

# Field Systems in the Vale of Holmesdale<sup>1</sup>

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THE Kentish rural landscape of the seventeenth century was basically one of small, enclosed fields, dotted with isolated farms and hamlets, interspersed with occasional nucleated villages. Nevertheless, the remnants of an open-field system of some sort were still visible. Estate maps, rentals, and surveys of the period reveal that open arable fields were largely confined to two zones, stretching east-west across the county: first, on the lower slopes of the dip-slope of the North Downs, particularly where soils were derived directly from the Upper Chalk, in east Kent and in the Hoo Peninsula; secondly, at the foot of the North Downs' escarpment, in the Vale of Holmesdale.<sup>2</sup> Estate maps depict clearly the patterns of these open fields, but for evidence concerning their origins and development it is necessary to turn to more ambiguous sources. Interpretations of this equivocal evidence have varied: H. L. Gray's explanation of Kentish open fields as products of partible inheritance has been rejected by M. D. Nightingale, who suggested that they were products of co-operative ploughing. Whereas Gray favoured partible inheritance but did not reject co-operative ploughing in explaining Kentish open fields, Nightingale favoured co-operative ploughing and rejected partible inheritance.<sup>3</sup> Much uncertainty about Kentish field systems stems from a paucity of exhaustive studies of particular townships, especially of townships in which open fields can be detected in the seventeenth century. This present paper is intended to examine more closely than hitherto the open fields of the Kentish section of the Vale of Holmesdale. A review of published accounts of Holmesdale's field arrangements is followed by an account of the field system of a single manor, Wrotham. These descriptions are then briefly related to studies of field systems in the Surrey section of the Vale.

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<sup>2</sup> D. C. Coleman, 'The economy of Kent under the later Stuarts', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1951, pp. 18-56; M. D. Nightingale, 'Some evidence of open field agriculture in Kent', unpublished B.Litt. thesis, University of Oxford, 1952, pp. 53-63; A. R. H. Baker, 'The field systems of Kent', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1963, pp. 217-64.

<sup>3</sup> H. L. Gray, *English Field Systems*, 1915, pp. 272-304 and 403-18; M. D. Nightingale, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-42.

## I

Between the crests of the escarpments of the North Downs and Lower Greensand lies a Gault Clay Vale, the Vale of Holmesdale. Within it, there occurs a great variety of soils, ranging from fertile loams developed on the Lower Chalk and, to the west of Sevenoaks, on the Upper Greensand, to heavy clays on the Gault and generally poor, sandy soils on the Folkestone and Hythe Beds of the Lower Greensand.<sup>1</sup> The Vale is no more than 3 or 4 miles wide, from north to south, but about 60 miles long, from east to west. Its strip parishes and early settlements have often attracted comment. S. W. Woolridge and D. L. Linton suggested that the line of favourable scarp-foot soils, of springs, and of the Chalk escarpment forming a well-marked guiding feature into the heart of a forested country help to explain the importance of Holmesdale in the early settlement of south-eastern England.<sup>2</sup> Seventeenth-century estate maps show nucleated villages nestling at the foot of the Downs, as well as numerous hamlets and dispersed farms. They show, too, signs of disintegrating open-field systems: although most landholdings were enclosed, some included unenclosed parcels of land lying within enclosed fields.<sup>3</sup> The consolidation and enclosure of these unenclosed parcels proceeded by private agreement, by exchange and purchase, rather than by Chancery Decree or Parliamentary Act.<sup>4</sup> Studies of manors in the Kentish section of Holmesdale have hardly grappled with the origins, development, and utilization of these open fields, with what Gray called "the manner in which the inhabitants of a township subdivided and tilled their arable, meadow, and pasture lands."<sup>5</sup> More is known, however, about the manner of tillage than about the method of subdivision.

On the manorial demesne at Westerham, T. A. M. Bishop observed a system of what he termed 'convertible husbandry'.<sup>6</sup> Certain fields, after some years of continuous cultivation, were wholly abandoned for long periods; every field remained partly uncultivated many times; and every field but one

<sup>1</sup> A. D. Hall and E. J. Russell, *A Report on the Agriculture and Soils of Kent, Surrey, and Sussex*, 1911, pp. 94-107 and 112-24.

<sup>2</sup> S. W. Woolridge and D. L. Linton, 'The loam-terrains of south-east England and their relation to its early history', *Antiquity*, VII, 1933, pp. 297-310; 'Some aspects of the Saxon settlement in south-east England considered in relation to the geographical background', *Geography*, XX, 1935, pp. 161-75.

<sup>3</sup> A. R. H. Baker, 'Some early Kentish estate maps and a note on their portrayal of field boundaries', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, LXXVII, 1962, pp. 177-84.

<sup>4</sup> W. E. Tate, 'A Hand-list of English Enclosure Acts and Awards. Part 17. Open fields, commons, and enclosures in Kent', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, LVI, 1943, pp. 54-63.

<sup>5</sup> H. L. Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> T. A. M. Bishop, 'The rotation of crops at Westerham, 1297-1350', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, IX, 1938, pp. 38-44.

remained wholly uncultivated at least once between 1297 and 1350. Bishop maintained that the cultivated lands comprised a nucleus of more or less permanent arable, amounting to about 120 acres, which he called the 'in-fields', associated with 'outfields', expanding from 400 to 600 acres, of which relatively small amounts were sporadically cultivated. While a three-course rotation was the general practice at Westerham, the system was extremely flexible and the fields seem to have been cultivated and pastured in severalty. "Irregular and heterogeneous rotations on many fields, the transference even of more or less regularly cultivated fields from one season to another, and the tendency of nearly every field to revert, at frequent intervals and for varying periods, to an uncultivated state—these practices could only have been adjusted with great difficulty, if at all, to communal methods and interests in the management of arable and pasture."<sup>1</sup> Irregular rotations and the sowing of demesne fields in sections, each having a different crop, have been observed by F. R. H. Du Boulay on the manor of Otford in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries.<sup>2</sup> Miss A. Smith, in a study of agriculture on the Kentish manors of Canterbury Cathedral Priory (1272–1379), concluded that, on eight manors in the Vale of Holmesdale, crop rotations showed characteristics similar to those observed by Bishop at Westerham: a three-course rotation on a more or less continuously cultivated 'infield', and irregular rotations on the sporadically cultivated 'outfield'.<sup>3</sup> Individual fields were also sown in sections with different crops. The terms 'infield' and 'outfield' are possibly misleading: Bishop did not show that the continuously cultivated lands, the 'infield', formed a compact nucleus, and at Westwell, the only manor investigated closely by Miss Smith, the so-called 'infields' did not form a central core of land but were intermingled with the sporadically cultivated lands, the so-called 'outfields'. It was an infield-outfield system in terms of the rotation of crops, but not in terms of the location of fields. This rotational flexibility was observed not only on manors located on predominantly sandy soils on the Lower Greensand but also on manors located on fertile marls on the Lower Chalk; it was not a simple response to light soils.

Crop rotations on the demesnes were certainly flexible: it is impossible to discern the nature of crop rotations on the tenants' lands, partly because there is no direct evidence, and partly because it is difficult to decide how far the lands of the lord were intermingled with those of his tenants. The de-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 43–4.

<sup>2</sup> F. R. H. Du Boulay, 'Late-continued demesne farming at Otford', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, LXXIII, 1959, pp. 116–24.

