of random coin finds from the village and the reputed discovery of a fragment of mosaic at Clarence Court (HER46481) may indicate the existence of a settlement, perhaps no more than a small village, but with the trappings of more urbanised society.

The romanised landscape of Congresbury in the second and third centuries was thus almost certainly well occupied with a variety of settlement forms. Wemberham may still be regarded as perhaps the principle focus of a potentially extensive estate, which, relative to other villas in the area, may have extended eastwards as far as Wrington and westwards to the sea. The internal economy of this estate was equally varied. Arable cultivation probably occupied much of the better drained soils in the east of the present parish. Diminishing quantities of pottery away from centres of occupation suggest the existence of intensively manured arable fields close to settlement, with less intensively used land at a greater distance. The existence of corn driers on Kenn Moor would indicate that similar areas within Congresbury may also have been cultivated. However on villa estates occupying similar ecological settings, excavation has shown that cattle were of primary importance. Iron Age grazing traditions may well have continued in these areas on a potentially more intensive basis.

Woodland may also have been important and that which existed was almost certainly well managed. Charcoal provided the major form of fuel for the pottery kilns and excavated material shows the use of ash and alder, both typical of the local, calcareous soils. The kilns were active for over 100 years with a peak of production apparent in the late third and early fourth centuries, and a continued supply of timber would have been a significant factor in their continuation. Estimates of fuel consumption for Romano-British brick kilns in Gloucestershire suggest up to twenty tons of timber may have been necessary for each firing of a kiln covering an area of up to 300 sq. ft. Though far smaller, the excavated Congresbury kilns measuring only 25 sq. ft. in extent (Usher & Lilly 1963), each firing may still have consumed up to a ton of timber, representing approximately one sixteenth of an acre of woodland.

By the middle of the fourth century, political unrest in the heart of the Roman empire was being marked by economic decline on the fringes, possibly exasperated in northern Somerset by barbarian raids (Branigan 1976). Evidence marking a dramatic decline of romanised rural society is well defined in the archaeological record, but recent writers have highlighted the breakdown and eventual collapse of the money economy as being of more potential significance than unproven raids (Leech 1977). Faced with increasing

insecurity, markets declined, cultivation diminished and estate incomes were reduced. Many local villas have provided strong indications of a lack of maintenance resulting in their eventual destruction, though occupation frequently continued on an impoverished scale. Coin evidence dates the latest occupation of Wemberham to AD 361, but excavation has provided little indication of its subsequent fate. Star villa burned down and though reoccupied for a short period thereafter was finally abandoned c AD 364. Banwell villa was not occupied beyond the mid 4th century and only coin evidence suggests that Locking villa may have survived into the fifth century.

Pottery production within Congresbury also seems to have diminished or ceased in the mid fourth century. Coin Hoards such as that recovered by the Revd. Skinner from Honey Hall in 1830 may reflect the sudden reduction in the medium of exchange and its consequent increase in value. The hoard of 133 coins of the younger Constantinus, Constans and Magnentius, are all of the mid fourth century, the latter being dated to AD 350-353. That many hoards were never reclaimed may also indicate increasing social unrest. In Henley Wood adjacent to Cadbury Hill, a Roman temple constructed in the early third century was wrecked in the later fourth, although the site continued to be used as a cemetery.

The full effect of this economic decline on the landscape is unknown. Following the withdrawal of Roman administration in AD 407, the money economy collapsed entirely. With no markets for whom to supply surplus grain and taxes no longer being collected, surviving villa estates would have had little use for labour. Tenant farmers may have continued to farm on a less intensive scale, probably reverting to a pastoral economy as at Row of Ashes where former arable fields reverted to grassland. Marine clays seal many Roman sites below the 5m contour suggesting considerable settlement desertion following a breakdown in drainage and sea defences. A decline in population is thus certain and as Costen has suggested, a paucity of evidence for the fifth century would indicate that the end of Roman rule was marked by the complete dislocation of the economy at all levels of society.

Chapter 3: The Dark Age and Saxon Landscape

The absence of any substantial physical evidence of post-Roman activity throughout much of Congresbury is to some extent ameliorated by information provided by excavations upon Cadbury Hill. Chance finds, field names and evidence from other excavated sites within the area make an assessment of the "Dark Ages" that followed the withdrawal of Rome somewhat less than obscure. Yet the evidence is limited and the development of the landscape over the following 500 years can only be charted in the broadest terms.

The full extent of post-Roman settlement decline is unknown but was probably substantial in view of the events outlined in the previous chapter. No evidence of fifth century occupation has been derived from any of the identified Romano-British sites within the parish and it is only the close proximity of medieval settlement to several that provides any suggestion of continuity. To some extent, the lack of evidence is unsurprising. At Row of Ashes fifth century occupation was marked by a reversion to timber buildings and the use of less durable, hand-made pottery. Subsequent development and agricultural activity is thus likely to have destroyed all but the deepest deposits which are unlikely to be recovered without excavation.

The reoccupation of Cadbury Hill may well have been stimulated by the political uncertainty and aggression of the period. Finds from the site, in particular Gaulish Samian and later imported fine wares from the eastern Mediterranean may indicate an attempted continuation of some form of romanised lifestyle by an existing elite. Excavations between 1968 and 1973 revealed the existence of at least eleven different structures

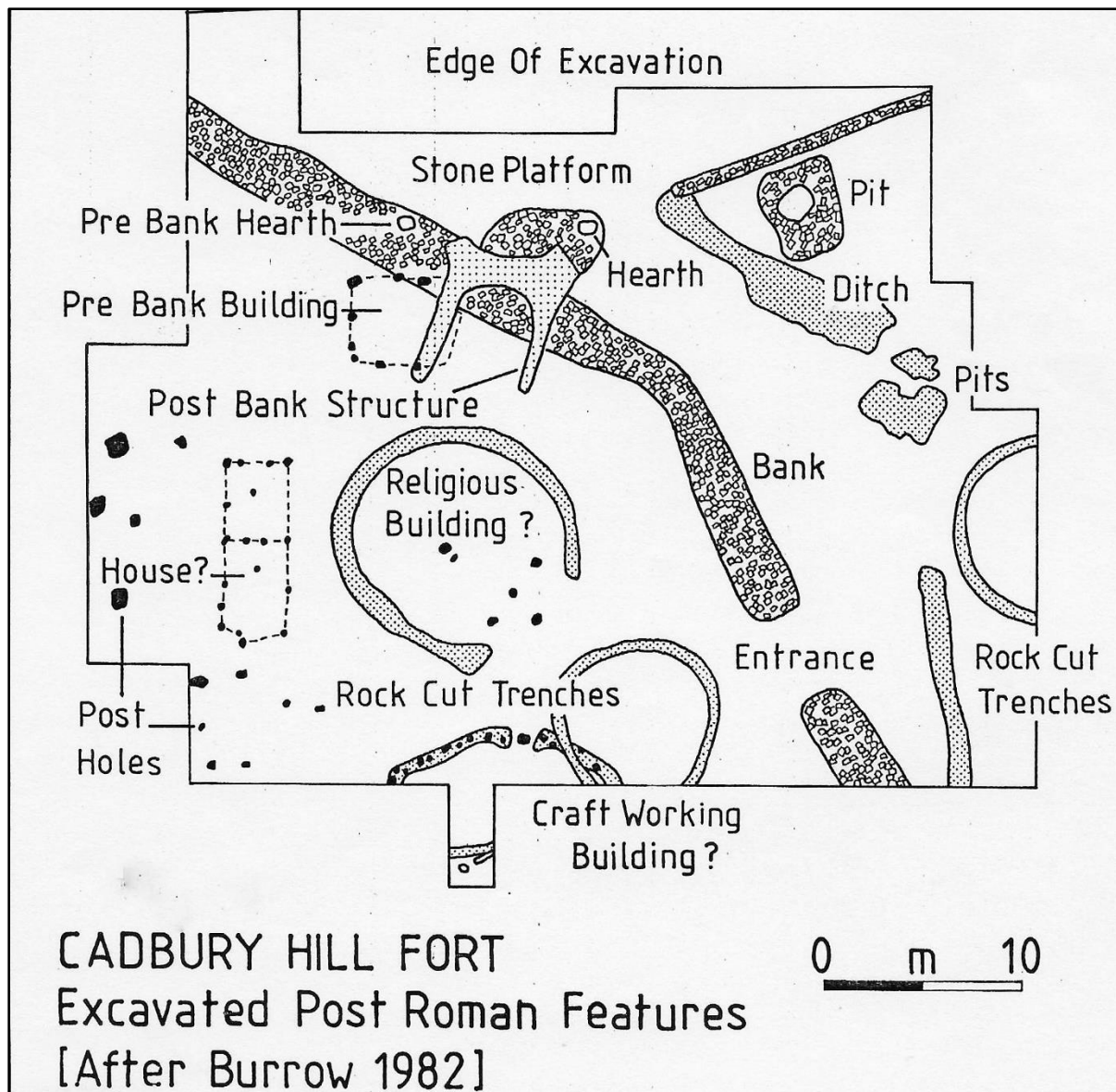


Fig 4: Post-Roman features at Cadbury hill fort

the superimposition of features representing an occupation of some duration or of several phases between AD 430 and 600. The association of late Roman material with two hearths and a rectangular building dated to between AD 430 and 450 would certainly seem to represent a continuation of Roman traditions, though of what precise form is uncertain.

The erection of a stone based rampart between AD 450 and 480 may be seen as a defensive measure but the structure is relatively insubstantial and could as easily represent a partitioning of what would seem to be becoming a substantial settlement. Based on the excavated evidence, Burrow has suggested that by the sixth century, the hillfort would appear to have become a centre of social importance supporting a

complex community. Bone fragments indicative of domestic activity were recovered in substantial quantities associated with the remains of eight huts and a possible long house dated to the early or mid sixth century. Amphorae and fine North African table wares illustrate the extensive links of this community who also maintained a local craft tradition represented by the recovery of crucible fragments and evidence of fine metal and glass working. A religious function of the site has also been postulated from the apparently deliberate placement of amphorae fragments and bone pendants in post holes within a rock cut, circular building.

Although the evidence suggests that cattle were slaughtered on site, the volume of bone, not only of cattle, but also of sheep, pigs, goats, horse and deer, would indicate extensive usage of the surrounding area. The presence of high status imports and local products infers the probability that the occupants of Cadbury Hill exercised both political and economic control over a number of as yet unlocated lowland settlements. Relative to other adjacent hillforts which have produced evidence of late or post Roman activity, a territory broadly similar to that postulated for the early Iron Age settlement is definable. Including the Wemberham villa site and assuming the earliest occupants of the hillfort comprised an existing elite, this territory, which corresponds largely with the later parishes of Puxton, Yatton, Brockley and Congresbury itself, may possibly represent the outline of an earlier Roman estate

Throughout the sixth century Somerset lay to the west of the furthest incursions of the English. A stable political situation among petty local rulers may have been achieved by the spread of Christianity (Costen 1992: 79). Within the possible territorial unit surrounding Cadbury Hill, Congresbury itself is named after St Cyngar and the church of Chelvey is dedicated to St Bridget. Both are Celtic in origin and not English. The existence of a Celtic minster church within Congresbury is suggested by a later Saxon grant (c AD 888) by King Alfred to the Welsh ecclesiastic Asser, of everything which was within '... the two minsters which are called in the Saxon tongue *Congresbyr* and *Banwille*'. In the face of conflicting evidence, Burrow has argued against the siting of any minster within Cadbury Hillfort, despite the apparent religious nature of the excavated circular building and the proximity of a potential Christian cemetery in Henley Wood (Burrow 1981: 180).

The persistence of the Old Welsh personal name of *Cada* in the identification of Cadbury Hill and the earliest surviving transcript of St Cyngar's legend would also seem to place the location of a minster elsewhere. Dated to the 10th century, the earliest legend describes the foundation of St Cyngar's church as being within an area 'shut in by water and reed beds'. This suggests a lowland location and the site of the present church from where chaff tempered pottery of the sub-Roman period has been recovered (HER 00380) would appear the most logical alternative.

By the later seventh century, the political stability achieved by the Celtic societies was deteriorating, allowing the now unified West Saxon kingdom to the east the opportunity

of expansion (Costen 1992: 79). It seems probable that the English settlement of the area that was to become Somerset began soon after Cenwalh had fought the Welsh *aet Peonnum* c AD 658, traditionally identified as Penselwood on the border between Somerset, Dorset and Wiltshire. Archaeological evidence for the final phases of occupation upon Cadbury Hill give no precise date for its desertion nor any indication of major disruption as a result of the English advance, but an early Saxon charter may indicate that its eventual demise was accompanied by a substantial reorganisation of the existing sub-Roman estate.

Now lost, a charter of King Ine, dated to between AD 688 and 726, granting '*Seven hides at Predian* [Priddy] *and twenty hides at Conbusburie* [Congresbury]' to the church of Sherborne (Finberg 1964: 372), would seem to mark a considerable reduction in the size of the assumed sub-Roman estate. At Domesday, the hide of an estate was a measure of its taxable value by area, based on an earlier reckoning of the land required to support a family unit. Congresbury was still assessed at twenty hides in 1066, and the Domesday hide in Congresbury measured approximately 320 acres. (For a fuller discussion of the value of the Domesday hide see chapter 4). The twenty hides of the lost charter may thus be equivalent to approximately 6,400 acres, an area significantly smaller than the assumed size of the sub-Roman estate, but far greater than the present parish.

A reasonable indication for the extent and composition of this new estate can be gained from the limited documentary sources of later periods. Certainly Wick St Lawrence was included within this area, remaining an integral part of the post Domesday manor as consistently recorded in medieval and later documentation. Also determinable was the pasture of *Waimora*, which, according to the Domesday entry for Yatton belonged to Congresbury prior to 1066 (DB 6.14). The pasture is identified as Wemberham (Thorn & Thorn 1980: 317) and lay, together with a hide of land in the joint holding of Hildebert and a woman called Aethelrun. Hildebert's landholding included Hewish (Morland 1964: 94-98) and elements of Hewish Field lay within the manor of Congresbury in 1567. It would seem logical to include Hewish, to the south of the River Yeo, as an element of the Congresbury estate rather than as an existing part of Yatton. With its appurtenant pasture of Wemberham it may well represent the hide granted to Bishop Giso prior to 1066 (DB 1.21).

The final elements of this reduced estate may be represented firstly by a detached portion of Kewstoke, which lay sandwiched between Puxton, Congresbury and Banwell in 1840 and secondly by Puxton itself. Domesday describes Kewstoke as forming the primary holding of Gilbert son of Thorold (DB 42.1) and an additional half hide was granted to him from Congresbury, prior to 1086. Lands in Puxton and 'Stockes' also formed an as yet untraced sixteenth century freehold component of the manor of Congresbury belonging to John Jennings (BRO). Puxton may represent the other half hide granted prior to 1086 to Serlo de Burci. Evidence to suggest that Puxton comprised part of the pre-Conquest estate lies primarily in the arrangement of landholding across

it's modern boundaries. The Mere Wall which delimits the south western extent of Congresbury parish, bisects an extensive area of former common meadow known as The Dolemoors. Within these moors, whose name is derived from the Old English *dal*, meaning a share of land, tenants from only those areas later to be detached from the pre-Conquest estate continued to hold common rights until the nineteenth century. Other elements of Puxton parish lay within Congresbury itself in 1840, whilst detached portions of Wick St Lawrence were isolated within Puxton.

Whilst no physical evidence of settlement from the eighth to eleventh centuries has so far been located, place and field names give some indication of the broad, internal arrangements of this new estate. Hewish derives from *hiwisc*, meaning the land for the support of a family and may well represent a discrete, independent landholding pre-dating the English settlement of the area (Costen 1992: 95). Wick in it's context suggests a dependent farmstead, from the Old English *wic*, itself derived from the Latin *vicus*. Both names imply some continuity of settlement, if not in site then in situation. Two other possible references to the survival of an earlier settlement pattern may be indicated by the field names Walleys and Woolmers. Both may be derived from the Old English *wealh* or Welshman, suggesting the continued existence of some elements of Celtic society within the new English estate.

The spread of secondary English settlement is potentially illustrated by place names bearing the suffix *tun*, meaning enclosure or farmstead. Bourton indicates an outlying grange or corn farm (OE *bereton*). Icelton Puxton, in the twelfth century, *Pockerleston*, ... Field names containing the element *wyrth* may record individual farmsteads. Three survive in Congresbury, *Greene Worthe* in The Marsh, *The Worthe* at Hempshurd and *Worthayes* in Brinsea. All lie adjacent to medieval occupation but no archaeological evidence has been recovered to indicate earlier settlement. Recent work has suggested that a dispersed settlement pattern, as shown by place and field names describing scattered farmsteads and hamlets, was probably commonplace during the early to middle centuries of the English settlement. The concept of the multiple estate, within which dependent settlements served to supply the needs of a head place or *caput* is also well established (Glanville Jones et al). The possibility remains that for Congresbury, settlements such as Wick, Icelton, Bourton and Puxton, served to support the existence of a minster church, the presence of which has already been suggested. However, the fate of any such monastic community remains unknown. Costen has noted that there are no known benefactions to either Congresbury or Banwell and that probably, neither flourished under English rule (Costen 1992: 104). Few other details of the Saxon estate can be inferred. Congresbury possesses no descriptive charters for the Saxon period and despite the boundaries of neighbouring Banwell being fully described in a charter of the early tenth century, none of its topographic features can accurately be ascribed to Congresbury's present borders. The survival of such charters does however serve to indicate the distinct nature of these estates. Resources were probably well apportioned between them and although the evidence regarding it's internal structure is limited, Congresbury maintained it's integrity

for some 300 years suggesting it to be little effected by reorganisational change which is evident in the break-up of many other estates. Later evidence (see Chapter 4) indicates that Congressbury was not subject to the development of large scale open fields, nor to the early nucleation of settlement. Rather, individual farmsteads continued to form the basis for subsequent expansion. An infield/outfield system of cultivation, possibly similar to that envisaged for the Romano-British period may well have continued in operation until the later Saxon era.

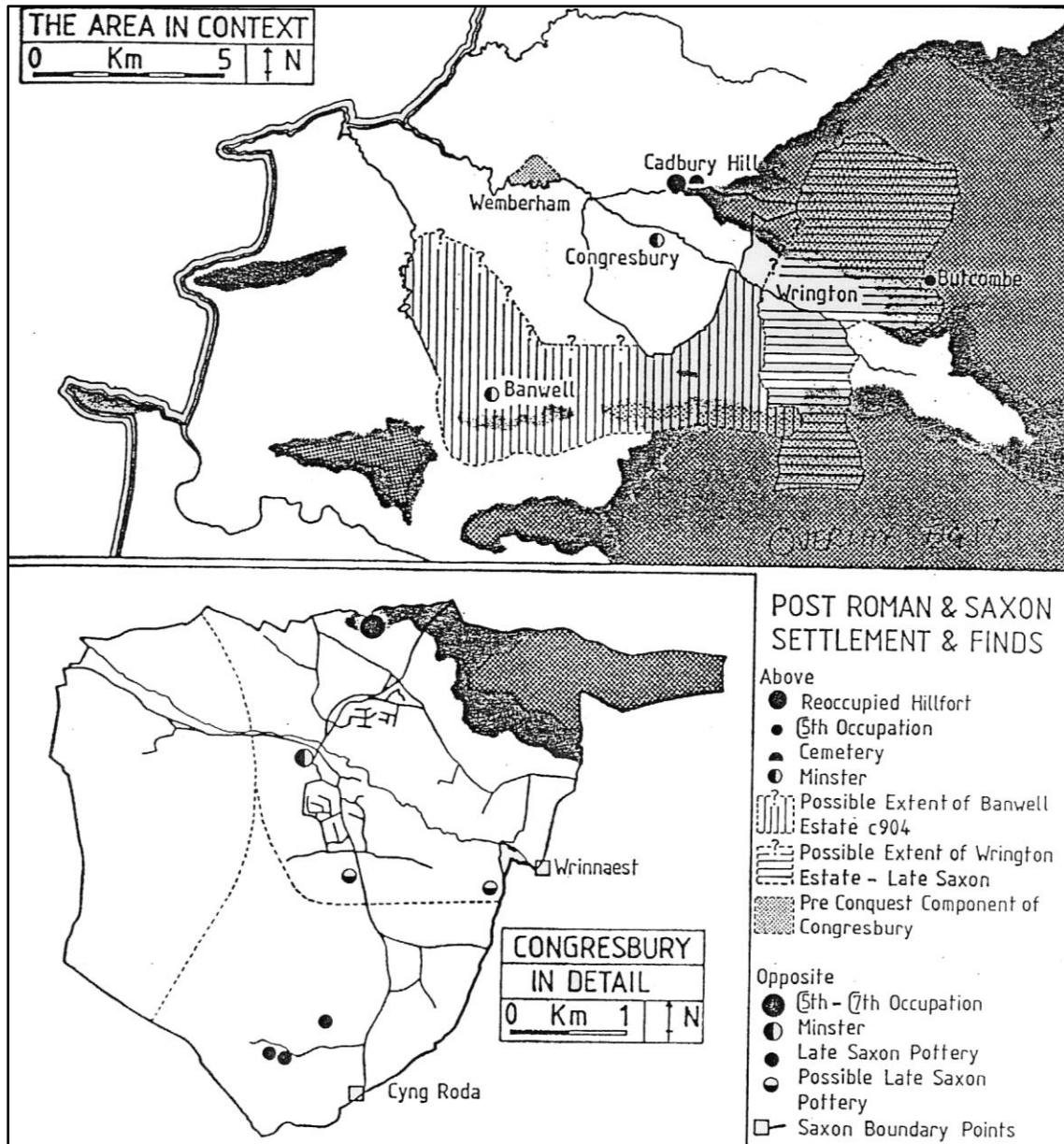


Fig 5: Post-Roman Congressbury in context

Chapter 4: The Domesday Landscape

The integrity of the Congresbury estate would appear to have been maintained until shortly before the Norman Conquest. In the early eleventh century, the lands of 'Kunigresbiria and Banewelle', which had been granted to Asser in the ninth century, passed to Dudoc, Bishop of Wells (Finberg 1964). On the death of Dudoc in 1060, his estates were seized by the King. Although Banwell was returned to church ownership in its entirety shortly after the Conquest, Congresbury, considerably reduced in extent, was to remain in royal hands until the thirteenth century.

Although archaeology provides a substantial body of information relating to the distribution of later medieval settlement, it is the existence of three documents which provide a fundamental basis for understanding the development of the medieval landscape as a whole. The first is the Domesday survey of 1086. The second, a manorial survey compiled in 1567. The establishment of links between these two documents, together with the evidence of archaeology allows some explanation of the processes by which the pattern of settlement, still largely visible in the eighteenth century, came into being. The third document is the Geld Inquest of 1084. Comparisons between this and Domesday itself indicate the occurrence of substantial changes between 1066 and 1086 which may well have initiated subsequent development.

The Domesday entry for Congresbury is as follows (additional information from *Liber Exoniensis* included in [])

Cungresberie. Earl Harold held it before 1066; it paid tax for 20 hides. Land for 50 ploughs, of which 5 hides are in lordship; 6 ploughs there; 12 slaves; 34 villeins and 34 borders with 34 ploughs [and 9½ hides]. 2 mills which pay 17s 6d; meadow, 250 acres; pasture, 2 leagues long and ½ league wide; woodland, 2½ leagues long and ½ league wide. [2 cobs; 20 cattle; 40 pigs; 200 sheep; 40 goats]. It pays £28 15s of white silver [when William the Sheriff acquired it, as much].

Of this manor's land three thanes, Alfward, Ordric and Ordwulf, hold 3 hides [of thaneland]. They held them themselves before 1066; they could not be separated from the lord of the manor [nor can they]. In lordship; 3 ploughs; [2 hides and ½ virgate]; 4 slaves; 6 villeins and 17 borders with 3½ ploughs [and 3½ virgates]. Meadow 20 acres; woodland 30 acres. [12 cattle; 10 pigs]. Value of the whole, 60s.

Bishop Maurice holds this manor's church with ½ hide. Value 20s

From this manor's land have been taken away 2 hides which lay there before 1066.

Bishop Giso holds 1; value £4; [when he acquired it, as much].

Serlo of Burcy and Gilbert son of Thorold hold the other, [each hold ½ hide and the values are 20s each].

Domesday is essentially a tax assessment. One of many imposed in the early years following the Norman conquest. But one whose particular attributes of context and

detail shed valuable light on the areas landscape history. Contextually, Domesday follows only two years after a previously levied geld in 1084. It was compiled in the face of potential invasion and spasmodic internal rebellion, in response to which the Conqueror had dispersed his great army across much of the country. Logistically therefore, William required to know the extent of resources available to his dispersed forces. In addition, in the face of a massive shift in ownership following the Conquest, on whom did the burden of taxation now fall?

Domesday is thus as much about tenure as tax and it is through tenure, in particular the land holding of the unfree peasantry, that it becomes possible (in Congresbury at least) to understand the data offered by the Inquest.

Crucial to this understanding is the acquisition of a real value for the Domesday hide. This early measure of tax assessment, based on an abstract idea of the land for the support of a family, varied in size from estate to estate, dependent on local conditions. In Congresbury, the Domesday hide comprised four virgates, a term still used to describe the form of landholding which in the mid sixteenth century was known as a yardland. It is possible to establish for Congresbury a virtually direct correlation between the number of virgates assessable for tax in 1086 (i.e. those held by the villeins) and the varied forms of land tenure described as 'Old Auster' in the survey of the manor of Congresbury in 1567.

