

The Composite Manor of Brent

a study
of a Large
Wetland-Edge Estate
up to 1350

Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
at the University of Leicester

by

J.D.Harrison

Department of English Local History
University of Leicester

October 1997

ABSTRACT

A fascinating alluvial landscape dominated by Brent Knoll, plus surviving surveys from 1189, 1235, 1260 and 1307, intermittent account-rolls from 1257 and court-rolls from 1265, together render the ancient estate of Brent with its component manors of East Brent, Lympsham, Berrow and South Brent, worthy of investigation into its medieval landscape, demesne economy and people up to 1350.

The perspective is widened in Chapter 2 to consider the implications of archaeological evidence for the exploitation of the landscape prior to c.500 AD, while charter evidence, place-names and Domesday are used to illumine the integrity of the estate prior to 1189. Chapter 3 examines the nature of the landscape and the implications of its wetland, giving a context for the analysis of demesne and people.

Chapter 4 commences with an analysis of demesne inputs such as expenditure, labour and land, and outputs such as rents, perquisites and sales. An evaluation of productivity enables the diminishing significance of demesne cultivation to be measured against the increase in overall income, especially from rents. Among the factors behind this economic shift are poor yields, population growth and the demand for land. The ability to raise income from rents gives the lord a strong interest in enhancing his tenants' ability to produce that income.

In Chapter 5 examination of landholdings indicates an increase in land supply in excess of population growth. Models of income based on the size of a ferdel are considered, leading to investigations into the significance of pastoral income for these and smaller holdings as well as the real size of tenancies. The demand for land is reflected by levels of entry fines and also in the large number of landless males, whose presence in the court rolls assists in a short demographic study, followed by a consideration of the opportunities for employment. A favourable impression is gained of the economy of the people of Brent, based, inter alia, on lay subsidies, the availability of land, minimal evidence for hardship and the significance of Brent's place in the wider economy of the Glastonbury barony.

The concluding chapter deals with the nature of the partnership between lord and tenant, both of whom had a mutual interest in the sustainability of the estate, and by working in tandem enhanced their potency to improve their prosperity.

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List of Abbreviations

Ag.H.R.	Agricultural History Review
b.	Bushels
BL Eg.	British Library Egerton Manuscript
BL Add.	British Library Additional Manuscript
Cat.	Cattle
Cot.	Cottagers
d.	pence: 12 to the shilling.
Ec.H.R.	Economic History Review
L.	Longleat manuscript
L.U.	Livestock units
La P.	La Pulle
M.	Miscellaneous holdings
p.	pence: decimal
P.R.O.	Public Record Office
P.S.A.N.H.S.	Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society
O.E.	Old English
q.	Quarters
s.	shillings
S.C.R.O.	Somerset County Record Office
Slav.	Slaves
Sma.	Smallholders
Vil.	Villeins

Chapter 1

Introduction

Brent Knoll rises to 457 feet above sea-level on the coastal alluvial belt at the western edge of the Somerset Levels. Looking south and west from the Mendips, or north from the Poldens, the shape of the Knoll is unmistakeable. A climb to the summit on a blustery April afternoon is rewarded by a panorama of sea and hills, between which is an unprepossessing landscape; flat, green and rainswept. As the clouds give way to the sun, a rainbow arcs over the Mendips and the light plays on the water in the rhynes. The attention is captured by patterns of ditches and hedgerows, a coded palimpsest of man's recognition of the fertility of the soil and his efforts to harness it to food production for survival and the acquisition of wealth. The code remains a mystery but it has served an initial purpose; to spark an interest in why and how people settled and exploited this landscape. Twelve miles to the east can be seen Glastonbury Tor, symbolic not just of the romantic and fanciful, but of a famous place with an ancient past. As the Avalon of the Arthurian romances and as the site of monastic ruins, Glastonbury is visited by thousands of people every year. In Brent, by contrast, there does not appear to be any connection with the great or the good, or events of national importance. Yet it is apparent that real people have lived and worked here for a long, long time and their story has yet to be told.

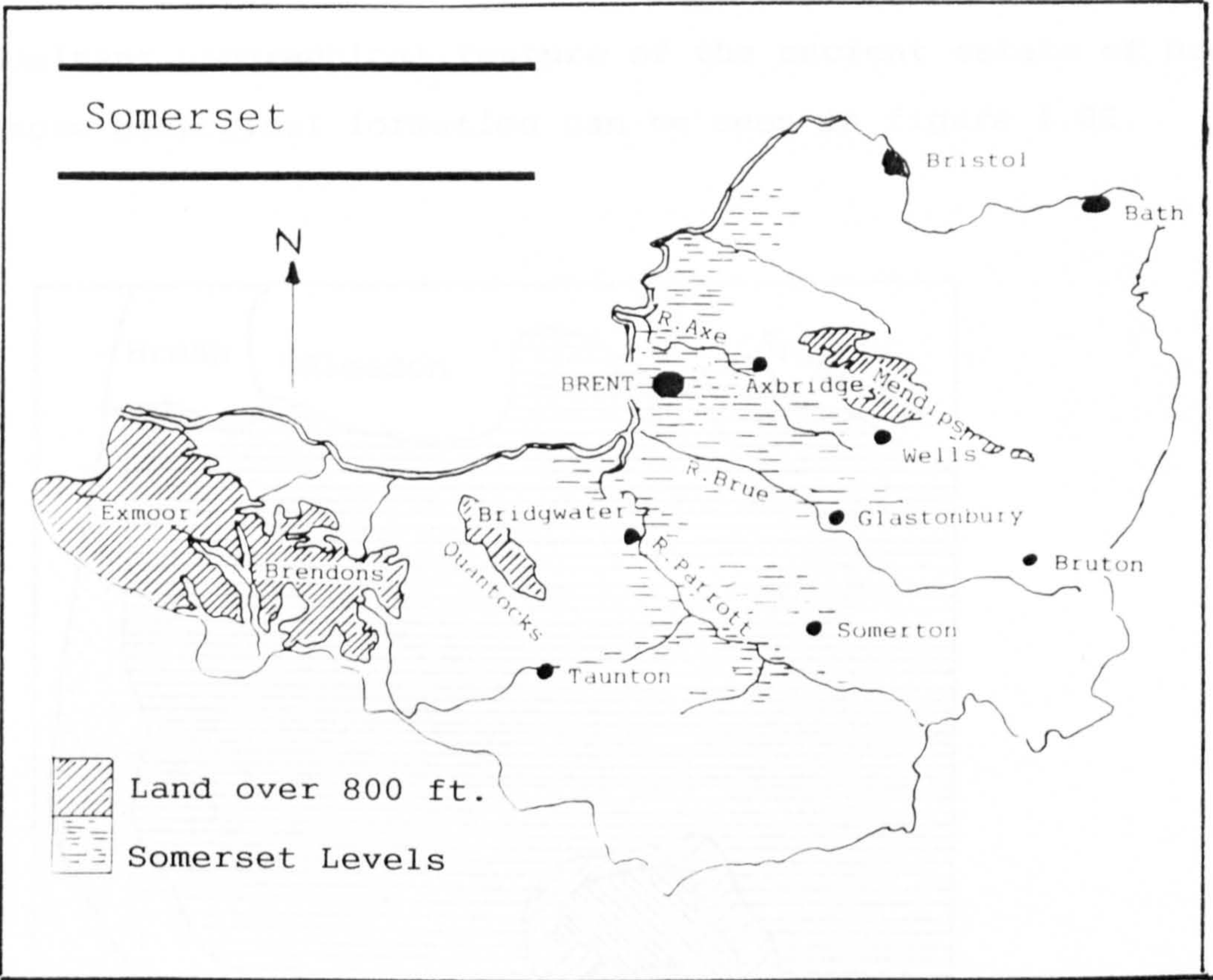


Fig.1.01 The county of Somerset

The Knoll, rising out of the alluvium with layers of middle and upper lias capped with inferior oolite, forms the dominant geographical feature of the ancient estate of Brent whose geological formation can be seen in figure 1.02.

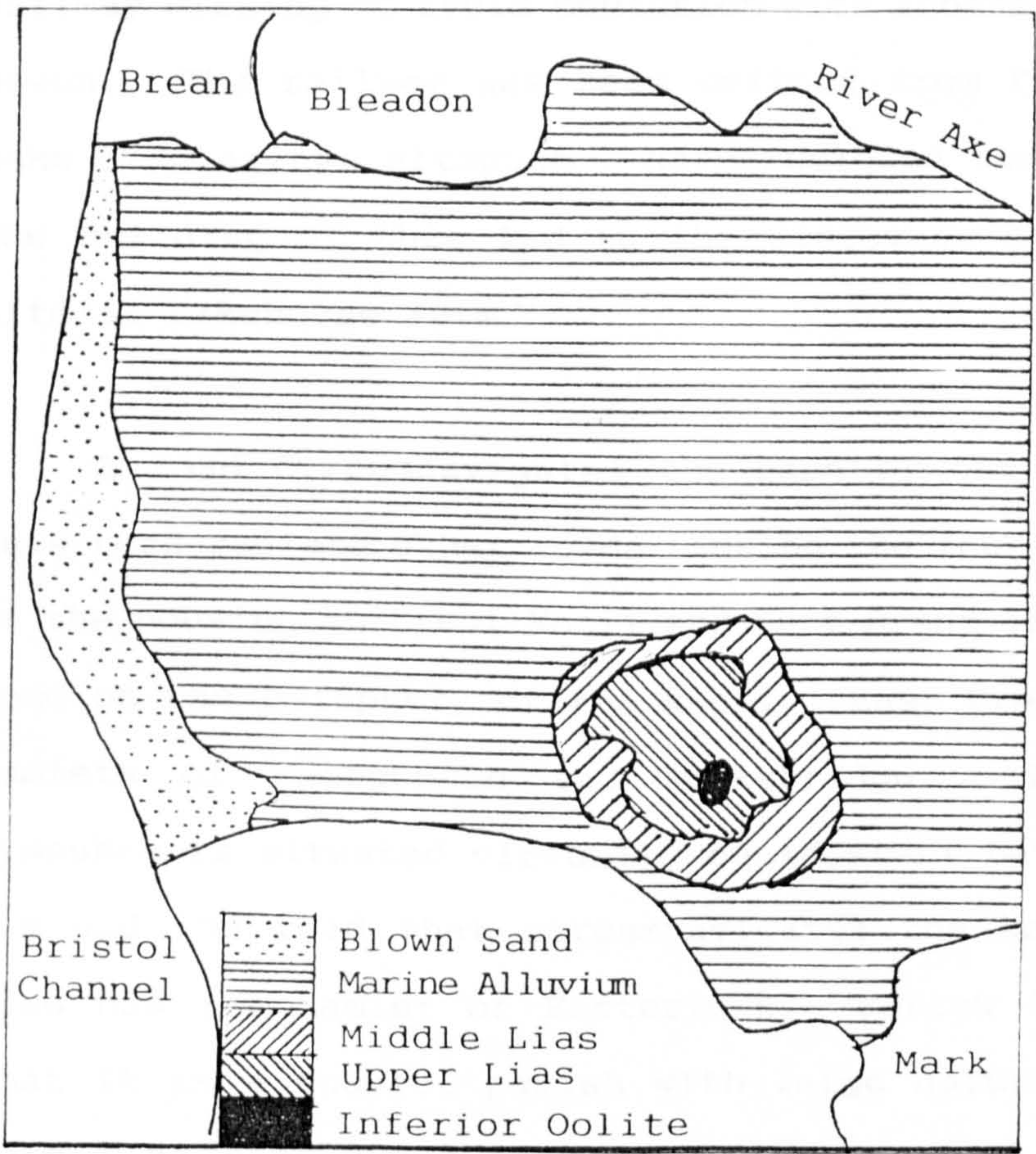


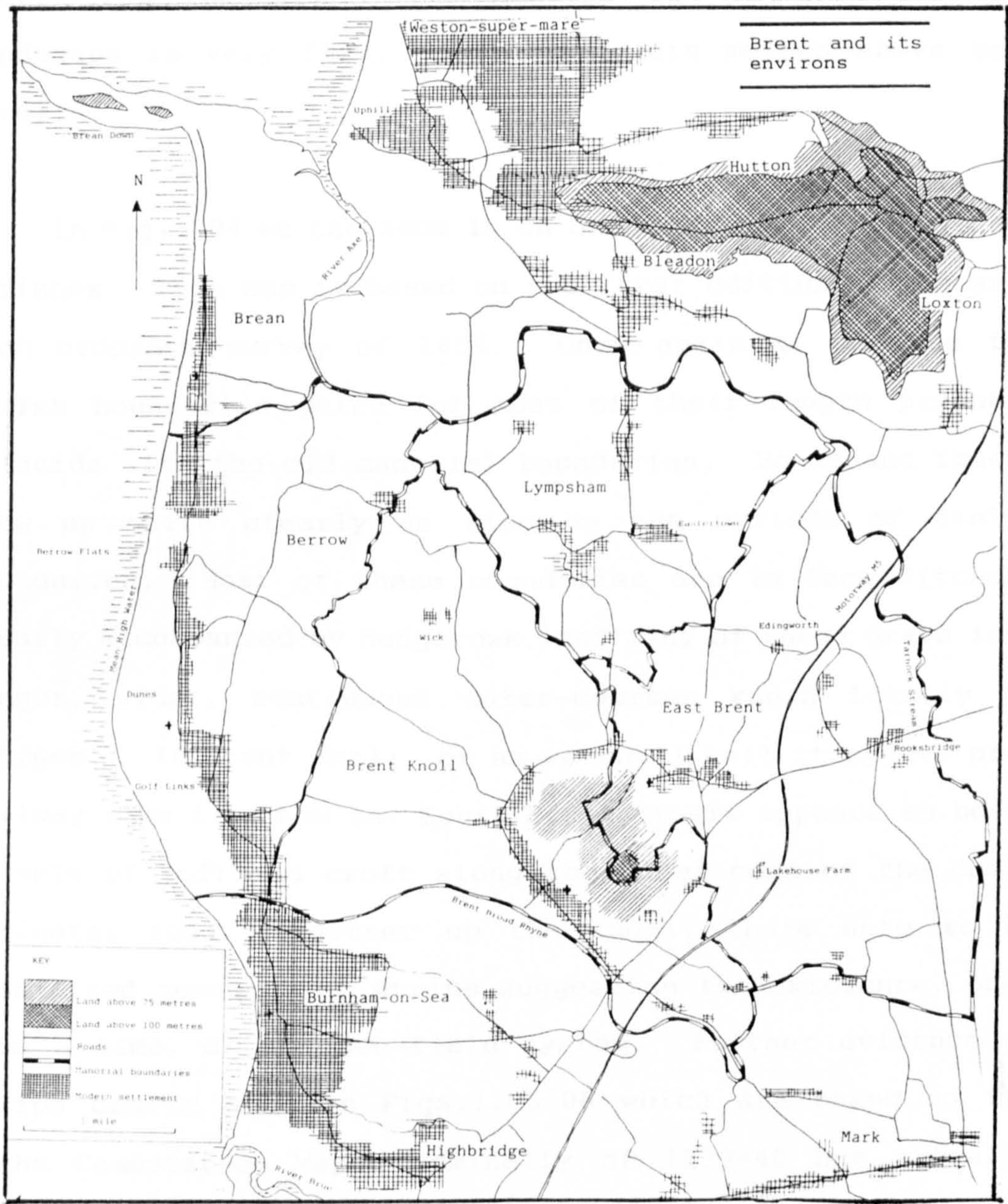
Fig.1.02 The geology of Brent.