<sup>3</sup> A. Smith, 'A geographical study of agriculture on the Kentish manors of Canterbury Cathedral Priory, 1272–1379', unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Liverpool, 1961, pp. 32–48.

mesne at Westerham seems to have comprised units of compact fields, and the large sizes of some of the fields at Otford and at Westwell suggest that they were compact also. The tenants, however, often held land as scattered, intermixed, and unenclosed parcels. Arable fields subdivided into unenclosed parcels have been observed throughout Holmesdale, and those at Sundridge, Otford, and Kemsing have attracted comment.<sup>1</sup> H. W. Knocker noted open fields at Sundridge in the mid-thirteenth century, when rentals refer to small parcels of land lying within named fields. He concluded that these open fields were common fields, but produced no evidence of common rotations or of common pasturing. He did, however, produce evidence of co-operative ploughing, although he did not overtly claim that this was the origin of the unenclosed parcels.<sup>2</sup> Open fields at Otford in the early fourteenth century were similarly assumed to have been common fields by G. Ward, but he noted that these 'common fields' were all small and based on dispersed farms and hamlets, rather than large and based on Otford village.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Ward assumed that open fields at Kemsing were common fields, and that they were a product of co-operative ploughing, although no evidence of this or of common rotations or pasturing was produced.<sup>4</sup> More recently, Du Boulay has shown that some of the unenclosed arable parcels at Otford in the early fifteenth century were produced by the leasing to tenants of small portions of demesne fields.<sup>5</sup> Studies of field arrangements in the Vale of Holmesdale have relied considerably on assumptions and have paid little attention to land tenure or to the custom of gavelkind. An exception was E. Harrison's study of the manor of Ightham, based largely on fifteenth- and sixteenth-century court rolls.<sup>6</sup> This revealed that, in addition to the village, the settlement pattern of the manor comprised seven hamlets and numerous dispersed farms; that the principal function of the manorial court was the recording of transferences of land, both on inheritance and as a consequence of an active market in land; and that a second major function was bringing

<sup>1</sup> M. D. Nightingale has accumulated considerable testimony of former open fields in Holmesdale: he found evidence of arable fields subdivided into unenclosed parcels at Aylesford, Boxley, Charing, Harrietsham, Hollingbourne, Kemsing, Sundridge, and Westwell.—*op. cit.*, pp. 50–2. He assumed that these open fields were cultivated and pastured in common, although no evidence of either practice at any of these places was cited by him.

<sup>2</sup> H. W. Knocker, 'The evolution of the Holmesdale. No. 3. The manor of Sundrish', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, XLIV, 1932, pp. 189–210.

<sup>3</sup> G. Ward, 'A note on the yokes of Otford', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, XLII, 1930, pp. 147–56.

<sup>4</sup> G. Ward, *Sevenoaks Essays*, 1931, pp. 242–4.

<sup>5</sup> F. R. H. Du Boulay, *loc. cit.*, p. 121.

<sup>6</sup> E. Harrison, 'The court rolls and other records of the manor of Ightham as a contribution to local history', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, XLVIII, 1936, pp. 169–218 and XLIX, 1937, pp. 1–95; 'Some records of Ightham parish', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, LIII, 1941, pp. 17–23.

tenants to task for trespass, encroachments, hedge-breaking, and neglect to repair hedges, fences, and ditches. The only attempt made by the court to organize agricultural activities on a communal basis related to common pasturing on Ightham Common. Although noting that most of the land was held in gavelkind and citing the partitioning of a holding between two sons in 1589, Harrison made no analysis of the impact of gavelkind tenure upon field and settlement patterns. In view of the importance which Gray attached to this tenure, it is surprising that few attempts have been made to assess its impact upon the landscapes of individual townships. What follows is an attempt partially to remedy this omission.

## II

The archiepiscopal manor of Wrotham extended over a number of modern parishes and its exact boundaries defy definition. Nevertheless, the early nineteenth-century ecclesiastical parishes of Wrotham and Stanstead contained most, and probably all, of the manor and together comprised what may be termed the township of Wrotham.<sup>1</sup> The township extended for about six miles from north to south, and for two to three miles from west to east. The most fertile soils lay at the scarp-foot, in an east-west zone of chalky marl, barely half a mile wide. To the north lay thin, dry soils on the steep scarp-face and beyond them stiff, stony clays on Clay-with-flints; to the south lay tenacious, ill-drained soils on Gault Clay and beyond them varied though generally lime-deficient soils on the Lower Greensand. In terms of both relief and of soils, the central part of the township, at the scarp-foot, was more suited to cultivation than any other (Fig. 1). In 1801 a zone at the scarp-foot formed the most extensive area of cultivated land in the township: here there was little wood, whereas elsewhere numerous small woods, and in the south-east an extensive wood, interrupted the cultivated areas. A close network of roads and tracks served the many isolated farms and cottages which existed in addition to the hamlets of Stanstead and Plaxtol, and the nucleated village of Wrotham. Dispersed farms set amidst an enclosed landscape are evident in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century estate maps.<sup>2</sup> A comparison of these maps with the tithe maps of 1842 shows that many field boundaries were being removed, to increase the sizes of individual fields, at a time when

<sup>1</sup> H. W. Knocker considered that the manor of Wrotham in 1086 included the modern parishes of Stanstead, Ightham, Wrotham, and Shipbourne—'The valley of Holmesdale. Its evolution and development', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, xxxi, 1915, pp. 155-77. These parishes comprised the Hundred of Wrotham—E. Hasted, *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent*, vol. v, 2nd ed. 1798, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Kent Archives Office (hereafter K.A.O.) U55 E37, U405 P3, U82 P5, U442 P45, and U442 P68.