Seven forms of 'Old Auster' tenure are described by the survey of 1567 (BMC 04235). Of these, yardlands, half yardlands, fardle lands and eight acres are mathematically related in the ratio 8:4:2:1. The yardlands averaging 80 acres in size and the remainder in direct proportion. This tends to suggest that the lesser forms of tenure are the product of the breakup of single yardlands. Within Congresbury there are no specific documentary references to the occurrence of this process. However, it is not unknown. Coincidentally included with a grant of land in Wick St Lawrence, a half virgate of land in the manor of Wellington is shown to be '...lately divided into two parts,.. a containing half a fardle,.. and four [further] closes.' (SRS 49. 173).

Similarly, five bovier lands are equivalent in size to a further yardland. Evidence to suggest that these are also the product of the breakup of a single yardland may be noted both in the location of their tenements and that each held one perch (or the fifth part) of Hempshurd Mead Wall.

Only the 'Old Auster' tenements known as 'letter bearers' and 'mundayslands' pose distinct problems in these relationships, breaking into fractional holdings of less than a complete virgate. In manors other than Congresbury, early customals frequently describe 'writ bearers' as the holders of half virgates (e.g. North Curry) In Congresbury, the situation would seem to have been the same. The combined size of the two tenements, which between them supported only one message, was equivalent to only

half a virgate or yardland. However, the mundayslands, of which four existed in 1567, maintained only 60 acres or three-quarters of a virgate between them.

Only the Dean and Chapter of Wells held other 'Old Auster' tenements within Congresbury and a comparable survey of slightly later date (1572) gives details of these (WCL ADD/2881, ff31-32v). Despite the anomalies observable in the pattern of breakup, tabulated and totaled together, the correlation between the total number of yardlands in 1567 and the number of virgates held by Domesday villeins is remarkably consistent

Fig 6: Tenurial relationships 1086-1567

Table 1. Tenural Relationships, 1086-1567.

Holding and Area	Yard Lands	Half Yards	Fardle Lands	Eight Acres	Bovier Lands	Munday Lands	Letter Bearer
Brinsea	1	8 [1]	13	12		1	1
Venus Street	1	3	1	7			
Middletown		7	7 [1]	16	4	3	1
Above The Yeo				7	1		
Land	1		1	5			
Marsh	2	9	2				
W-St-L	2	9	9 [4]	3			
Total Holdings	7	37	38	50	5	4	2
Total Yardlands by Area	7	18.5	9.5	6.25	1	0.75	0.5
Total Number of Yardlands	43.5						
Total Number of Domesday Virgates	43.5						

For Congresbury therefore, the stability of the total number of virgates or yardlands suggests that the value of the Domesday hide is 320 acres (4 × 80 acres), considerably larger than the accepted estimate for many areas of 120 acres. Further substantiation for this figure may be derived from an analysis of the estates resource base as summarised by the Domesday statistics.

Within the immediate post-conquest estate lay 275 acres of meadow, 1440 acres of pasture and 1830 acres of woodland (Multipliers after Rackham, 1986). Assuming the remaining land to be cultivated and that the Domesday formula 'Land for 50 ploughs' indicates arable, then from a total of 18 hides or 5760 acres, 2215 acres were under the plough. A not excessive figure considering the physical environment of the area. Partial confirmation of this figure may be inferred from later documentation. Although it has recently been noted that there need be no direct relationship between the amount of ploughland and the number of recorded plough teams (as expressed by the the Domesday formulae, 'land for 'x' ploughs' and 'with 'x' ploughs') some correlation may

exist. The *carucate*, (literally, ploughland) used infrequently as an areal measure in several medieval documents relating to Congresbury, is in one, described as being 43 acres (SRS. 12, 1898) The area of Domesday ploughland divided by the number of Domesday ploughs gives a figure of 47.6 acres, similar enough to suggest that for Congresbury at least, a reasonable estimate of Domesday ploughland is obtainable and that the acreage determined for the Domesday hide is realistic.

The establishment of such links has considerable implications for the understanding of the evolution of Congresbury's settlement pattern and field systems. However it remains unknown when such a system of landholding was developed. The *villani* and *bordarii* represent part of the social gradations inherited by the Normans (Costen 1992: 168) and the virgate existed as a measure of land prior to 1066. However, comparisons between the Domesday Inquest and the previously levied geld of 1084 show clearly that the Congresbury estate underwent a fundamental reorganisation in landholding between 1066 and 1086.

The Geld Inquest notes that:

'In the Hundred of Congresberie are 19 hides. Thence the king has 13 shillings and 6 pence of his geld from 2 hides and 1 virgate. And the king and his barons have 5 hides and 1 virgate in demesne. Of these hides the king has 3½ hides in demesne. Ordric 3 virgates and Ordwulf half a hide and Alward half a hide. The king has no geld from 11 hides which the king's villeins of Congresberie hold, nor for half a hide which the villeins of the church of Congresberie hold. From this Hundred 69 shillings remain to be paid'.

The probable identity of the two hides of land alienated from the Congresbury estate between 1066 and 1086 have already been noted (Chapter 3). The retention within the later parish of Congresbury of areas titheable to the parishes of Puxton and Kewstoke would strongly suggest that if such areas represented fragments of early virgate farmsteads, then the process of their breakup had begun prior to the Conquest itself. The 18 hides remaining in 1086 comprised Wick-St-Lawrence and Congresbury, the two primary components of the post-conquest manor. Within that area, demesne lands, or those cultivated for the lord's profit, were extended. The king's demesne increased by 1½ hides between 1084 and 1086, whilst those of his barons increased by 1¼ hides in total. The redistribution of lands between the king and his barons would almost certainly have been at the expense of the villeins upon whom an increasing burden of demesne labour service would have fallen. A consequent restructuring of the basic virgate tenement by its division into even smaller tenurial units would thus have released additional labour and increased the taxable basis of the post-Conquest estate.

The close correspondence between the number of Domesday virgates and the total of post-medieval yardlands suggests that whilst virgates could be subdivided into progressively smaller units, no new virgate tenements were created after 1086. The seven single yardland tenements still in existence in 1567 would thus potentially

represent Domesday landholdings. An absence of archaeological evidence prevents the precise identification of any Domesday occupation site and despite pre-Conquest pottery being identifiable close to the assumed foci of several of the virgate holdings, there is no direct evidence to suggest that the visible distribution is based on a pre-existing pattern of earlier settlement. Only the assumption that the Saxon settlement pattern comprised one of dispersed farmsteads and hamlets may indicate that the broad pattern of post-Conquest settlement remained generally unchanged, but secondary settlement expanded rapidly in the years following the Conquest.

A generalised picture of the Domesday landscape and settlement pattern may however be reconstructed from early surviving field names and later documentation. Many, though not all, of the tenements described by the survey of 1567 can still be located and an analysis of their landholding shows direct relationships to exist between a large number. Throughout most of the fields described as being 'common' in the sixteenth century it is clear that only tenants of landholdings which together add up to single yardlands are the occupants. In some cases, the messuages of these tenants form distinct clusters. Again, these would suggest the foci of Domesday settlement and in addition, the nature of landholding within their fields would appear to substantiate the absence of early large scale open field development.

The distribution and organisation of Domesday's 2,215 acres of arable is thus uncertain. Field shape gives some indication of its maximum extent at the height of the medieval period, but this was almost certainly an increase on that cultivated in 1086. Although demesne lands comprised extensive consolidated blocks in 1567, much of the arable held by tenants was severally enclosed and frequently lay adjacent to their tenements. The observable extension of demesne farming between 1084 and 1086 implies an expansion of arable cultivation, but by what method is unclear. A similar expansion of cultivation by tenants may have been achieved by the intake of less intensively farmed land surrounding their tenements. Although such a process may have initially produced an apparently 'open' landscape, there is no indication that such a system was regulated to the extent that a true common field system developed. Indeed, with excessive amounts of pasture available, the necessity for regulation was diminished and may never have truly existed.

The extent of Domesday woodland, pasture and meadow is perhaps more readily inferred from field names but as with settlement, its location can only be generalised. With no precise chronology of reclamation or woodland clearance, the earliest recorded field names indicative of these elements may well be recalling features of an earlier landscape.

Field names recording woodland and woodland clearance illustrate this most clearly. The Old English suffix *hyrst* meaning a copse is confined solely to the moorlands and its broad distribution in these areas implies a well wooded landscape existed here in the Saxon period. This would seem to be confirmed by the Saxon boundaries for Banwell which

record frequent woodland on the moors. By the fourteenth century, the majority of fields bearing this name in Congresbury are described as pasture, but with no earlier documentation, the date of their clearance remains conjectural (See Chapter 11). Domesday records nearly 2,000 acres of woodland within the manor of Congresbury, almost one third of the total area. It therefore seems probable that field names indicative of woodland or woodland clearances may well refer to woodland that was largely extant in 1086 but almost certainly well preserved and cultivated.

The Domesday description of *Waimora* (Wemberham) as pasture clearly indicates that the moors also provided a valuable grazing resource, although it seems unlikely that the substantial and probably organised reclamation of these areas occurred until a later date. Meadow, of which Congresbury possessed 275 acres in 1086, probably flanked the banks of the Yeo and the fringes of the moors as the distribution of mead field names suggests for the medieval and post-medieval periods.

Without any further archaeological or documentary information, the impression of the Domesday landscape presented in Fig 10 will always remain generalised. The estate of Congresbury in 1086 possessed a church, two mills and was well occupied, with a population in excess of 500. The landscape was almost certainly fully utilised, either on an intensive or extensive basis. Subsequent change was to build on foundations laid in previous epochs but probably completed within twenty years of the Norman Conquest.

Chapter 5: The Medieval and Post-Medieval Landscape

The gradual social and economic changes of the early medieval period are still partially visible in the physical fabric of Congresbury village and the landscape of its parish. Whilst both documentation and archaeology remain limited in scope until the fourteenth century, subsequent evidence imposed upon the foundations laid in previous chapters enable the generalised development of the medieval landscape to be charted. The history and geography of the post-medieval period is more readily accessible. Although far from comprehensive, documentation from the mid sixteenth century is prolific, touching upon most relevant aspects of the landscape of the parish.

As already described in Chapter 4, an expansion of demesne farming at the expense of the peasantry and increases in taxation in the years immediately following the Conquest, may well have been a primary factor in the breakup of the Domesday settlement pattern. Although no new virgate tenements were created after 1086, the division of peasant holdings into smaller units would have realised an increase in rents and additional labour to service the growing demesne demanded for the support of a more thoroughly militarised landholding class (Costen 1992: 168).

Whilst such events, together with an expansion in population during the early medieval period (Havinden 1980: 107), may have been a principle reason for the production of Congresbury's later medieval settlement pattern, the overall influence of royal possession upon the estate between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries remains unknown. As the centre of a Hundred of the same name, Congresbury clearly maintained an administrative function during this period, the Hundred being the basic unit of local government adopted by the Conqueror from the pre-Conquest system of administration. There are however, no recorded royal visits to the area and the primary interest of the Crown in the estate almost certainly lay in the revenue it received from its tenants. The only surviving indication of Congresbury's royal possession lies in the name of Kings Wood, marking the brief, but possibly significant extension of Forest Law to include the area during the twelfth century.

The final definition of that area which was later to comprise the parish of Congresbury as described by the Tithe map of 1840, was probably achieved at some time in the mid twelfth century. A series of disputes between the Prior of Bruton and the vicar of Congresbury concerning the chapel of *'Pockelerston'* (Puxton) and mention of the parish of *'Cerceles'* (Churchill), would seem to indicate a hardening of territorial divisions during this time (SRS 8: 30-32). The manor of Congresbury was restored to Bishop Joceylin in 1215 and in the same year, the new church of Congresbury received its endowment. By 1227, Wick St Lawrence was maintaining a dependent chapel, itself valued separately from the church in 1292. Wick remained an integral component of the manor of Congresbury until the mid sixteenth century, by which time, its independent parochial status had been confirmed.

The manor acquired by the bishop at a Fee Farm rent of £35 was clearly a valuable acquisition. Fee Farm rents usually representing around one quarter of an item's true value (Adams. 1976, 24). The bishop may have rapidly capitalised on his new gain, for by 1227 the manor had been disafforested and granted the licence of a weekly market and yearly fair (Cal Chart Rolls 17 February 1227). Although documentary evidence is lacking and physical evidence is tenuous, the restoration to the bishopric would seem to mark the beginnings of an expansive phase of landscape development that was almost certainly complete by 1300.

By the early fourteenth century, such trends may well have been reversed. Surviving documents would seem to show demesne farming at this time to be contracting as pastures were leased and labour services were commuted for cash rents. In 1302, 106 plough works and 1260 autumn works were commuted for 1d each, yielding the Bishop an income of 113s 9d. In the same year, many of his demesne pastures were being leased for rents varying from 7s 4d for the pasture of '*Oldelond*' (In Wick) to 60s for the '*pastura de Lakes*', probably Pillfield in the Marsh (PRO SC6 1131/3). Subsequent accounts reveal similar figures, yet too few documents survive to assess major social or economic trends on the basis of Congresbury alone. Persistent harvest failures and famines throughout the country, are known to have characterised the first quarter of the fourteenth century. Plagues, which from 1349 may have decimated an already weakened population remained endemic until the later fifteenth century. The precise effects of such events on the local population will always remain unknown, but it seems fairly certain that a new economic order was established as a result.

Later fourteenth century court rolls show a fluid land market amongst Congresbury's peasantry whilst the influence of the Bishopric appeared to be gradually declining in the face of a more assertive and locally active, Dean and Chapter. Two thirds of the profits of Congresbury's prosperous church had been granted to the Chapter in 1259 (SRS 7: 59) and in 1391, the bishops buildings within the manor were demolished on consent of the Chapter by virtue of being '*... utterly ruinous and altogether useless*' (SRS 56: 87). The manor however remained to the Bishopric until the early sixteenth century, passing back to the Crown in 1548. Subsequently it was leased to George Owen and in 1562, sold to William Carr. In 1586, under the will of the latter's son, John Carr, the manor was bequeathed to the foundation of Queen Elizabeth's Hospital in Bristol, with whom it remained until the early years of this century.

The effects of social and economic change throughout the following centuries may still be seen in some of the substantial buildings which still survive within the parish. Their development following the gradual rise of a more confident, Yeoman class, hastening the demise of copy-hold tenure, which was extinct throughout much of the parish by 1650. The spread of leaseholding was encouraged by a series of extensive land sales between 1594 and 1601 which saw the alienation of many tenements and nearly 2,000 acres of manorial land. The raising of entry fines by new, improving landlords may have been one of the primary reasons for the abandonment of a number of tenements prior to 1700, aided by a further decline in population in the early seventeenth century (Cran 1983: 86).

On a broad scale, changes in agricultural practice and the introduction of new crops were stimulating further modifications in the landscape. Although Congresbury remained largely pastoral, developments in husbandry, particularly through an increase in fodder production, led to greater stocking levels and demands for improvement to the areas drainage.

The final, most significant event in the development of the post-medieval landscape prior to 1840, was that of the Congresbury Enclosure of 1814. The full extent of the award involved only 820 acres of which less than 200 acres were subject to physical partition. Yet, in the final abolition of the 'Old Auster' tenement, the award marked the end of an agricultural system that had conditioned the course of landscape development for over 800 years.

Medieval and post-medieval Congresbury are here viewed in detail through through the rental divisions described by the manorial survey of 1567. Those being Brinsea, Land, The Marsh, Venney Street, Middletown and Above the Yeo. The basis of these divisions is uncertain. However, the boundaries between each area, whilst remaining indistinct, are almost certainly not arbitrary and would seem most likely to be related to the administration of the early medieval manor.

Modern village development has overridden the distinctions between Venney Street, Middletown and Above the Yeo which are as a consequence treated here as a single entity. Likewise, the moorland and woodland to which all tenants had some form of access is similarly considered. The small manor of Iwood, which from the thirteenth century maintained its discrete independence forms the final element in this study of the medieval and post-medieval landscape.

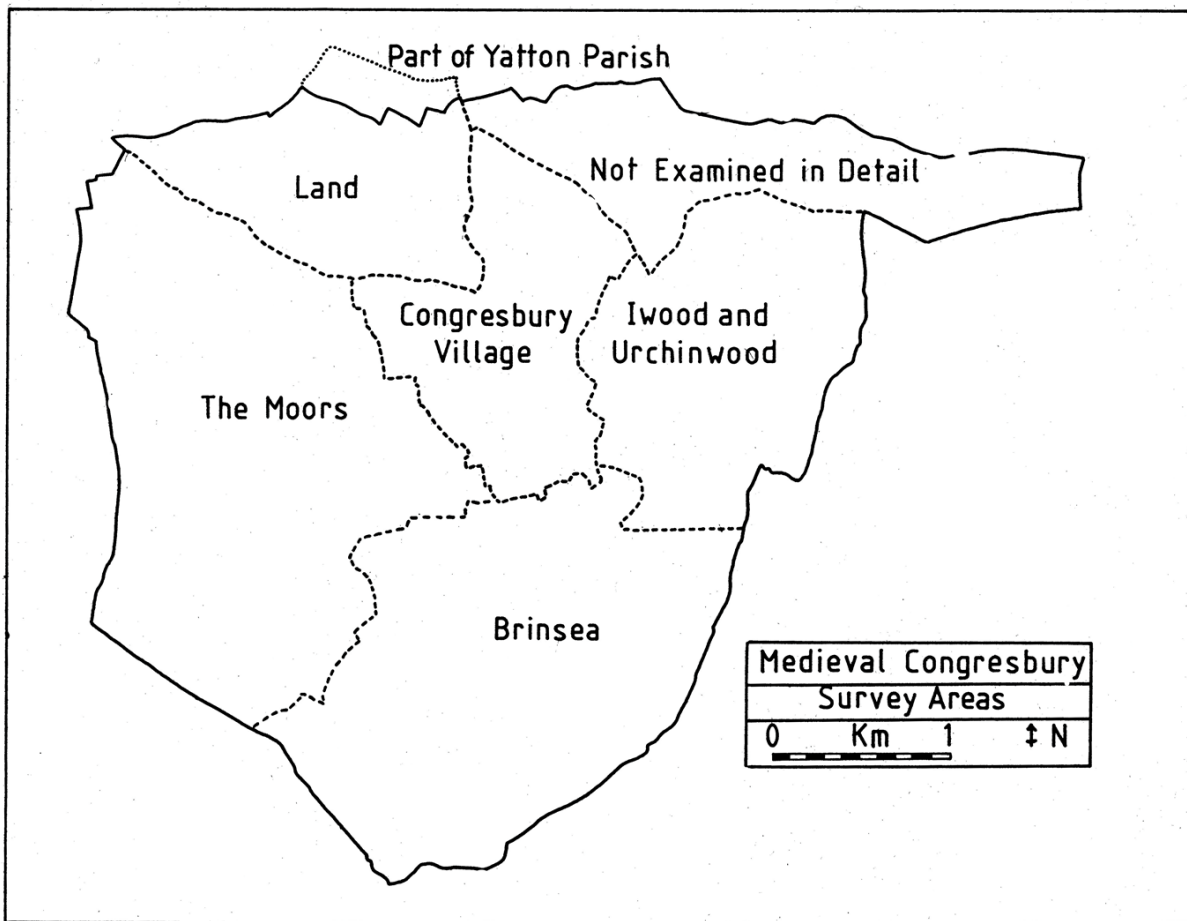


Fig 7: The areas of medieval and postmedieval Congresbury

Chapter 6: Brinsea

Despite a wealth of archaeological evidence suggesting an extensive pattern of medieval settlement in this area of the parish, no specific documentary references to Brinsea prior to 1567 have yet been found. However the field names *Walleys* and *Worthesys* have already been noted as potentially indicating areas of pre-Conquest settlement and the name *Brensye*, as first recorded in the manorial survey of 1567, may also have early origins. Local folk lore suggesting the name to be descriptive of an island surrounded by the sea (Briney Sea!), may indeed have some slight basis in fact. The possibility remaining that the name may be derived from the British '*briga*', meaning a high place and the Old English element '*eg*' referring to an island or land by water (Eckwall 1960).

The probable course of settlement development throughout Congresbury has already been outlined (Chapter 4), an expansion of habitation stemming from the break-up of large scale landholdings into progressively smaller units. An analysis of 'Old Auster' tenements within Brinsea would suggest the existence of at least 11 farmsteads centred on complete virgates or yardlands at the time of the Domesday Inquest (Fig 10).

Fig 8: Landholding at Brinsea

	Yard Lands	Half Yard	Fardle Lands	Eight Acres	Mond. Lands	Letter Bearer
Number of Holdings	1	9[1]	13	14[2]	1	1
Yardland Equivaler	1	5	3.25	2	0.25	0.25
Total Number of Yardlands	11.75					

Note: Figures in brackets indicate holdings within Brinsea of tenants living outside the area.

Only one virgate or yardland survived intact until 1567. That held by Agnes Johnes based on the site of the present Brinsea Green Farm, although no evidence of any early occupation has been recovered from its immediate surroundings. Thirteenth century pottery has however been derived from the garden of the adjacent 'Green Acre' and in 1928 'The Gentleman's Magazine' contained a note recording that '*In pulling down part of an old farmhouse, the property of Mr Beake (then owner of Brinsea Green Farm) at Brinsea in the parish of Congresbury, the labourers lately found a small screw box containing 115 silver and 23 gold coins. The silver ones are groats of Henry V... The gold included a noble of Henry VI and a noble by Edward IV called the rial...*' (Gentleman's Magazine 1928 Pt1: 464)

Limited finds of pre-Conquest pottery from Honey Hall Farm and Brinsea Farm may indicate the foci of two further virgates. The former possibly representing the precursor of the later half yardlands occupied in 1567, by William Backwell and Elizabeth Roydon whose lands and rental are similar, but whose post-medieval descent cannot be elucidated. The latter virgate, also subdivided into two half-yardlands, was held in the 16th century by Johanna Bradman and John Twitt. Throughout the area their lands lay adjacent as did those of Johanna Lewis and Robert Atwill at Brinsea Batch, whose two half-yardland tenements probably constitute a further original virgate holding.

Whilst partial relationships may be established between several further tenements the complete fragmentation of others with no direct documentary linkage prevents the total reconstruction of the immediate post-Conquest settlement pattern. The four fardle-lands of William Symes, John Keene and Agnes, the daughter of William Horte, form a compact landholding to the east of King Road with many other shared characteristics between them, although any early focus of this possible tenement remains unlocated. Likewise, the holdings of William Love and John Swayne, based on West Brinsea Farm are almost certainly connected with those of John Cade and Rose Taylor whose tenements remain to be associated with any surviving property.

Despite there being no firm indications of when such tenements were created, the available evidence would suggest that the process of settlement expansion was probably complete by 1300. Whilst the archaeological evidence is not totally satisfactory, the 100% correlation of medieval finds with sites occupied in the 16th century and still available for examination, would suggest only slight difference in the pattern between these two dates. Yet despite their common ancestry, the settlement pattern which emerges as fully developed in the 14th century was far from uniform. A marked difference being noticeable between eastern and western Brinsea. For much of eastern Brinsea, the partial fragmentation of some virgates left many holdings smaller, but still consolidated, with messuages surrounded by considerable acreages of land held in severalty. To the west, the break-up of other virgates led to the creation of a small, semi-nucleated settlement and associated two-field system, described in 1567 as Brinsey North Field and Brinsey South Field.

Five 16th century tenants occupied messuages in this area. One, David Neade, was a tenant of the Dean and Chapter, holding a half-yardland based on the present Ivy House Farm. Of the others, the two half-yardlands of William Backwell and Elizabeth Roydon have been noted above, whilst John Cade and Rose Taylor occupied two fardles. Few of these tenants held more than two acres of enclosed land adjacent to their houses and only David Neade held more than six. West of Ivy House Farm and to the south of Honey Hall Lane, substantial evidence of medieval occupation was recovered from each of the small enclosures and gardens available for examination, one providing evidence of at least two medieval dwelling sites (*Fig 18 below*). It seems likely that all may have been occupied in the 14th century.

Omitted from later surveys and lacking any early documentation, a reconstruction of the medieval landscape in this area will always be incomplete. However, the aratral curve of surviving hedgerows would suggest that the two fields mentioned in 1567, lay to the south of the occupied enclosures and to the north of Honey Hall Lane. It is uncertain whether these fields were ever truly 'Common', although their arrangement may have been deliberate. The lands of the four manorial tenants were distributed equally throughout the two fields in numerous parcels, whilst that of the Chapter's tenant was severally enclosed. Identical landholding arrangements applied amongst these same tenants within the adjacent meadows of Brinsey Mead and Cun Mead, but no information relating to the operation and regulation of this land survives.