In Figure 1.03 below can be seen the main geographical features of Brent today. It consists of four civil parishes: East Brent, Lympsham, Berrow and Brent Knoll. Brent Knoll is the modern name for South Brent, the change occurring in the nineteenth century as a consequence of the Great Western Railway wishing to avoid confusion with another South Brent in Devon. The railway has been omitted from Fig.1.03 for the sake of clarity, although I have included the M5 motorway as the building of this led to the discovery of a Roman villa site at Lakehouse Farm.¹

A road circumnavigates the base of the knoll and from this road radiate other roads linking the four parishes. Most of the housing in Brent Knoll and East Brent lies close to the road on the periphery of the knoll. East Brent has outlying hamlets of Edingworth and Rooksbridge. The nucleus of Lympsham is situated virtually equidistant between the River Axe and the road that circumnavigates the knoll. Lympsham also has its hamlet of Eastertown. Berrow is different in that it is a coastal parish with large natural sea-defences formed by sand-dunes. Today it appears to have a greater density of housing than the other three parishes, largely as a result of ribbon development spreading northwards from Burnham-on-Sea along the coast road and beyond Berrow into Brean. Beyond the River Axe to the north, in the

¹R.H.Leech, 'The Somerset Levels in the Romano-British period', The Evolution of Marshland Landscapes (1981), pp.25-29.

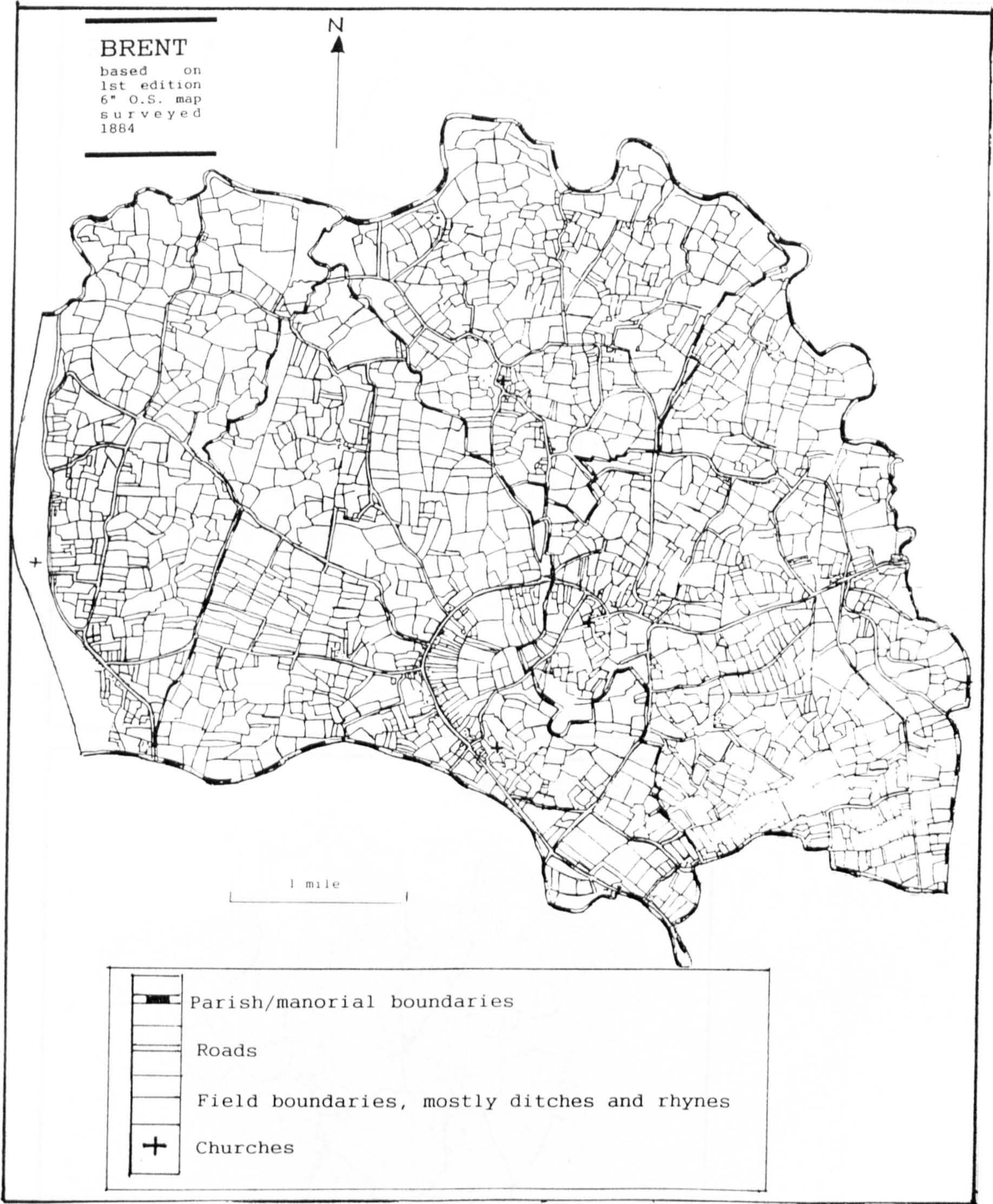
Figure 1.03



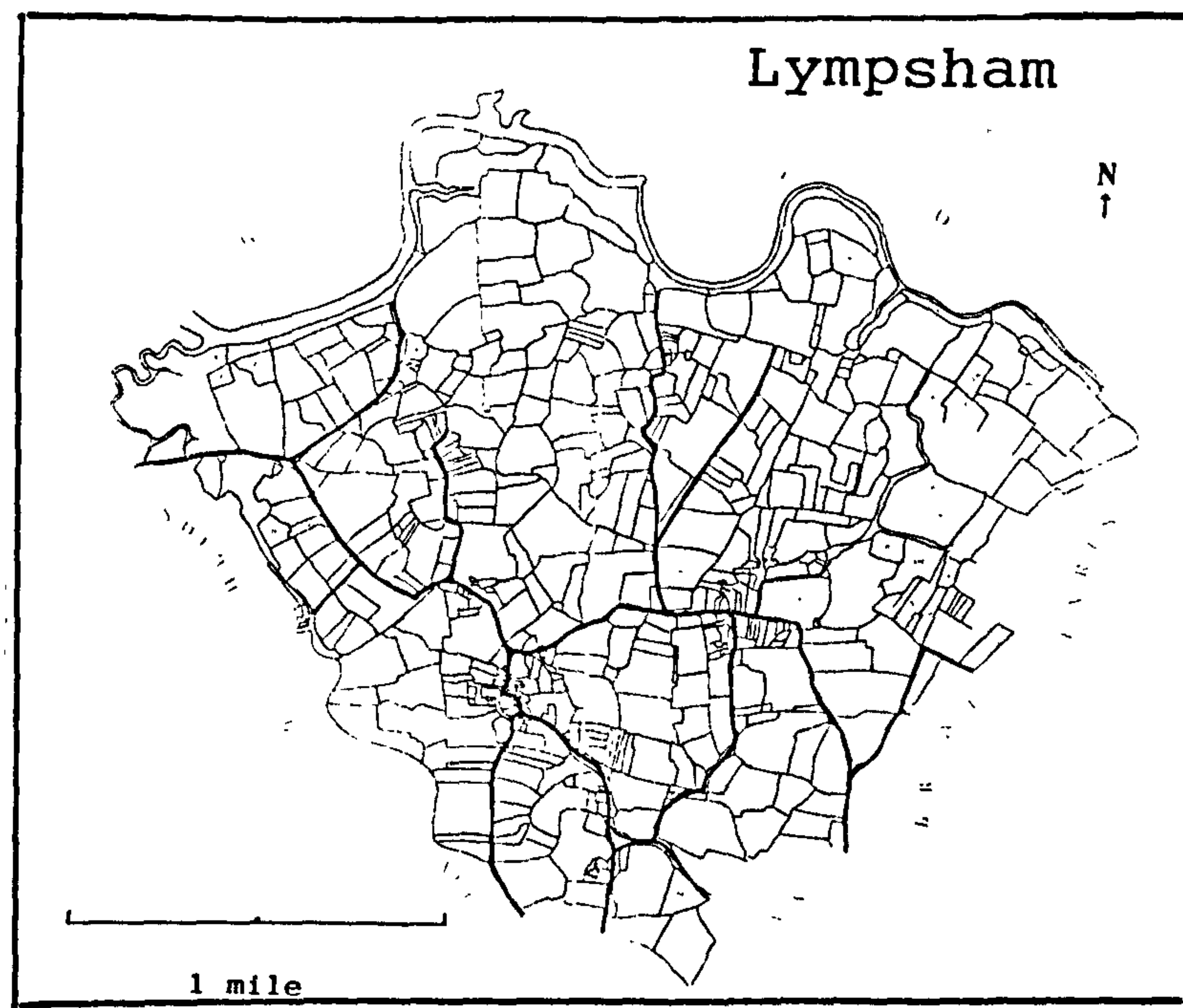
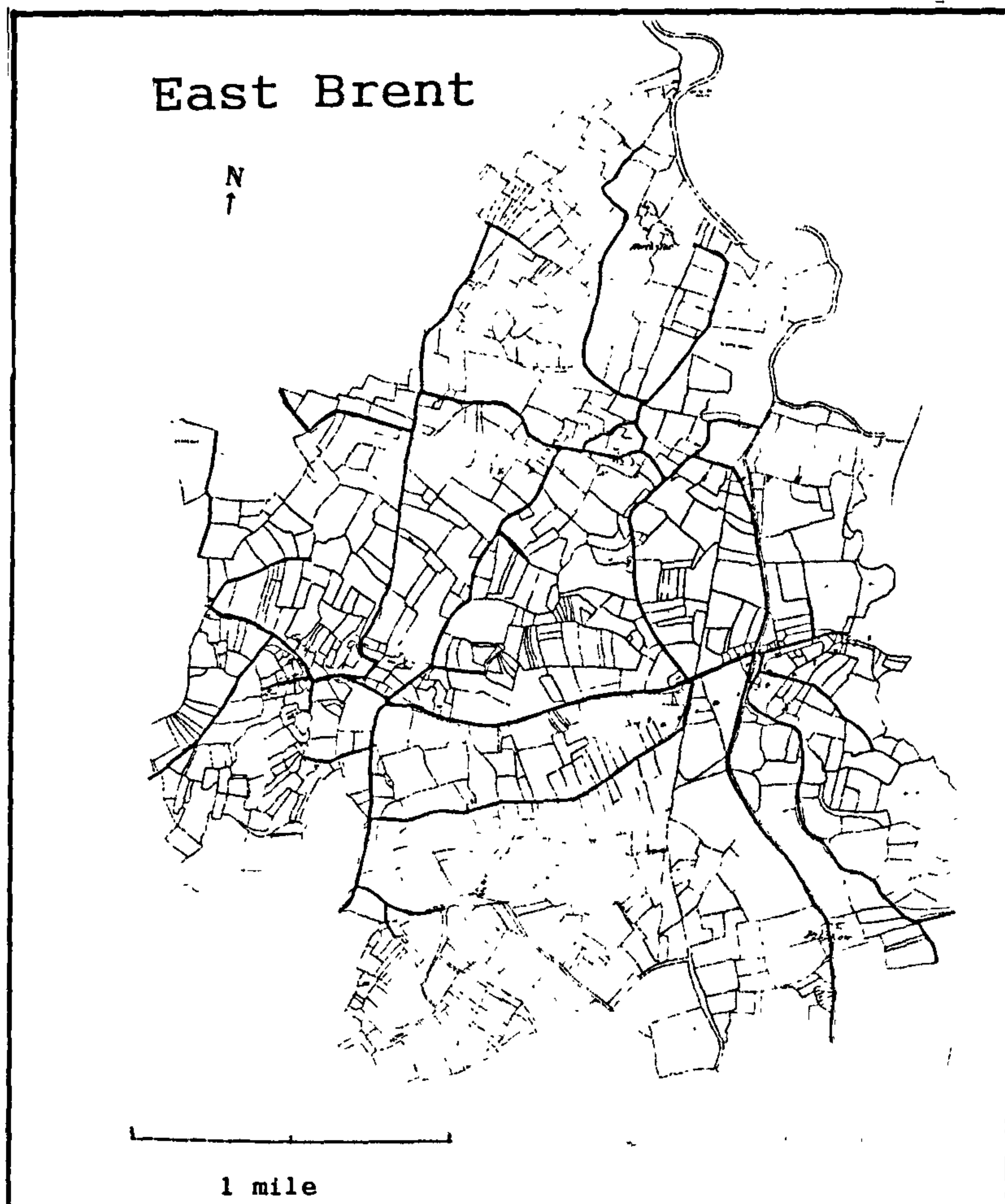
vicinity of Bleadon, Hutton and Loxton, is an outcrop of the Mendips and beyond this the urban sprawl of Weston-super-Mare. Apart from the Knoll, the Mendips and Brean Down, this landscape is very flat, mostly only six metres above sea-level.