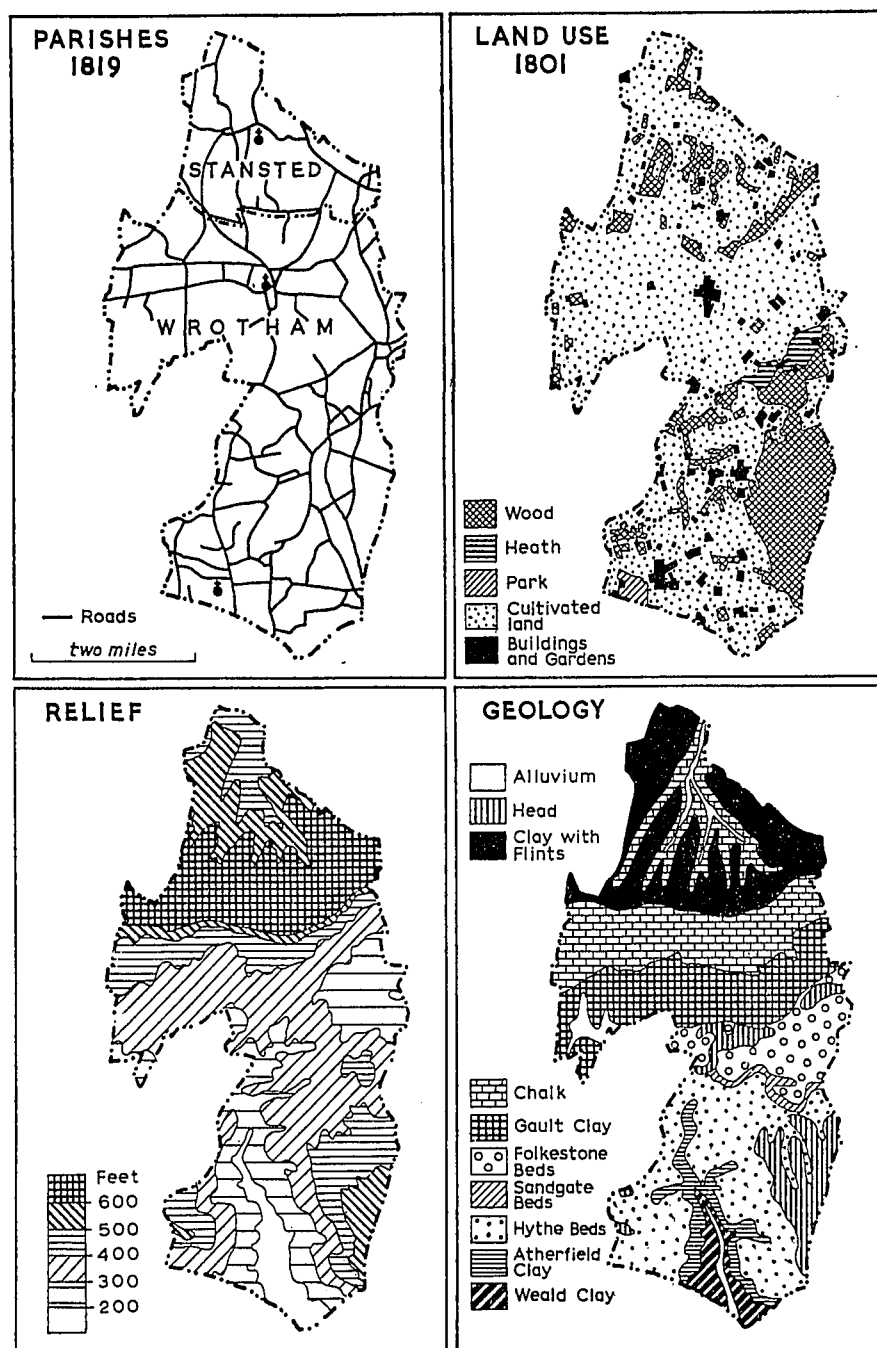


FIG. I. WROTHAM: THE SETTING.

*Sources:* Index Map to the Tithe Survey (1819), Sheet 6; Ordnance Survey One-inch Map (1st edn, 1801); Ordnance Survey One-inch Map (7th edn, 1959), Sheet 171; Geological Survey One-inch Map (Drift edn, 1924 and 1950), Sheets 271 and 287.

many townships in the Midlands saw an extension of the hedgerow by parliamentary enclosure (Fig. II). The tithe map portrays one arable field, of a little over 7 acres, called 'Common Field'.<sup>1</sup> This field was, by 1842, enclosed and in single ownership and occupation, as indeed it was by 1759.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the tithe map depicts a contrast of field patterns: large, rectangular fields on either side of Wrotham village, on the chalky marls, and much smaller, more irregularly shaped fields to the north and south of the village.

A map of 1620, depicting principally the manorial demesne, shows that fields to the east and west of the village were large, rectangular, and, with one exception, enclosed, whereas fields to the south-west were smaller and more irregular in shape.<sup>3</sup> A similar contrast of field patterns was found within the two parks: fields of the eastern park, 'Wrotham Park', were large and rectangular, those of the western park, 'Ightham Park', smaller and irregular (Fig. III). Similar contrasts elsewhere have been regarded as a reflection of the age of enclosure, small, irregular fields representing an earlier period of enclosure than large, rectangular fields. The existence in 1620 at Wrotham of one large, rectangular field subdivided internally into unenclosed parcels suggests the possibility of a similar explanation here. This subdivided field, called 'Common Field', comprised 17 unenclosed parcels shared among three persons. By 1658 this field was in the hands of a single person, and by 1759 it had been converted into four enclosures, one of which was still termed 'Common Field', as it was in 1842 also.<sup>4</sup> New field boundaries were erected not only within this subdivided field: the large rectangular fields of the early seventeenth century had been converted by the latter half of the next century into smaller, though still rectangular, fields (Fig. II). Certainly some of the rectangularity of the fields at Wrotham in 1800 was a consequence of the erection of field boundaries during the previous two centuries. Estate maps show that contrasting field patterns also reflected contrasting ownership of land: fields of the demesne were generally large and rectangular, and fields of the tenants generally small and irregular. The demesne lands occupied the best soils of the township, loams at the scarp-foot; the tenants' lands were situated principally on the poorer soils, and this was reflected in covenants of leases stipulating the number of cartloads of manure and lime that were to be put on the land annually.<sup>5</sup>

During the sixteenth century, landholdings at Wrotham were becoming concentrated into fewer hands, but the process had different consequences

<sup>1</sup> K.A.O. CTR 406.

<sup>2</sup> K.A.O. U681 P8.

<sup>3</sup> K.A.O. U681 P31 and U49 P4.

<sup>4</sup> K.A.O. U830 T5.

<sup>5</sup> K.A.O. U522 T37 and T43. Lessees were also usually required, when the lease fell in, to surrender the lands "well and sufficiently hedged, fenced and inclosed."