The reasons for the differential development of settlement between western and eastern Brinsea are unclear, but may be related to the availability of land for expansion. General trends show a rising population throughout the early medieval period and Congresbury was probably no exception. As a response to this and the fragmentation of holdings, some deliberate reorganisation of the landscape may have been instigated amongst those tenants

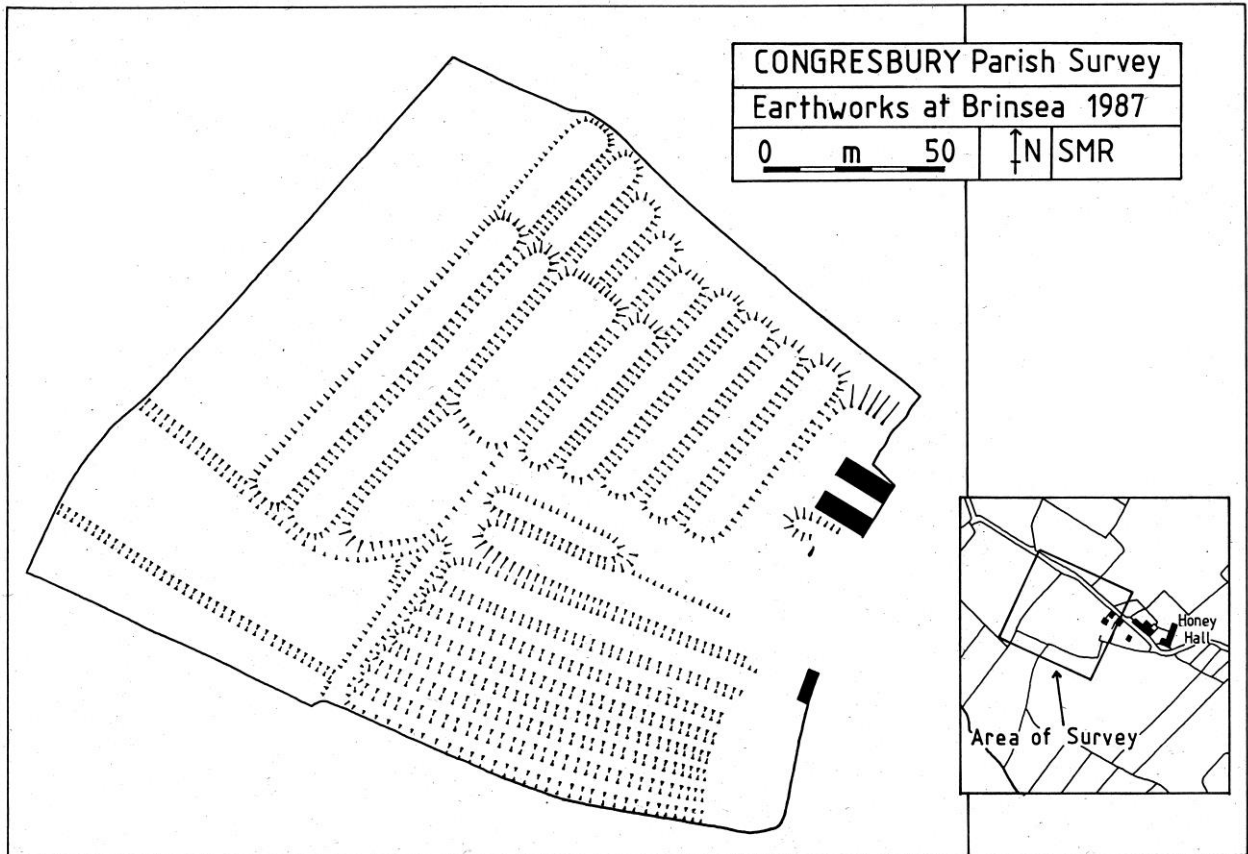


Fig 9: Earthworks at Brinsea

whose lands were limited by moorland to the west and what may have been an extensive area of woodland to the south.

Several isolated pockets of woodland survived to the south of Ivy House Farm in 1567. Surviving hedgerows here still contain many woodland species and many field names are indicative of its former presence. Lacking any specific documentary references to assarting, the dating of its removal is uncertain. It may be that such clearance followed the disafforestation of the manor in 1227 and the passing of the Statute of Merton in 1234, when the manorial lord was allowed to assart woodland without the payment of a fine and to reclaim waste providing sufficient was left for other manorial tenants. A reference of 1279 to Walter de Wallage holding '20 acres in a newly made perpesture' may be indicative of clearance within The Walleys at this time. The existence here of a large block of demesne, together with several small commonable fields occupied primarily by the tenants of Honey Hall Lane, may suggest that in the face of increasing pressure for expansion, such measures provided the impetus for this development.

By contrast, tenants of eastern Brinsea maintained a number of substantial blocks of woodland in the 16th century, and although field shape and aerial photography would suggest extensive arable cultivation around most of the remaining 16th century farmsteads, here there is no indication, either archaeological or documentary, that the land associated with these farms was ever sub-divided further. A lessening of expansionary pressure upon these tenements may have been achieved through the processes of moorland reclamation identifiable as a zone of small enclosures described as crofts lying marginal to Brinsey Moor.

Each would seem to represent successive intakes of moorland waste and all were held in severalty in 1567, by the tenants of eastern Brinsea.

The primary difference between the settlement pattern of the 14th century and that of 1567 lay in the abandonment of occupation sites developed on eight acres derived from the break-up of larger holdings. Several are described as being, or lying adjacent to tofts in 1567 and this indication of habitation is partially substantiated by the location of medieval occupation in one such holding, which also bears the habitative field name 'Lodgings', lying adjacent to Brinsea Moor. It seems probable that others, though not all, were similarly occupied. The toft of an eight acre known as 'Bowlits' and described as a single close of pasture in 1567, shows clear indications of having been sub-divided into a number of smaller enclosures, as does the toft of a further eight acre called 'Passage'. However 'Prowde Croft' and 'Old Moor Croft', despite their designation as tofts show no indication of occupation, but may well have been associated with other abandoned sites.

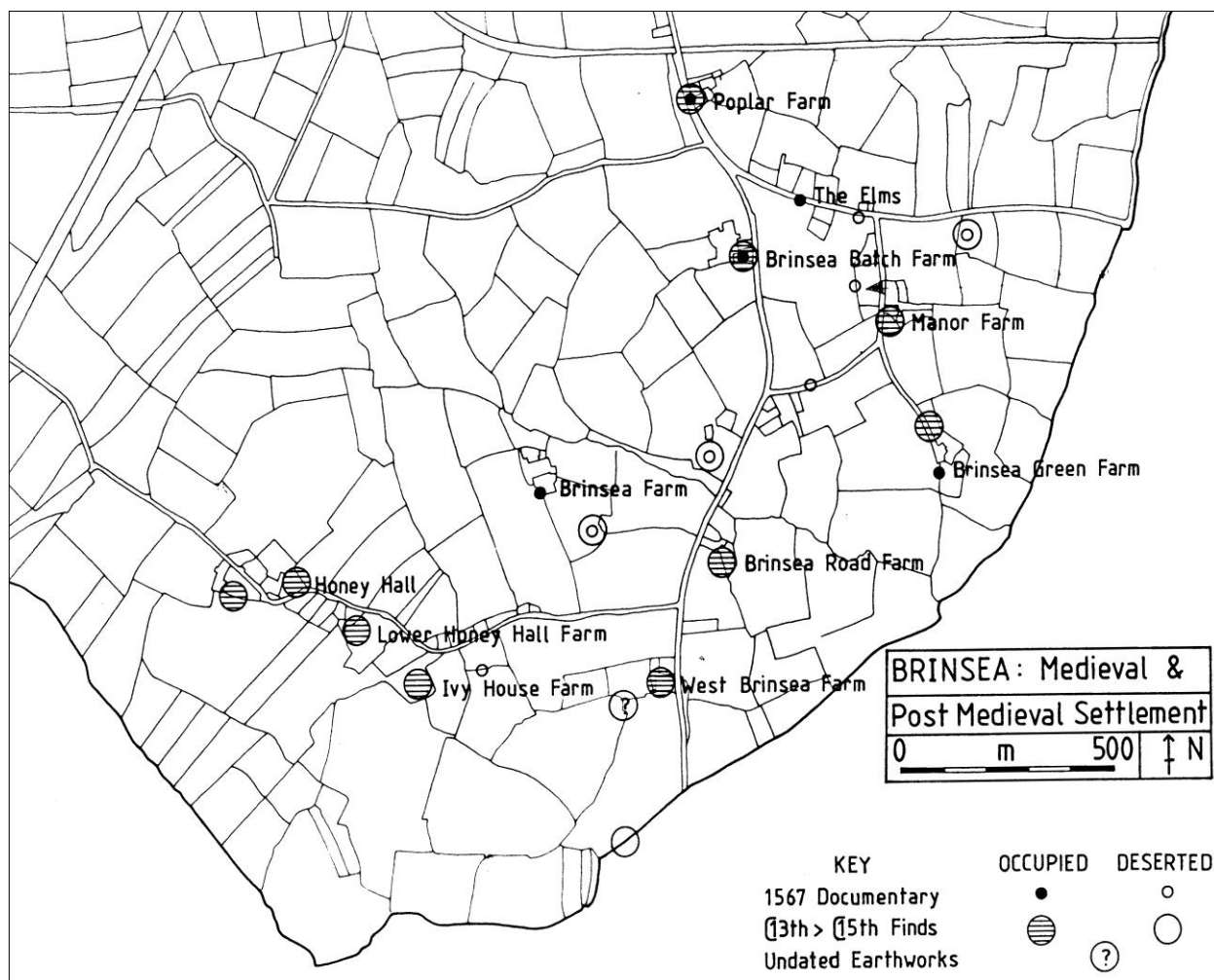


Fig 10: Brinsea medieval and postmedieval settlement

The Post-Medieval Landscape

It is clear from the survey of 1567 that the bulk of the landscape, with the possible exception of the fields surrounding Honey Hall Lane, was fully enclosed by this date. However, no chronology of this process has yet been determined and it remains uncertain whether the extent of this enclosure was an early feature of the landscape or a late development. Field boundaries now removed, but visible on aerial photographs, correlate well with boundaries depicted on the de Wilstar map of Brinsea and closes described as being in existence in 1567. The absence of any observable differences in the pattern between these two dates strongly suggests that within those areas that the de Wilstar survey omits, field boundaries still visible from the air were also extant in the mid 16th century.

The reasons for the differential development of settlement between western and eastern Brinsea are unclear, but may be related to the availability of land for expansion. General trends show a rising population throughout the early medieval period and Congresbury was probably no exception. As a response to this and the fragmentation of holdings, some deliberate reorganisation of the landscape may have been instigated amongst those tenants

29 manorial tenants are recorded as holding land within Brinsea in 1567, including several dwelling outside of the area. 25 occupied messuages of which 20 can be accurately located through subsequent documentation. Although court rolls of the 17th century frequently refer to repairs and thatching, there is little other indication of the appearance of these dwellings, with the exception of the Hearth Tax returns of 1664/65. Of those tenants whose names can be related to these returns, few were assessed as having more than three hearths, suggesting small and relatively impoverished dwellings were the norm. One major exception to this was that of Anne Jones, widow of Christopher Jones with twelve hearths extant and six recorded as having being blocked.

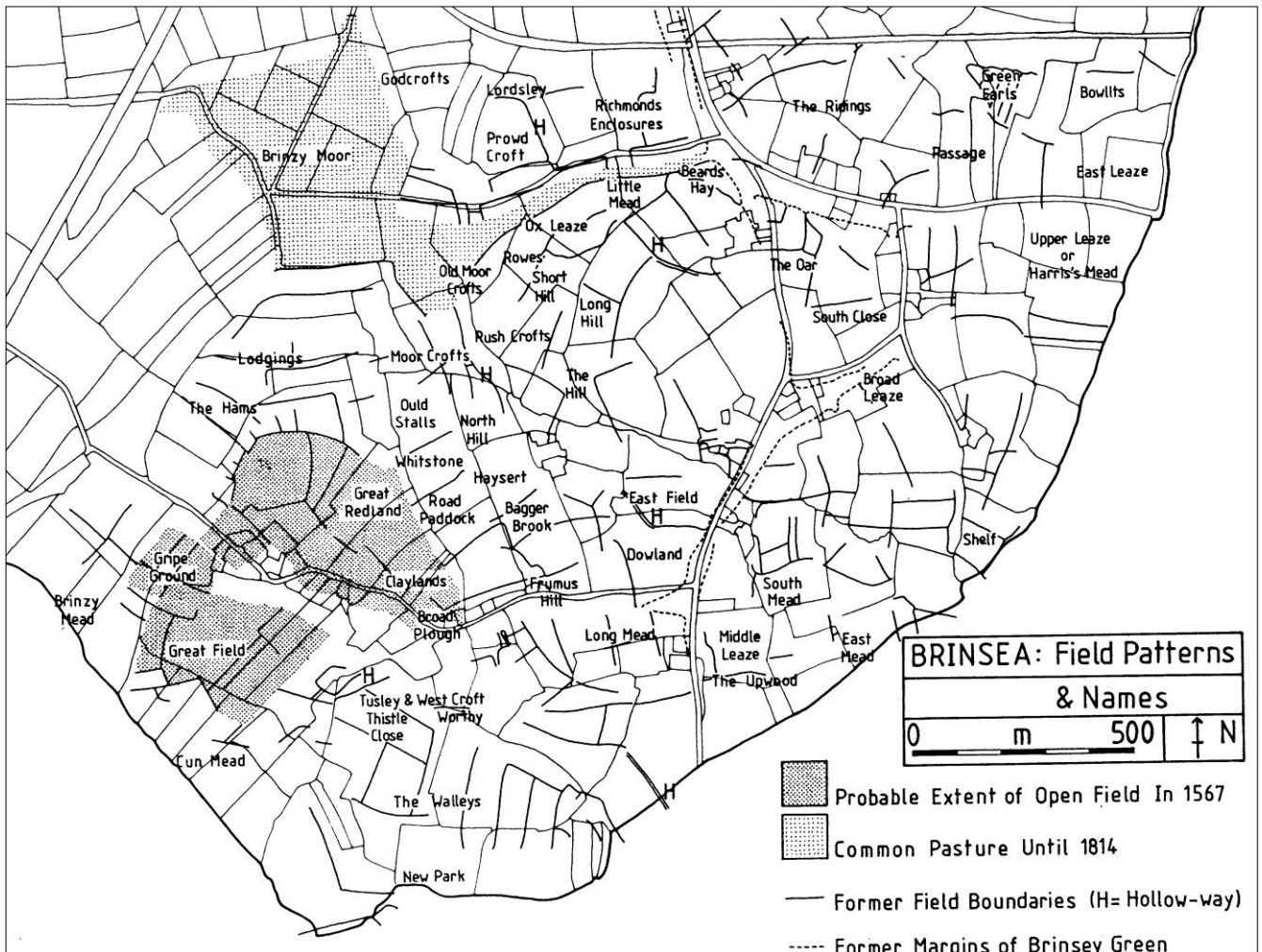


Fig 11: Field patterns and names in Brinsea

The lands of Christopher Jones as described by a series of later seventeenth and early eighteenth century deeds (SRO DD/BR/py), included the bulk of the 554 acres of manorial land within Brinsea that was sold between 1594 and 1600, to Francis Knight, William Jones, John Fowens and Mary Langley respectively. The precise location of the house recorded above is uncertain, but the most probable is that of the *'Capitol Messuage or Mansion House, formerly in the holding of Christopher Jones, lately of Katherine Watts (deceased) and now of Launcelot Appeleby'* (SRO), later, in 1864, described as the *'Old House, formerly a capitol messuage or mansion house'* which stood on the site of the present Honey Hall Lodge. Honey Hall itself, originally known as *'Honey Hole'*, dates from the later eighteenth century and may have been built for Henry Tonge, from whom it was purchased in 1800 by John Knight.

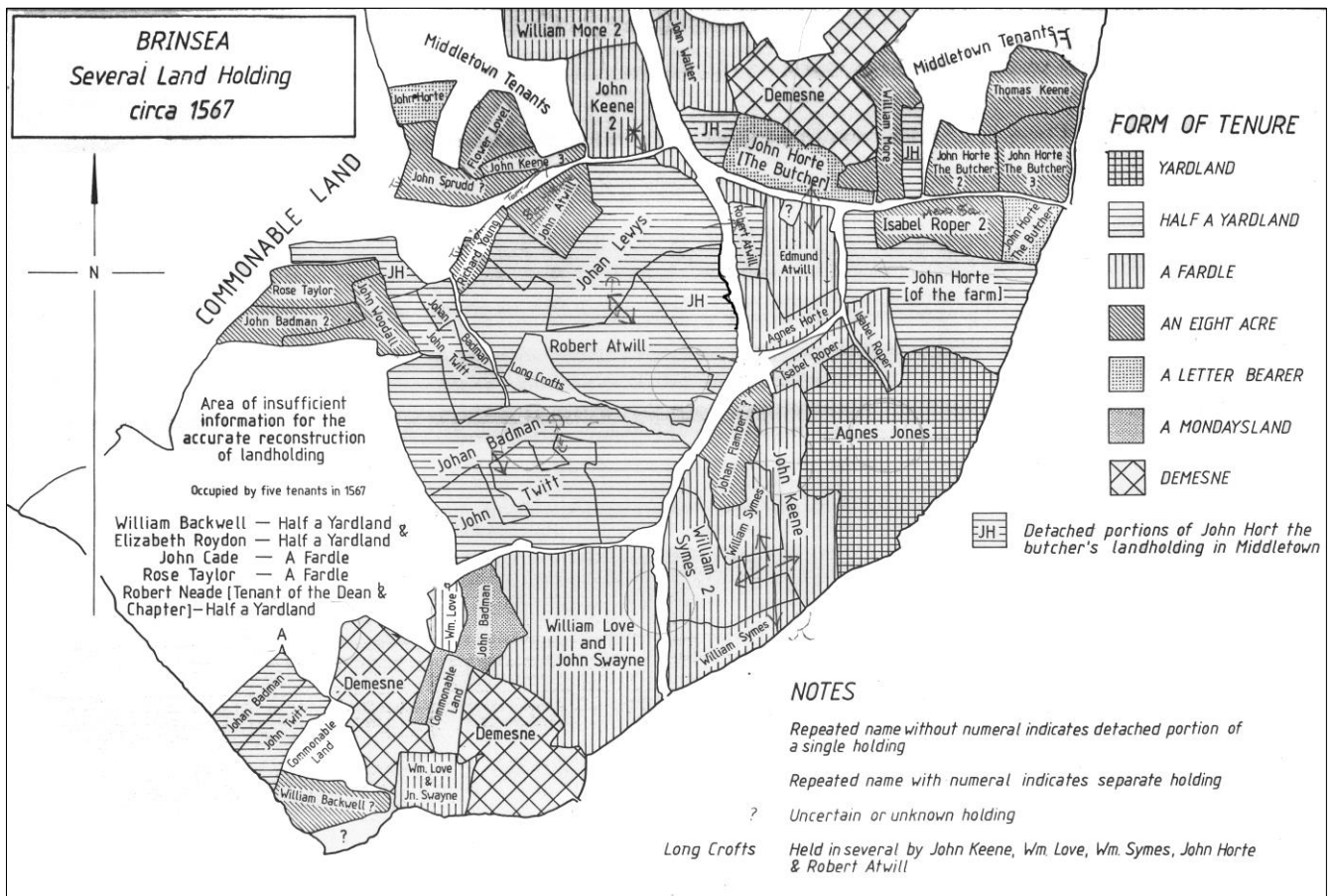


Fig 12: Several land holding in Brinsea 1567

The land sales of the early seventeenth century and the subsequent consolidation of these holdings under new ownership, was probably the most significant factor leading to the abandonment of a number of tenements in Brinsea between 1567 and 1840. However general decay and economic decline also played their part. Of the properties that remained in the possession of Queen Elizabeth's Hospital, several are shown to have been abandoned through disrepair between 1647 and 1700. In 1655, John Keene, who held a customary tenement that stood opposite West Brinsea Farm, was in default of the manorial court as *'the thatching on his tenement is gone'* (BRO. BMC/4/35[b]). A manorial survey of 1657 records that the house, parcel of Giles Goffe's tenement called *'...Richmans... is decayed'* (BRO. BMC/4/).

The desertion of houses between 1700 and 1840 was however complimented by the construction of others on waste, allotted and awarded by the Enclosure Act of 1814. For the five tenements abandoned between these two dates, six new dwelling houses were constructed on the former waste adjacent to Honey Hall Lane and Brinsey Batch. Other physical aspects of the landscape were however little altered by the Act whose main effect was to finally extinguish the remaining elements of customary tenure.

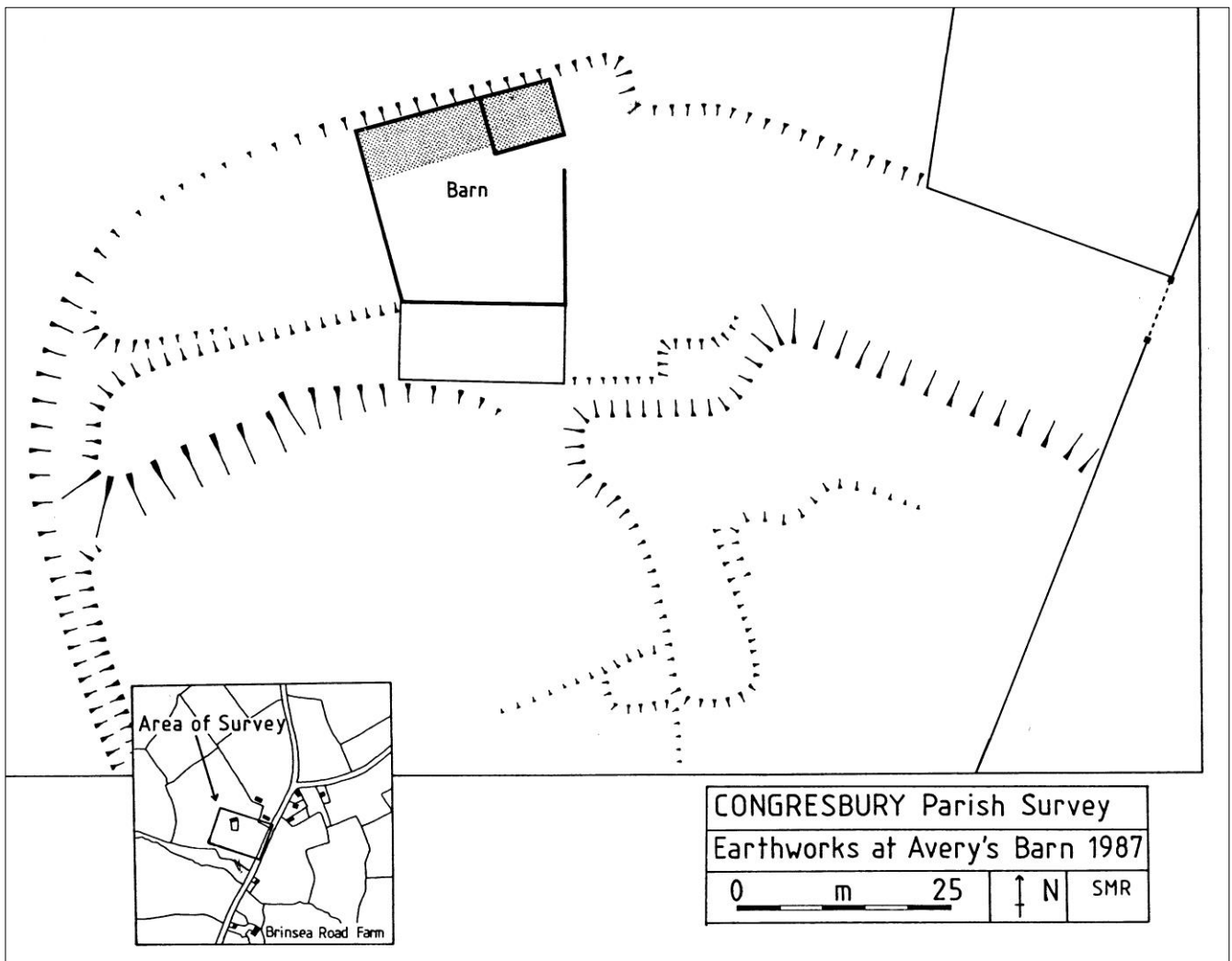


Fig 13: Earthworks at Avery's barn, Brinsea

At the very end of the parish survey, the ploughing of an orchard, just east of Honey Hall Farm, produced evidence for the existence of at least two medieval dwellings. Over 1000 sherds of medieval pottery were recovered, together with substantial numbers of 16th - 18th century material. The finds support the idea that a small hamlet existed on the southern side of Honey Hall Lane.

The sherds illustrated in Fig 14 below are primarily derived from glazed jugs of the 13th-14th centuries. A and B are fragments of jug handles, slashed to prevent breakage during firing. The fabric and yellow glaze of B indicate its source to be Ham Green. The origin of A, a hard grey fabric with a patchy, yellow glaze, is unknown.

Rim forms C and D show the influence of French potters of the 13th century. E is a typically undecorated body sherd with a yellow glaze, while F is an applied strip decoration,, probably representing a horse's head.