In Fig.1.04 we can zoom in on Brent shorn of its adjacent parishes. This map is based on the first edition of the six-inch ordnance survey of 1884. Once again we can see the parish boundaries which for most of their length probably coincide with the old manorial boundaries. Roads and tracks show up quite clearly as also do the myriads of field-boundaries. Most of these boundaries are in fact ditches, usually accompanied by hedgerows, and many of these drain into longer, wider, continuous water-courses known locally as 'rhynes'. In Brent Knoll, or as we shall call it by its pre-railway name from now on, South Brent, there appears to be an example of toft and croft along the inner edge of the Knoll perimeter road. Further up the knoll, there seem to be fossilized remnants of strips suggesting the existence, once upon a time, of an open-field system. Further evidence of strips can be seen in Figs.1.05-08 which are based on the Tithe Commutation Maps, nominally of 1839-40 but actually surveyed between 1802-11. A cursory comparison of Figs.1.05-08 of 1802-11 with Fig.1.04 of 1884 and Fig.1.03 showing modern Brent, clearly shows that apart from some amalgamation of those fossilized strips, expansion of modern settlement and the building of the railway and motorway, the bulk of the

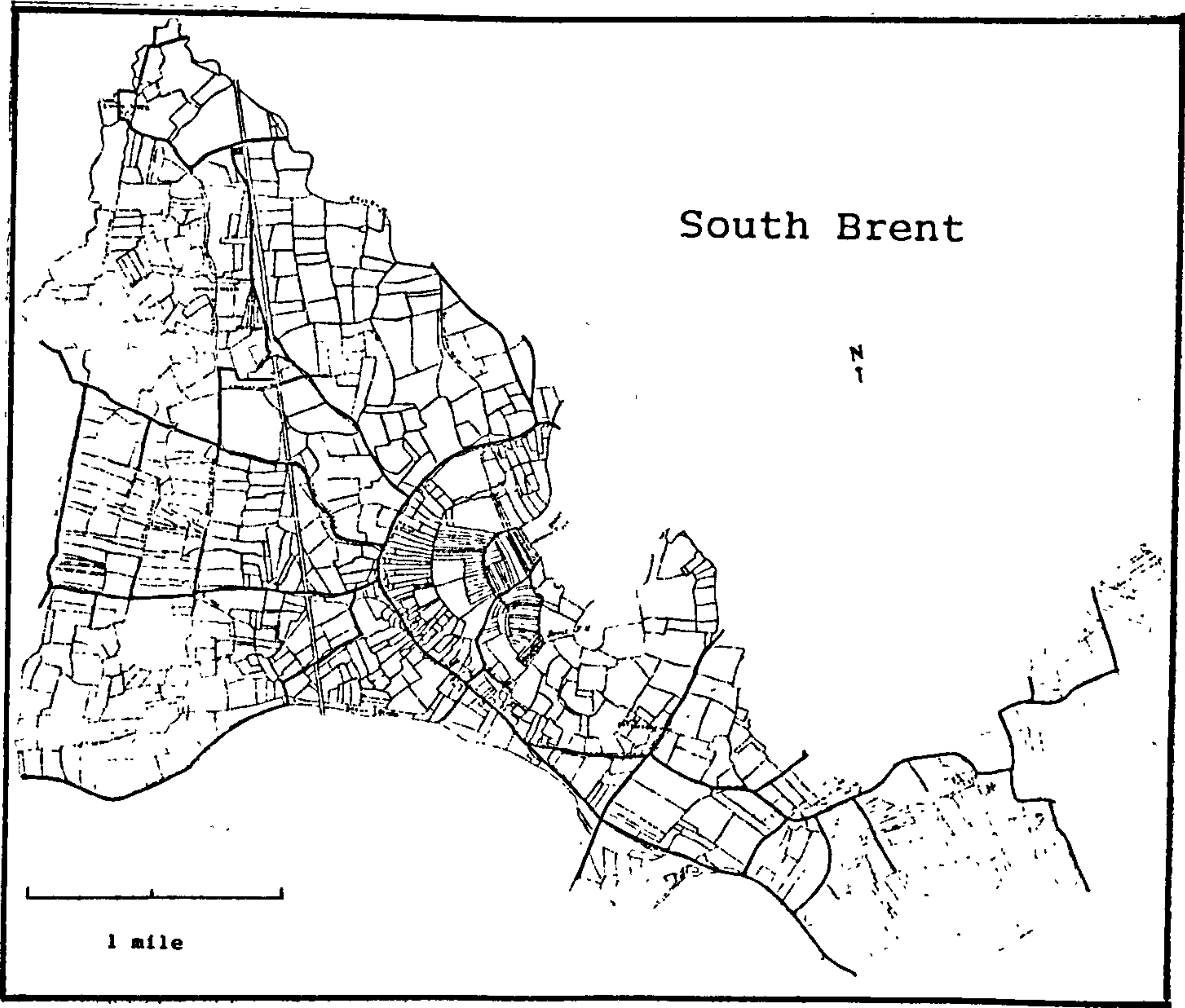
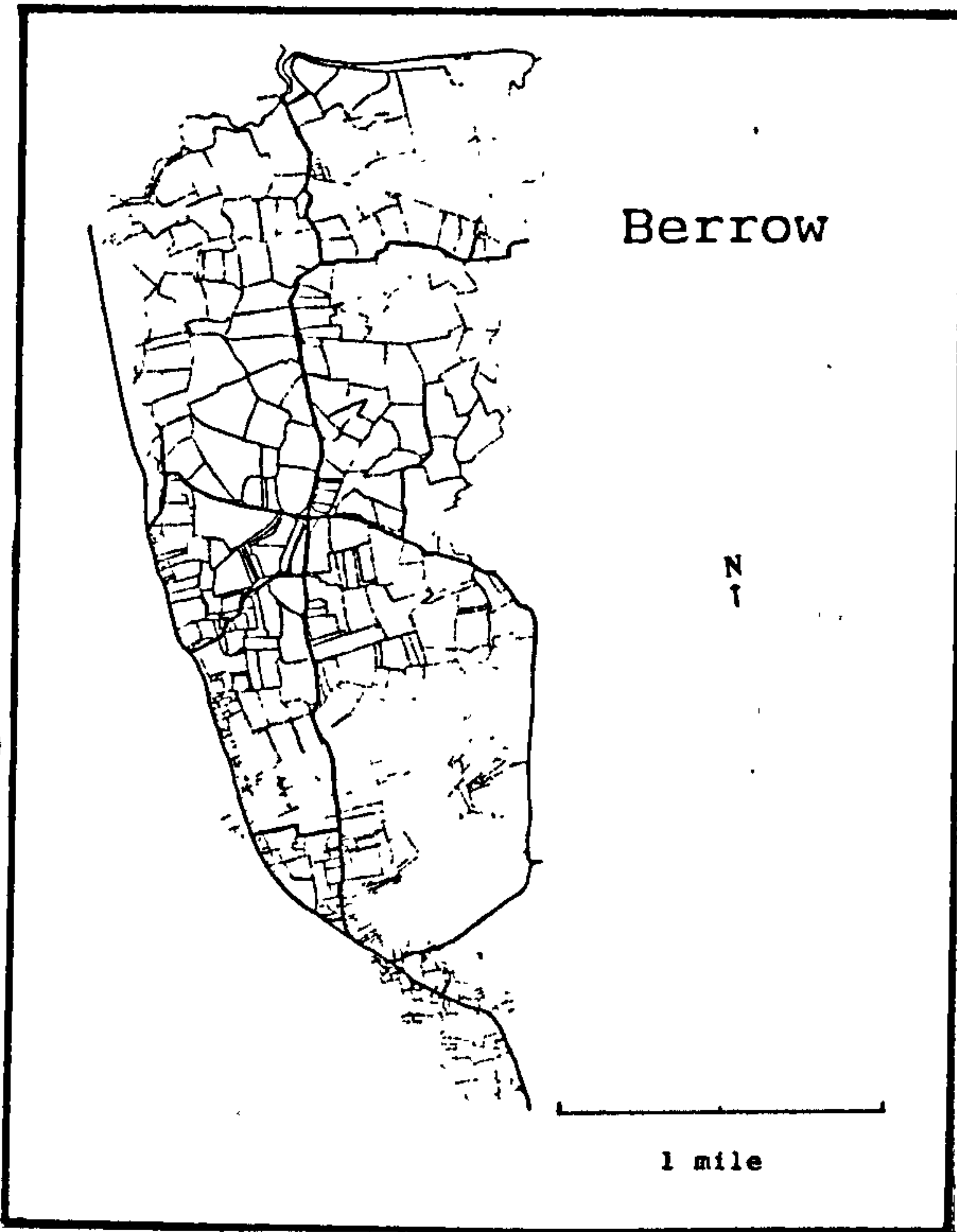
Figure 1.04



Figures 1.05 and 1.06 based on the Tithe Surveys



Figures 1.07 and 1.08, based on the Tithe Surveys



boundaries evident on the early nineteenth-century maps still exist today after nearly 200 years which have arguably experienced the greatest amount of change in the English landscape. If so much continuity is evident for the past two centuries, how much of that evidence dates back to medieval times, or even earlier?

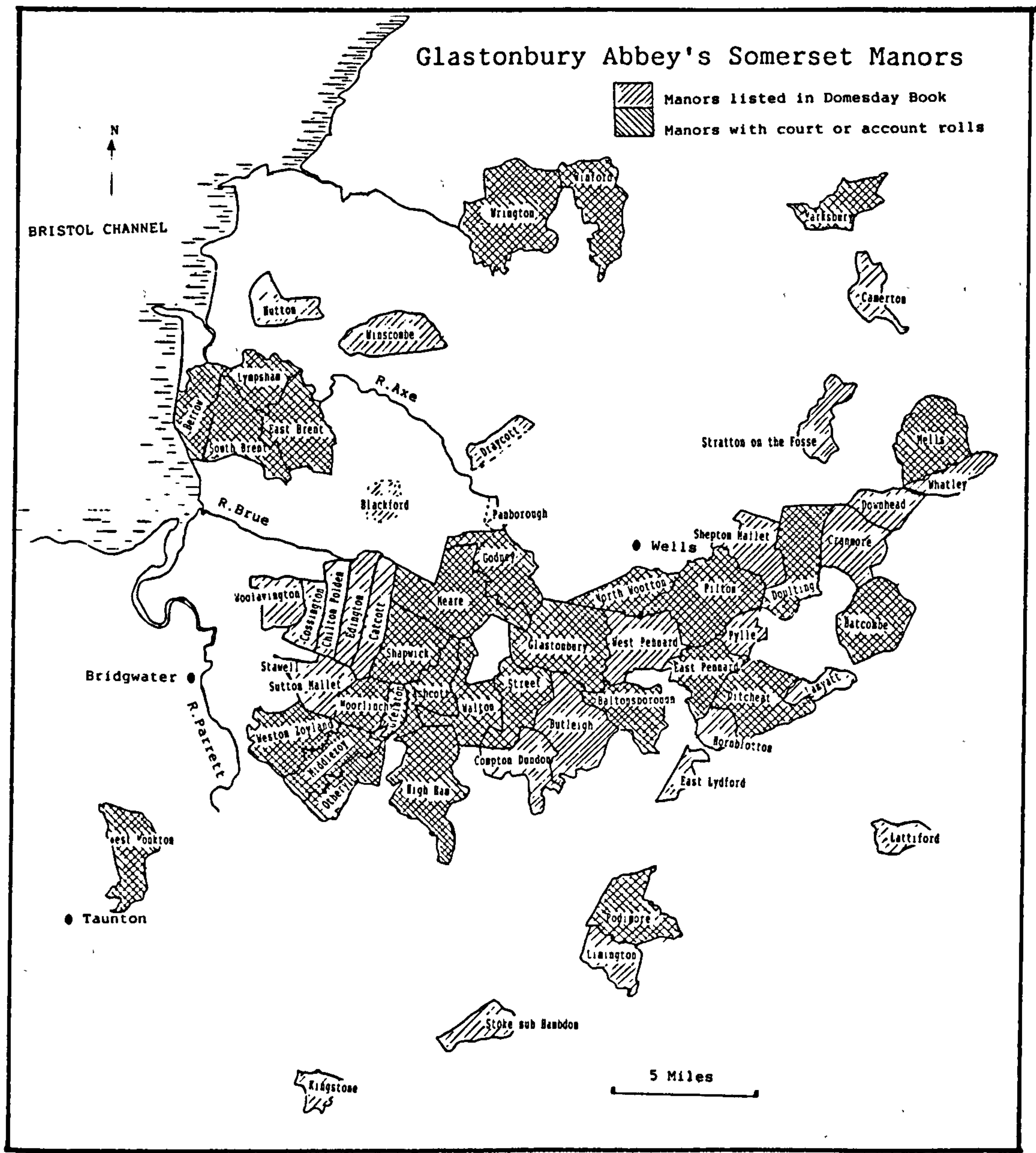
If the fascination of the Brent landscape lies mainly in the intriguing clues it presents about its past, is there anything else to attract the attention of the historian? During the Middle Ages, Glastonbury Abbey was one of the most important and wealthiest monastic institutions in England. It was important enough in the 12th century to have Abbots of the 'blood-royal'; Henry of Blois and Henry de Soliaco.² At the time of Domesday, Glastonbury was the wealthiest of all English monasteries with an income of £800.³ Most of the Abbey's property was in Somerset and the bulk of this lay in one block stretching from Woolavington and Weston Zoyland in the west to Mells and Whatley in the east, as can be seen in Figure 1.09. North of Woolavington, separated from the main block by the River Brue and 'Brent marshe',⁴ was situated a smaller block of Glastonbury properties: East Brent, Lympsham, Berrow and South Brent. Once again, mapwork

²Henry of Blois was the grandson of William the Conqueror and the brother of King Stephen. Henry de Soliaco was the third son of William the Simple, nephew of King Stephen and great-grandson of the Conqueror: J.E.Jackson, J.E.Jackson, ed., Liber Henrici de Soliaco, Abbatis Glaston, an Inquisition of the Manors of Glastonbury Abbey, of the year 1189, (henceforth Soliaco), Roxburgh Club (1882), p.ix.