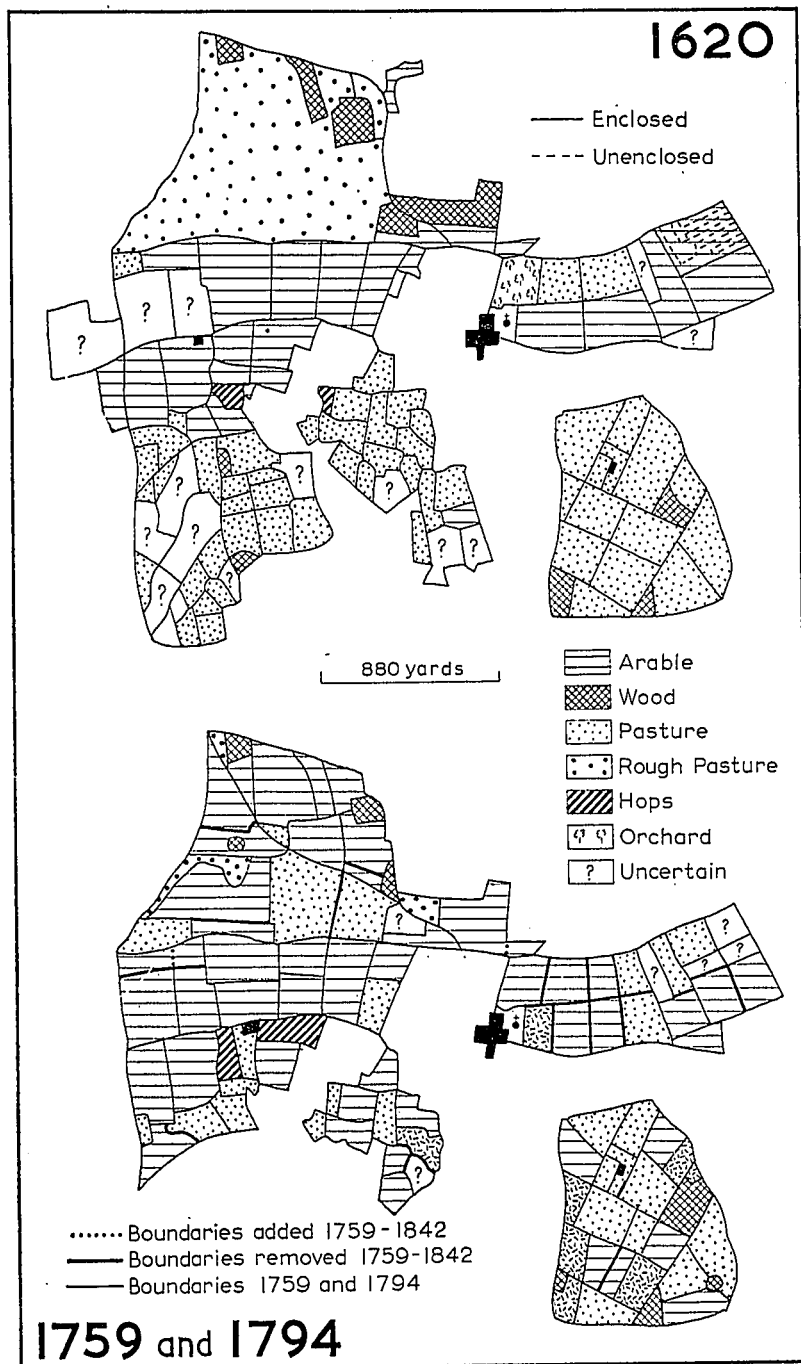


FIG. II. WROTHAM: SOME CHANGES OF FIELD BOUNDARIES AND LAND USE, 1620-1842.

Sources: K.A.O. U681 P31 and P8, U405 P3, and CTR 406<sup>B</sup>.





Most of the demesne fields, however, were already in 1568 enclosed and held in severalty. In at least one instance a large field of 1568 had been converted into two fields by 1586: 'Eastfelde' and 'The Staple' were described in 1568 as 'one severall close of arable land', but in 1586 they were separate enclosures. New field boundaries had also been erected in East Park (or Wrotham Park), for in 1568 it was 'one severall pasture' but by 1586 it was 'one peece of land . . . having nowe therein a lodge and 15 severall closes', all of which were still pastures in 1620. The pastures of both parks were occasionally rented out during the sixteenth century, but there was no great demand for them.<sup>1</sup> Some enclosures had been made in West Park before 1505-6, although no rent was forthcoming from them in that year. In 1531-2, 1532-3, 1533-4, and 1539-40, a substantial income was received from the leasing of West Park but none at all from East Park. The former had been converted into fields and let at an earlier date than the latter. The small, irregular fields of West Park in 1620 were much older than the large, rectangular fields of East Park. Similarly, the fields of the tenantry had developed very differently from those of the demesne.

A view of the manor at Wrotham at the end of the fifteenth century is provided by a survey made in 1494.<sup>2</sup> There were then 151 tenants, nearly a third more than in 1538.<sup>3</sup> Only rarely does the survey of 1494 state acreages of individual pieces of land, so that the relative size of holdings can only be compared indirectly through the total rents that each paid. The lowest rent owed from a single holding was 2d., and the highest was £4 6s. 3d. The 131 holdings (compared with 90 in 1538) were not evenly distributed between these two extremes (Table I).

TABLE I  
RENTAL VALUES OF HOLDINGS

	1494 %	1538 %
5s. or less	69.5	53.9
5.1-10s.	13.7	17.9
10.1-15s.	6.1	10.1
15.1-20s.	2.3	4.6
More than 20s.	8.4	13.5

<sup>1</sup> K.A.O. U55 M71 and M72; Lambeth Palace Library (hereafter L.P.L.) CR 1252; British Museum (hereafter B.M.) Add. MS. 5535.

<sup>2</sup> K.A.O. U55 M59.

<sup>3</sup> The figure for 1538 was 107.—K.A.O. U55 M60/2. In each case the figure has been calculated by counting co-heirs as two; the resulting figures are therefore minimal.

Thus there were more holdings in 1494 than in 1538, and in particular there were more holdings of the lower rental values, and, both absolutely and proportionately, holdings of middle and higher values increased in numbers between 1494 and 1538. There was considerable inequality of holding size and the inequality was increasing as the fifteenth century ended. Yet most holdings in 1494 were small: one-fifth owed a rent of 1s. or less, nearly two-fifths a rent of 2s. or less, and just over one-half a rent of 3s. or less. The median rental of a holding was 2s.-3s., compared with 3s.-4s. in 1538. Furthermore, an individual holding tended to be situated in one part of the township rather than distributed throughout it (Table II). In 1494 an individual holding was slightly more concentrated than in 1538: there were proportionately more holdings with land in only one or two boroughs, but less than half as many with land in three boroughs.<sup>1</sup> Towards the end of the fifteenth century, some holdings were being enlarged at the expense of others and consequently an individual owner was acquiring land with a wider distribution throughout the township.

TABLE II  
LOCATION OF HOLDINGS

	1494 %	1538 %
Holdings with land in only 1 borough	74.8	73.1
"    2 boroughs	19.9	16.8
"    3 boroughs	3.0	7.8
"    4 boroughs	1.5	nil
"    5 boroughs	0.8	2.3
"    6 boroughs	nil	nil

Nearly all of the land in 1494 was freehold, there being only 16 copyholds, mainly messuages and shops in the village of Wrotham. The survey contains no direct reference to the operation of gavelkind tenure, but it is possible to detect its influence in a few instances. Some brothers held land jointly, but patrimonial holdings were also being or had been partitioned. William Der-

<sup>1</sup> The Kentish rural borough or 'borgh' was a territorial tithing. C. I. Elton, *The Tenures of Kent*, 1867, pp. 153-4: "The country districts were everywhere divided into tythings, which may at first have meant the lands of ten free families, but which soon became a mere local division. . . The word *borough* (from *Borh*, a pledge) is the Kentish name for districts elsewhere called tythings." More recently, F. R. H. Du Boulay has given two definitions of *borgh*: (1) the Kentish name for tithing; (2) the sub-district of a Kentish manor, the inhabitants of which were grouped together for the maintenance of law and order.—*Medieval Bexley*, 1961, p. 48.

man, for example, held "part of one messuage, garden and croft of land called Huntys," Thomas Haych held "half a messuage, garden and piece of land lying together called Bernechert," and Richard Pickerell held "one croft of land called Goldis except one parcel of land there lying in the middle of the said croft." Such subdivided messuages and crofts seem to represent the residue of former partitionings, but it is impossible to decide from the survey when they took place. The survey uses a great variety of terms to describe holdings: apart from crofts, they could comprise 'gardens', 'meadows', 'closes', 'haughs', 'pieces' and 'parcels' of land, 'fields' and 'parcels of land lying in a certain named field'. Undoubtedly, crofts and enclosures of one sort and another dominated the landscape. Frequently, groups of various types of land are described as being under one enclosure (*subter unam clausuram*), which probably meant that they were adjacent. The heirs of John Wolverich held "one piece of land called Holeys, one croft of land called Littill Longfeld, one piece of land called Great Longfeld, nine acres of land in Halefeld, one croft of land called Ramsland and one croft called Mellcroft together lying under one enclosure." A typical median holding was that of Richard Cooke, who held in the borough of Hale for a rent of 2s. 10d. "one piece of land called Bakisland, one parcel of land and meadow called Stoke-mede and one piece of land called Taylers." The typical holding at Wrotham at the end of the fifteenth century thus comprised a messuage, an adjacent garden, and a number of small crofts and larger fields, lying often as a compact unit and never widely fragmented, and being held and cultivated in severalty.