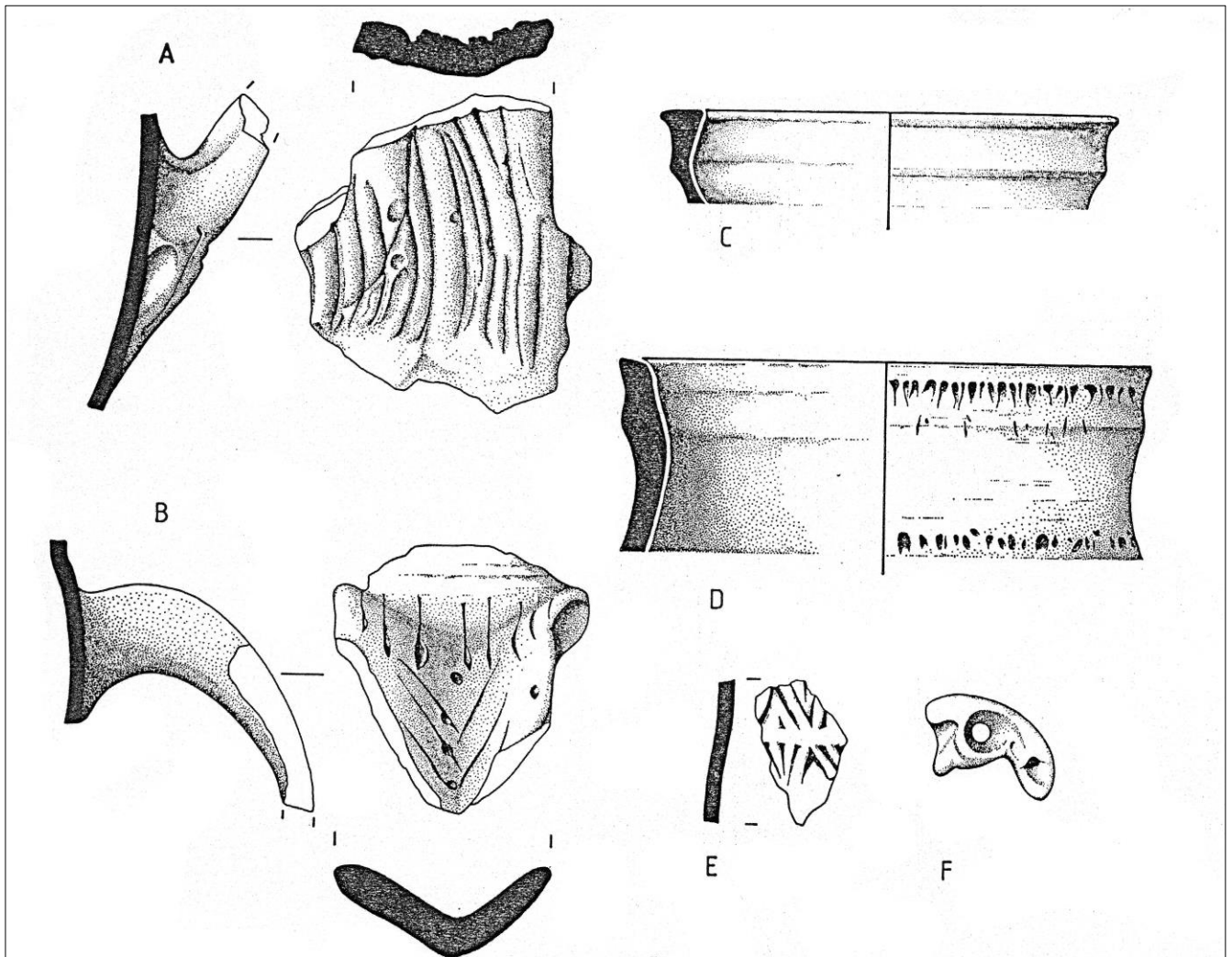


Fig 14: Medieval pottery from Honey Hall Lane

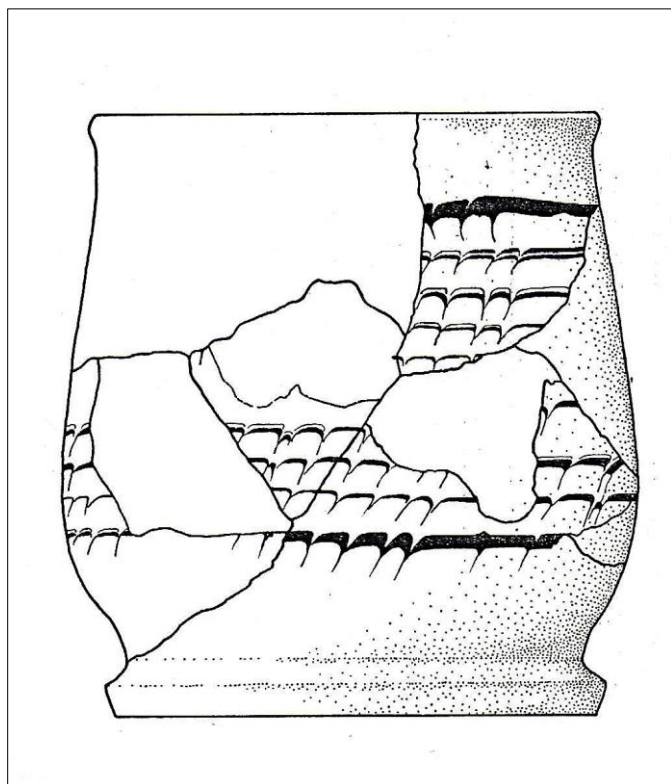


Fig 15: Combed and trailed slipware vessel from Honey Hall, lane, probably early 18th century

Chapter 7: Congresbury Village

The present village of Congresbury occupies three of the rental divisions described by the survey of 1567, those of Venny Street, Middletown and Above the Yeo. A fourth division, Hempshurd, is defined in a survey of 1596 and the 1567 tenure of this area can be reconstructed from this later rental.

Taken together, 13 complete virgates of manorial land are to be found in these areas, together with a further half virgate belonging to the Dean and Chapter. However, the difficulties of defining early landholding are compounded by the absence of post-medieval documentation relating to many properties and the existence of several large freehold tenancies whose origins, though founded in the manorial demesne, remain obscure. Absent too is much direct archaeological evidence. Whilst medieval pottery is to be found in many of the enclosures shown to be occupied in the sixteenth century and several buildings display evidence of medieval construction, much archaeology has undoubtedly been obscured by modern development.

Despite these difficulties, an integrated analysis of adjusted sixteenth century landholding for each of the areas outlined above, together with a topographic examination of village form, enables a number of distinct units within the village to be identified. This in turn allows some suggestions to be forwarded as to the processes which led to the creation of the medieval settlement.

Firstly it is clear from the rental distinctions alone that the present village has evolved from a number of distinct clusters of what once may have been discrete farmsteads. Within Middletown, that area that now comprises the core of the village, nine complete early virgates are identifiable, if it can be assumed that all four of the recorded mundayslands originally lay within its boundaries. Several broad topographic zones are also identifiable within the village as shown by the de Wilstar survey of 1736 and upon these the known sixteenth century tenurial forms may be superimposed.

A reconstruction of sixteenth century landholding to the west of Brinsea Road unfortunately remains incomplete. Many of the larger tenements that can be traced through subsequent documentation were located here and several others can be inferred from their surveyed descriptions. Half-yardlands held by John Horte the Butcher and John Horte of the Farm formed the basis for Silver Street Farm and Stonewell Farm, both of which probably lie on medieval sites. Thirteenth century pottery has been recovered from the former, whilst the latter lay within an enclosure known as '*Kennals*'. Stephano Caynel is recorded in the Lay Subsidy of 1357 and may well have been the medieval occupant of this tenement.

Rookery Farm, which has produced considerable quantities of medieval pottery, almost certainly represents the focus of two further half-yardlands, the holdings in 1567 of John Warde the younger and John Woodall. The single farm which remained on this site in the eighteenth century would seem to represent an amalgam of their combined holdings, possibly recreating an early virgate farmstead. Abutting these latter tenements to the east lay three occupied enclosures comprising demesne lands of the Chapter and Bishopric. These appear to represent intakes of waste from the wide driftway of Brinsea Green which in the sixteenth century extended into the core of the village. Whilst all were certainly occupied in 1567, there is little evidence of earlier habitation on these sites.

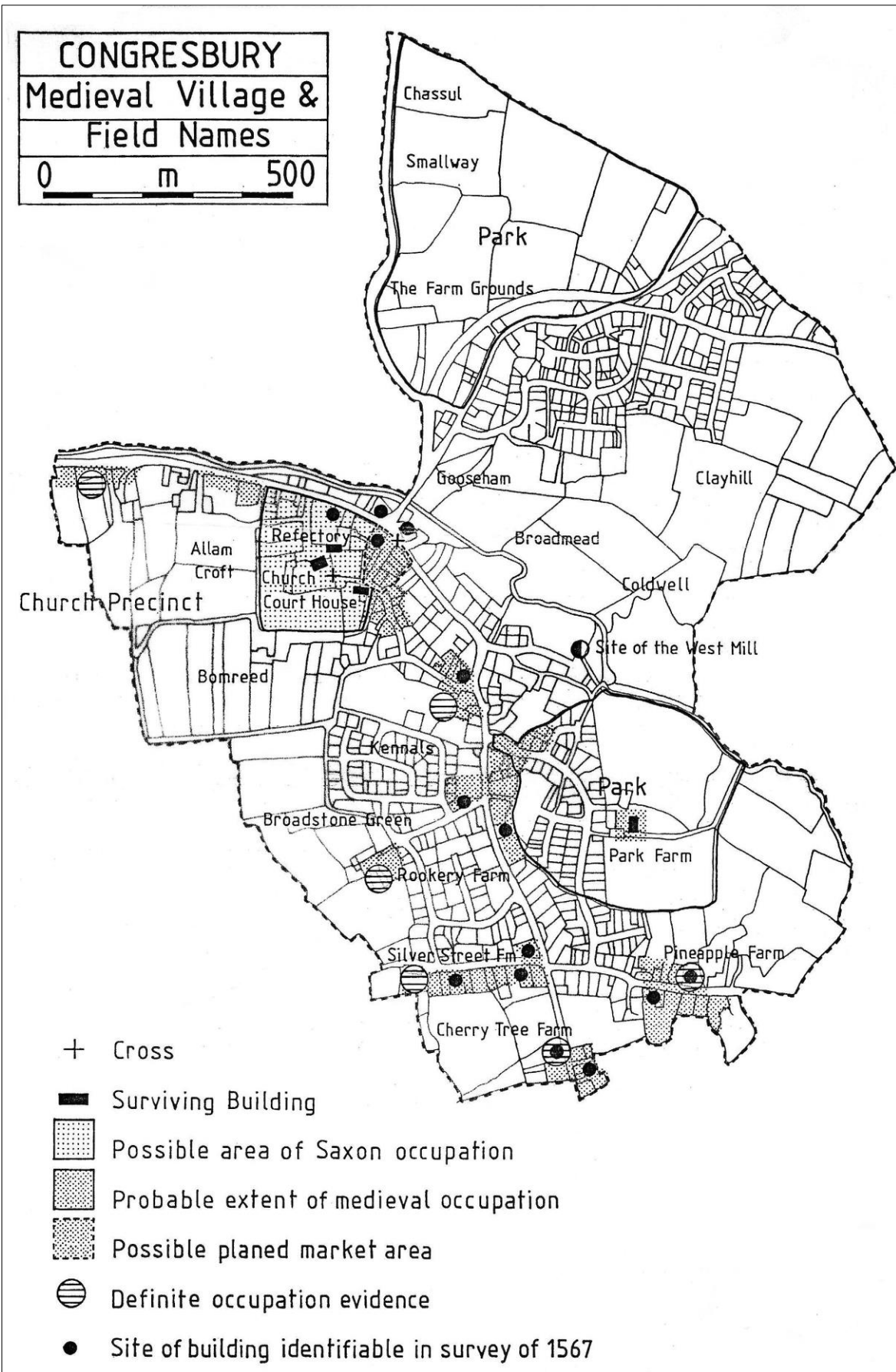


Fig 16: Congresbury medieval occupation

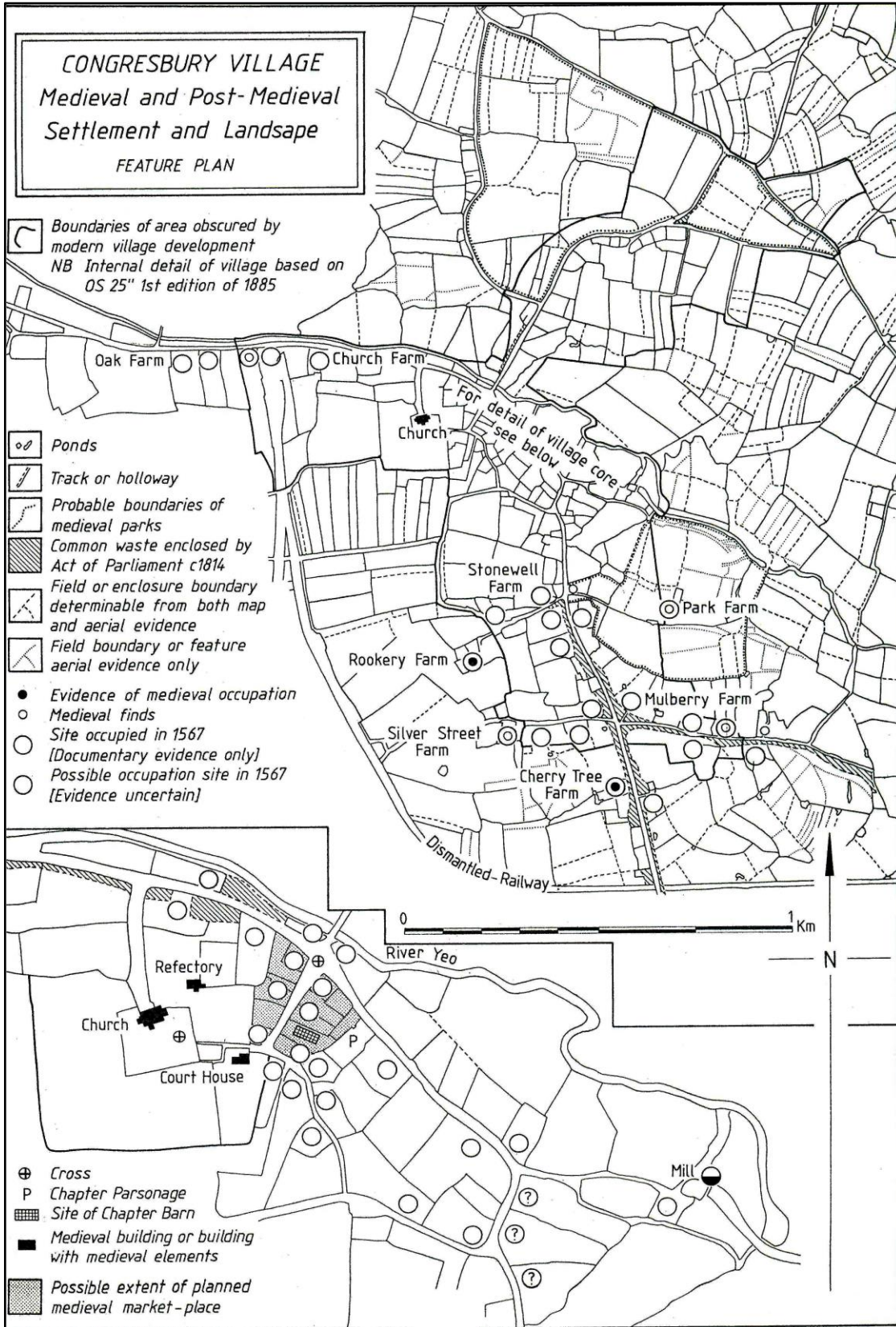


Fig 17: Medieval and post medieval Congresbury

Although it is possible to reconstruct the sixteenth century landholding bordering Silver Street, details of the medieval settlement pattern in this area are unresolved. Medieval occupation may well have extended beyond its present limits. Both John Horte the butcher and John Horte of the farm held two half-yardlands apiece and both occupied substantial acreages of land in Smithmoors at Silver Street's western end. In the fourteenth century this area bore the personal name of *'Tyllynggessmethemore'*, occupied in 1351 by John Tyelyngs (SRO DD/SAS BA1). Fields at the eastern end of these moors show clear indications of having been divided into a number of small, irregular enclosures which may once have been inhabited, perhaps as the focus of another early virgate.

The foci of other early holdings to the east of Brinsea Road remain unknown. However, the topography of this area would suggest that individual virgates may have occupied a series of discrete enclosures. That which encompasses Stonewell Farm is clearly shown by the DeWilstar survey, defined to the north by The Causeway and to the south by the hollow way now occupied by Stonewell Lane. At its western end lay Broadstone Green, a name which may perhaps refer to the early origins of these enclosures, being derived from the Old English *brad*, a wide piece of land and *tun*, meaning enclosure.

The church too lies within a similar enclosure, inside the boundaries of which 'Old Auster' tenements of 1567 comprising a half-yardland, fardle and two eight acres amount to a single virgate. The outline of this enclosure is broken by later development but may once have been continuous on its eastern side. Adjacent to the Court House which bares traces of medieval construction, lay a small building described in 1567 as *'The Wryngehouse'* and which may well have been extant in the fourteenth century when John atte Wryngehouse was fined 6d for trespass (LPED 1177). The presence of this building would seem to infer the existence of a Ring Fence enclosure, almost certainly a continuous ditch, occupied by a stream course now canalised beneath Broad Street, but still visible to the south and west of the church. Documentary evidence would suggest that breaches of the north-eastern part of this enclosure post-date its construction although physical evidence has been removed by modern development.

West of the church enclosure and breaching its north western boundary, lie a series of eight acre holdings which comprise the separate rental division of Hempshurd in 1596 and which together amount to a single virgate. The regular and almost equal distribution of these holdings, with the exception of that which lies within the boundaries of the church, suggests a deliberate plan. The shape of the enclosures indicating that they may well have been lain out over former field strips. The location of the latter holding and the break in the demesne lands surrounding the church at that point, may indicate this arrangement to pre-date the construction of the church enclosure. Pottery of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries has been recovered from several gardens in this area but no archaeological evidence has been found to suggest the precursor of this pattern. Not all were occupied in the sixteenth century though none are designated as tofts. If each at one time contained a house site, then the absence of this designation may be indicative of early abandonment.

Settlement planning is well known in the medieval period and may also have been responsible for the arrangement of landholding to the east of the church. Either side of the eastern end of what now forms the High Street lie the cluster of tenements designated as bovier lands. Although these five tenements form an equivalent virgate of 80 acres and share between them several specific areas of land, their designation remains obscure. In view of their unusual ratio of break-up, it seems probable that these tenements were designed for a

specific manorial service and possibly deliberately located in this area adjacent to the site of what may have been one of the two mills described in 1086. Likewise, two mundayslands whose name also hints at manorial service are located here. These too are now divided by the present road which would suggest that the High Street may post date the creation of the original tenements.

Above the River Yeo, a single virgate would appear to form the basis for the individual eight acre holdings which lay here in the sixteenth century. However no medieval material has been recovered from any of the enclosures occupied at this time. Development of this area was severely restricted by the existence of a substantial block of demesne land comprising the Park of Congresbury. The Park probably dates from the thirteenth century, its creation following the disafforestation of the manor in 1227 when the Bishop was allowed to *'enclose, make parks and essarts and take wood in the said manor at will'*. The shape of this block of demesne is characteristic of such features, its size indicating that its main function may have been as a larder for deer. The animals being chased in through the narrow neck at its north eastern end to be confined within a large, pouch shaped enclosure which was probably encircled by a bank topped by a pale fence. Traces of a bank survive in several places but internal details of the park are unknown.

By the time the park is first documented in 1330, its original function would seem to have been lost as it is noted that *'From the pasture which is called Le Park nothing [no profit] because it is at farm with beans and oats'* (PRO SC6 1131/6) In 1567, with the exception of seven acres of wood, the entire area of the park was devoted to arable cultivation.

A second park, centred on the freehold estate of Park Farm, is a creation of the fourteenth century and obscures much of the early village landscape to the east of Brinsea Green. Its origins are recorded in a document of 1314 when Richard le Riche granted to Richard de Rodeneye and Lucy his wife, *'A messuage, two carucates of land and 15s rent in Congresbury and his right on land that Nichola, late wife of Gilbert le Mareschal holds there'* (SRS 12 1898). In 1567, George Rodney is noted as holding *'One Capital Messuage and certain lands called Parcke Feelde besides other lands by Olde More called Twenty Acres'* (BRO 04235). The internal arrangements of this park again remain unknown although its boundaries are distinct and overlies both physical and tenurial boundaries of properties on the northern side of Venus Street, indicating some re-adjustment to the settlement pattern of this area.

Venus Street itself provided a further focus of early occupation, but whilst the rental division is clear, its extent remains unknown. Three complete virgates are definable within this division, together with a fractional holding amounting to two eight acres, but only a small number of the areas sixteenth century tenancies can be positively related to later landholding. Several more may be defined by inference and later, isolated deeds. However Venus Street almost certainly included Urchinwood and other lands within Iwood, both of which areas were omitted from subsequent surveys.

Archaeological evidence defining the pattern of medieval settlement east of Brinsea Green is substantial, though probably far from complete. Elements of medieval construction are discernible in buildings at Park Farm and pottery of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries is plentiful in many gardens which now lie within enclosures shown to have been occupied in the eighteenth century. Pineapple Farm and Yew Tree Farm both stand on medieval sites but evidence of earlier occupation is lacking.

The preceding description gives some indication of the complexity of the village landscape and implies many factors to have been involved in its early development. Archaeological and documentary evidence would suggest that the village that existed in the sixteenth century was little different from that depicted in 1736 and was almost certainly based on a plan that was fully developed by the late fourteenth century. An overall chronology of development prior to this date however may only be assumed, although some details can be added to particular aspects of the landscape.

The form of any late Saxon settlement remains uncertain. The rental divisions of Middletown and Venny Street, together with the distribution of virgate tenements and demesne land whose origins lie in the pre-Conquest period, suggests the existence of a number of large but discrete farmsteads with a probable clustering of occupation in the area of the church.

The present church has already been cited as the possible location of an early minster and the existence of a pre-Norman church is inferred in Congresbury's Domesday entry. Whilst the fate and precise location of either remain unknown, the probability that an existing church provided a focus for early development, is strongly suggested by the concentration of demesne land adjacent to the church and the consolidated holdings of the Dean and Chapter in the village core. Lands belonging to the church were granted to the Dean and Chapter in 1259 and their holding of two virgates in 1572 almost certainly represents the half hide of land held by the villeins of the church of Congresbury in 1086.

Indications of deliberate planning within the village core and Hempshurd can only be suggested on the basis of clustering of tenement types and the regularity of property boundaries. Dating with any accuracy is problematic, but assuming a pre-Conquest pattern of large, single farmstead enclosures, then their sub-division would appear to be related to the manorial reorganisation which may have followed the Norman Conquest. An extended demesne requiring increased labour, together with increases in taxation imposed upon the peasantry, may well have provided the impetus for such events. Beyond the village core, the fragmentation of virgate farmsteads into smaller, but still related units, began the process of creating the pattern of several enclosures which characterised the landscape in 1567.

It is not until the thirteenth century that documents begin to reveal some topographic information about specific aspects of the settlements landscape. In 1215 *'The garden on the east side of the church and the bishop's court'* are noted in the charter of endowment of the newly dedicated church of Congresbury, whilst in 1262, William, Bishop of Bath and Wells granted *'A croft which Stephen de Aguste, formerly vicar of the same church, held in the manor of Congresburi, between the way which leads to the cemetery of Congresburi on the north side of the church and the manse of the aforesaid William'*.

The latter document suggests that the bishop's dwelling (*mansum*) lay to the north east of the church, possibly a precursor of the present vicarage since the bishop retained the benefaction of the vicarage following his grant of the church and other lands to the Dean and Chapter. The location of the bishop's court however remains unknown, but together with the garden was part of the lands transferred to the Chapter's possession.

The garden may well have occupied a substantial area of land to the east of the present Broad Street and other manorial buildings were probably located within it. In 1391 the then Dean of Wells, Thomas de Sudburie gave consent *'to the demolition of any houses or buildings within the Bishop's manor of Congresbury, except the barn there, as unnecessary and superfluous considering that the Bishop has several neighbouring manors fully sufficient*

for his residence even if they were fewer' (SRS 56. 87). It is possible that this grant is associated with the development of Broad Street itself as the focus of a new market and may well refer to buildings on its western side. Here, a small block of Chapter land breaches the enclosure which surrounded the church. The barn lay to the east and was still extant in 1840 on the site now occupied by a garden in Broad Street. In 1650 it was described as *'consisting of eleven bays of building, the walls of stone and covered with thatch, together with a barton or fold yard and garden adjoining'*(SRO DD/CC 110001/1).

Congresbury was, in common with a number of other manors, granted licence for a market in 1227 (Cal Charter Rolls 17 February 1227). Its original focus probably being the cross which survives in the churchyard and has been dated to the later thirteenth century (Pooley 1877: 124). The reasons for the development of a new market place remain unknown but may lie in the general need to increase revenue in the uncertain economic conditions of the later fourteenth century. The Dean and Chapter would appear to have been actively involved in the restructuring of this area of the village. A much damaged account roll of the Chapter Manor for 1388 records a number of grants of land lying within the lord's garden:

'3s new rent from Thomas ...hull for 3 acres of land and one toft containing ½ acre of land in the south part of the garden of the Lord.

9s (?) new rent from William Lidcocks for 1 perch of land in the Lord's garden.

7d rent from.... for 1 perch of land in the north part of the Lord's garden' (SRO DD/CC 131910a/6)

As this land comprised the demesne lands of the parsonage it is possible to locate it to the area bordering Broad Street on the east. Similar entries in fifteenth century compoti record dwellings within this area, though one, earlier known as *'Symonds Plott'* remained vacant until the nineteenth century. The de Wilstar depiction of Broad Street is unfortunately fanciful, but an early nineteenth century map of the Chapter land in this area shows what would appear to be regular house plots on its eastern side. The unusual width of this street, together with the late fourteenth century market cross at its northern end (described as *'le polecross'* in the accounts noted above), would suggest that this was a deliberately planned arrangement.

The creation of a new market place was probably the last major event in the genesis of the village structure, with the exception of the development of the de Rodney's Park. No documentary or archaeological evidence survives to suggest any significant change in the village plan between the late fourteenth century and that described by the survey of 1567.

The Post-Medieval Landscape.

With minor incidences of infilling and renewal, the village plan as depicted in 1736 remained to a large extent medieval. Unlike other areas of the parish, despite the alienation of many manorial properties through the land sales of the late sixteenth century, desertions within the village were either rare or rapidly obscured by new development. Deeds of the period illustrate the process of expansion from existing settlement. In 1647, William Panes was granted *'part of an orchard (belonging to the messuage of Issac Tucky) measuring five luggs to build a bay or field or housing'*. By 1697, the site, now obscured by..., contained *'a dwelling house, shop and orchard, lately taken out of the backside of the tenement before mentioned'* (SRO DD/BR/bb11).