³H.R.Loyn, Anglo-Saxon England and the Norman Conquest (1962), p.250.

⁴Christopher Saxton, Map of Somerset (1575).

Figure 1.09.



indicates something notable about Brent; these four manors are separate from the main block of Glastonbury properties but together make up a significant and unified unit, providing the Abbey with its only coastal manors and controlling its main outlet to the sea, the River Axe. However, there is a treat in store for the historian beyond the remarkable landscape evidence. After the Dissolution, Sir John Thynne acquired the archives of Glastonbury Abbey and most of those that have survived are still to be found at the house he built, Longleat.⁵ If we take 1350 as our cut-off point, we have for Brent eleven account rolls between 1257 and 1334, thirty-seven manorial court-rolls between 1262 and 1350 and hundred-court rolls for 1310 and 1311. These records are randomly spread, but there are concentrations of court-rolls for some particularly interesting periods: 1304-9, 1313-15 and 1344-50. On top of this, in the Cartulary so ably transcribed by Dom Aelred Watkin, there are a further thirty-three documents pertaining to Brent, two of which are pre-Conquest charters.⁶ The earliest of these, according to the cartulary, is a very early charter by King Ine of Wessex dated A.D.663.⁷ The original charter has not survived, so we have to question the reliability of the cartulary version. Abrams mentions that the simplicity of the Latin bounds has been taken to support the age of the grant, and cites William of Malmesbury's view

⁵K.Harris, Glastonbury Abbey Records at Longleat House: a summary list (1991), p.vii.

⁶Dom Aelred Watkin, ed., The Great Chartulary of Glastonbury, Somerset Record Society, Vols.59 (1947), 63 (1952), 64 1956).

⁷Watkin, Chartulary, p.527.

of Brent as one of Glastonbury's most ancient properties. Finberg considers that whereas the copy contains some spurious material, it is 'thought to embody the substance of the original'. The date is clearly a mistake as Ine was not king of Wessex until A.D. 688, nevertheless Finberg and Abrams agree that the indiction quoted in the cartulary version indicates the year should be A.D. 693.⁸ As if these were not riches enough for the medieval historian, there have survived four surveys: Henry Sully's of 1189, Michael of Amesbury's of 1235-52, Roger Ford's of 1260 and Geoffrey Fromond's of 1307/8.⁹ These surveys are especially valuable because not only are the last two contemporary with the court-rolls and accounts but each one gives us a detailed breakdown of the landholdings and the customs of the manor in such a way as to provide a skeletal structure onto which the economy and society of medieval Brent can be fleshed out by all the other evidence from that period. Such an unrivalled assemblage of surveys can be supplemented by Domesday and an even more detailed survey, Abbot Beere's of 1515. This Tudor survey, carried out on the eve of the Dissolution, when compared with the Fromond survey, shows a remarkable degree of continuity, not only in the numbers of landholdings recorded but also in the recognized customs of the manors.

⁸L.Abrams, Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury: Church and Endowment (1996), pp.69-70. H.P.R.Finberg, The Early Charters of Wessex (1964), pp.23, 111.

⁹Jackson, Soliaco; C.I.Elton, ed., Rentalia et Custumaria de Michael de Amesbury et Roger de Ford, Somerset Record Society, (1891), the original is British Library Additional Manuscript 17450. Extent and Custumal of Geoffrey de Fromond, (1307/8), British Library, Egerton Ms.3321.

Although East Brent, Lympsham, Berrow and South Brent are separate civil parishes today and were separate manors in medieval times, it is clear from the surviving documentary evidence that they were generally treated as one entity by Glastonbury Abbey. The nature of their boundaries and the geographical location also supports the idea of their having constituted one estate at some time in the past. The summit of Brent Knoll is surrounded by earthworks that are acknowledged as constituting a hill-fort which would have commanded and provided protection for the local population. The place-name 'Brent' appears to be an old British name,¹⁰ supporting the idea that the hill fort dates back at least to the Iron Age. Thus with a prominent hill-fort and a British place-name it would not be surprising if the four manors surrounding the knoll and protected north and south by rivers, should not have constituted one estate in pre-Roman times. The absence of the individual manor names in King Ine's seventh-century grant of Brent to Glastonbury Abbey, adds weight to it being one estate prior to its first appearance in a documentary source.

If Brent's physical location and size relative to the rest of the Abbey's Somerset estates suggest that this was an estate of some importance and if the surviving documentary evidence is significant, what questions can we pose that are

¹⁰E.Ekwall, The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-names, (4th edn, 1987), p.63, states;

'"Brente" might be a derivative of OE "Brant" (steep). But forms such as "Brienta", "Brunte" suggest it is rather a British name, identical with OBrit "Brigantia" (high place)'.

worthy of historical pursuit ?

We have to consider what we can establish about Brent prior to 1189 in order to have a baseline for our primary research. What archaeological work has been carried out in this area that may shed some light on its pre-medieval economy and society? What was the condition of Brent at Domesday; what can we tell of its size, population and value in 1086 and how does it compare with other Glastonbury properties? What were the developments that led to the appointment of Henry de Soliaco as Abbot, why was there a need for a survey, what were the economic pressures that led to the farming out of manors and the eventual rescinding of that policy in favour of direct management?

As background to the information to be culled from the documentary evidence we need to consider the nature of the landscape of Brent in the 13th and 14th centuries. How far can we ascertain the field system in use and the balance between arable, pasture and meadow? Did the classic Midland system operate here or were there discrete farmsteads each with their own infield-outfield, or were there elements of both to be found. What part did the landlord play in managing the landscape of Brent and was there a need to participate in large scale schemes for the greater good of the barony of Glastonbury? To what extent were the rivers transport arteries and drains? Were all the ditches and walls part of an integrated drainage and sea-defence system? Were there

other water-connected industries thriving in Brent, such as fishing and milling?

Having set out the physical scenario of Brent for the 13th and 14th centuries as far as it is possible to do, we can then concentrate on the economy and people of the four manors. To do this we need to consider first the demesne because this is better documented than the tenant holdings. The keeping of accounts and the holding of courts at least twice a year has bequeathed us some complex material from which it is to be hoped that we can learn something of the way the demesne was managed. Perhaps we may be able to ascertain the location of the demesne fields, whether they comprise strips scattered across open-fields or whether they form separate identifiable and enclosed blocks. Did the balance between arable, meadow and pasture in Brent reflect the trend elsewhere, or did ecological factors dictate a different pattern? The surveys should help us to establish the amount of customary service that was required to operate the demesne, to consider the nature of the services required and how these were distributed among the levels of society in Brent.

The very fact that the later surveys put a value on every type of customary service and that account rolls were meticulously kept, gives us an insight not only into how the demesne was managed, but also into some of the motives behind its operation and the concern with profitability. The accounts, albeit only the eleven that have survived, will

enable us to make an analysis of the demesne economy by setting the costs of managing the four manors against the revenue they produced. A major part of this will be an examination of demesne agriculture, studying its purpose and the productivity of crops and livestock compared with other manors; then looking at the changing significance of demesne agriculture from the perspective of overall demesne income.

Demesne has attracted the attention of historians partly because it was a dominant interest of the medieval scribes whose documentary evidence has survived. Being a major source of revenue for the lord, its workings were meticulously recorded and the records kept for centuries. Demesne only constituted a portion, albeit a significant portion of the manor. The bulk of the manor was held by the lord's tenants upon whom he was largely dependent for the working of the demesne, but they were also a significant source of revenue through rents, services, fines and taxes. Through the lord's records we can find a large community of tenants with a sophisticated social structure that was flexible and capable of fine tuning. The manorial documentation provides a remarkable amount of data from which a study can be made of the economy and society of the people who actually lived in Brent during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Central to everyone's interest in an agrarian economy was the amount of land held by individuals. There was a finite amount of land available and despite significant proportions being held in demesne and by free tenants, the bulk was in the hands of

servile tenants. The distribution of land determined a further social sub-structure, which although generally unacknowledged in the accounts and hall-moots, is very apparent in the surveys where the tenants are listed according to the size of their landholding as half-virgaters (twenty acres), ferdellers (ten acres), five-acremen, three-acremen and so on. Such categories are not unique to Brent and they have fuelled much thought among historians.

Postan and Titow presented an image of a population that had outstripped its ability to support itself adequately on the land at their disposal. Titow calculated that tenants with ten acres or less in a three-field system, or $13\frac{1}{2}$ -acres in a two-field system, would not be able to grow sufficient food without having to supplement income by labouring for the lord or the more substantial tenants. Opportunities for such employment were thought to be restricted by the tendency for demesnes to shrink while there were insufficient tenants of larger holdings to employ all those who needed work. They were further ground down by the burden of capital costs such as entry fines and heriots, plus labour services, tithes, taxes and miscellaneous fines.¹¹ As the overwhelming majority of the customary tenantry of Brent nominally held ten acres or less then the investigation into the people of Brent has to consider whether their condition was as critical as the Postan-Titow thesis suggests. To this end it is necessary to

¹¹M.M.Postan, The Medieval Economy and Society (1972), pp.139, 146-7; 'Heriots and prices on Winchester manors', in M.Postan, Essays on Medieval Agriculture and General Problems of the Medieval Economy (1973), p.172; J.Z.Titow, English Rural Society 1200-1350 (1969, 2nd imp. 1972), pp.73-93.

study the structure and growth of customary tenancies over time and to analyze their value to both lord and tenant. Models can be constructed of the likely issue of a ten-acre holding set against household size and consideration given to real as opposed to nominal sizes of holdings and the relative significance of livestock and pasture. The large numbers of landless listed in each Hock court roll can be used to help estimate population size and the amount of work available on the demesne and among the customary tenantry. Population growth would increase pressure on the land supply, so some measure of these factors is necessary to determine if there was a crisis. If the evidence does not suggest that the people were in extremis, what resources did they have that cushioned them against the hardships perceived by so many historians?

Some responsibility for the economic situation in England prior to the Black Death has been laid by Brenner at the door of grasping landlords, whom he considered used their feudal power to extract excessive rents from the servile tenantry, causing stagnation in the medieval economy.¹² Given the lordly status of the Abbots of Glastonbury and the servile rank of most of the population of Brent, the Brenner thesis has a cogency that persuades an historian to be on the lookout for evidence of such exploitation. The flowering of documentary evidence for Brent in the thirteenth and

¹²R.Brenner, 'Agrarian class structure and economic development in pre-industrial Europe', Past & Present 70 (1976), pp.30-75.

fourteenth centuries is largely as a result of a renaissance of lordly interest in the management of estates, highlighting the relationship between landlord and tenant, an empathetic understanding of which is vital to the comprehension of their mutual interest in the land and its resources, and the extent to which they could guide their destinies.

Chapter 2

Brent before 1189

In the court roll for Michaelmas of 1313, a heriot of one ox was recorded for Thomas Sparke of Lympsham for his holding of a messuage, a ferdel and one acre of ancient tenure, and 17 acres of arable, 4½ acres of meadow rented from demesne, one enclosure with a wall containing 3 acres and 5 acres in Hommede.¹ The reference to ancient tenure was to differentiate between Thomas Sparke's basic holding of one ferdel and one acre, which formed the basis of his liability to service and taxation, and the additional land that he had accreted during his lifetime. Reference to an ancient holding is commonplace in the court rolls when mention is made of ferdels and the larger half-virgates. They were indeed old land-holdings by the fourteenth century, but how old were they?

To understand the economy and society of Brent in the sort of detail that its surviving medieval documentary sources permit, it is necessary to set it in a chronological perspective, so that we have a sense of how this estate had evolved. The survival of Anglo-Saxon charters and references in Domesday indicate that the Brent estate is ancient, but the medieval surveys, accounts and court-rolls reveal a level of sophistication in estate management which, together with their

¹Longleat House Ms. (hereafter L.) 10654, 11r-v.

references to ancient landholdings, beg the question as to how far back in time was the social and economic structure of Brent as sophisticated as it evidently was in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries? To push back the frontiers of knowledge prior to 1189, the scarcity of documentary evidence requires us to leave the muniment room to study archaeological evidence from excavations and field-work; to browse over aerial photographs and analyze maps, to don boots and explore the landscape ourselves.

THE HILL FORT

Brent Knoll dominates the surrounding countryside. The cone of the knoll is the obvious feature no matter which chief compass point it is viewed from and it is the apex of this on which the fort was situated. The only excavations of the hill-fort were carried out by Skinner in 1812, 1830 and 1832. He found coarse Roman wares, Samian ware, Pennant roofing stone, foundation stones and painted stucco.² No systematic excavation has been carried out since and although much of the interior had been destroyed by quarrying before Skinner's time, it would still be a worthwhile project to excavate, but as the site is not a subject for rescue archaeology, excavation is unlikely in the near future. Fortunately, a field survey was carried out by Ian Burrow during the mid-1970's. Burrow described the fort as having a defensive inner bank with two outer terraces that may have been banks originally. A third terrace is across the approach from East

²British Library Additional Manuscript (hereafter BL Add.) 33646 f10, 33719 f95, 33726 f106, f110.