This picture of a landscape dominated by crofts and enclosed fields must be modified in two respects. First, some crofts and fields were being enlarged: William Hubbill, for example, held "two crofts of land together called Ashfeld and Copfeld now called Tayntfeld," and others held two crofts "now made into one." The hedgerow which dominated the landscape at Wrotham in 1494 was, in places, being removed. Secondly, some holdings included unenclosed parcels of land lying within enclosed fields. In addition to subdivided crofts, some larger fields were subdivided into unenclosed parcels shared by sometimes large numbers of tenants. The vague terminology of the survey makes it difficult to ascertain the exact number of parcels and of tenants with land in any particular subdivided field, but there is no doubt that the fields were generally shared among only a few tenants, that they contained only a few parcels, and that most lay within the adjacent boroughs of Wrotham and Nepicar, at the foot of the Chalk escarpment. Thus the subdivided fields were limited both in number and in extent: their total impact upon the landscape of Wrotham in 1494 was small, but never-

theless significant, for most of them were, as a comparison with the map of 1620 shows, part of the demesne. A comparison of the subdivided fields which can be identified both in 1494 and 1538 shows a reduction in the number of tenants between those two dates in 8 of the 9 fields, and an increase in the number of tenants in only one of the 9 fields (Table III). Although in details the accuracy of these figures may be suspect, the general picture which they convey is not: between 1494 and 1538, the parcels of a subdivided field came into fewer hands, the complexity of the parcel pattern was reduced and occasionally eliminated.

TABLE III  
SUBDIVIDED FIELDS AT WROTHAM

Name	Number of parcels identified	Number of tenants	
		1494	1538
Bitmontshole Feld	3	3	2
Costismeade	6	5	3
Dunstall	3	3	2
Eastfeld	2	2	3
The Farthing	2	2	1
Raungers	17	8	6
The Reed	2	2	1
Sandfeld	2	4	3
Stonyfurlong	3	2	1

The wooded appearance of the landscape created by hedged crofts and enclosures was emphasized by numerous areas, large and small, of actual woodland. Apart from the large areas of woodland called 'Le Herst' and 'Bechinwood' in the south-east, there were many smaller areas of woodland throughout the township. There was, in fact, some woodland on one-sixth of the holdings. Similarly, small pieces of common pasture were widely distributed in addition to the larger heaths called 'Le Borow' and 'Le Napse', on the Lower Greensand ridge. In two instances, heathland formed part of a landholding but more usually the heathland was common land. Fields, woods, and commons were interspersed with houses and farm-buildings (Table IV).

Little settlement had taken place in Stanstead, in the heavily wooded, Clay-with-flints country above the escarpment. Some tenants who held land in Stanstead and in that part of the borough of Wrotham which was above the escarpment (*supra montem*) in fact had dwellings below it. The borough of Roughway, in the south-eastern, most thickly wooded part of the township,

similarly had only a light scattering of dwellings. Apart from Wrotham village, small groups of messuages formed hamlets, at 'Le Bergh' in the borough of Wrotham, for example, at 'Plott' in Wingfield, and at 'Southestrete' in Hale, and isolated farms were dispersed throughout the township.

TABLE IV  
LOCATION OF MESSUAGES, 1494

<i>Borough</i>	<i>Number of messuages</i>
Wrotham	42
Wingfield	40
Hale	29
Nepicar	13
Roughway	8
Stanstead	6
	138

The middle decades of the fifteenth century saw years of economic depression at Wrotham and the reeve had difficulty in finding a permanent lessee of the manorial demesne.<sup>1</sup> In 1453-4 the demesne was intended to be leased out, together with a few customary labour services, for an annual rent of £13 13s. 4d., but in fact only parts of the demesne were leased, to seven different people, for a total rent of £5 13s. 8d. The remaining lands, comprising about half of the demesne, lay vacant for want of a farmer. Similarly, land falling into the lord's possession by escheat or for lack of heirs was sometimes vacant for want of a new tenant and when it was rented out again, its new rent was sometimes lower than it had previously been. There was no great demand for land at Wrotham in the middle of the fifteenth century. Consequently, the demesne was not always leased in its entirety to a single lessee, but in parcels to a number of lessees. Most of the demesne with the manor house was leased, when possible, to a single tenant, but small parts were let to others. This process seems to explain the subdivided fields that existed on the demesne until the early seventeenth century.

The decades that ended the fourteenth century and began the fifteenth saw the manorial economy of Wrotham in a critical period of instability and transition. The lord of the manor was trying to find a lessee to cultivate his demesne but was having difficulty in doing so. In 1382-3 the demesne was leased to Roger Bereford for £20 annually and he had for his use all of West-park, and certain customary boon-services owed from the lord's tenants.

<sup>1</sup> L.P.L. CR 1240; K.A.O. U55 M71.

These services were very few and, from the point of view of the tenants, light: for example, the total ploughing services only amounted to the ploughing of 13 $\frac{3}{4}$  acres. The farmer was also allowed all the perquisites of the manorial court.<sup>1</sup> It seems that the terms of the lease were more favourable to the farmer than to the lord of the manor. Nevertheless, by 1393-4 the demesne was again being farmed by the lord and his officials, as it was also in the following year.<sup>2</sup> By 1393-4 more services had been commuted than in 1382-3, and the principal source of income was rents and commuted services and customs. The second largest source was sales of corn, principally wheat. On the expenditure side, the largest item was repairs to buildings and fences. In 1394-5 the principal sources of income were the same, but purchases of livestock and wages of labourers and officials formed the two largest items of expenditure. In both years the accounts concerned with the farming of the demesne showed deficits and, although allowance must be made for agricultural products supplied to the Archbishop's household, it nevertheless seems that demesne farming was not a particularly profitable concern. Of the livestock, sheep and pigs provided the main income, from sales of fleeces and live pigs. Of the crops, wheat was the most important and a large amount was sold each year. The total sown acreage amounted to just over 150 acres: of this, just over one-third was sown with wheat, about one-sixth with barley, about one-sixth with oats, not quite one-sixth with peas, and not quite one-sixth with vetches. Wheat, both in terms of income derived from it and acreage sown, was twice as important as any other crop. Accounts for only two consecutive years do not allow any precise conclusions to be drawn about crop rotations, but they do at least suggest the probable nature of the cropping system. The accounts state the acreage of each crop sown in 1393-4 and 1394-5 and say whether the seed was sown in 'Eastfeld' or in 'Westfeld' (Table V).

It is thus seen that 'Eastfeld' and 'Westfeld' were operated on a broad two-course rotation, with wheat and barley being grown in one year, followed by oats, peas, and vetches the next year. But each of these large fields was not considered a single unit: in fact, each field was divided into sections sown with different crops and, in addition, in any one year, there was some land lying fallow in both fields. The rotation was far from being a simple two-course. It seems probable that the two-course rotation was once practised, but by the end of the fourteenth century it had advanced considerably, and the rotation was extremely flexible.

A few years later, the demesne was again leased out, again for an annual rent of £20, for in 1397-8 a new farmer took up the first year of a seven-year

<sup>1</sup> K.A.O. U55 M63.