Infilling was also achieved through the reclamation of the remaining waste, both by manorial sanction and illegal squatting. In 1663, Ephraim Lawrence, whose dwelling lay opposite the entrance to the church, was given *'permission to enclose the waste to the west of his cottage, 28 yards long and 13 yards broad'* (BRO BMC/4/18). Conversely, the manorial survey of 1656 noted the existence of several squatters such as Widow Eastcombe, who possessed *'without rent or other considerations a little poore Cottage built upon the waste'* (BRO BMC). The main focus of these developments lay along the margins of Brinsea Green where several small cottages were developed between 1567 and 1800. In Kent Street, adjacent to the site of the village pound (opposite the present Bell Inn), deeds attest to further infilling before 1638 (SRO DD/SX/2-1), and prior to 1814, further encroachments had been made onto the waste bordering Venus Street. The Enclosure Act formalised these developments and by reducing the final areas of waste along the former Brinsea Green, released additional land for expansion.

Chapter 8: Land

Land, its name derived from the Old English meaning soil, emerges as an area of minor settlement only in the manorial survey of 1567. Six tenants are recorded as occupying messuages here at this time, their combined holdings equivalent to a yardland or single virgate. Three other manorial tenants occupied elements of a further substantial, but already deserted yardland holding within the same area (Fig 20). A medieval settlement pattern based on the breakup of two early virgate farmsteads may thus be envisaged for this area.

Fig 18: Land Tenure c1567

	Yardlands	Fardlelands	Eight Acres
Number of Holdings	1	1	5 [1]
Yardland Equivalent	1	0.25	0.75
Total Number of Yardlands	2		

Note: Figure in brackets indicates tenant dwelling outside of area.

With one major exception, finds of archaeological material from Land have been limited. Direct archaeological evidence of medieval occupation is confined to only one field. Limited quantities of medieval pottery recovered from the garden of Land Farm would however suggest that this was a site occupied in the fourteenth century. Land Farm represents the sixteenth century tenement of Alice Beale and Waltero Bele, recorded in the Lay Subsidy of 1327, may have been an earlier tenant (SRS 3).

The tenement of Thomas Allsey, holder of two eight acres in 1567, remains visible as shallow earthworks in a field to the east of Land Farm. The ploughing of this field produced abundant artefactual evidence for the existence two medieval dwellings, probably representing the two eight acre holdings of the later tenant. Pottery from one suggests occupation for only a limited period between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The second produced substantial quantities of thirteenth to seventeenth century pottery as well as structural remains and is almost certainly that of Thomas Allsey himself.

The correlation of medieval and post-medieval evidence for these two sites may thus indicate, as in other areas of the parish, that identifiable sixteenth century occupation also represents the pattern of settlement already established by the early fourteenth century. There is no direct evidence to indicate the location of the two probable precursors of the medieval settlement pattern which itself remains to be fully proven. However a series of undated and relatively insubstantial earthworks together with visible former field boundaries can be correlated with later descriptive evidence. This enables the landscape of 1567 to be reconstructed and by inference, that also of the medieval period (Fig 28).

Thus, of the other sixteenth century tenants dwelling in Land, John Swayne, Robert Bryant and David Neads each held a messuage and eight acre apiece which may well have been in existence by the fourteenth century. Isabel Beney also held a messuage and eight acre, but together with John Champneys and Edmund Watts, was the occupier of "the third part of a yardland called Bennys" (BMC).

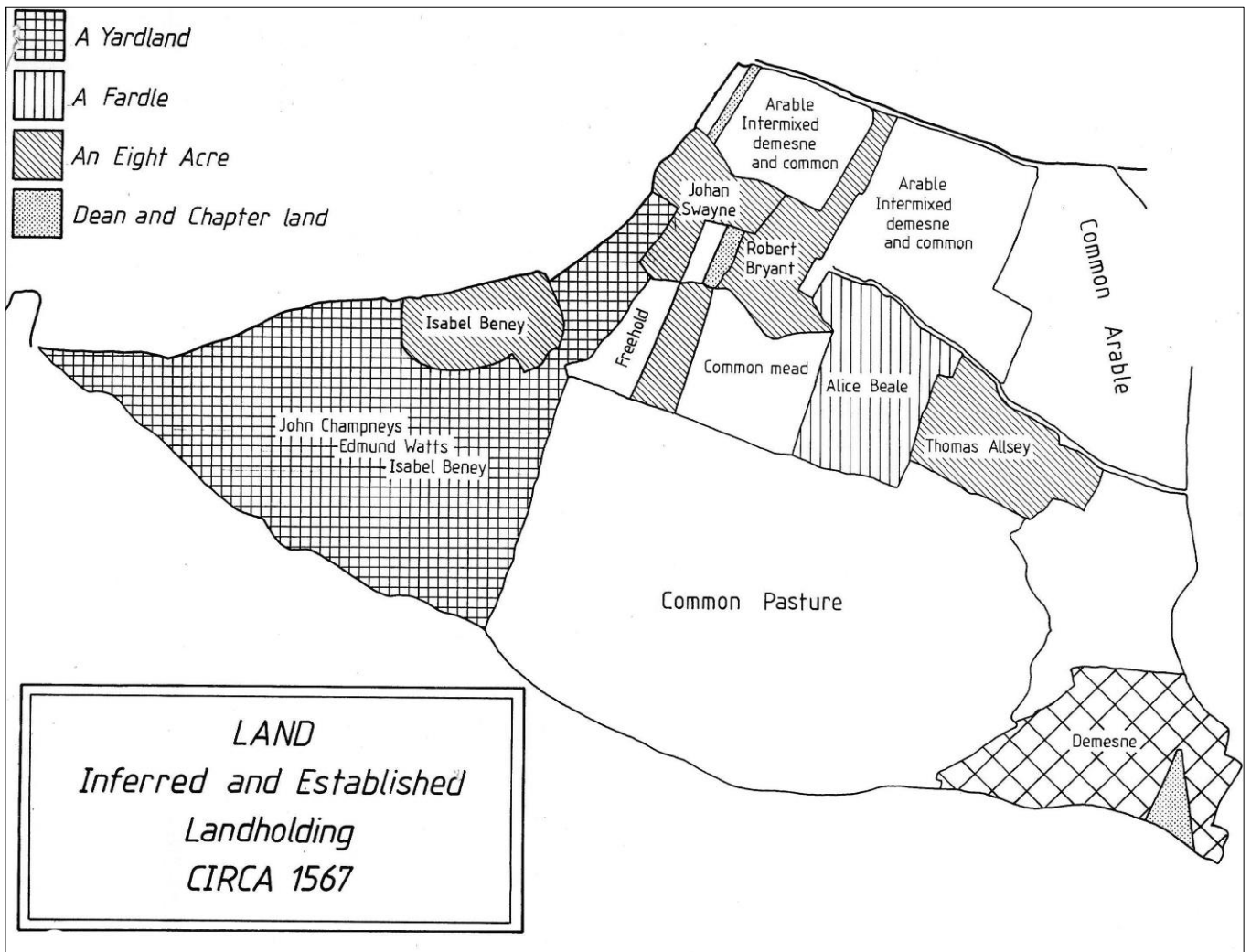


Fig 19: 1567 holdings at Land

Isabel Beney's share of this latter holding is described by the survey of 1567 as a toft, implying the existence of a former dwelling. The field name Binhay is still applicable to the large, irregular and almost certainly medieval enclosures to the west of the Old Moor. Vague earthworks survive in the field adjacent to that described as "*Benney House*" by the de Wilstar survey of 1736. Although a field survey sheds little light on these earthworks, stone, bone, pottery and charcoal has been noted here during former ploughing (M Britton *pers comm*). It is possible that this site represents one of the two tenements of the immediate post-Conquest period in the area.

The description of Isabel's own messuage and eight acre corresponds well with the pattern of former enclosures and earthworks visible on aerial photographs of 1946 (RAF CPE/UK 1869, 3152). The site is now heavily disturbed but relates to the deeds of Cadbury Farm amongst which is one of 1695 which describes "... a messuage, tenement or farm known as Binney Land with four closes of meadow or pasture lying together and known as Binney containing in the whole twenty six acres, adjacent to the Old Moor on the east, a close of ground called Elm Hay... on the north part and certain lands belonging to the Chamber of Bristol on the west..." (CFD). No artefactual material has been recovered from this site but adjacent ditches contain substantial quantities of dressed stone suggesting the existence of a former building nearby.

The messuage of Robert Bryant may be traced through the Cadbury Farm deeds to the site of the present farm. That of Johanne Swayne lay on the parish boundary to it's west. This latter

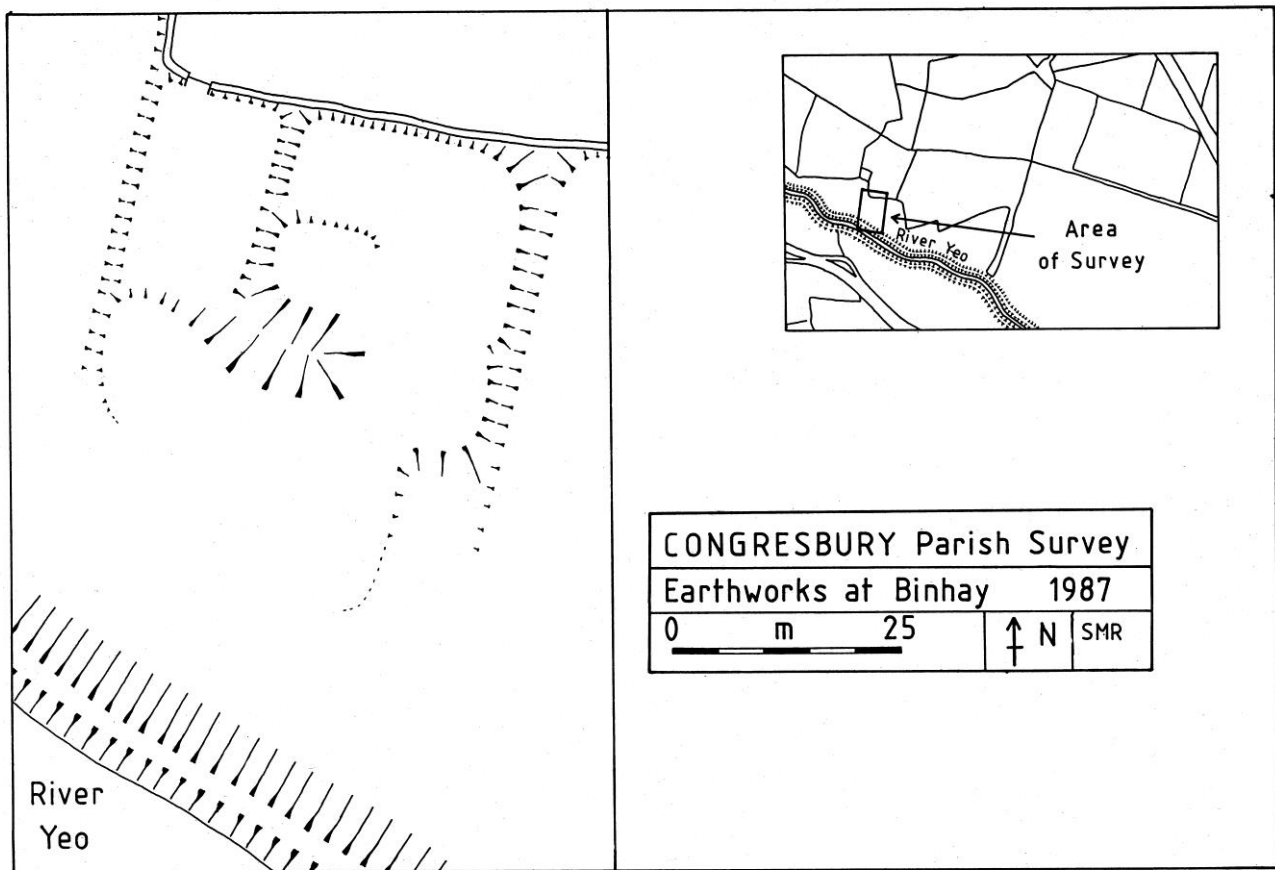


Fig 20: Earthworks at Binhay

tenement is clearly shown on a map of 1766. Although then described as an ox stall, the manorial perambulation of 1796 notes "...the ruins of an old dwelling house, now Widow Camms ox house in the possession of Thomas Gregory" (BMC/4/20b), linking with further deeds of Cadbury Farm. Structural remains and earthworks of the ox houses still survive but are heavily overgrown. A similar fate overtook the messuage of David Neads which lay within a small enclosure to the west of Land Farm. The de Wilstar survey depicts a further ox house on this site, but aerial photographs show clearly the existence of several buildings related to fields which match this sixteenth century holding (RAF CPE/UK 1869. 3151). No archaeology remains here as the whole site has been stripped and replaced with imported topsoil.

That these tenements were resultant upon the breakup of a single yardland is further indicated by the pattern of landholding above Land Lane. Located here was a substantial field known as The Upfield, now partially submerged beneath housing development in Yatton. The field is first documented in 1351 when Henry de Dene is recorded as exchanging three separate acres of land in Le Upefelde with William de Langedene and John Sprudd respectively. In 1567, the Upfield comprised over twenty acres of demesne arable, together with eighteen acres of common arable held solely by these tenants from Land whose combined holdings were equivalent to a single yardland. Lacking any early illustration of this field its full extent and medieval character remains uncertain. Internally unenclosed in the sixteenth century, the demesne lands here were largely consolidated whilst those of the tenants were distributed widely throughout its extent. Alice Beale for example occupied four acres in six places between

Frowards Hill and Benny's Gate, Thomas Allsey, nine and a half acres between Smallways and Hamhedge.

With the exception of a small area of woodland, arable occupied most of the area above Land lane in the sixteenth century as it probably had throughout the medieval period. Land Field lay just to the north of Thomas Allsey's tenement and is first noted in a further land exchange described in 1351 between Gilbert Bithelonde and John atte Cross (DD/SAS BA1). So too is land west of Smallway and both areas are described as arable at this time.

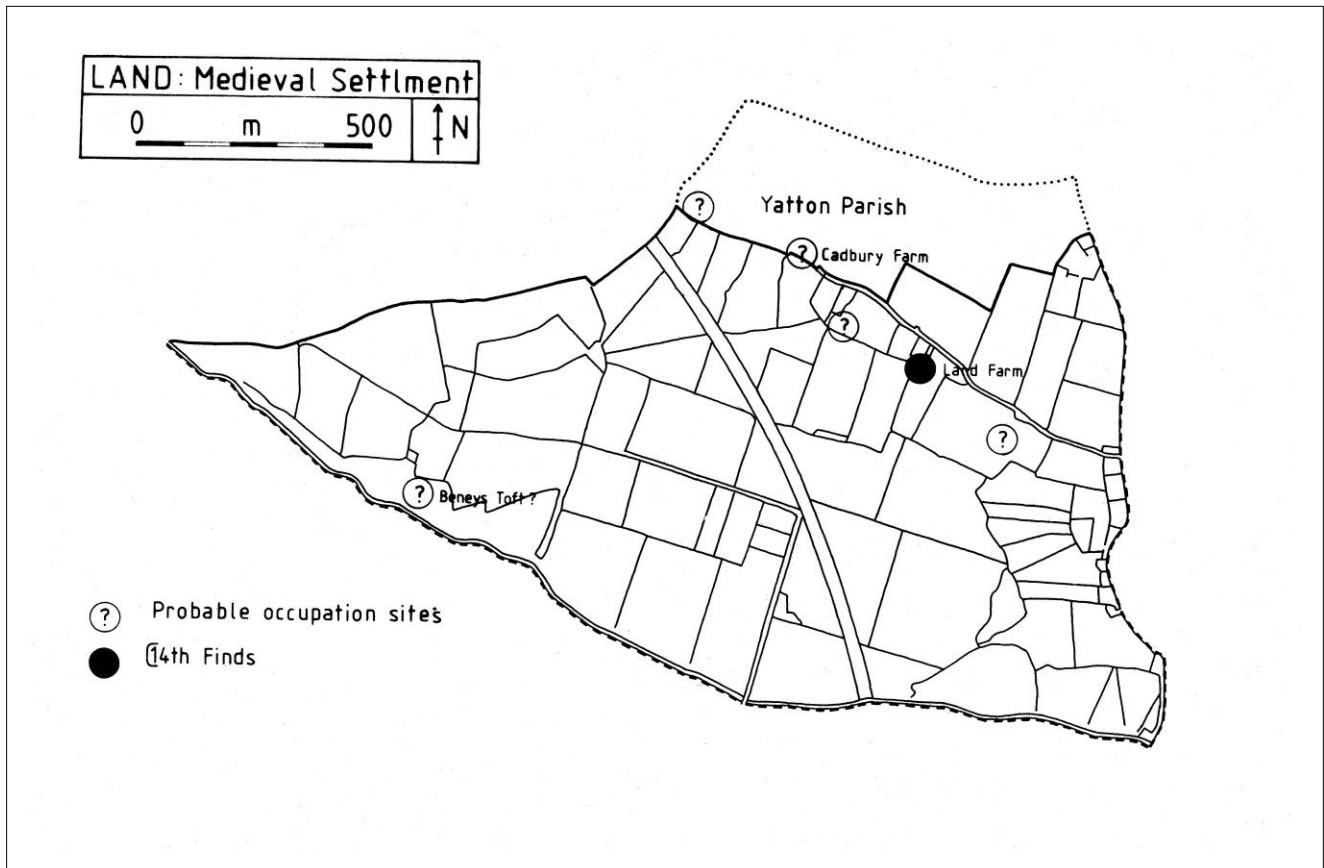


Fig 21: Medieval settlement at Land

Southwards from the tenements on the south side of Land Lane lay meadowland known as the Westmead followed by the extensive pastures of the Great or North Moor. The survey of 1567 notes "...that theare belongeth to the sayde manor one Common more called the Northe More wherein the tennantes afore sayde of the same manor hathe theyr Common of pasture as apertenante to theyr tenures". The moor is first recorded in 1330 when the manorial lord derived payment of "8s for the drift of cattle on La Northmore" (PRO SC6 1131/6). A large lake is shown here by the DeWilstar survey and a second is indicated by a pronounced lush mark just to it's north (RAF CPE/UK 1869. 3152). A series of substantial former stream courses crossing the area are also visible from the air. To the west of the moor and separated from it by a lane known as Waterlands Way, lay Benney's. Two references to this area in the medieval period suggest it was largely meadowland at this time. The first of 1351 notes merely the exchange of "two acres of meadow at Le Bene" (SRO DD/SAS BA1). The other, dating from 1389 records that the tithes of hay from "Benelond" were worth 19s (SRO DD/CC).

It remains unknown if the small area of woodland adjacent to Frowards (now Frost) Hill shown by the DeWilstar survey of 1736, is that noted in 1567. Woodland probably existed around the margins of the Great Moor in the early medieval period as is suggested by the field names Hurst on it's eastern side and The Great and West Leighs to the west of Benney's. However there is no record of it's clearance and in common with woodland throughout the parish, most had probably gone by the fourteenth century.

The Post-Medieval Landscape

A comparison between the reconstructed landscape of 1567 and that of 1736 shows substantial change. All but two of the sixteenth century tenements had been abandoned and with the exception of the Great Moor, the bulk of the landscape was enclosed. Almost certainly this was as a result of land sales and exchanges in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

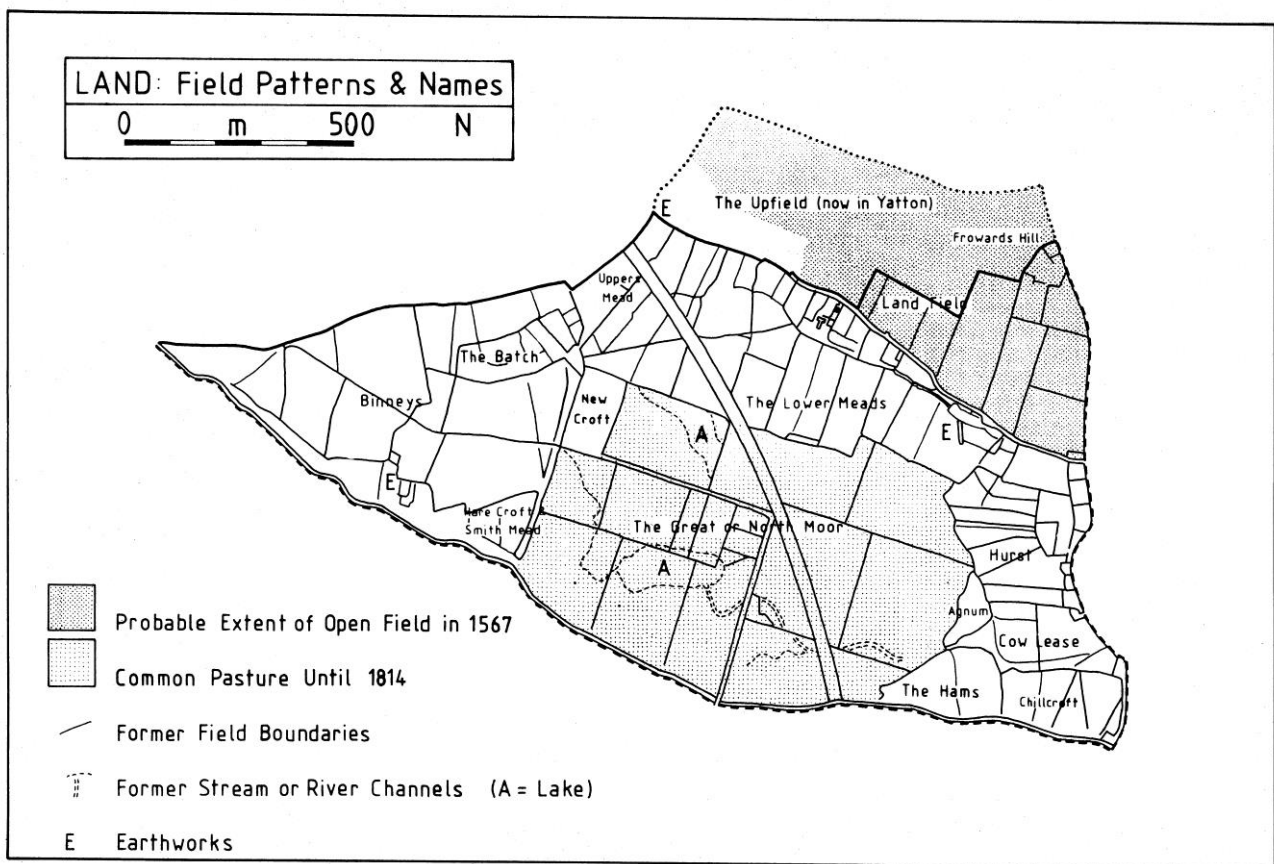


Fig 22: Field patterns and names at Land

Of the tenements already described, those of Alice Beale, Thomas Allsey, Johanne Swayne and Isabel Beney were all sold in 1601 to Richard Cole of Nailsea. Together with most of those tenements which lay Above the Yeo, these comprised the main elements of the Manor of Congresbury Cole in the seventeenth century. Robert Bryant's tenement was granted in fee farm to William Tucker in 1594 and was occupied in 1598 by Roger Whityng. Only the tenement of David Neads remained in the possession of Queen Elizabeth's Hospital and had probably been abandoned by 1657 when it's component lands were absorbed back into the manorial demesne. The archaeological evidence from the tenement of Thomas Allsey suggests

that this site was abandoned in the later seventeenth century, but there is no direct indication of when the others ceased to exist.

The precise reasons for these desertions remain unknown but may be related to the consolidation of landholding, indicated by the lands surrounding Land Farm in 1736 being in the sole possession of one Late Mr Jeffries. There is no documented information relating to his acquisition of this property, although seventeenth century deeds show the manor of Congresbury Cole to have been partitioned in around 1682. The process of consolidation within the fields above Land Lane is partially documented in court rolls of the period. In 1644, John Watkis the elder exchanged several acres of land on the moors of Congresbury for three separate acres in *Landfield* belonging to the tenement of Edmund Lovell. Other entries show similar exchanges and the end product of such actions was almost certainly physical enclosure.

The eighteenth century landscape described by the de Wilstar survey shows a pattern of fields little different from that in 1840, with only the Great Moor remaining unenclosed. Waste land adjacent to Smallway is shown to contain a small cottage in the possession of John Reede which was clearly in existence prior to 1730 when Ambrose Wall and James Morse, both of Wick-St-Lawrence, granted to the said John Reede "*All that tenement or cottage with garden, orchard and appurtenances called Smallway House, late in the occupation of the said Ambrose Wall and James Morse*" (ASD) A second cottage, not shown by de Wilstar, had also been developed on land belonging to John Watkis adjacent to Frowards Hill. This was in existence prior to 1632 when it was granted to Thomas Hilsey (SRO DD/SX/2-1).