PLATE 2.1.

Brent Knoll as seen from Lympham

Brent. The entrance was situated on the east side flanked by two unequal sized enclosures. If this was a defensive structure, then these banks would have required capping with substantial wooden structures.³

Once a fort was built it could remain a structure of status for some time and be symbolic of power for the overlord who controlled it. Such centres of power became places of homage and ceremony serviced by a civil and military household which in turn required an agrarian base to support it. How long such a fort could be sustained depended on the willingness of the lord to stay on a windy hill-top, contemporary perceptions of a military threat, the need to maintain such a symbol of power, and the willingness of his subjects to provide for it. At least it could represent a place of refuge in time of need.

Burrow was careful in his thesis to differentiate between hill-forts and hill-top settlement; nevertheless he categorised Brent Knoll as a 'Group 1 hill-fort', that is having

'an origin as a communal settlement site in which social pressures outweighed the advantages to be gained from lowland living....there would have to be a local population of some size to make intensive use of a hill-top feasible, and there must have been a powerful stimulus to cause such use.'⁴

Maybe the stimulus was a military threat, or perhaps a great

³I. Burrow, Hillfort and Hill-top Settlement in Somerset in the First to Eighth Centuries A.D., British Archaeological Report, British Series 91 (1981), pp.72-74.

⁴Burrow, Hillfort Settlement, p.26.

and prolonged flood of the surrounding countryside. The medieval documents from Domesday onwards indicate that there was a local population of some size, while the existence of what are believed to be medieval lynchets high up on the Knoll back up the idea of intensive use.

An alternative use for the top of the Knoll was as a religious site. Certain physical features of Brent Knoll would provide suitable settings for grand processions: the inclined ridge leading up from East Brent on the north and the dell to the south leading down to South Brent. Burrow refers to the remains of a substantial building found by Skinner and although he states that there 'is no clear evidence that this structure was a temple', he does consider that the topographical setting with its steep sides would make it unsuitable for a villa site while 'all known or suspected temple sites share the common feature of hill-top location, and two sites, Brean Down and Creech Hill, possess common plan elements which may suggest similar cult practices'.⁵

THE ROMAN EVIDENCE

Brean Down, situated about 5½-miles NNW of Brent Knoll, also has the remains of an Iron Age hill-fort and what is thought to be a Romano-British temple constructed c.AD 340 and demolished c.AD 390.⁶ ApSimon, who excavated this feature

⁵Burrow, Hill-fort Settlement, pp.143 & 160.

⁶M.Bell, ed., Brean Down Excavations 1983-7, English Heritage Archaeological Report No.15 (1990), pp.82-3.

between 1956 and 1959, interpreted it as a temple because its plan of a square cella with surrounding ambulatory 'is the most common plan found among the very numerous Romano-Celtic temples distributed in those parts of France, the Rhineland and the Low Countries formerly occupied by Celtic peoples.'⁷ Constructed of stone, ApSimon's analysis has revealed the origin of the different types of stone used, indicating some sophistication in the Romano-British building supplies network: carboniferous limestone from Brean Down; dolomitic conglomerate from the Mendip Hills, 2-3 miles away; yellow triassic breccia from the north side of Bleadon Hill, 2 miles away; blue lias limestone from the Polden Hills; Pennant sandstone for roofing 'slates' from Nailsea, 12 miles away; and Bath stone.⁸ Remnants of Pennant sandstone roofing material were also found by Skinner in 1830 on Brent Knoll, lending support to the notion that it too had a temple.⁹ However, ApSimon points out that Pennant sandstone was a common roof covering material for Roman buildings in Somerset, so the surviving remnants of Pennant sandstone on the Knoll are not conclusive evidence of there having been a temple there.¹⁰

If the Romano-British structure on Brent Knoll was

⁷A.M.ApSimon, 'The Roman temple on Brean Down, Somerset', Proceedings of the University of Bristol Spelaeological Society (1964-5), p.227.

⁸ApSimon, 'The Roman Temple', pp.253-5.

⁹BL Add. 33719 f95.

¹⁰ApSimon, 'The Roman Temple', p.255.

contemporary with the temple on Brean Down, which the Pennant sandstone roofing material suggests, it would seem that this religious function was a later use for the hill-fort. The Brean example was not contemporaneous with the hill-fort on the Down and the temple itself was short-lived, posing the question that if there was a temple on Brent Knoll, was it similarly short lived? Although we cannot rule out a religious function for the summit of the Knoll in Roman times, or earlier, the surviving earthworks are more reminiscent of a defensive structure. Once a perceived military threat had passed the structure could remain in use as a power base. In time of war its facilities would be spartan and secondary to the need to defend its occupants from attack. As a power-base in peace-time we would expect it to don the comforts of a civilised society. Nothing has survived from the Iron Age or earlier to suggest a substantial civilian dwelling on the summit. Could the Pennant sandstone roofing tiles and the painted stucco found by Skinner suggest the existence of a villa? This seems unlikely because the summit is exposed to the elements. More propitious sites for a villa might be adjacent to St.Michael's church in South Brent on the south-western slopes of the Knoll, at Battleborough facing south-east, or adjacent to St.Mary's church in East Brent where there would be shelter from the prevailing winds.

The only artefactual evidence for a villa site in Brent comes not from an archaeological excavation but from observations of debris thrown up by the building of the M5

motorway adjacent to Lakehouse Farm. In addition to Romano-British pottery, 'building material including dressed stone blocks and slabs, sandstone roofing tiles, tegulae and imbrices, box and pilae tiles, painted wall plaster and window glass was found'.¹¹ Such material is normally associated with a villa and there must have been at least one building with a hypocaust. Much depends on our interpretation of the word 'villa'; if we take it to mean the centre of a substantial agricultural estate then Lakehouse Farm on the alluvium at six metres above datum is not the best site in Brent. If we interpret 'villa' as meaning a substantial Romanised house then the site is still no better, but we should expect to find evidence of other substantial Romanised houses on the slopes of the knoll. Only occasional Romano-British potsherds have come to light on the knoll. The Lakehouse Farm site was in operation during the 1st century AD according to McDonnell and during the late 3rd century subjected to flooding which produced a depth of alluvium that buried a Romano-British landscape. McDonnell's report was largely based on an extensive study of aerial photographs from which he interpreted a relict landscape between the Poldens and Wedmore which he considered to be evidence of land reclamation and improvement of the early Roman period. Apart from the Lakehouse Farm site and a line of features along a line to the north-west of the knoll, Brent is generally devoid of this relict landscape. It may be that prior to the late 3rd century flooding, the land surface was not as flat as it is

¹¹Somerset County Council Sites and Monuments Record, No.10479.

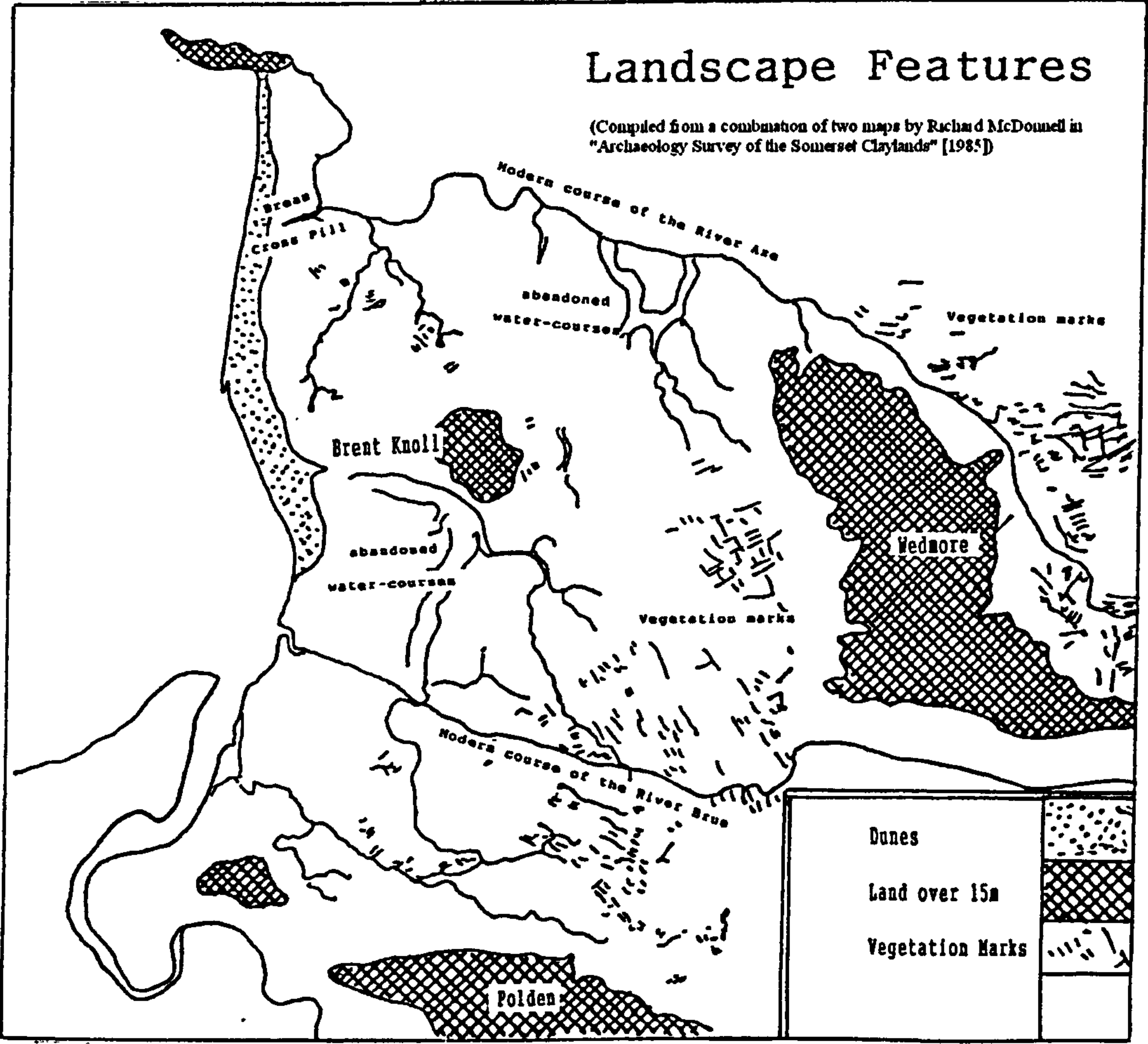


Figure 2.01 Landscape features including the vegetation marks observed by McDonnell from aerial photographs and some of the abandoned water-courses in the area. Notice particularly the abandoned water-course to the south of Brent Knoll.

today. Nash was able to show that Roman material in Highbridge could be found at varying depths indicating that there was once a deep water inlet.¹² McDonnell has taken this further, showing the deep water inlet continuing to the north and curving to the west as the course of the River Siger, Brent's southern boundary.¹³

The significance of the inundation is controversial, but perhaps the most recent consideration of it is worth relating. The recent excavations on Brean Down were predominantly investigating a Bronze Age settlement at the eastern end of the Down, but as part of the study a systematic series of bores were made in the alluvium to the south of the Down. The report accepts the idea that the clay flats were drained and settled during Romano-British times. The flats between OD and 4.6 OD 'can be co-related with the Wentlooge Formation....and relates to the time of the Flandrian marine encroachment. The deposit ceased to form at about the Romano-British period.'¹⁴ The report goes on to consider that Brean Down was an island, albeit a seasonal one, during the Bronze Age. The salt-marsh to the south was slowly accreting to as high as Mean High Water Spring Tide, 'in which case the flats would only have been inundated by occasional spring tides'. A further point of interest revealed in the archaeological report is that the

¹²S.G.Nash, 'A deep water inlet at Highbridge', Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society (1973), pp.97-101.

¹³R.R.J.McDonnell, Archaeological Survey of the Somerset Claylands, Report on Survey Work in 1984-5 (1985).

¹⁴Bell, Brean Down Excavations, p.105.

River Axe must 'at a time of lower sea-level have entered the sea south of Brean Down', suggesting Brean Cross Pill as a possible former course as there are traces of a sea-bank here and this line is also the boundary between Berrow and Brean.¹⁵ Thus we are left with two basic possibilities regarding the inundation in Romano-British times: that it was a substantial and lengthy flood that buried an extensive tract of the levels with their Romano-British or earlier fields, or, that the current surface is the consequence of a series of spring-tide floods.

The situation of a 'villa' at Lakehouse farm has significant implications for the level of exploitation of much of the Brent landscape during the Roman era. The status of the structure revealed by the surviving archaeological material indicates a degree of wealth associated with its owner and at least a system of roads and tracks to bring the building materials into Brent. If the villa was simply a country house, then the wealth and status of its owner was secondary to those who would have been occupying the drier knoll, unless the proprietor already owned properties on the knoll. If the source of the occupant's wealth came from beyond Brent, then the house required reasonable access to major routes. If, as would seem more likely, the villa was an agrarian centre, its wealth originating from the land surrounding it for the benefit of its occupant, or as a sub-

¹⁵Bell, Brean Down Excavations, pp.82-3, 105. This would also help to explain why Brean was not part of the Brent estate during medieval times.

farm for villa of higher status on the knoll; then the surrounding land would have required organization to produce the surpluses necessary to afford the standard of living evident in the archaeological remains.

Unless the climate was significantly drier during the first four centuries, it would have been necessary for the alluvium in the vicinity of Lakehouse farm to have been drained if the villa was to flourish. To dig the odd ditch would have been insufficient; ditches would have to be linked to larger water-courses that emptied into rivers. In Figure 2.02 I have highlighted the major rhynes north and south of Lakehouse farm. These rhynes flow into Blind Pill Rhyne, which joins the River Axe to the north via the Mark Yeo, thus forming the basic drainage network that could have served the villa site if they were in situ during the first to fourth centuries. To prove the antiquity of rhynes is very difficult because they are scoured at regular intervals. Thanks to modern roadbuilding and drainage works, Roman material has been found in this alluvial landscape, mainly along the course of the M5 motorway, but also between Blind Pill Rhyne and the Mark Yeo where walls have been discovered at a depth of 40cm.¹⁶ Ditches of sufficient depth to drain this landscape would have to be considerably deeper, so if the area had been abandoned or subject to a severe inundation, such ditches should have shown up on the aerial photographs used by McDonnell in his claylands survey. The scarcity of such

¹⁶Somerset Sites and Monuments Record No.11118.