<sup>2</sup> K.A.O. U55 M64-7.

TABLE V  
CROP ACREAGES ON THE DEMESNE

	1393-4	1394-5
'Eastfeld':	30 ac. wheat 38½ ac. wheat 4 ac. winter barley 25 ac. spring barley <hr/> 97½ ac.	20 ac. peas 23 ac. vetches 23½ ac. oats <hr/> 66½ ac.
'Westfeld':	16½ ac. peas 17 ac. vetches 22½ ac. oats <hr/> 56 ac.	59 ac. wheat 5 ac. winter barley <hr/> 64 ac.
Other fields:	nil	20 ac. spring barley
Total sown acreage:	153½ ac.	150½ ac.

lease.<sup>1</sup> But the arrangement proved unsatisfactory and in 1399-1400 the demesne was again being farmed by the lord's officials.<sup>2</sup> In 1399-1400 the lord was cultivating most of his lands, but he was leasing out a part. In all, about 12 acres of the demesne were leased by the lord to his tenants in various fields of the manor (*in diversis campis huius manerii*), for a total rent of 11s. 2d. By 1406-7 this practice had been extended, for although most of the demesne was being cultivated by the lord, leased portions produced a rent of £2 16s. 0d.<sup>3</sup> The practice of leasing parcels of the demesne fields to different tenants thus dates at least from the end of the fourteenth century. As the fields had often been sown in sections with different crops, so they came to be leased out in parcels to different tenants.

A picture of the manor towards the end of the thirteenth century can be reconstructed from a rental and custumal which is included in the "great description of his lands and tenants which Archbishop Pecham caused to be made between 1283 and 1285."<sup>4</sup> The demesne lands in 1285 comprised 264½ acres of arable, 133½ acres of meadow, 16 acres of pasture, and 1,196 acres of wood. The arable is described as thirteen separate pieces, ranging in size from

<sup>1</sup> L.P.L. CR 1141.      <sup>2</sup> L.P.L. CR 1142.

<sup>3</sup> L.P.L. CR 1145. The leased parcels included 3 acres 'in Algaresschote' and 3 acres in 'West Whytehell', both probably parts of 'Westfeld'.

<sup>4</sup> F. R. H. Du Boulay, 'Dennis, droving, and danger', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, LXXVI, 1961, pp. 75-87. The rental is Dean and Chapter of Canterbury MS. E24.



2½ acres to 50 acres. Each area of arable is said to be in a named piece of land: thus 12 acres were 'In Chalk Welleshote', 32 acres were 'In Stonyforlang', 20 acres were 'In Rengreshote, Longden et Littlehote', and 50 acres were 'In Estfeld'. In 1394-5 the demesne fields were referred to as 'Westfeld' and 'Eastfeld', and the pieces named in 1285 seem to have been individual sections of these two large fields. A comparison of the names of these pieces with field-names on the map of 1620 shows that in 1285 the demesne in fact comprised two great blocks of arable land, one to the west and one to the east of the village, and three blocks of meadow and pasture to the south of the village.

The description of the lands of the tenants is less precise than that of the demesne: only infrequently are field-names stated. There was only a moderate inequality of holding sizes in 1285, for three-quarters of the tenants each held only one piece of land and almost all others each had fewer than five pieces. Nevertheless, inequality there was, and already by 1285 one large holding had come to be termed a 'manor'. It is impossible to discover the exact sizes of individual holdings, for the rental frequently lists five or more tenants as together paying the rent on a single piece of land. The general picture, however, is of small holdings. William Blacson held only 1 acre and John, son of Dunstan, 7 acres. Occasionally a parcel of land is said to be *in crofto*, and in one instance a parcel is said to be in the middle of a meadow, but it is difficult to interpret the significance of these infrequent descriptions. Of the 409 tenants, only about 20, or about 5 per cent, held land in more than one borough: the comparable figure in 1494 was 25 per cent. While the lands of a single tenant in 1285 were not necessarily compact, they were certainly not widely scattered. Individual holdings were more compact in the late thirteenth century than they were in the late fifteenth century. Even by 1285, settlement at Wrotham was widely dispersed: numerous small holdings existed throughout the township.

The rental frequently refers to *heredes*, *socii*, *parcenarii*, and *pares*, but interpretation of these phrases is not easy. It could be claimed that they imply a form of joint-tillage which obviated the partitioning effects of gavelkind tenure, or it could be claimed that such phrases represented the most convenient way for the lord to apportion the responsibility for rents and services from a partitioned holding. The evidence of the rental is inconclusive on this point, but in any case proof of the occurrence of either joint-tillage or partitioning would not mean that the other did not also take place. There is no need to regard joint-tillage and partitioning as being mutually exclusive. That tenants did at times partition their tenements can be inferred at Wrotham, for one divided tenement owed divided rents and services but

only one suit of court, to be performed by one parcener for the others. William Fara's tenement was partitioned so that his sons Richard and Robert received jointly two parcels, of 3 acres 3 roods and of 6 acres, while Henry Fara, their brother, received parcels of 1 acre 3½ roods and of 3 acres. Thus Henry claimed his third of the patrimonial holding while Richard and Robert held their two-thirds jointly. The land parcels, rents, and services of the patrimonial holding had been partitioned in precise proportions, of two-thirds and one-third. The subdivision of tenements at Wrotham is also discernible when a holding is described and the name of the previous holder also stated. In the portion of the rental relating to the manor of Bexley, such references are stated to relate to the tenant in *c.* 1214, and it may be assumed that the Wrotham references are to the same or nearly the same date.<sup>1</sup> Where the name of the previous holder of a parcel at Wrotham is stated, the subdivision that had occurred between *c.* 1214 and 1285 is clear (Table VI).

TABLE VI  
SOME SAMPLE INCREASES OF TENANT NUMBERS  
DURING THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

Area of land	Numbers of tenants	
	<i>c.</i> 1214	1285
1½ acres	1	5
1½ acres 16 feet	1	8
6½ acres	1	8
9½ acres	3	7
13 acres	1	13

Increasing pressure upon the land, as a result of population growth, undoubtedly led to the partitioning of holdings at Wrotham during the thirteenth century.

Such partitioning could have taken the form either of the subdivision of individual units of land, i.e. fields or parts of fields, or else the subdivision of a holding as a whole: the former would have produced or accentuated a pattern of parcels within individual fields, while the latter would have resulted in a fragmentation of holdings. That inheritance of land could produce *subdivided fields* is seen in a deed of 1296 whereby Guydo de Eldham leased to Martin de Pecham all his lands in Wrotham which by the law of inheritance had descended to him on his father's death, excepting "*quodo campo vocato Bromfeld et insuper terciam partem unius campi vocati Northfeld.*"<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> F. R. H. Du Boulay, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> B.M. Add. Ch. 16,508.