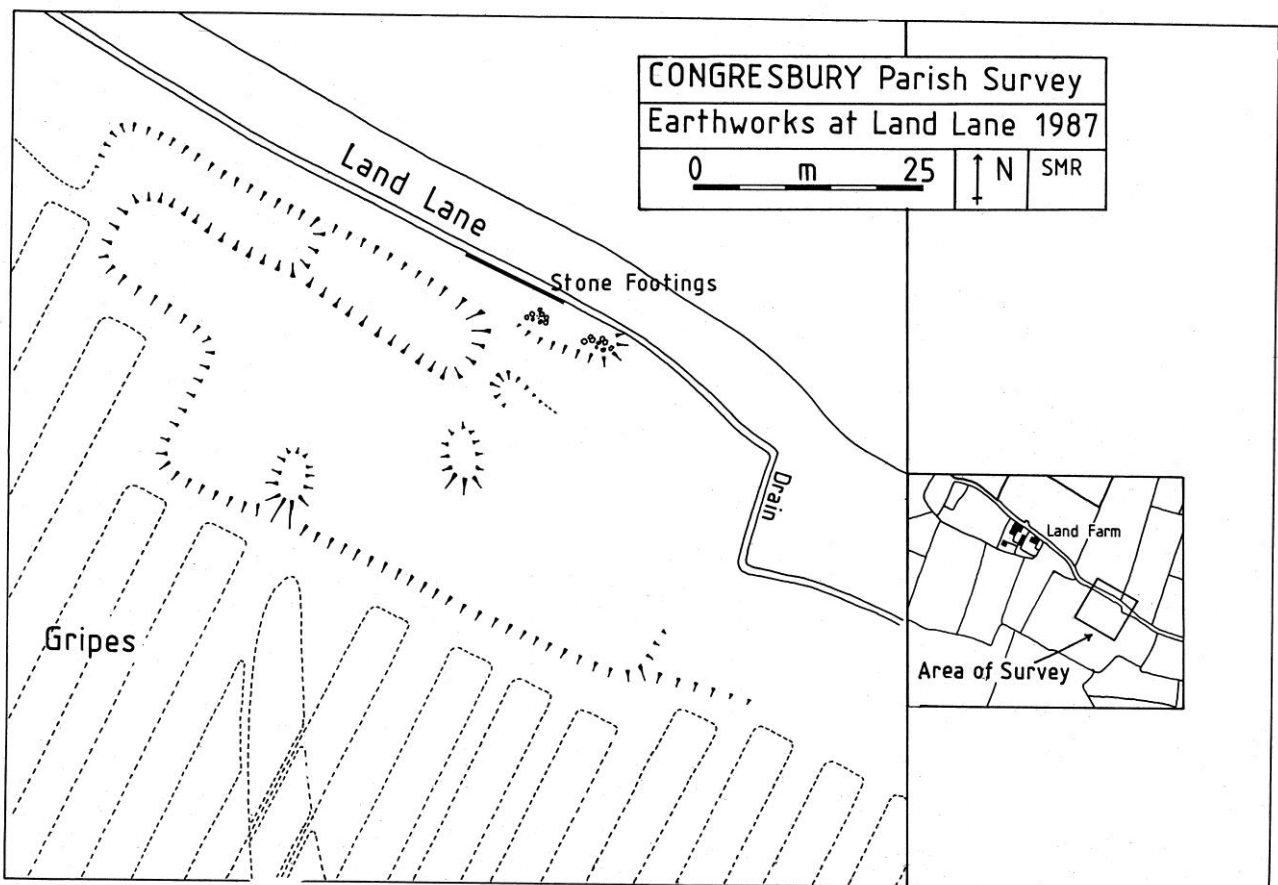


Fig 23: Earthworks at Land Lane

Between 1736 and 1814, the remaining physical vestiges of commonable land in the fields above Land Lane were finally eliminated, primarily by the ongoing process of exchange. The Enclosure Act officially sanctioned the end result as John Pigot, then owner of Land Farm, was awarded most of what had previously been described as commonable in this area. The re-allocation of land along the margins of Smallway and the foot of Cadbury Hill led to a subsequent rash of cottage development between 1814 and 1840. The prime mover in this expansion would appear to have been the Dean and Chapter upon whose existing and newly acquired lands five of the eight new cottages were built.

However, The greatest observable impact of the 1814 Act was the physical partitioning of the Great Moor. The large lake shown here by DeWilstar had already been drained by this date but precisely when this occurred is unknown. It may have coincided with adjustments to drainage in the Westmeads where a substantial ditch known as the New Cut was dug sometime between 1766 and 1800. With Enclosure, nine acres of the former common were sold to defray expenses, the remainder was allotted to various tenants with the manorial lords taking the largest proportion. The regular pattern of rectangular fields enclosed by quickset hedges that resulted from this division is, with only minor differences, still largely extant.

Chapter 9: Iwood and Urchinwood

The small but discrete estates of Iwood and Urchinwood owe their origins to very different roots. The former illustrates the creation of an early freehold estate, later to become an independent manor within the parish. The latter is derived from the consolidation of landholding and land sales of the early post-medieval period. The results of both processes however are broadly similar, creating compact land units under unified ownership.

Despite the survival of a substantial body of medieval and post-medieval documentation relating to this part of the parish, the de Wilstar survey shows only a limited area and the absence of a complete cartographic description prior to 1814 prevents an accurate reconstruction of landholding. No manorial surveys of Iwood survive and whilst Urchinwood almost certainly comprised tenements from both Middletown and Venus Street, none can be precisely related to existing occupation or archaeology.

There is no documentary linkage between the survey of 1567 and the present Urchinwood House to suggest occupation of its site at that time. Nor has any archaeological evidence been forthcoming to indicate earlier habitation. However, the description of one of the few undivided and thus potentially early yardlands, held in 1567 by John Kynge, would seem to match in part, the eighteenth century holdings of James Wreach. Based on Iwood Farm, these lands were in 1814 occupied by Benjamin Thayer, who amongst others possessed an Old Auster known as '*Kingmans*'. Evidence of medieval occupation on the site of the present farm is however limited. A second farm, which in 1814 belonged to George Parker, lay just to the south. Now demolished, the field in which it lay has produced slightly more substantial evidence of medieval settlement, although none is earlier than the fourteenth century.

The immediate post-Conquest settlement pattern is thus uncertain. As elsewhere in the parish, it seems reasonable to assume the existence of a number of farmsteads in the area, particularly in view of evidence for earlier Romano-British occupation. One almost certainly lay adjacent to Iwood Lane where a site of the later medieval period yielded a small number of sherds of eleventh century pottery. It is also possible, though not proven, that the *Mill of Ywod*, first documented in the early thirteenth century, is one of the two mills described by the Domesday Inquest.

Field names and early documentation both suggest that the area supported considerable woodland in the early medieval period. Kings Wood may well have extended as far south as the present Wrington Road, above which lay *le Breache*, *Broadleys* and *Udley*. Although the latter names are more indicative of early clearance, *Breach*, meaning land broken up for cultivation is a development of the post-Conquest period, but in common use by the thirteenth century. Iwood itself means 'the wood on the Yeo' and Urchinwood, first documented in the sixteenth century, indicates woodland within which were hedgehogs.

The creation of the manor of Iwood stems from a grant of 1228 when Jocelin, Bishop of Bath granted to Stephen (Aluet) his Chamberlain...

'...a mill in Congresbury, called the mill of Ywod with the site and suit thereof, and four...(omitted) with all that goes with them and their lands, that is Selak with six acres

without the moor and three acres within the moor and three acres of meadow. Thurbert with a croft containing two acres of land. Maud de Ywod with six acres of land without the moor and one acre within the moor and two acres of meadow, and Emeline, relect of Nicholas Flambard with four and a half acres of land and an acre of meadow; grant also to the said Stephen of a wood in Ywod, closed with a dyke and paling, to assart in whole or in part as he may, paying therefore four marks yearly.'

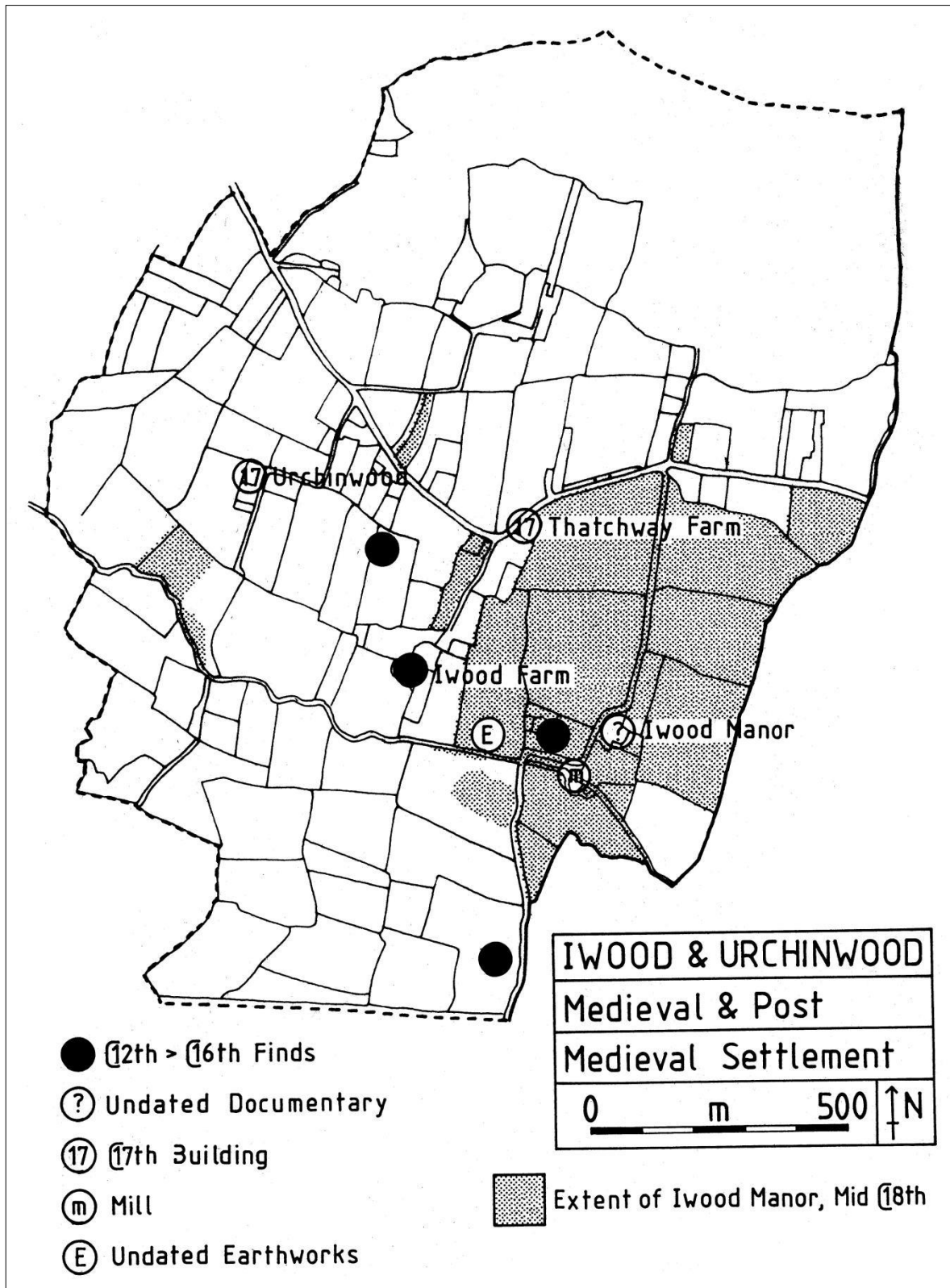


Fig 24: Medieval and post-medieval settlement at Iwood and Urchinwood

It is notable that only one mill is mentioned in the original grant, for by 1275 the Hundred Rolls record that the Bishop had demised to Stephen...

'...two virgates of land out of his lordship... in Ywod with two watermills, rendering eight marks annually.'

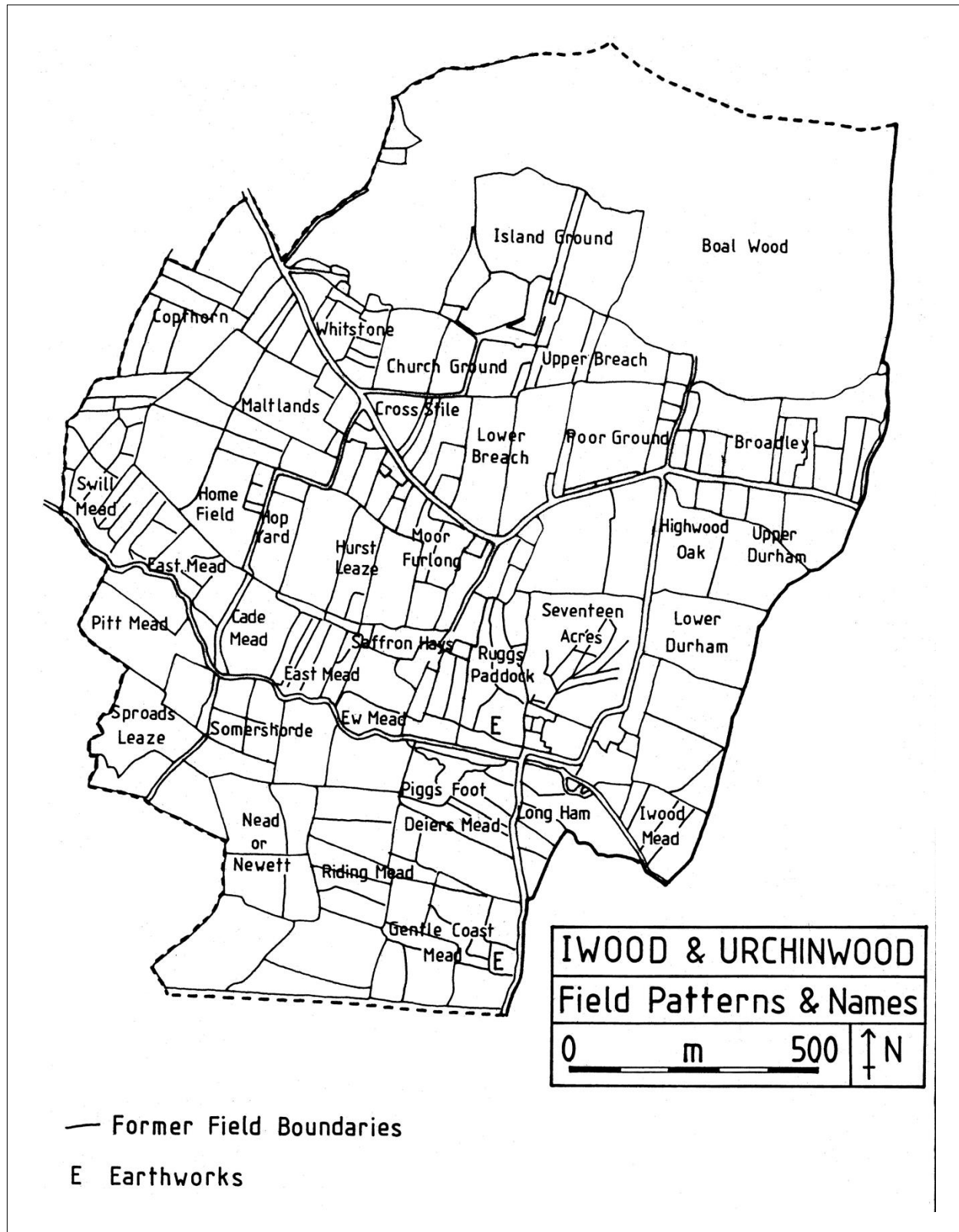


Fig 25: Field patterns and names at Iwood and Urchinwood

The broad outlines of this estate were still visible in the nineteenth century. The second mill was undoubtedly the mill of Congresbury itself which remained appurtenant to the manor of Iwood until the nineteenth century and for which the lord of that manor maintained a responsibility for repairs and upkeep. The location of the wood '*closed with a dyke and paling*' is uncertain but may be that known in the sixteenth century as Green Earls, a detached portion of the estate which lay just to its south. Low but substantial wood banks are still extant around much of its former boundaries. It is possible that a considerable proportion of the land included in the original grant was either wood or waste. In 1275, Bartholem de la More was the occupant of '*one virgate of land in a purpresture* [clearance]'. Iwood was held by Stephen de la More in 1317 and the former may well have been his predecessor.

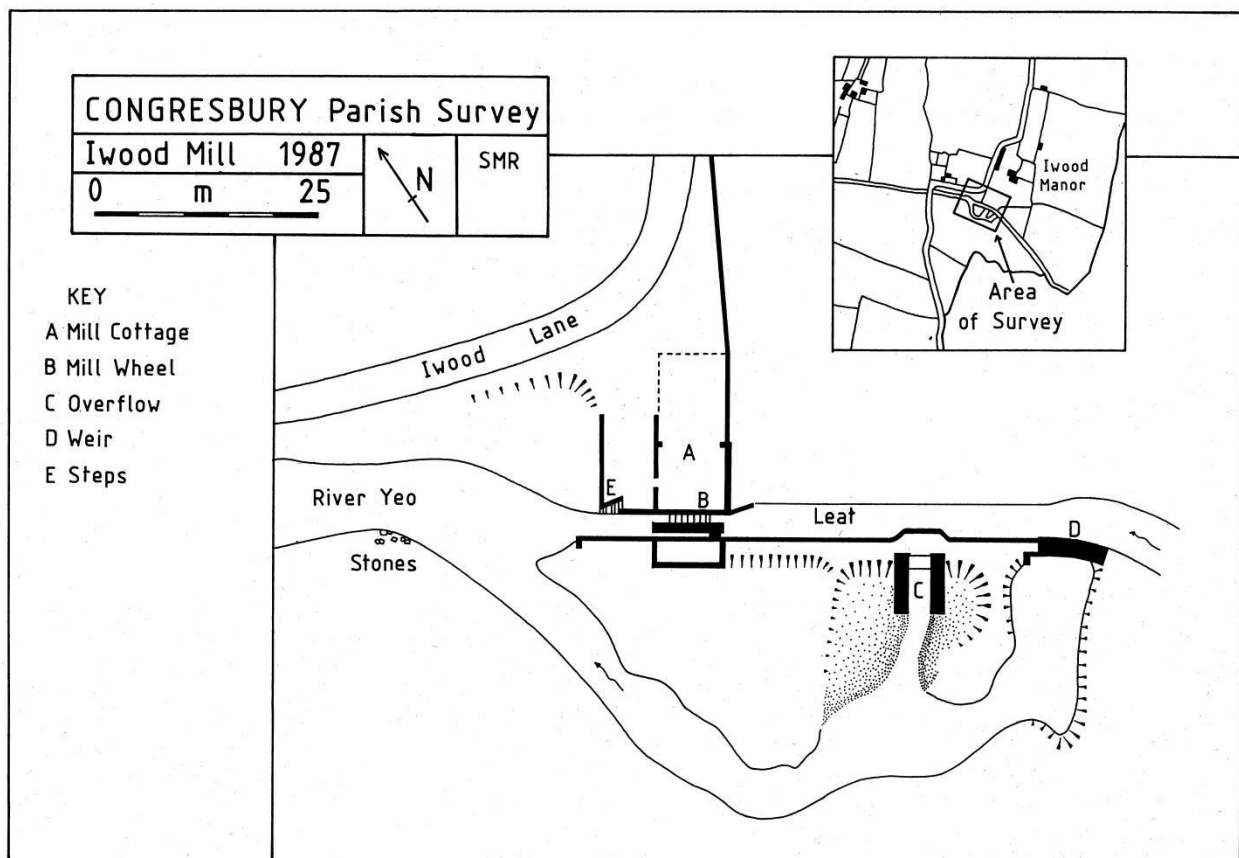


Fig 26: Iwood Mill in 1987

The details of the tenants holdings included in the grant of 1228 are too obscure to allow any reconstruction of their location. It is possible that all but Maud de Ywod (whose surname is locational) may have dwelt outside the area. The grant shows clearly the ease with which people, particularly those of bonded status, could be transferred between one estate and another. The aim possibly being the creation of a new settlement as land elsewhere was increasingly exploited.

Surviving earthworks and pottery scatters give at least a partial impression of settlement in the area of both Iwood and Urchinwood from the twelfth century. Medieval occupation has already been noted at Iwood Farm and adjacent to Iwood Lane. Earthworks and pottery from the latter site suggest the existence of at least two structures and several phases of

occupation from the eleventh century until around 1700 (*Fig 36*). The site in 1755 belonged to Captain Webb of Urchinwood and is noted amongst his deeds as '*...the scite of one other messuage or tenement commonly called or known by the name of Gentlecost with the garden, orchards, backsides, outlets and several closes of land, meadow and pasture ground thereunto adjoining containing in the whole 19 acres.*' Clearly deserted by this date it's earlier occupants remain uncertain. It's designation as an 'Old Auster' in 1814 indicates that it formed a component of an earlier virgate, possibly part of the 1567 holding of John Sprudd on whose lands the Urchinwood estate was later partially based.

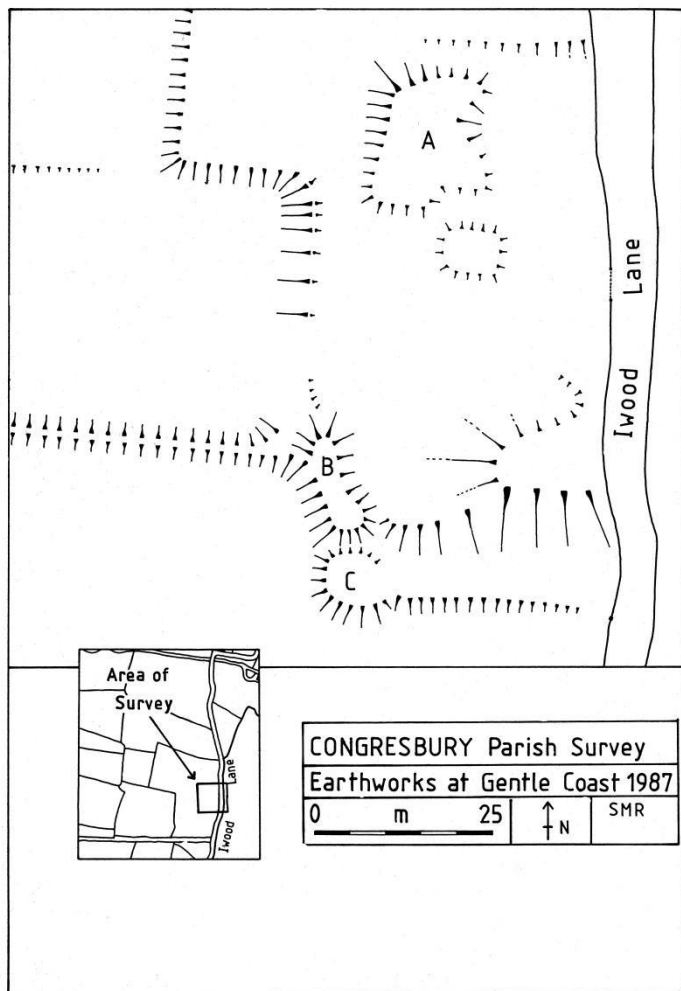


Fig 27: Earthworks at Gentlecoast, Iwood Lane

Pottery recovered during construction work at Iwood Manor Cottage would indicate occupation of this site from the thirteenth century and probably before. To it's west, surviving but undated earthworks in pasture (*Fig 27*) may well represent the site of a further medieval dwelling. The earthworks are confused and relatively insubstantial, with no clear indication of a house site. Lacking any early documentary information relating to this field, only excavation could establish the location of a building within this complex of low mounds and ditches.

A fortunate survival from the medieval period are a series of account rolls (*compoti*) of the manor of Iwood for the years between 1342 and 1347. The accounts provide an indirect but

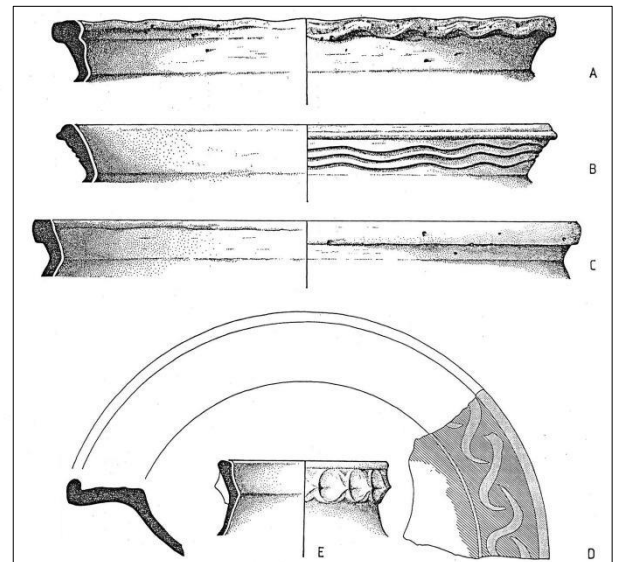


Fig 28: Medieval pottery from Gentlecoast

A-C 11th to 13th century cooking pots. B is likely from the Ham Green kilns.

D is a 17th century trailed slipware dish: white / cream slip on a dull green background. Probably from Donyatt.

E Earthenware glazed jug. Poss Wanstrow.

detailed impression of the landscape of this small area of Congresbury. In addition, in the absence of similar detailed accounts for the manor of Congresbury itself, they provide information which in a primarily agrarian economy is of value in assessing the nature of land use throughout the parish.