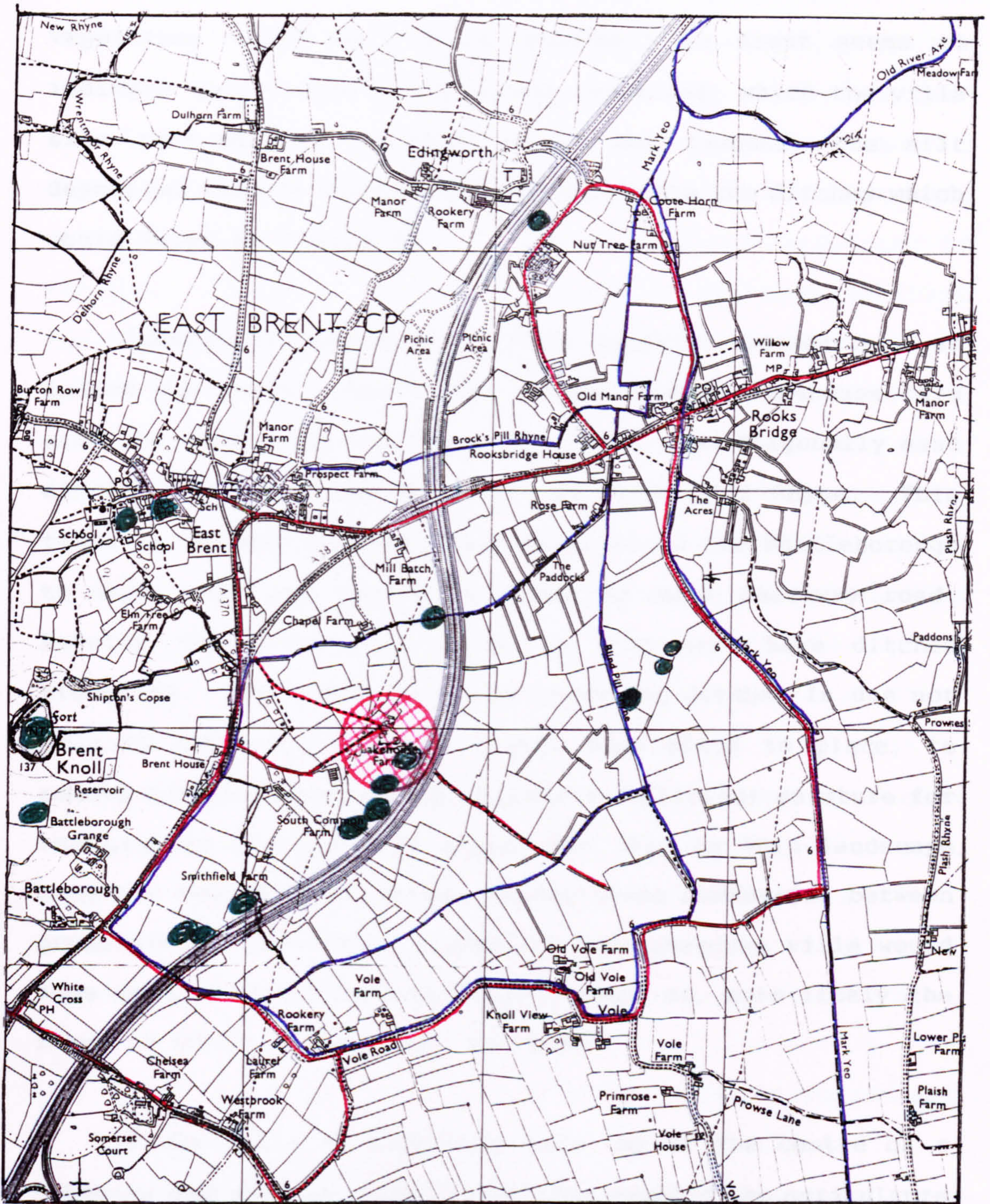


Figure 2.02: Location of Lakehouse Farm 'villa', highlighting its main drains, access tracks and peripheral roads.

vegetation marks noticed by McDonnell in Brent seems to indicate that either the area was unsettled, which the villa site contradicts, or that if it was flooded, the silt deposited was not deep enough to obliterate the ditches which could later be rescoured.

Substantial rhynes can form tenurial boundaries, as indeed can roads. One of the tracks linking Lakehouse farm with the modern A38 continues as a drove road diagonally east of the M5 towards the SW-NE arm of Blind Pill Rhyne. This track is aligned approximately parallel to the Battleborough to Vole road and the White Cross to Mark Causeway road. Usually the roads and tracks in this area have ditches alongside. The cohesiveness of roads and ditches is due not only to mankind's need to travel from place to place, to remove surplus water and yet maintain sufficient moisture for the growing of grass and crops, but also in this landscape only six metres above datum, to delineate boundaries between properties. The likely bounds of the Lakehouse villa would thus seem to be either the major rhynes, or, more likely the roads to north, south, east and west.

If the villa at Lakehouse farm lay at the centre of a cohesive drainage and road system that enabled the agriculture of the alluvium to the east of Brent Knoll to be exploited, then it ought to be possible for a similar arrangement to exist elsewhere on the alluvium. On the opposite side of the knoll to Lakehouse Farm, the long straight course of Pitland

Rhyne has strategic importance for the drainage of the alluvium between the knoll and Berrow. Long straight water-courses, like roads, hint at an origin in Roman times, but in this part of the alluvium there is an absence of supporting archaeological evidence.¹⁷ If the major drains and roads in the Brent landscape have their origins in the Roman era, then the mundane ditches, roads and farmsteads have been scoured, relaid and rebuilt so many times, that the ancient nature of much of the current territorial infrastructure has been camouflaged. However, without substantive supporting evidence, this interpretation of the impact of a villa economy on the landscape of Brent, has to remain a tenuous hypothesis.

THE WEST SAXON ESTATE

In the Anglo-Saxon period archaeological artifacts seem to be non-existent, so we are left with charters, place-name evidence and retrospective clues from later medieval documents.¹⁸ Perhaps these will reveal something significant about the development of Brent during the Anglo-Saxon era.

A key event in the history of Somerset is the battle aet

¹⁷Long and careful study of 6" Ordnance Survey maps of Brent and the surrounding parishes, has indicated the strong possibility that the area was the subject of a cadastral system. The controversial nature of the cadastral concept and the space that its examination necessitates, renders it inappropriate for inclusion in this thesis.

¹⁸Dom Aelred Watkin, ed., The Great Chartulary of Glastonbury, Somerset Record Society, 63 (1952), pp.527-8 includes a further charter, Carta Regis Edmundi facta Athelstano Comiti de Brenteforlond of AD 944, but after the work of Rose-Troup, 'The Anglo-Saxon charter of Brentford', in Report & Transactions of the Devonshire Association 70 (1938), pp.253-75, it is generally believed that this charter has nothing to do with the Somerset Brent.

Poennan, dated AD 658 according to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, where Cenwalh defeated the British and drove them as far as the River Parrett. Having won at Penselwood did not necessarily mean that the West Saxons now had control of Somerset; indeed Costen considers that the grant of Creechbarrow Hill in AD 682 is indicative of when control of West Somerset was acquired. The earliest royal grant to Glastonbury Abbey is dated AD 670, contemporary with the period of time during which the West Saxons were establishing control of Somerset. The establishment of Christianity in Wessex with a see at Dorchester-on-Thames in 634 had helped to buttress the expanding Wessex in standing up to the stronger Mercians.¹⁹ In consolidating their kingdom, kings of Wessex had to divest themselves of some power by rewarding their supporters with estates. Perhaps the grant of Brent in A.D. 693 by King Ine of Wessex to Glastonbury could be seen in this light.

We know about this grant because ecclesiastical landlords had a long term interest in the maintenance of their estates. They had a virtual monopoly of formal education, so that not only could they bolster the king's power through the structure of formalised religion but they could provide the civil servants and lawyers to run the machinery of government and by keeping a written record of important transactions, enhanced royal power even further. While the details of civil administration could be managed by clerics, kings could devote

¹⁹M.Costen, The Origins of Somerset, (1992), pp.82, 85.

more energy to military matters; the defence and advancement of the realm. There was a price for the support of the church; it required support from the king in establishing bishoprics and abbeys which in turn needed an economic base such as an estate. Having obtained a grant, the church was able to have this recorded in writing and made sure that the title was kept safe in case of future challenge.

Simply stated, the charters indicate that Glastonbury was established as a Benedictine monastery with the support of the kings of Wessex during the late 7th and early 8th centuries. However, William of Malmesbury fostered the idea of a pre-West Saxon christian community at Glastonbury. William visited Glastonbury during the 12th century and examined their archives. He does not quote any pre-Anglo-Saxon documents, but he related the story of Ider who battled with three giants on Brent Knoll and was thought by King Arthur to have died as a result. Arthur, feeling responsible, established 80 monks at Glastonbury, 'granting them lands and territories for their sustenance'. The story is fanciful, but later in his summary, William of Malmesbury states that :

'Arthur in the time of the Britons gave Brent Marsh and Powelldone with many other lands in the neighbourhood, for the soul of Ider.... these lands were fallen upon and taken away by the English when they were pagans but later restored, with many others, after their conversion to the faith.'²⁰

²⁰J.Scott, The Early History of Glastonbury. An edition, translation and study of William of Malmesbury's 'De Antiquitate Glastonie Ecclesie' (1981), pp.87-9, 141. Scott, in his end-notes on p.197 states that this story is an interpolation after the discovery of Arthur's remains.

Thus it would seem that there was a tradition at Glastonbury in the twelfth century that there was a monastic establishment during sub-Roman times, implying that the Anglo-Saxon charters were merely restoring to Glastonbury properties that it had held under the previous regime. On the face of it, such a case is spurious, not just because of the fanciful nature of the Arthurian Romance and its exploitation by Glastonbury to help restore its fortunes after a disastrous fire in the twelfth century, but also because Christianity was already established in the royal house of the West Saxons before they conquered Somerset. Furthermore there 'seems to be no indisputable archaeological evidence concerning a British community on what later became the monastic site' at Glastonbury.²¹ The only part of this story that has any feasibility about it is the idea that there may have been a Celtic monastic settlement at Glastonbury supported by revenue from estates which the medieval monks liked to believe were restored to Glastonbury by the early West Saxon kings. However, it does promote a sense of primacy about Brent as one of the Abbeys oldest possessions.

The earliest charter for Brent appears to date from AD 693.²² As the original version has not survived and the date of the charter in the surviving medieval copy is AD 663, its reliability has to be questioned. It states that Ine, King of

²¹J.P.Carley, Glastonbury Abbey; The Holy House at the head of the Moors Adventurous (1988), p.4.

²²Watkin, Chartulary, Vol.2, pp.clxxxiii and 527; P.H.Sawyer, Anglo-Saxon Charters. An Annotated List and Bibliography (1968), S.238.

the Saxons, granted ten cassatos to Abbot Hengisli with the advice of the bishop and the consent of Baldred, the sub-king of Somerset, who gave him the land. As Ine did not become king of Wessex until 688 and Haemgils Abbot until c.676, the date of 663 is clearly a mistake.²³ In the document the date is given as DClxiiij, indiccione vj, xiiij Kal.Augusti. Finberg states that the sixth indiction would fit 693 which would be contemporary with both Ine and Haemgils. Finberg considers that this charter, although a copy, embodies the substance of the original even if some of it may be spurious.²⁴ The substance is that Brent was granted by Ine to Glastonbury when Baldred was sub-king of Somerset. The most informative and particularly relevant parts of the charter that require careful study are the bounds and the assessment.

The bounds state:

'terra autem hec sita est in monte et circa montem qui dicitur Brent' habens ab occidente Sabrinum, ab aquilonem Axam, ab oriente Ternuc, ab austro Siger.'

Such simple bounds, expresses in Latin, are typical of early charters. Here we have a substantial area of land described as 'the hill and the land around the hill', with the geographical limits given at the four compass points that suggests because Brent was an extensive estate with clear natural boundaries there was no need to be more specific. The

²³C.R.Cheney, ed., Handbook of dates for students of English History (1991), p.16. Carley, Glastonbury Abbey, p.XX.