Similarly, the rental of 1285 shows that tenements were at times subdivided into parcels of exactly equal sizes and describes one tenement as including "three parts of Lusieshagh." That inheritance could produce *fragmented holdings* is seen in another late thirteenth-century deed whereby John de Frenyngham sold his tenement in Wrotham: the deed specifically states that John held the entire tenement in Wrotham because his brother and co-heir, Ralph, had not claimed his portion of their inheritance; in exchange John had not claimed his portion of their inheritance of their father's lands in Loose. The patrimonial holding was fragmented.<sup>1</sup> Inheritance practices, together with the leasing, selling, and exchanging of land, produced both subdivided fields and small holdings. The landscape was predominantly one of small fields enclosed by hedges and ditches and sometimes subdivided internally into unenclosed parcels.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, the demesne fields were large: 'Eastfeld' certainly and 'Westfeld' probably were enclosed, although their internal subdivisions were not.<sup>3</sup> Further, not all of the lands of the tenantry were being partitioned: the free alienation of land *inter vivos*, a feature of gavelkind tenure, made possible the consolidation and augmentation of holdings by purchase and exchange. A number of late thirteenth-century charters show Martin de Pecham purchasing parcels of land "*in campo occidentali de Wrotham*," and, as the parcels were described as being adjacent to some already in his possession, it seems that he was consolidating and enlarging unenclosed parcels.<sup>4</sup> Charters in fact suggest what the rental of 1285 fails to reveal: that some of the tenants at Wrotham held unenclosed parcels of land within a large field called 'Westfeld'. One charter describes a parcel within this field as lying adjacent to 'Dunstrete', now known as the Pilgrims' Way, and a glance at the map of the demesne in 1620 shows a gap immediately to the west of the village, between the village itself and the 'Westfeld' of the demesne (Fig. III).<sup>5</sup> It was here that the 'Westfeld' of the tenants must have been located. During the thirteenth century, parcels within the tenants' 'Westfeld' were being consolidated and later deeds, rentals, and surveys make no mention of it. Even by 1285, only a few of the tenants could have held land within it, for it

<sup>1</sup> B.M. Add. Ch. 16,501.

<sup>2</sup> Land transactions are recorded in numerous collections of title deeds: see, for example, K.A.O. U47:3 T46, U601 T164-72, and B.M. Add. Ch. 16,494-16,508. That holdings comprised enclosed fields is seen in descriptions of land "*sicut sepibus undique includitur*"—see, for example, B.M. Add. Ch. 16,497 and 16,500.

<sup>3</sup> The heirs of Walter son of Cocus were responsible for making "*j haccum contra Estfeld de manerio domini*"—Dean and Chapter of Canterbury MS. E24, f. 82v.

<sup>4</sup> K.A.O. U47:3 T46:105; B.M. Add. Ch. 16,502.

<sup>5</sup> B.M. Add. Ch. 16,498; K.A.O. U681 P31.

lay within the borough of Wrotham, whereas most of the tenantry lands lay in the other five boroughs. Perhaps at some period before the thirteenth century most tenants dwelt in Wrotham village and cultivated only 'Westfeld': it may have been a one-field township, such as J. E. A. Jolliffe postulated.<sup>1</sup> But it is certain that by the end of the thirteenth century, settlement had become much more widely dispersed and the cleared area more extensive.

Early dispersal of settlement, the operation of the market in land, and the partitioning of inheritances had repercussions on the manor's customary services. The total services due from each borough are stated in the 1285 rental at the end of the list of the tenants of each borough. The total services due from the first borough described in the rental have written against most services a money value: for example, tenants of the borough had to plough 2 acres 1 rood at 6d. per acre; to reap and bring in 9 acres 1½ roods of wheat at 12d. per acre, doing this with 4½ carts at 6d. per cart; and to reap but not bring in 1½ acres of barley at 12d. per acre. On the other hand, the services of enclosing 12 perches of the *Burgiard* and of threshing 5 bushels of wheat have no such money value against them. It seems that by 1285 most, but not all, services had been commuted. Services apportioned to individual tenants often included small fractions, which again suggests that commutation had already taken place. Certainly commutation of most services had taken place by 1309-10, when income from commuted services and customs was nearly £12.<sup>2</sup> Only seven holdings were referred to in 1285 as being full or half *iuga*, many small parcels being referred to instead as *forland*, *gavelland*, *cotland*, *nova terra*, *assartum*, or simply as *land*. Services on Kentish manors were usually based on *iuga*, and the early commutation of most services probably accounts for the early disappearance of *iuga* from Wrotham.<sup>3</sup> Growth of population and the intense subdivision of holdings would have made the apportionment of services increasingly difficult. For many of the holdings, the 1285 rental states that tenants owed nothing except rent and suit of court, and such holdings are sometimes stated to have been *nova terra*, so that these would seem to represent assarts made subsequent to the commutation of services. Most assarts were located either in the borough of Stanstead, on the Clay-with-flints above the escarpment, or in the borough of Roughway, on sandy soils on the Lower Greensand ridge.

If cultivation of the demesne arable lands was being carried out less with

<sup>1</sup> J. E. A. Jolliffe, *Pre-Feudal England: The Jutes*, 1933, pp. 1-19.

<sup>2</sup> L.P.L. CR 1139.

<sup>3</sup> By contrast, the late commutation of services (c. 1447) on the archiepiscopal manor of Gillingham accounts for the survival of *iuga* there until the mid-fifteenth century: once services were commuted, the financial and tenorial framework of the *iuga* disintegrated.—A. R. H. Baker, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-7 and 90.

labour services than with wage labour, nevertheless, tenants still owed important services in relation to pasturing on them. Tenants of each *cotland* were to produce annually "five hurdles for a fold of the lord," and certain tenants were "to common over the demesne with all their ewes and . . . to go to the fold of the lord from hokeday until the feast of St Martin." The rental suggests a curious mixture of tenants' duties and rights in this connection, for some were "able to have five ewes and no more" commoning the demesne, while others could only common their sheep if they had ploughed twelve furrows of the demesne for each ox that they owned. The making of folds and the regulations for folding sheep suggest a rigid control of grazing on the demesne, to ensure the efficient utilization of dung and to permit a more flexible rotation of crops. Total reaping services amounted to just over 228 acres, which was only 36 acres less than the total arable lands of the demesne. This suggests that, through an efficient use of animal manure, only a small proportion of the arable lay fallow. It might be thought that only 36 acres or about one-seventh of the total arable of the demesne lay fallow annually, but an account of 1309-10 shows that in that year 81 acres or a little less than one-third lay fallow.<sup>1</sup> It is impossible to ascertain crop rotations from an isolated account, but there was in 1309-10, as in 1393-4 and 1394-5, a broad contrast between crops sown in 'Westfeld' and in 'Eastfeld'. In 1309-10, the wheat and barley was in 'Eastfeld', the oats and vetches in 'Westfeld'. Within each of these fields, different sections were sown with different crops, and by comparing acreages sown in 1309-10 with the total acreage of each section in 1285, it is seen that some sections had more than one crop sown on them, some sections were only partly sown, and some lay fallow. There was considerable flexibility in the rotation of crops at Wrotham in the early fourteenth century.