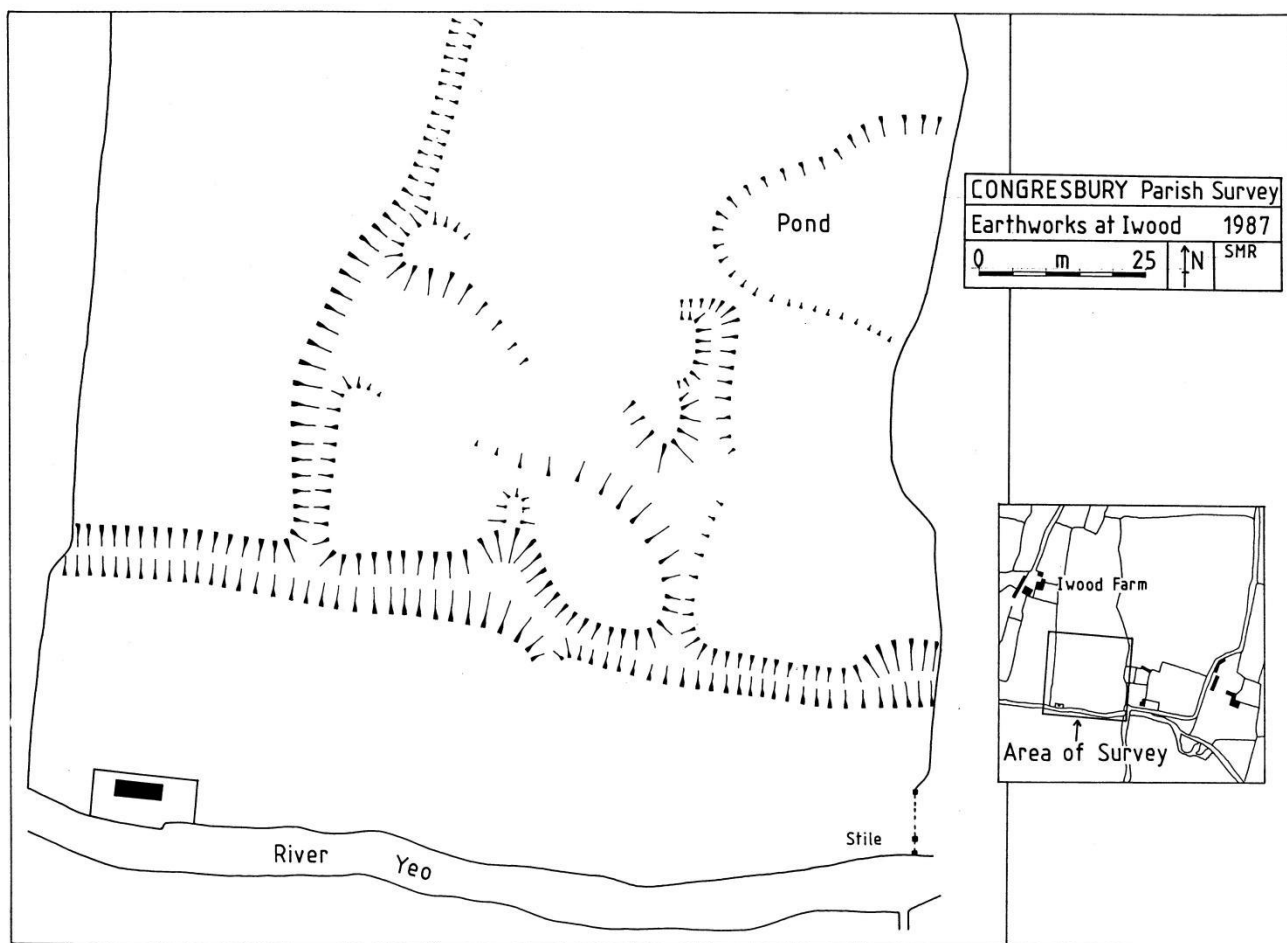


Fig 29: Earthworks west of Iwood Mill

The sale of hedge clippings and the cost of cleansing or digging new ditches, is an annual feature of these accounts, showing clearly that the landscape was largely enclosed. Blackthorn or quickset hedges (*spinet*) are recorded next to the identifiable fields of The Breach, the croft called *La Dirham* (Durham) and along the Wrington boundary. *La Hame* (Long Ham) was enclosed by a new hedge and ditch dug in 1343 at a cost of 7d. Other ditches are noted between the closes and fields of the lord and on either side of the way leading to the common field. In 1342, John de Wyke paid two men 7s 2d for digging a total of 86 ropes or 1,806 feet around a number of these named enclosures.

The land use of these fields is also fully described. Meadow and pasture lay either side of the Yeo at Millmead, Ridings Ham and East Ham. The pasture of *Ordelesham* remains unlocated but *Le Alres* (an aldergrove) is probably the Green Earls Grove of the post-medieval period. Millmead was customarily mown five times a year by two men at a cost of 2½d, but in 1343 both Millmead and *Le Alres* were being used for the pannage of the lord's pigs. Sales of stock indicate that sheep rather than cattle were of primary importance, probably reflecting a general trend observable in many areas in the fourteenth century. The large numbers of ewes sold in 1344 and 1345 is interesting. These are described as ewes whose lambs were

stillborn or which had died. In addition, 1345 saw the sale of fleeces from 87 wethers and 33 lambs which had died from murrain, this was clearly a poor year for sheep!

Wheat, barley and oats comprised the primary grain crop on the lord's demesne as they did on the Bishop's lands throughout the parish. In Iwood, the lord's arable fields were probably those which lay to the west of Iwood Lane as in 1343 a new ditch is described as being dug between the field of the lord and the Kingsway, the present Wrington road to the north. Wheat provided the largest yield and greatest annual income. Barley and oats were grown in lesser quantities whilst beans and pulses were rotated on an annual basis, presumably to increase or maintain soil fertility. Fields were also fallowed but the accounts give no indication of which. The fallow fields were usually let to pasture at an annual income averaging 20d.

One aspect of the landscape which does not figure so prominently in these accounts is woodland. The sale of underwood is mentioned only twice in the five years covered. In 1343, 4s was received from the sale of one perch of underwood in The Grove. In 1345 a further three acres and one rod of underwood was sold at 3s 3d per acre.

There is no indication of the number of tenants dwelling within the manor at this time and whilst two customary tenants are occasionally mentioned, most labour would appear to have been hired from elsewhere. Neither is there any evidence to suggest the existence of any manorial buildings, other than a dovecot and the two mills. The dovecot was at farm for an annual rent of 13s 4d, but its location remains unknown. The receipts from the two mills are undifferentiated in the accounts but income from the mills provided the estate with its greatest source of revenue.

Beyond the observable boundaries of Iwood, other aspects of the medieval landscape are obscure. Much of the land above the present Wrington road comprised part of the Bishop's demesne as originally had Iwood itself. The leasing of these lands to tenants is infrequently noted in the few surviving accounts of the Bishopric such as that in 1353 when *'Richard de Godescote gave the lord 40d for two acres of overland in Southebrech out of the south part of the demesne'* (LP. ED. 1177). In 1382, eight tenants were attached at the Hundred Court for *'occupying forty acres of the lords land below Kingswood'* (LP. ED. 1181). The assarting of these areas was thus largely complete by the fourteenth century.

South of the Wrington road, there is little indication, either archaeological or documentary, that the large pasture enclosures surrounding the site of Urchinwood Manor were ever subdivided further. The artreal curve fossilised in field boundaries to the east suggests cultivation of much of this land in the medieval period, but only the field known as Moorfurlong was under arable in the sixteenth century. The retention of significant proportions of manorial land in this small common field allows a partial reconstruction of its landholding. As elsewhere in the parish, lands within this field were occupied solely by tenants from one particular area (in this case Venus Street), suggesting its 'common' origins lie in the breakup of specific virgate holdings. As in Iwood, meadows probably lined the remaining lands along the banks of the Yeo although none are mentioned by name prior to 1567. The river itself was spanned by a number of bridges although it is uncertain if any of the three surviving structures are medieval in origin.

The Post-Medieval Landscape

Documentary information relating to Iwood in the post-medieval period is virtually nonexistent. The 1567 survey of Congresbury notes only that as a freeholder, Richard Blewett held lands and tenements in Iwood together with the West Mill. Seventeenth and eighteenth century rentals for the manor of Iwood and Yatton give no indication of landuse, nor any clear distinction between the occupants of either area (SRO. DD/X/FRC 10). By way of contrast, Urchinwood is reasonably well documented from the early seventeenth century and although the precise origins of the estate are uncertain, it's accumulated landholding can be traced to a series of substantial land purchases in the early 1600's.

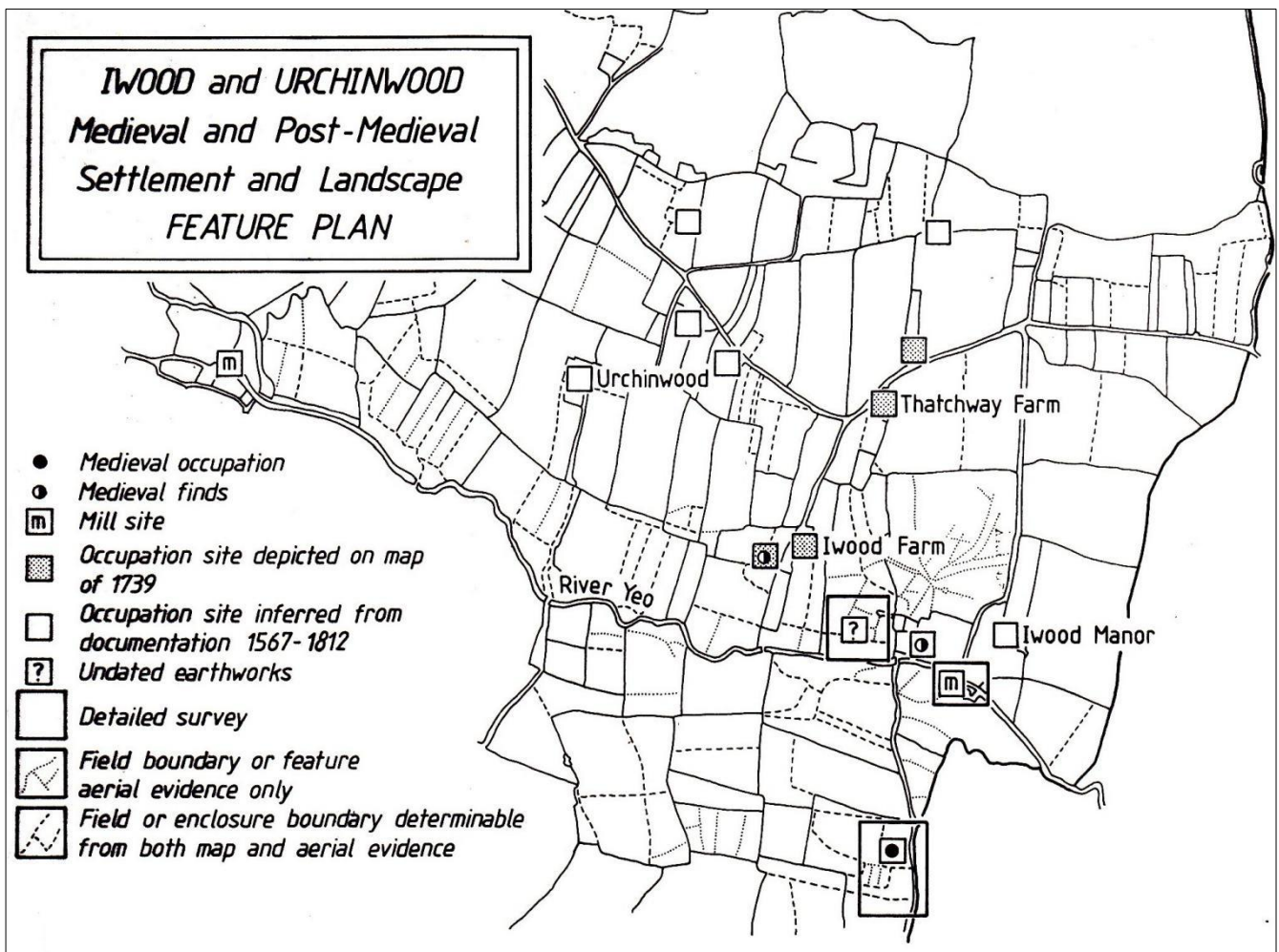


Fig 30: Medieval and postmedieval landscape

The present Urchinwood Manor bears a datestone of 1620 and was clearly a significant building in 1664 when it's then occupant, John Taylor, was assessed for 26s in the Hearth Tax returns. Taylor had persued a number of purchases following the sale of manorial lands in the late sixteenth century, beginning in 1631 with the purchase of land that in 1601 had been granted to John May, lord of Charterhouse. These lands comprised '*One messuage or tenement with appertenances and 82½ acres of land, meadow and pasture thereunto belonging, now in the possession of John Sprudd the younger and Robert his brother*' (BRO). Sprudd's original tenement comprised several messuages, probably based on the present Pineapple Farm and possibly including the previously mentioned tenement known as

'Gentlecost'. His substantial landholding included land at Urchenwood and a series of large enclosures whose acreage matches the description of fields surrounding Urchinwood Manor in an abstract of 1755 (UD). It seems likely that the present house was built for John May and that records of its later purchase by Taylor are now lost.

In 1643, Taylor bought six further leases including a substantial proportion of the former demesne lands in The Breach, a customary tenement and 17 acres *'sometime in the tenure of William Young'* and two further tenements and two orchards in the occupation of William Atkins and Maurice Lloyd. Of these tenements, that of William Young comprised the Fardle held in 1567 by John Young of Middletown, the location of which remains unknown. A lease of 1693 describes the location of the latter as *'...that messuage or dwelling house, garden and orchard and four acres lying about the said messuage, near to the dwelling house of the late William Atkins towards the south and the lands of the Lord Pawlett called the Ball towards the north. Heretofore in the tenure of Maurice Lloyd and after of Francis Kemp'* (BRO 7836 [53]). William Atkins may have been the occupant of the present Vine Cottage and Maurice Lloyd the tenant of a messuage and garden, shown on the enclosure map of 1814 in a field just to the north. This site is now deserted and no trace of the former house remains. 'Kemps' survives as a field name some distance to the east.

By 1664 a substantial house may also have stood on the site of the present Iwood Manor. Katherine Wallis was assessed for 20s in the Hearth Tax of 1664 and William Wallis appears as the chief tenant of the Farm and two cottages in a rental of 1647 (SRO. DD/X/FRC 10). There is no indication on the present site of Iwood Manor of any early occupation, although in view of the extensive, pre-nineteenth century landscaping of the area surrounding the house, this is probably not surprising.

The fate of the adjacent mill is also uncertain. There are no documented references to the Mill of Iwood prior to 1840 and it is only the West Mill which figures prominently in early descriptions of the parish. This lack of account for such a significant feature may indicate that the mill recorded in the medieval period fell into disuse. The mill recorded by the Tithe map and documented in a photograph of 1890 (Plate) would appear to date from the eighteenth century. It may have been used in part as a timber mill, associated with an adjacent wood yard also shown on the Tithe map. Burnt down at the end of the nineteenth century, surviving footings, cobbled floors and the mill wheel itself remain as a testament to the limited industrial archaeology of the parish (*Fig 28*).

As throughout the parish, much of the area of Iwood and Urchinwood was largely enclosed by 1567, the landscape broadly similar in appearance to that depicted by the Tithe. Court rolls continued to record the clearance of woodland around the margins of Kingswood into the seventeenth century. In 1655, Henry Elliot *'converted his wood ground in Kingswood to tillage'* and in the same year it was ordered *'to view one yard of land in The Breach that was formerly wood'* (BMC/4/35[b]). Land sales and exchanges between tenants finally eliminated the last vestiges of commonable land derived from the breakup of the early medieval virgates. By 1814, only a relict pattern of narrow enclosures in Broadleys and Moorfurlong testified to its former existence. The same influences probably accounted for the desertion of the several tenements already mentioned and for the development of Thatchway Farm, which can be dated to the seventeenth century, but for which no early documentation is available.

Thus the Enclosure Act of 1814, which primarily involved the re-allocation and exchange of lands, had little immediate effect on the appearance of the landscape, Only minor areas of waste along the margins of the Wrington road were physically enclosed. By 1840 even these had been developed and occupied.

Chapter 10: The Marsh

Now beyond the western limits of the modern civil parish, the Marsh describes a complex landscape of intermixed parochial areas. The area defined as being part of the parish of Congresbury in 1840 and which is enclosed by the manorial boundaries recorded in 1805 (BMC), today lies wholly within the civil parish of Puxton.

The complexity of the boundaries of the Marsh almost certainly stem from events in the early medieval period as components of the pre-Conquest estate of Congresbury were granted away. The fossilisation of lands titheable to Kewstoke, Puxton and Wick St Lawrence along the northern boundaries of the area may therefore represent an element of the landscape that was in existence by 1086. The field name *Huish Feelde* is applicable to much of this land, further emphasising the probable link between Congresbury and Hewish in the pre-Conquest period. As it is probable that this area represents an early phase in the reorganisation of post-Conquest landscape, the preserved sub-division of holdings here, which where reconstruction is possible, can be shown to belong to single yardlands, lends weight to the supposition that the identifiable virgate holdings are a product of the pre-Conquest period.

The partitioning of the landscape between 1066 and 1086 may thus have had little effect on the overall pattern of settlement. Despite the descriptive inference of its name, it is clear from a reconstruction of the virgate tenements here that this area of low-lying moorland was well settled in the immediate post-Conquest period (Fig 40).

Fig 31: The Marsh; Land Tenure c1567

	Yardlands	Half-Yards.	Fardlelands
Number of Holdings	2	9	2
Yardland Equivelent	2	4.5	0.5
Total Number of Yardlands	7		

As elsewhere in the parish, direct archaeological evidence of medieval occupation is limited, only four of the still inhabited farms within the Marsh producing pottery of the period. Surviving earthworks in the area are substantial but undatable and it is primarily sixteenth century and later documentation that provides the main evidence for a reconstruction of the medieval settlement pattern.

Of the occupied farms which can be related to the manorial survey of 1567, Chestnut Farm, then the property of Isabell Irysh, produced the most substantial evidence of medieval habitation. The present building bearing traces of fifteenth century construction and its garden yielded much pottery of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The farm comprises one of the two undivided yardlands which survived into the sixteenth century, possibly representing the focus of an immediate, post-Conquest tenement.

Palmer's Elm Farm and Pool Farm, the former occupied in 1567 by Cuthbert Willott and the latter by Edmond Hardwill, both remained the property of Queen Elizabeth's Hospital until the nineteenth century. Each produced a limited number of medieval pottery sherds that may

indicate medieval occupation on these sites. The latter farm comprised a half-yardland holding, the lands of which almost always lay together with those of a further half-yardland that in 1567 was in the possession of Thomas Keene. The description of this tenement matches the nineteenth century holdings of John Pigot, based on the now unoccupied property of The Oaks. Together, a further Domesday virgate may be identifiable.

The farm now known as The Grange was, in 1567, the focus of two tenements. One, a half-yardland known as 'Follyetts' and the other '*A toft and yard-land of Olde Auster called Colles*'. Both were in the possession of John Irysh, the former at that time held by copyhold, the latter by indenture of lease. 'Colles' tenement may be that first noted in 1462 in a '*Grant by indenture to Peter Cole now deceased and Joan his wife of a tenement and a virgate of land in Congresbury, to go to Thomas Browne his servant and Isabel, daughter of Richard Dunbar at the death of Joan*' (SRS 49: 403). The toft remains unlocated although 'Coles' survives as a field name in lands to the west of The Grange and in a large number of isolated parcels of land within both Congresbury and Puxton. The field name 'Follyetts' has also been lost but the tenement may be that of The Grange itself. A limited quantity of medieval pottery was derived from disturbed soil adjacent to the present farm which was certainly extant in the sixteenth century, if not before.

Neither Grange Farm nor Willow Farm have produced any positive evidence of medieval occupation although both were occupied in 1567. Grange farm comprised a half-yardland holding in the occupation of Ralph Bumer. Willow Farm, a further half-yardland held by Robert Willott. The shared landholding of Robert Willott and John Knight whose half-yardland was based on a now deserted tenement located to the rear of....., forms a compact land unit suggesting a further Domesday tenement. Grange Farm's modern landholding includes the sites of two further sixteenth century tenements, both of which are now deserted. Those of John Payne and Johanna Avery lay adjacent to May's Lane. The former still occupied by a barn, the latter surviving as substantial earthworks (Fig 18).

The location of the three other tenements described in this area by the survey of 1567 remains uncertain. Earthworks defining a series of ponds and small enclosures survive in a field just north of Tile House. No house site is visible here but field boundaries now removed may represent the four closes adjacent to the messuage of John Taylor. This sixteenth century holding shared a number of lands in common with that of Ralph Bumer's tenement immediately to its south. John Brownes tenement remains untraced as does a second tenement in the possession of Isabel Irysh. The former being a Fardle was almost certainly directly related to the tenement of Johanna Avery, paying the same rent and holding similar lands. The latter is described as being the third part of a yardland but was not of 'Old Auster'. Its component lands, including a substantial acreage in '*Hysh Feelde*', suggest its location to be in Huish rather than Congresbury.

Despite the lack of archaeological evidence, it seems reasonable to assume that sites occupied in the sixteenth century represent a settlement pattern that, as in other areas of Congresbury, was probably well established by 1300. However documentary information relating to other aspects of the medieval landscape is virtually non-existent. The Marsh is not specifically mentioned by name until 1388 when a compotus of the Dean and Chapter of Wells records the tithe of '*£8 recieved from the sale of corn from fields in La Mersh*'. At one tenth of its value, this figure implies a significant acreage of arable cultivation within the area at this time, but its organisation remains uncertain.

While several large fields are recorded by the survey of 1567, these were not commonable, but as in other areas of the parish, shared between the occupiers of specific tenements. *Sowthe Feelde* and *Chout Feelde*, the location of which can be inferred only from their 1567 description and the existence in the post-medieval period of a trackway known as *Chonte Lane*, were occupied solely by the adjacent half-yardland tenancies of John Knight and Robert Willott. Neither show any significant indication of medieval ploughing and both in 1567 were pasture. *Maydens Feelde*, which lay to the east of Puxton Lane, was severally enclosed pasture in 1567 and it too shows little indication of previous ploughing. Although an expansion of cultivation may be envisaged for the medieval period, the absence of clear indications of its existence in terms of field shape or surviving plough ridges, suggests that for the Marsh it was short lived. The consolidated nature of landholding here further denies the formation of any large scale open fields. Sixteenth century arable cultivation was confined primarily to areas adjacent to tenant's messuages, surrounding which aerial photography shows numerous small, but deeply ditched enclosures. These are not described by the survey of 1567 and are presumably medieval in origin. Many show clear indications of ploughing and may well have been the focus of arable cultivation in this area subject to frequent flooding.

Pasture would thus appear to have formed the backbone of the medieval economy of this area of Congresbury and cattle figure prominently in the wills of the sixteenth century tenants who dwelt here. Robert Willott, two of whose sons Cuthbert and Robert are recorded as tenants above, died c1544, leaving heifers, cows and '*a little sharked calf*' to several of his children. Richard Avery, who died in the same year, left cattle and yearlings. The extensive demesne lands of *The Pillfeelde* on the eastern margins of the Marsh were all let to pasture in 1457 when an account roll of the Bishopric records an income of '*...£10 from diverse pastures called The Pillys granted to Robert Neddys, William Touker, John Dyke and other tenants of the lord this year*'. Earlier, in 1302, an income of 20s was derived '*from the pasture called Le Hard*' on the eastern side of these fields (PRO SC6, 1131/3).

Meadowland would seem to have been restricted to fields adjacent to the Holebridge Yeo and an extensive Lot Meadow known as The Dolemoor. This latter meadow held a unique position in its relationship to the tenants of The Marsh and tenants also of adjacent parishes. A fuller description of the place of this meadow in relationship to the development of the moorland landscape is given in Chapter 11. However of all the tenants dwelling within the parish of Congresbury in 1567, only those from the Marsh had any common rights within this area.

One significant aspect of the medieval landscape remains to be fully elucidated. The present Oldbridge or Holebridge Yeo occupies an artificially straightened course that was certainly extant in the sixteenth century. Documents of the fourteenth century mention the '*watercourse called Holeyoy*' and '*Holebrugge*' by name (LP ED 1182 & 1183), but give little indication of their nature. In two cases, sixteenth century tenements adjacent to the river possess lands which are bisected by its present course, *The Old Acre* of Robert Willott's tenement and the fields known as *Budforthes* belonging to that of Cuthbert Willott. Both field names have early origins, presumably related to their original virgate holdings. Assuming these to be a product of reorganisation in the immediate post-Conquest period suggests that adjustments to the course of the Oldbridge River occurred sometime between 1086 and 1300.

The Post-Medieval Landscape

The primary influence on the post-medieval landscape of the Marsh was almost certainly the sale of all but two of the manorial tenements within the area to independent landowners. However, surviving deeds give only partial details of subsequent development and only a small proportion of the area is shown by the de Wilstar survey. Despite these limitations of quantity, that documentary information which survives is significant.

Following the land sales of 1594 to 1600, several of the tenements within the Marsh recorded by the survey of 1567 became abandoned. The land associated with the toft known as '*Colles*' was leased and divided between Jacob Avery, Giles Bitfiles and Josephine Ravells. That of Robert Willett and John Knight was sold in fee farm to Francis Knight and subsequently amalgamated into a single tenement (BRO & SRO DD/GB/49). So too were the lands of Johanna Avery and John Payne which were purchased by Thomas Farr (SRO DD/FS [57] 5&6). No precise date can be given for individual desertions but the above tenements had all gone by 1700.

Conversely, the limited areas shown by de Wilstar reveal the development of a small but significant number of cottages at Waterman's Bow and elsewhere along the course of the present A370. That of Simon Card below the Lower Heathgate being described in the same survey as '*lately built*', whilst others, such as '*the smiths shop at Waterman's Bow*', were clearly in existence by the mid seventeenth century, having been noted in the manorial survey of 1656. Post-medieval development continued to focus on the line of this highway. By 1814, much of the waste which lay to either side had been squatted or otherwise legally developed.