²⁴Finberg, Charters of Wessex, pp.23, 111.

alternative names, Brentemerse, Brentemaraais, also suggests that it was physically cut-off from other estates thus eliminating the need for rigorous delineation.²⁵

If we accept the veracity of the bounds, can they be recognized in the landscape today? The Sabrina on the West we can accept as the Bristol Channel or the Severn estuary; therefore Berrow must have been included in the grant of 693. Similarly, the Axe is acceptable as the northern boundary, although this might suggest that Brean was once included in the Brent estate. Consideration of some place-name evidence suggests a tenuous explanation of Brean's relationship to Brent. Ekwall suggests that Brent was originally a British name 'identical with OBrit Brigantia, 'high place'; thus it is understandable that East Brent and South Brent, whose mutual boundaries cross the Knoll, should retain that name. Lympsham with its -hamme suffix is clearly English, with the first element suggested by Ekwall as lind-pyll, 'pool where lime trees grew', although Gelling's interpretation of pyll as OE 'tidal creek' would seem more appropriate here. Berrow, Ekwall interprets as OE beorg(as), 'hill(s) or 'mound(s)', which Gelling supports but clarifies by stating that in southern England it is frequently referring to burial mounds which there may have been in Berrow but the obvious similarity to such features and the likely origin of the place-name is probably the sand-dunes. Brean, whose southern boundary is Berrow's northern boundary, is interpreted by Ekwall as having

²⁵Thorn, Domesday, p.90. Sawyer, Anglo-Saxon Charters, S.1671.

its origins in OBrit briga, Welsh bre, 'hill'. If Berrow and Lympsham have English names; Brean, with its British name similar in origin to Brent's, its proximity to Wales and the possible Celtic dedication of its church to St.Bridget; does pose the question that if Brent was handed over as an early English estate to Glastonbury, was Brean with its meaner resources on the outer edge of Brent, left in the hands of indigenous British?²⁶

The eastern boundary of the Ternoc is interpreted as Tarnock stream, which forms the parish boundary today between East Brent and the hamlet of Tarnock in Biddisham, or as it was put in an allegedly spurious charter of 1065, Biddisham quod Tarnuc proprie appellatur.²⁷ Costen quotes this as an example of an Old Welsh name being replaced by an Old English name, except that in this case the Old Welsh name has survived. The Tarnock stream today is a modest water-course that flows into the River Axe but that only adequately explains about half of East Brent's eastern boundary. The original source of the Tarnock is difficult to judge, but it probably drained what is now Allerton Moor and Binham Moor. Today, at its southern extremity it connects with the artificial water-courses of Plash Rhyne and Kings Way Rhyne which run in a southerly direction alongside Kings Way into

²⁶E.Ekwall, The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names (1987), pp.39, 62-3, 309. M.Gelling, Place-Names in the Landscape (1984), p.27. M.Gelling, Signposts to the Past; place-names and the History of England (1979), pp.132-4.

²⁷Finberg, Charters of Wessex, p.153. Sawyer, Anglo-Saxon Charters, S.1042. E.Ekwall, English River Names (1928), p.392, suggests 'muddy stream' as the pre-English meaning of Tarnock.

Mark. Its route is duplicated a short distance to the west by the Mark Yeo, a much more substantial artificial waterway that connects the Rivers Brue and Axe and which has long been thought to have been a medieval creation, not just as an aid to the drainage of the Somerset Levels but as a mode of waterborne transport.²⁸ The River Siger formed the southern boundary of the estate in Ine's charter, but the problem with this feature is that it has long disappeared. There is a logic in accepting that the parish boundary between Berrow/South Brent and Burnham was the course of the Siger as it meanders to the sea. The Douglas Allan photograph in Plate 2.2 of floodwater following the general line of the parish boundary lends support to the idea of this being the defunct Siger. A water-course as wide as that shown in Plate 2.2 was not evident in 1575 as Saxton does not show it on his map, although Ogilby's strip-map of 1675 (Figure 2.03) does show a river or stream in the appropriate location, giving it the same sort of prominence as it does the River Brue. The work of Nash and McDonnell indicates that the original outlet of the River Brue may have been to the north of its current outlet and indeed it and the Siger might have been one and the same, although if these are both British names that possibility seems unlikely.²⁹ A more likely explanation is that the Siger in the 7th century was not significantly wider

²⁸M. Williams, The Draining of the Somerset Levels (1970), p.69, infers that this water-course was completed in 1316, but there are earlier references to it in the survey of Michael of Amesbury c.1235.

²⁹See pages 28-30 above.



Plate 2.2. This aerial photograph of floodwater forming a meander in what has been suggested was the course of the lost River Siger mentioned in Ine's charter of AD 693. Photograph by courtesy of Douglas Allen Photography, Bridgwater.

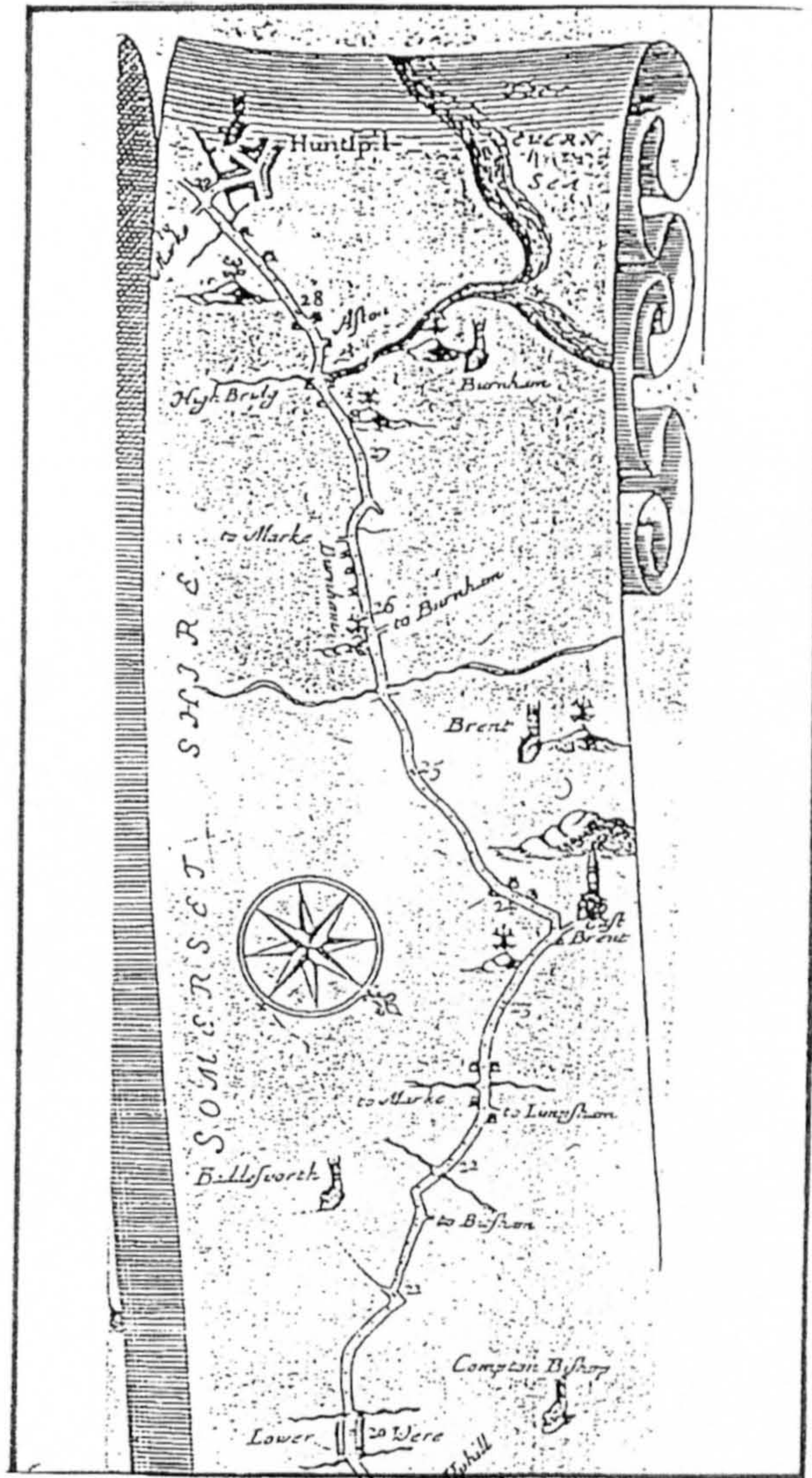


Figure 2.03 Ogilby's map of 1675, showing the River Siger between mileposts 25 and 26.

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than Brent Broad Rhyne (which forms the parish boundary) is today. If this was the case, then Burnham could not have been part of the Brent estate in Ine's charter. This is also supported by the fact that two centuries later Burnham was evidently a royal estate as it was among the estates bequeathed in King Alfred's will.³⁰

We cannot close our minds to the possibility that the Siger and the Brue may have been different names for the same river. Saxton on his map of 1575 clearly marks Brentm[er]she to the north of the Brue and Brent marshe to the south of the Brue, giving the impression that it stretched as far south as the base of the Polden Hills. Emmanuel Bowen, in his map of c.1760, clearly delineated Brent Marsh, which included Burnham, as being south of Brent Hundred and stretching as far east as a road leading south-west from Blackford but west of the Mark Yeo/Pilrow Cut, with a smaller section south of the Brue, or the 'Brent River' as he labelled it.³¹ Both Saxton and Bowen give the impression of the four manors of Brent, plus Burnham, Brean and Brent Marsh, as forming an island bounded by the sea, the Axe, the Mark Yeo and the Brue. If Burnham was part of the Brent estate in AD 693, then it must have been alienated for King Alfred to be able to bequeath it in the latter part of the ninth century. A charter granted in AD 973 by King Edgar to his thegn Wulmer for quinis ab accolis mansiunculis....at Burgh', gives the

³⁰Whitelock, English Historical Documents, pp.492-5.

³¹E.Bowen, Map of Somerset, (c.1760), re-published 1972.

impression that Berrow was alienated from Brent.³² Wulmer was granted all rights in fields, pasture, meadows, woods and rivulorumque discursibus, indicating a contemporary awareness of the importance and value of the water-courses, while maintaining the usual obligations of tribus expedicione et pontis arcisve restauracione. We are then treated to a set of Anglo-Saxon bounds containing eighteen place-names of which only one can be found in medieval documents pertaining to Brent; Axen, the River Axe. Several attempts to make some sense of the bounds on a map of Berrow have proved fruitless, but the inclusion of references to Merkmere has led Finberg to suggest that these five hides must have included land outside the modern parish of Berrow.³³ If Merkmere can be interpreted as 'Mark Moor', this is situated within Brent Marsh as delineated by both Saxton and Bowen and it is possible that this charter does refer to a detached portion of Berrow, an idea which is supported by Williams in his mapping of distant communal grazing rights on the Somerset Levels before recent enclosure.³⁴ Although Finberg considers this charter to be authentic, it was not in the Liber terrarum or in William of Malmesbury's De antiquitate, but was extant in the fifteenth century. The only reference to Berrow by William of Malmesbury is in a corrupt version of a charter by William the Conqueror confirming Glastonbury's possession of several

³²Watkin, Chartulary, Vol.2, pp.clxxxiii and 529. Sawyer, Anglo-Saxon Charters, S.793.

³³Finberg, Charters of Wessex, p.147.

³⁴M.Williams, The Draining of the Somerset Levels (1970), p.90. M.Aston, Interpreting the Landscape: Landscape Archaeology in Local Studies (1985), p.110.

estates, including Berrow. Although its position in the chartulary indicates that in the later middle ages it was considered to refer to part of Brent, there is a possibility that this charter is spurious, having been produced to defend Glastonbury's properties in disputes with the bishop of Bath and Wells.³⁵ If the Edgar charter was authentic, Berrow was back in Glastonbury's hands as part of Brent by 1189 and perhaps even by Domesday.

A third Brent charter included in the Chartulary by Watkin is dated AD 944 and was granted by King Edmund to Comes Athelstan for Brenteforlond, 'two measures of land at Brent near the tributaries of the Axe.'³⁶ However, Grundy had already shown that references of the rivers Exe and Creedy in Devon within the bounds meant that this charter had no connection with Brent in Somerset, and Rose-Troup concluded that the bounds were for Brampford Speke, Brampford Pyne and Brampford Steven in Devon.³⁷ The problem remains as to why the Brenteforlond charter came to be in the possession of Glastonbury. Abrams suggests that Athelstan may have deposited the charter in the archive when he retired to Glastonbury to die c.AD 956, but there is no other evidence connecting Brenteforlond to Glastonbury and the name does not

³⁵L.Abrams, Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury: Church and Endowment, (1996), pp.57-8. Scott, History of Glastonbury, p.154.

³⁶Watkin, Chartulary, Vol.2, pp.clxxxiii and 527-8.

³⁷G.B.Grundy, 'The Saxon Charters of Somerset', The Transactions of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society (1931), pp.150-1. F.Rose-Troup, 'The Anglo-Saxon charter of Brentford', Report and Transactions of the Devonshire Association 70 (1938), pp.253-75. I am grateful to Dr.Lesley Abrams of the University of Cambridge Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic for this information.

appear in any of the Brent medieval documents.³⁸

WAS BRENT A MULTIPLE ESTATE?

Glanville-Jones' exposition of multiple estates in Wales that he elicited from the Book of Iorwerth, strikes a chord with Brent. He showed the structure of multiple estates viz:-

4 acres	=	1 homestead
4 homesteads	=	1 shareland
4 sharelands	=	1 holding
4 holdings	=	1 vill
4 vills	=	1 multiple estate
12 multiple estates + 2 vills (50 vills)	=	1 commote
2 commotes (i.e. 100 vills)	=	1 hundred ³⁹

If this structure was evident in Wales in the 13th century then it is only natural that we should look for a similar structure in England, especially in those places with an evident pre-English link such as a Celtic place-name and a hill-fort. Brent with its four vills could well have been a 'multiple estate'. The hill-fort, the Roman artifacts on the Knoll suggestive of a temple, the possibility of a villa at Lakehouse Farm with its implications for the exploitation of the alluvial landscape around the knoll; all these form the appropriate background for a multiple estate of four vills. However, the model breaks down at that point because the number of homesteads, sharelands and holdings do not fit in with the Brent vills, at least for medieval times when we have

³⁸The nearest we have is Brentforlang in Longleat 11252 m.16-17v (1307) in which men of South Brent were fined 2/- for damaging crops in Sefurlang, Brentfurlang and Pullenclyne.