Field and settlement patterns at Wrotham were, then, closely linked to population pressure and land tenure. During the thirteenth century a rapid growth of population coupled with the partitioning of inheritances and the free alienation of land, both of which were aspects of gavelkind tenure, produced a multiplicity of small, dispersed holdings and a pattern of fragmented farms and subdivided fields and crofts. By the end of the fourteenth century, pressure upon land was less and the supply of land exceeded demand. It was not until the second half of the fifteenth century that demand for land again began to mount, but even then the tenant population was only about a third of what it had been two centuries earlier. The late fifteenth century and all of the sixteenth saw an increasing inequality in the size of holdings, and during this period the operation of the land market was far more important than

<sup>1</sup> L.P.L. CR 1139.

the custom of inheritance in influencing field and settlement patterns. Holdings were enlarged by purchase and exchange, and there are only a few signs of their reduction as a result of partitioning. During the sixteenth century, some lands in the township were dis-gavelled.<sup>1</sup> The intensive colonization of the thirteenth-century landscape was reflected in the numerous small crofts, enclosed fields, and isolated farms that formed the landscape of the sixteenth century. By 1600 there were only a few subdivided fields and crofts on the lands of the tenants: most had been consolidated into a single tenant's hands. Those subdivided fields that did exist in the sixteenth century were mainly on the demesne and were the result of leasing parcels to different tenants. Unenclosed parcels on the demesne were consolidated and enclosed by the middle of the seventeenth century; in contrast, fields of the tenants were being amalgamated and opened up. By the end of the eighteenth century, the demesne fields were also being enlarged by the removal of interior boundaries. The large, rectangular fields of the demesne had a very different evolution from the small, irregular fields of the tenantry: the contrast of field patterns reflected not only different periods of enclosure but also different land ownership.

### III

Field and settlement patterns at Wrotham show close similarities with those of other townships in the Vale of Holmesdale. At the end of the thirteenth century, the settlement pattern comprised not only nucleated villages but also hamlets and isolated farms. Open fields—or, more accurately, enclosed fields subdivided into unenclosed parcels—were mostly small, but numerous, and they were based as much on dispersed farms and hamlets as on nucleated villages. A Holmesdale township possessed a multiple open-field system, rather than a two- or three-field system. The unenclosed parcels originated in a number of ways. Some may have been a product of co-operative ploughing by agnatic or by neighbouring groups: but there is no evidence of co-operative ploughing organized on a village or manorial basis. Some were a product of gavelkind tenure, of the partitioning of inheritances, and of the selling and leasing of land. Some probably resulted from the subdivision of assarts among the assarters. On the demesnes, unenclosed parcels of land were a feature of flexible crop rotations, of the sowing of sections of fields with different crops; later they were a consequence of the leasing of fields in parcels. There is no evidence, however, that the open fields of the Kentish section of Holmesdale were common fields, i.e. subject to common grazing by the livestock of an entire township. Fifteenth-century court rolls

<sup>1</sup> E. Hasted, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

of Wrotham and Ightham contain many references to livestock trespassing on the demesne and on lands of the tenants: this confirms that land was held in severalty. There were no manorial regulations concerning crop rotations or common grazing on the fallow arable. If common grazing was practised, it must have been by private agreement among individuals rather than by dictation of the manorial court.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps not surprisingly, field and settlement patterns of the Surrey section of the Vale of Holmesdale correspond quite closely with those in the Kentish section. E. M. Yates has shown that, in a number of parishes in the Dorking area, multiple open fields were associated with a pattern of hamlets and isolated farms.<sup>2</sup> He suggested that the primary settlement pattern was a series of farms and hamlets, occupied by agnatic groups and each hamlet having one arable field used continuously. Secondary settlement extended on to more difficult soils: where population was very scattered, the enforcement of labour services would have been difficult and the early commutation of services likely. A weak manorial system made possible the early dispersal of settlement. Some hamlets, as population grew, developed into villages and, where there was a shortage of common pastures, grazing on the town-field—the arable nucleus—became subject to manorial control. Some of the Surrey townships certainly had common fields.

This suggested development of settlement in Surrey may also be applicable in the Kentish section of Holmesdale. Weak manorial organization, an abundance of wastes and common pastures, and the operation of gavelkind tenure seem to explain the early dispersal of settlement and the absence of common pasturing over the township arable. It seems probable that inheritance practices and the operation of the land market could account for the multiple open fields in Surrey in the later Middle Ages as they do for those in Kent. Yates made little reference to either, although he did suggest that with the decay of kinship groups the fields associated with the primary settlement were divided into large strips. Yates hankers after racial explanations of the field systems of Kent, like Meitzen, Gray, and Jolliffe before him, and has suggested that the affinities of field and settlement patterns in Kent, Surrey, and Sussex lend support to the view that the latter counties experienced an earlier Jutish colonization before that of the Saxons.<sup>3</sup> This may

<sup>1</sup> K.A.O. U55 M13-17; E. Harrison, *loc. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> E. M. Yates, 'A study of settlement patterns', *Field Studies*, 1, 1961, pp. 65-84. Yates has also observed analogous features in north-west Sussex, in two parishes occupying situations topographically similar to those in Holmesdale, in this case lying astride the escarpment of the South Downs.—'History in a map', *Geographical Journal*, CXXVI, 1960, pp. 32-51.

<sup>3</sup> A. Meitzen, *Siedlung und Agrarwesen der Westgermanen und Ostgermanen, der Kelten, Römer, Finnen und Slaven*, 1895; H. L. Gray, *op. cit.*; J. E. A. Jolliffe, *op. cit.*

have been so: but the evidence presented in this paper suggests that settlement and field patterns were closely linked with soils and topography, with an abundance of waste, with a weak manorial organization, with land tenure, and with the pressure of population upon land. Factors not connected with race were important: the 'Kentish field system', as Gray termed it, does not appear to have been limited to Kent. Something similar to it may have developed wherever this particular group of geographical and social factors was found in combination.

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## Letter to the Editor

CHARLES VARLEY—THE UNFORTUNATE  
HUSBANDMAN

SIR,—With reference to Dr E. R. R. Green's very nice review of my book, *The Unfortunate Husbandman*, I am in full agreement with him regarding the lack of notes on the source of the material reprinted. The original typescript of *The Unfortunate Husbandman* contained very full notes, and references, but with modern publishing being what it is, these

notes had to be sacrificed in the interest of a popular appeal. I would have preferred to have published the original typescript, with notes and reproduction of the famous Varley pamphlet, which set out his claim to the Governorship of New Jersey, but, unfortunately, I failed to find a publisher willing to issue the considerably more important book I actually wrote.

Yours sincerely,

DESMOND CLARKE

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## Notes and Comments

### THE BRITISH AGRICULTURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

The joint winter conference with the Association of Agriculture was held at the London School of Economics on Saturday, 4 December. The president of the Society, Professor H. P. R. Finberg, took the chair. At the morning session Dr J. T. Coppock, Professor-elect of Geography, Edinburgh University, spoke on 'The Changing Pattern of Land Use.' The afternoon discussion was devoted to the same subject and was led by Mr H. C. Prince and Dr F. M. L. Thompson of University College, London, and Dr G. E. Mingay of the University of Kent.

The Dublin conference in April 1966 has had to be cancelled at short notice and the executive committee feels it is now too late to attempt to organize another conference else-

where. The annual general meeting of the Society will, therefore, be held at University College, Gower Street, London, W.C.1 on 16 April 1966 at 11 a.m. Details and an agenda of the meeting are enclosed.

Arrangements are in hand for the annual conference in April 1967 to be held in Dublin.

### HISTORICAL FARM RECORDS

In the past few years efforts have been made to further the collection and preservation of the business records of individual farmers. Some repositories hold very few such items, while, more seriously, large numbers have apparently been destroyed. Their scarcity and wide dispersal presumably explain why this source has not been systematically used by scholars who have little alternative but to rely on secondary sources (often defective)

(continued on p. 76)