Other landscape changes between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries were limited. The area was largely enclosed by 1567 and it was the reduction of field boundaries on the amalgamation of tenements, rather than an increase, that was most significant. One major event prior to 1842 was however to have a substantial impact on the northern margins of the area. The construction of the Great Western Railway was begun in 1839 and completed by 1841. The line bisected lands at the extreme western end of the parish

Chapter 11: The Moors

The long term pastoral usage of those lands below the 5m contour has already been envisaged in previous chapters and some indication of the immediate post-Conquest landscape has also been described. Throughout the medieval and post-medieval periods Congresbury's moorland landscape underwent a number of significant physical changes. The origins of these changes were probably stimulated by the post-Conquest partitioning of the Saxon estate and almost certainly encouraged by economic and social change in the following centuries. Whilst little archaeological material has been recovered from the area, medieval documentation and an analysis of later landholding, provides a basis for assessing the form and nature of this moorland reclamation.

There is no clear indication that any drainage system that may have been established during the Romano-British era continued to function beyond the end of the fifth century, the majority of known Roman sites along the coastal clay belt being sealed by estuarine alluvium to a depth of up to 70cm (S. Rippon, *pers comm*). Features representing potential Romano-British settlement in the south west corner of Congresbury parish and within the Puxton Dolemoors, show no relationship to the present pattern of drainage. Rather, they would appear to relate to a pre-drainage pattern of natural streamways (Fig 40). Neither is there any evidence to suggest significant attempts at moorland reclamation in the pre-Conquest period. Banwell's descriptive Saxon charter makes no mention of any prominent artificial features in its passage across the moors. Despite the fact that its modern boundary is in places clearly man made, the Saxon boundaries rely on natural landscape characteristics.

Lacking any documentary information on the area prior to the twelfth century, it seems reasonable to assume that as in other such lowland areas, the moors provided an unenclosed area of seasonal grazing for those scattered settlements that comprised the pre-Conquest estate. The practice of intercommoning is well documented on moorland estates to the south of the Mendips and is strongly suggested in Congresbury by the fossilisation of areas of land within the parish which in 1840 were titheable to parishes other than Congresbury itself. This is particularly notable along the south-western boundary of the parish and within the extensive common meadow of the Dolemoors. Within this latter area, tenants from Kewstoke, Puxton, Wick St Lawrence and Congresbury, those areas which comprised the pre-Conquest estate, maintained common rights until the nineteenth century.

Such rights not only involved pasture, but probably extended to the taking of timber and firewood. The location within the moors of a large number of fields bearing the suffix *hyrst*, meaning woodland has already been noted. Although most had almost certainly been cleared by the mid thirteenth century, they were all, with the exception of *Stibhurst*, described as commonable in 1567. Here again, not only tenants of Congresbury held rights of common. Several tenants from Wick St Lawrence occupied land in *Smallhurst* and *Gyldenhurst* in the sixteenth century and further elements within these areas remained titheable to Wick until 1840.

In view of the maintenance of these common rights it is unlikely that the breakup of the Saxon estate resulted in an immediate physical division of the landscape. However, the limited available evidence suggests that the partitioning of the moorland was systematic and almost certainly planned, possibly in two main phases. Documentary references infer that it was also complete by the mid fourteenth century.

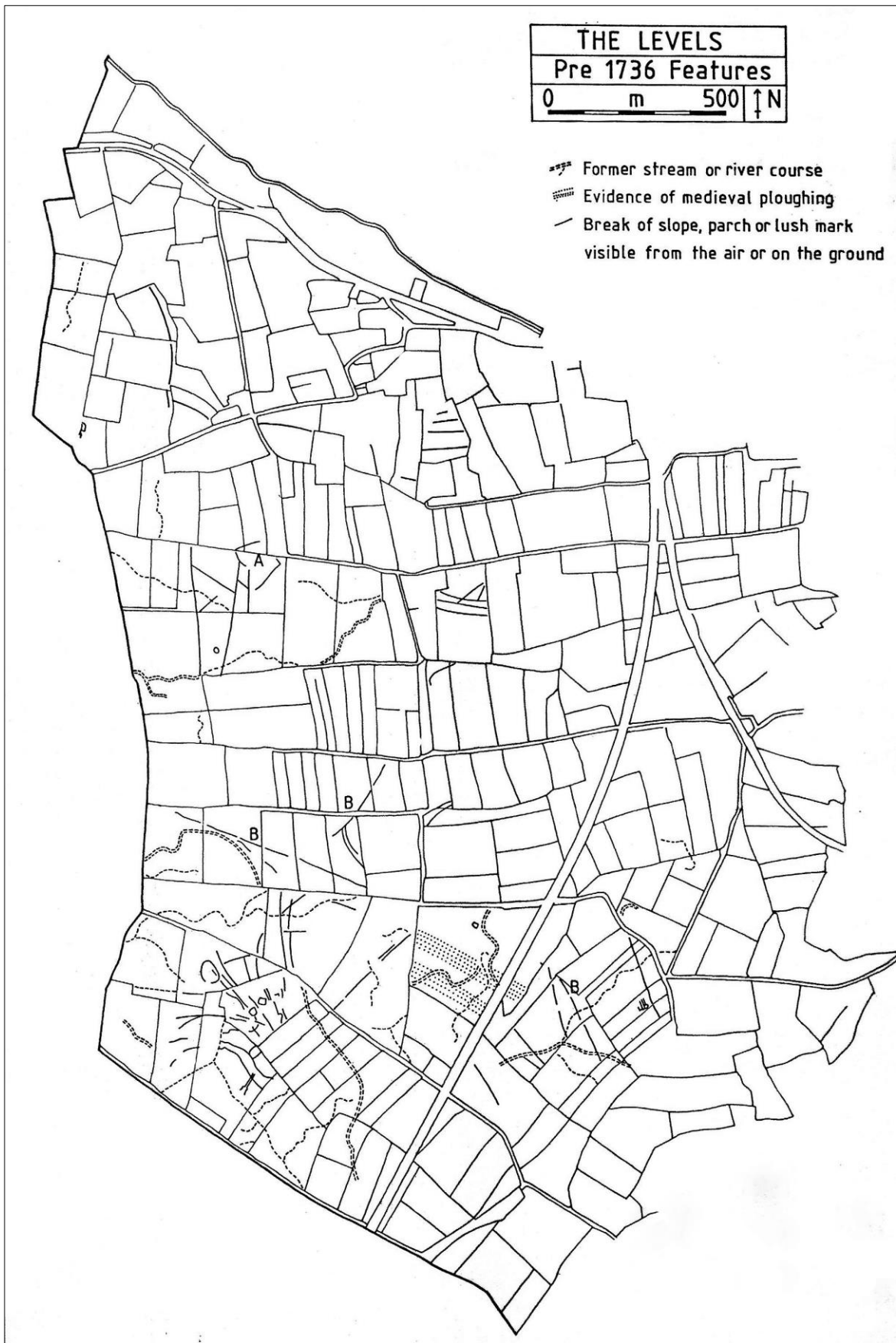


Fig 32: Pre-1736 features in the Marsh

Early medieval moorland reclamation was probably confined to areas adjacent to the moors. The distribution of *croft* field names, primarily around their margins, possibly representing piecemeal, though manorially sanctioned, intakes by individual tenants. *Horsecroft* is first identified in 1215 (HMC), suggesting that areas immediately to the west of Middletown were reclaimed at an early date, but it is not until the fourteenth century that the remaining crofts become apparent. A notable exception to the marginal distribution of these field names is that of *Cripps Crofte*. The name indicates the existence of a hovel or shelter and is located amidst the potential Romano-British features in the south-west corner of the parish.

An examination of medieval documentation reveals the existence of several broad moorland divisions lying between these areas of early reclamation. The Dolemoors represent one such area, whilst Smithmoor (*Tyllynggesmethemore*), Brinsey Moor (*Le Oldemore*) and *Le Outmore* are also identifiable. Separating each, broad droveways or 'Walls' provided both access and primary drainage into the Meer Wall Rhine which forms the western boundary of the parish. All were clearly in existence by the end of the fourteenth century, being mentioned by name in documents between 1351 and 1388.

It seems probable that this apparent sub-division of the moors into smaller areas represents the penultimate phase in the final reclamation of the moorland. Although to date these features with any precision is problematic, it is possible that the formalisation of parochial boundaries between Congresbury, Puxton and Churchill in the later twelfth century provided an initial stimulus to their development. At this date (between 1174 and 1191), a series of grants involving land in *Cerceles* (Churchill) and '*The chapel of Wringmareis*' (Puxton), to the prior of Bruton, would seem to indicate a hardening of territorial divisions within the area, subsequently confirmed by a dispute between the aforesaid prior and the parson of Congresbury concerning the chapel of *Pokereleston* (Puxton) (SRS 8: 30-32). Such events may also have been encouraged by an increasing pressure on grazing land which can be noted at this time in areas with more substantial documentation (Williams 1970)

The diversion of Banwell's Towerhead Brook by the cutting of the Liddy Yeo, the straightening of one of the several streamways visible on aerial photographs to create the modern Churchill Rhyne, and the construction of Congresbury's Meer Wall, may have been an initial consequence of these events. However it is not until 1325 that documents make clear the division of the Dolemoors into two separate areas (Knight 1902: 229) and only in 1351 is the Meer Wall first mentioned by name (DD/SAS BA1).

The arrangement of landholding behind the Meer Wall and field names within the area described as *Le Outmore* both suggest a high degree of deliberate planning in the final phase of moorland reclamation. The manorial survey of 1567 describes the droveways or 'walls' which divided the major moorland blocks, as primarily belonging to the demesne. The retention of these features to the lordship of the manor and their parallel nature would seem to infer that their construction was under strong manorial control and possibly completed in a short period of time.

Between the walls and within *Le Outmore*, which in 1351 is described as comprising the identifiable fields of *Cotsettlesforlong*, *Cranemeresforlong*, *Croukhele*, *Stubhurst*, *Guldenehurst*, *Quatterham*, *Shortforlong*, *Faireforlong* and *Smallehurst* (DD/SAS BA1), an analysis of sixteenth century landholding shows that, in the main, only tenants from specific rental divisions within the parish occupied particular areas. The responsibility for reclamation between the walls may thus have been divided between particular groups of tenants, a possibility further inferred by the survival of the field name *Cotsettlesforlong* (in 1739,

Courses Furlong). The name is derived from the Old English *cot-seta* or cottage dweller, signifying the interest of one particular group of tenants in this area.

Whatever the precise course and timetable of reclamation, the overall layout of the early fourteenth century moorland landscape was probably little different from that described in 1567 and visible on maps of the eighteenth century. Only in terms of the subdivision of fields between the walls was there possibly any substantial difference. Initial enclosure between the walls probably involved fairly extensive areas as is suggested by the broad grouping of field names. However, late fourteenth century documents would seem to infer that subsequent enclosure was preceding apace in the years after 1350.

An unusually long list of land exchanges documented in 1351 may well be indicative of this process. Possibly encouraged by vacant tenancies following deaths due to the plague of 1349-50, a Hallmoot roll of that year describes over thirty exchanges of small parcels of land within the moors. In many cases, the same tenants can be seen to be accumulating lands which probably lay adjacent within the same fields. To take one example, Hugh Egebrok was involved in a series of three exchanges accumulating a substantial holding in *Guldenehurst*. From Henry Burgh, he acquired two acres in exchange for two acres in *Le Faireforlong*; from William Whitecok, two acres for two in *Quatterham* and from Nicholas Selok, a further two acres for two in *Croukhele* (DD/SAS BA1). This active reduction of scattered holdings in favour of more easily worked, consolidated blocks of land, may be seen as the precursor to the final enclosure of the moors. It continues to be recorded in surviving documents throughout the remainder of the fourteenth century.

The Post Medieval Landscape

The moorland landscape of 1567 was almost identical to that of the eighteenth century. Whilst land use varied slightly with infrequent arable being more notable in the sixteenth century, it was primarily the grazing of stock which dominated the areas economy. Leases and deeds of the post-medieval period make plain the tenants obligation to maintain the drains and ditches which enclosed their lands and fines for non compliance were commonplace. In 1589, John and Robert Swayne were both ordered to '*...well and sufficiently scour and dig out their ditches at Hempeshearde Mead, under penalty of each of them disobeying, 5s*', whereas Robert Needes, Agnes Kinge and John Lovell were each fined 3s 4d for failing to '*dig out and scour other rhines*'. Severe flooding, resulting in extensive inundation, the loss of life and stock, as occurred in the winter of 1606-7 was a rare event. Grazing however remained largely seasonal, winter flooding being commonplace despite the numerous ditches, as is recorded in a note appended to a manorial survey of 1658.

'That part of the Manor above mentioned (the moors) hath little that is of special observation. The said part besides Weeke is 1247 acres one rood eleven perches by measure. And much of it is very good ground. Manie scores of acres thereof, would with husbandry be made much better than now they are. Lying the greatest part of the winter under water by the conflux of the Fresh. This parish being the sinke of a great part of the County adjacent. And hath an Arme of the Sea neare, into which the passage for the waters above said is too narrowe by halfe to vente those that have accesse thither. There being but that only passage into the sea. By this meanes the landes aboves and are excessively drowned.

And there are two things which render that evill hardly cureable. One the muddie moiste unhealthiness of the Ayre; By reason whereof those that have estates whereon or whereby to live in places more healthy will not expose themselves or their families here; and therefor lett

out their estates in this place some of them for a third part lesse than they are worth, unto under tenants, whoe thinke they have little cause to bestowe much paines or chardage for improvement of other mens lands upon such uncertaine termes as they hould them.

The other impediment lyes in the Owners of estates that live in this parish, who by reason of their poverty or idlenes, or both, are backward to endeavour, to procure another passage for the Anusant water above said into the sea. And hereby the ground remains the more unprofitable, and the Ayre doubtlesse the more unhealthie. Another passage would be made with tollerable charge and the benefitt would be very great did all the partyes interested joyne. The charge would be the easier and the worke feizable. This I thought fitt to present to your wisdomes'.

There is no documentary evidence to suggest that their 'wisdomes' acted on this plea. Extensive flooding occurred again in 1703 and writing in 1794 Billingsley could still comment that the area remained underwater for four or five months of the year. In his *A General View of the Agriculture of Somerset*, he echoed the sentiments expressed by the seventeenth century surveyor quoted above, claiming that '*effectual draining*' could make the moorland '*as good land as any in the country*'.

The enclosures of 1814 had little effect on the pattern of drainage within the moors, being concerned primarily with the redistribution of lands formerly belonging to Congresbury's ancient tenements. Whilst the allotment of the former common pastures and meadows of Brinsey Moor and the Dolemoors gave rise to a new and regular pattern of geometric fields, their boundaries were marked by quickset hedges and shallow ditches whose value to the overall drainage scheme was limited. Indeed, the continuous widening and deepening of existing rhynes, conducted under the auspices of the Commissioners of Sewers was of little consequence. The main impediment to improved drainage, as recognised by the authors of the 1658 survey, being the free entry of tidal waters up the embanked course of the Yeo preventing the free flow of the waters from the adjacent moors.

Enclosure did however finally extinguish one of the areas more colourful customs. The seasonal allotment of the Dolemoors was described by Bennett writing in 1825, shortly after the cessation of the practice.

' On the Saturday preceding Midsummer-day, the several proprietors of the Estates having any right in these Moors, or their Tenants, were summoned by the ringing of the bells at Puxton, to repair to the Church in order to see the chain measured, the proper length was ascertained by placing one end at the foot of the Arch dividing the Chancel from the body of the church and extending it through the middle Aisle, to the foot of the Arch of the West Door at each of which places, marks are cut in the stones for that purpose. After the chain had been properly measured, the Parties repaired to the Commons. A number of Apples, 24 in number, were previously prepared, bearing the following marks viz:

Five marks called Pole-axes, Four ditto Cross's, Two ditto Dung Forks or Dung-pikes, One mark called Four Oxen and a Mare, One ditto Two Pits, One ditto Three Pits, One ditto Four Pits, One ditto Five Pits, One ditto Seven Pits, One Horn, One Hares-tail, One Duck-nest, One Oven, One Shell, One Evil and One Hand-reel...

Each of these Moors were divided into several Portions called Furlongs, which were marked out by strong Oak-posts placed at regular distances from each other; After the Apples were properly prepared, they were put into a Bag and certain Persons began to measure with the

Chain and proceeded 'till they had measured off one Acre of Ground; at the end of which the Boy who carried the Bag Containing the marks took out one of the Apples, and the mark which such Apple bore was immediately cut in the turf with a large knife, this knife was somewhat in the shape of a Cimeter with its edge reversed; in this manner they proceeded 'till the whole of the Commons were laid out, and each Proprietor knowing the mark and Furlong which belonged to his Estate, he took possession of his Allotment or Allotments accordingly, for the ensuing Year; An adjournment then took place to the house of one of the Overseers where Acres reserved for the purpose of paying expenses and called the out-let or out-drift, were let by inch of candle.

A certain quantity of strong Ale or Brown stout was allowed for the Feast or Revel as it was called, also Bread, Butter and Cheese together with Pipes and Tobacco. The day was generally spent in sociality and mirth, but not unfrequently of a boisterous nature, from the exhilarating effects of the Brown-stout before alluded to'. (Bennett 1825).

It was not until 1819 that a scheme to alleviate the primary cause of flooding, the taking away of high water from the Yeo, was instigated by Act of Parliament, the Commissioners of Sewers having ultimately proved ineffectual. The principle elements of this plan which was devised by John Rennie and successfully carried out between 1819 and 1827, involved a substantial new cut in the course of the Yeo towards Wick St Lawrence and the construction of a number of sluices to restrict the flow of sea water. On Congresbury's moors, the further widening and deepening of the principle rhynes aided the landward drainage and whilst not totally eliminating the threat of flooding, was, some thirty years later, said to have led to '*a great improvement*' (Clark,128)

Chapter 12: World War II Archaeology

The products of military activity are more usually thought of in terms of castles or wrecks. Structures dating from World War II are however not uncommon. The best known examples in the local area probably being the system of beacons on Blackdown, constructed as a decoy town for Bristol, to foil the bombers of the Luftwaffe. In Wrington, the remains of a Second World War fighter have been recovered and local legend has it that a Spitfire made a forced landing on the Dolemoors.

Only one site was recorded in Congresbury itself. This was that of a searchlight at Iwood, and was noted only after the finding of several spent anti-aircraft cartridges adjacent to a low mound in a freshly ploughed field (now removed). The farmer (Mr Ford) recorded the existence of a Nissen hut in the field and its concrete base still survives (Fig 48).

From the air, two parallel tracks led to the site of a searchlight itself, and are possibly those of a railway on which the light was mounted. Six US airmen were reputedly stationed here for the duration of the War, and a well-worn track is clearly visible on aerial photographs leading to the site of their latrines!

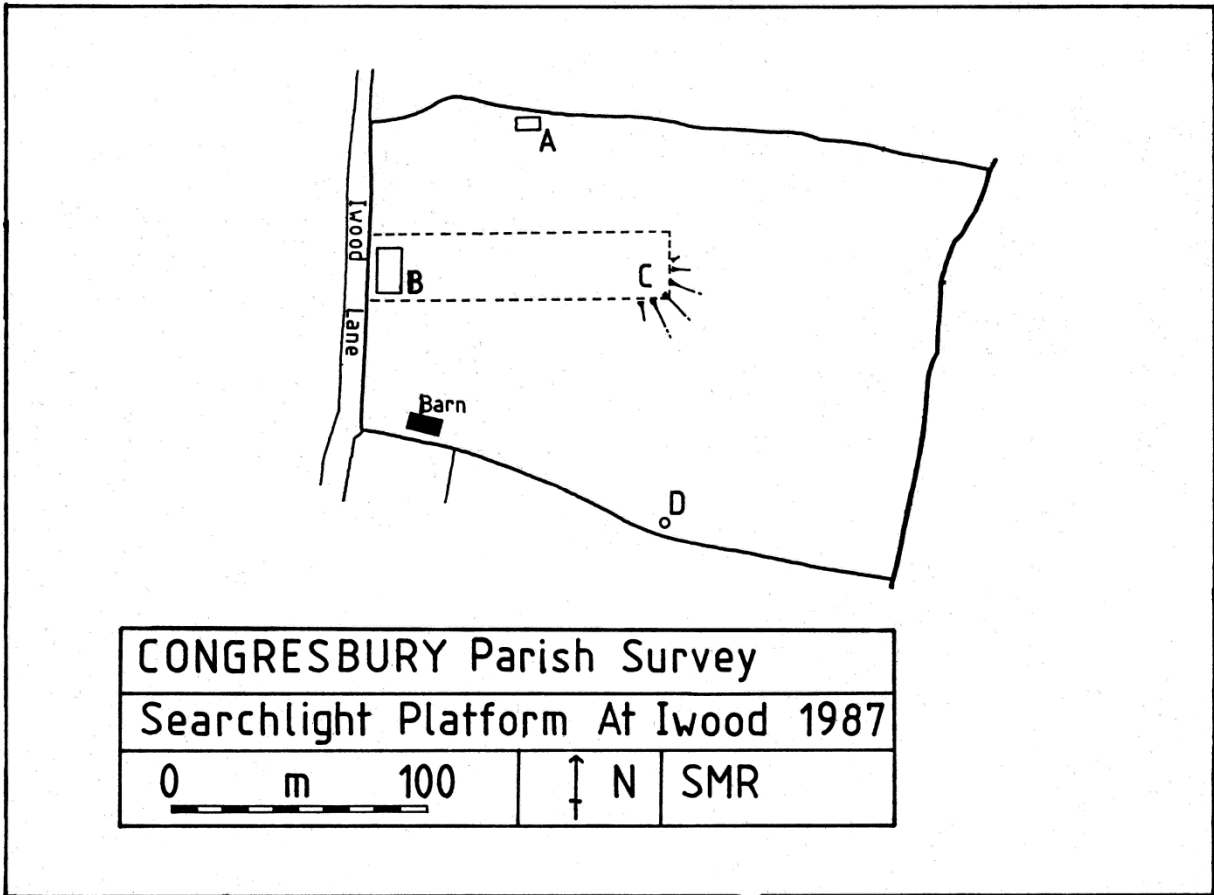


Fig 33: Searchlight battery at Iwood Lane

Chapter 13: References

Original documents

Documents relating to Congresbury are widely scattered. The two primary collections are held at the Bristol Record Office and the Somerset Record Office. At Lambeth Palace, London, there is a long series of court rolls belonging to the bishopric, detailing many of its manors; these were only briefly consulted, but would undoubtedly repay further research. The British Museum houses the unique series of medieval accounts for Iwood, while at the Public Record Office is a limited number of Keepers Accounts for the Manor of Congresbury.

Please note: all references to D1, D2, D9 and D10 are given in the text as de Wilstar survey (D1), 1567 (D2), Tithe 1840 (D9) and Enclosure Award (D10).

Bristol Record Office

A) Maps and plans

D1 33041 BMC 4/PL 1/1-5. II de Wilstar 1736-39
04480 II de Wilstar - bound volume map of Kings Wood

B) Surveys

D2	04235	1567-1593
D3	04236	1647
D4	04237	1656
D5	04793	1593
D6	04261	Perambulation of 1805

C) Other

D7	00576 (8)	Particulars of sales 1594-1601
D9	BMC/4/29	Book of special records 1574-1626

Somerset Record Office

A) Maps and plans

D9 Tithe Map 1840
D10 Enclosure maps and award 1814

B) Surveys

D11	DD/X/FRC	Rental of Iwood 1649
D12	DD/CC 110001/1	Parliamentary Survey, Chapter estates 1649
D13	D/p/Cong	Survey of Silver Street Farm

C) Other

D14	DD/CC 131910a/6	Compotus roll 1388-94 Chapter estates
D15	DD/CC 131919/6	Compotus roll 1475 Chapter estates
D16	DD/CC 131919/2	Court roll 1448-9 Chapter estates
D17	DD/CC 131914/2	Court roll 1457-8 Chapter estates
D18	DD/CC 131915/3	Court roll 1468-9 Chapter estates
D19	DD/CC 131916	Court roll 1473-4 Chapter estates
D20	DD/CC 131911a/1	Court roll 1495-6 Chapter estates
D21	DD/SAS BA1	Hundred and halimote 1351-2 Court Roll

Lambeth Palace

Estate Documents, Bishops of Bath and Wells

D22	ED 1176	1342
D23	ED 1177	1353
D24	ED 1178	1361
D25	ED 1179	1369
D26	ED 1180	1373
D27	ED 1181	1382
D28	ED 1182	1383
D29	ED 1183	1384
D30	ED 1185	1390
D31	ED 830	1277
D32	ED 351	1379

Public Records Office

Keepers Accounts, Bishops of Bath and Wells

D33	SC6 1131/3	1302
D34	SC6 1131/4	1309
D35	SC6 1131/6	1330

British Museum

D36	ADD CH 7883	1342
D37	ADD CH 7664	1343
D38	ADD CH 7665	1344
D39	ADD CH 7666	1345
D40	ADD CH 7667	1347

Private documents

Many documents remain in private ownership. The team gratefully acknowledge the following for allowing us to view their collections.

Mrs P Towill (Urchinwood), Mr Britton (Cadbury Farm) and Mr Haines (West Brinsea Farm).

Printed documentary sources

A) Record Office Publications

- D41 The Hundred Rolls Vol 2 (1818)
D42 Calendar of Charter Rolls Henry III (1901)

B) Historical Manuscripts Commission

- D43 Calendar of Manuscripts of the Dean and Chapter of Wells Cathedral Vol. 1 (1907)

C) Somerset Record Society publications

- D44 Volume 1 Drokensford's Register
D45 Volume 2 Somerset Chantries
D46 Volume 3 Kirby's Quest
D47 Volume 12 Feet of Fines
D48 Volume 17 Feet of Fines
D49 Volume 51 Somerset Enrolled Deeds
D50 Volume 73 Medieval Deeds of Bath and District

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