³⁹G.R.J.Jones, 'Continuity despite calamity: the heritage of Celtic territorial organization in England', Journal of Celtic Studies (1981), p.3.

documentary evidence. Neither do we have relict names suggestive of the specialised nature of the farmsteads serving the caput, although there is the remote possibility of 'Honey Mead'. There are 'croft', 'huish' and 'worth' place-name elements among the medieval field names but their numbers are small in comparison with other field-names. The structure suggestive of a multiple estate in Domesday is much stronger for the larger Pouholt estate with its 'caput' at Shapwick and fragmented outliers with their combined personal/habitative place-name elements probably replacing the former specialist names; the survival of the place-names such as Shapwick and Walton; the manner in which the Poldens, Nidons and Levels are shared out among the fragmented outliers; Pouholt's larger assessment of sixty hides implying that there were more resources to share out when the estate was divided.⁴⁰ However, if the interpretation of Pouholt as Celtic bo gwelt, 'cattle pasture', is correct, then the model network of specialised Tuns does not fit Pouholt because the existence of a 'honeytun', 'sheeptun' and 'graintun' within a cattle pasture seems to be a contradiction.⁴¹

Brent and Pouholt do have several things in common which help to overcome the dilemma set up by the creation of the multiple estate model. William of Malmesbury's reference to

⁴⁰N.Corcus, 'Early estates on the Poldens and the origin of settlement at Shapwick', PSANHS 127 (1983), pp.47-53.

⁴¹The tun model is illustrated in diagrammatic form in M.Aston, Interpreting the Landscape; landscape archaeology in local studies (1985), p.35. Honey Mead Farm is in Lympsham at ST341551. Fields named Honey Mead in the Tithe schedule are situated to the west of the farmstead. Field-names such as Honylond, Honymede and Honypulle appear in 14th century court rolls and surveys.

Arthur granting 'Brent Marsh and Poweldone with many other lands in the neighbourhood',⁴² despite its romantic associations, does ascribe a sense of primacy surrounding Brent and Poweldone, that these are estates of substance to be named rather than submerged within 'lands in the neighbourhood'. There is evidently a tradition that both estates were originally British grants to Glastonbury, but to accept that idea we would have to accept the notion of a Celtic monastery at Glastonbury and its overlordship of subject estates for which there is no substantive evidence. Brent could well have been self-sufficient in Iron-Age and Roman times with its hill-fort as its caput; similarly Pouholt with its archaeological finds of Roman pottery and coin-hoards together with field-names 'Abchester', 'Chestells' and 'Bassecastell' indicating the former presence of a substantial Roman structure that may have served as a caput.⁴³ Whatever the pre-English importance and structure of Brent and Pouholt estates, when they were granted in 693 and 729 they became Glastonbury estates and by default Glastonbury became the caput. Maybe Pouholt supplied the Abbey with cattle and perhaps Brent may have specialised in beans if we wished to adhere to the multiple estate model, but it is more likely these estates could supply the new caput with a variety of produce. The multiple estate model may well have applied to certain estates in England and Wales at particular points in time past and they may have applied in a static economy, but

⁴²Scott, History of Glastonbury, p.141.

⁴³Corcos, 'Early estates on the Poldens', p.51.

it would be naive to expect strict adherence to it over a period of time in Brent.

PLACE-NAMES

Michael Costen has highlighted the significance of the place-name elements huish and worth in tracing evidence of early English settlement in Somerset. Huish is derived from hiwisc; 'land for the support of a family' and etymologically is connected to hid, the hide. Where these can be reconstructed, it seems that a huish was an identifiable unit in the landscape. Costen considers them to be 'pioneering' units and quotes examples in Berrow and South Brent because they are in wet areas requiring 'embankment and draining at a later period as well as being in areas which were clearly wet and marshy in the Old English period'.⁴⁴ By studying Figure 2.04 it would not take much imagination to stretch the coloured areas to attain rectangular blocks of roughly similar size. In the Beere survey of 1515, Huish amounts to 63 acres in South Brent while Huish and its derivatives account for 65 acres in Berrow.⁴⁵ That there was only 2 acres difference in size by 1515 may be suggestive of deliberate establishment of these units at one time in the past, but this late piece of evidence and the similarity in size is not strong enough to arrive at any firm conclusion. Unfortunately, very few huish names have survived; the two areas on Figure 2.04 being the

⁴⁴M.Costen, 'Huish and Worth: Old English survivals in a later landscape', Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History 5 (1992), pp.65 & 73.

⁴⁵BL Eg.3034. The variations are Huysshe, Huysshebysebrugge, Huysshebysepull and Southhuysshe. By the time of the Tithe Map, Huysshebysepull had become Huish Bispole.

only ones that can be traced from the Tithe Maps.⁴⁶

There are very few survivors of another Early English place-name element to be found in Brent; worth. Costen quotes Smith in linking worth's early forms of wyrð and wyrðiq with wurð, 'soil', and he is quite clear that it is associated with the idea of enclosure'.⁴⁷ Costen also quotes Fox as suggesting that wyrðiq in Ine's Laws is connected with a period of active colonization.⁴⁸ In South Brent, Killingworth survived to be included in the Tithe Map; the remnants having been coloured green on Figure 2.04. As with the Huish areas, it would not be difficult to extend the coloured areas to their logical parameters. In medieval times Killingworth was predominantly meadow, which is understandable considering its geographical location adjacent to the suggested course of the River Siger. If Applewitby Rhyne has a Roman origin, it is likely that rather than this worth representing colonization of virgin land, it is a case of colonization of British land. In Roman times and in the 8th century it may, as its name suggests, have been one enclosure bounded by Applewitby Rhyne on the west, the Siger on the south, Berrow Lane on the north and Crooked Lane or even the foot of the Knoll on the east. Its sub-divisions are quite different from the divisions to the north of Berrow Lane, with smaller and squarer enclosures

⁴⁶SCRO D/D/Rt 339 (tithe award for South Brent), D/D/Rt 213 (tithe award for Berrow).

⁴⁷A.H.Smith, 'English place-name elements', English Place-Name Society 25 & 26, (1970). Costen, 'Huish & Worth', p.73.

⁴⁸Costen, 'Huish & Worth', p.74. H.S.A.Fox, 'Approaches to the adoption of the Midland system', T.Rowley, ed., The Origins of Open-Field Agriculture (1981), p.87.

suggestive of piecemeal sub-division that we might expect with meadow over time. It may, in early English times, have been in the possession of whoever lived in Ham Farm; situated on Killingworth's northern edge, across Berrow Lane. It would be nice to think that this was an example of an habitative ham, but we only have medieval evidence for the topographical La Hamme; in 1346 John Crey exchanged his one acre of land in La Hamme for William Selyman's one acre of land in Hywyssh.⁴⁹ Study of the map indicates that Gelling's 'land in a river bend, dry ground in a marsh, river-meadow'⁵⁰ are all feasible explanations. Such early colonization on what was probably marginal land may help to explain the longevity of this early English name.

Another worth survivor in the landscape is Edingworth on Figure 2.05. Today, Edingworth is a hamlet within East Brent, but in 1086 it warranted its own entry in Domesday Book as Lodenwrde for which Ekwall suggests OE eow-denn; 'pasture for ewes'.⁵¹ Such an interpretation would seem to serve better the hachured area on Figure 2.05 as it stretches out to the River Axe and indeed this could well be considered part of Edingworth today. The solid green area on Figure 2.05 is simply bounded by lines that represent a continuous boundary and as such are no more than a speculative attempt to

⁴⁹L. 11251 m.38-39v.

⁵⁰Gelling, Signposts, p.112.

⁵¹Ekwall, English Place-Names, pp.160-1. On p.302, under Loddon and Lode, the prefix Lode might be interpreted more appropriately as 'muddy river' from Brit Lutna or water-course from O.Eng. Lad.

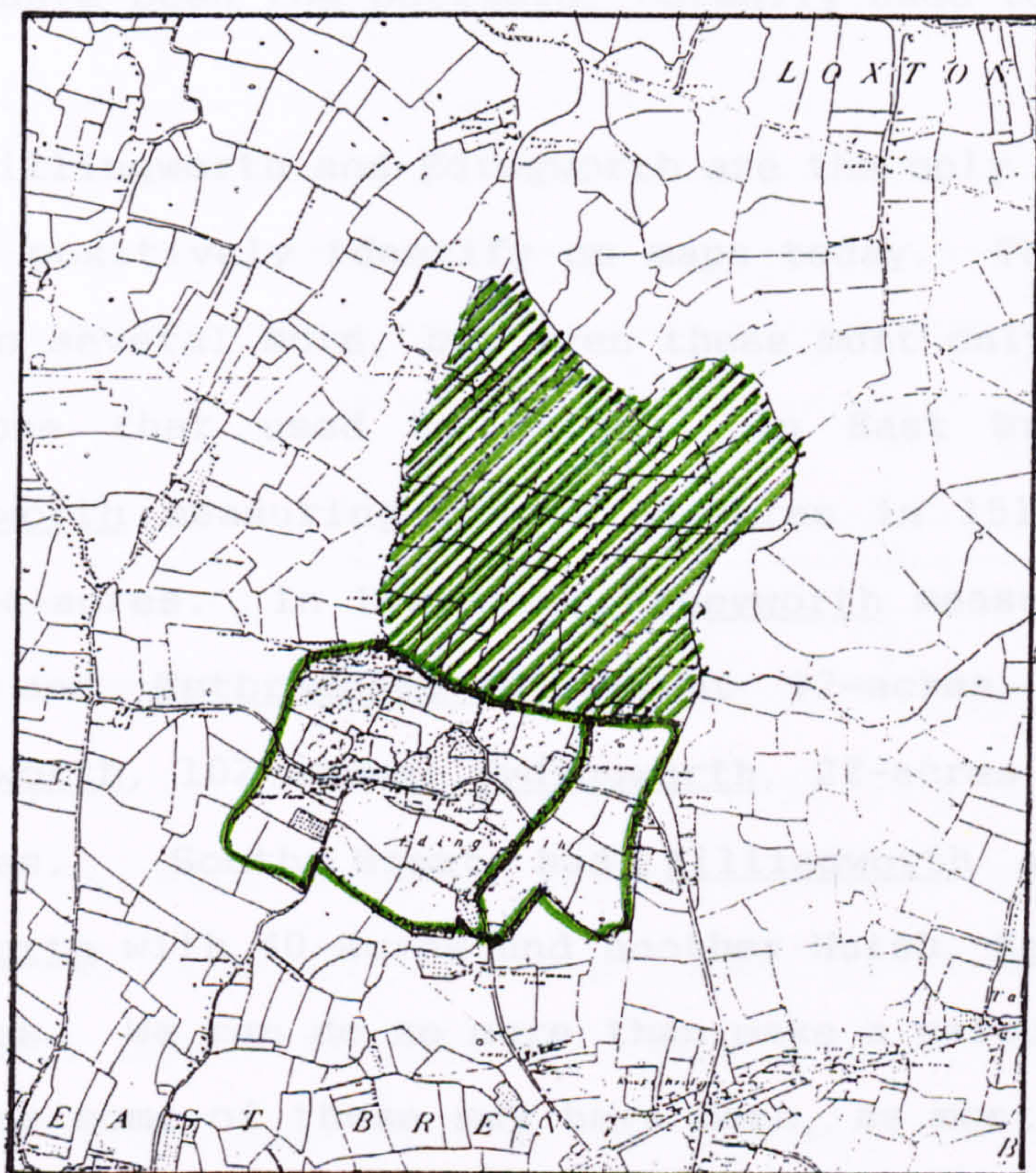


Figure 2.05 Edingworth

resurrect the original worth. There is a logic to the west, north and east boundaries, but on the south there is no obvious line. The two coloured areas are suggestive of an infield-outfield system, the solid green area representing the worth, the intensively farmed infield, while the hachured area might have been the outfield, normally used for pasture.

Killingworth and Edingworth are the only two worths that we can positively identify on maps today. The Beere survey records several more, but even these must only be a fraction of those that used to exist. In East Brent there was Drosenworth measuring almost 45-acres in 1515 and Manworth with 24-acres. In Lympsham, Honeyworth measured almost 78-acres and Estbrodenworth almost 12-acres. Berrow had Nettleworth, 102-acres; Kydingworth, 22-acres and Sakeworth, 5½-acres. South Brent had Killingworth with 84-acres; Appulworth with 40-acres and another Huish, Kempeshuish with 37-acres. We can do no more than make a calculated guess as to where some of these may have been, as most of the Anglo-Saxon and medieval place-names in Brent have disappeared.

It is understandable that names should change over time, but it is interesting to note the survival by 1307 of OE place-name elements suggestive of enclosures in Brent demesne as set out in Table 2.01. 'Huish' and 'worth' are not the only old English names associated with enclosures and although a study of them may be particularly illuminating, it is worthwhile considering the information in Table 2.01. This

Table 2.01: Brent place-name elements suggestive of enclosure					
PN-suffix	East Brent	Lympsham	Berrow	South Brent	Total
-worth	2	3	2	1	8
-hamme	2	3	1	4	10
-huish	1	0	0	0	1
-croft	2	1	2	1	6
-pale	0	1	0	0	1
-hay	0	0	3	2	5
Totals	7	8	8	8	31
Total demesne fields	14	12	19	20	65
enclosure %	50	67	42	40	48

only deals with demesne fields, but as this contains a substantial body of land in Brent it does constitute a reasonable sample of the whole estate. The actual number of some survivors may seem to be minimal, but in total they represent 48% of demesne field-names in 1307. In other words, by the beginning of the fourteenth century, almost half of the demesne fields in Brent possessed names suggesting that they were enclosures in Anglo-Saxon times.

The picture emerging of Brent in the seventh, eighth and probably the ninth centuries; is one of dispersed farmsteads with their own enclosed fields and perhaps operating a 'shareland' system with adjacent farmsteads. The moors beyond

the manorial bounds probably provided rough grazing, underwood, wildfowl and further afield, peat. The rivers provided fish and there were numerous ditches providing drainage of the fields. It is difficult to be more precise because of the paucity of evidence. Beyond the landscape, maps, aerial photographs, the bounds of an Anglo-Saxon charter and the place-name evidence; there is very little to go on.

INFLUENCES DURING THE NINTH AND TENTH CENTURIES

The ninth century Danish raids may have made an indelible mark on the main corpus of English history, but political history has had little or no direct effect on Brent. Simply, Brent was a collection of farms held of the abbot in return for rent and services. It was an economic unit chiefly concerned with the production of food for the lord and the society within its bounds. While that lordship remained, whoever held political power in the country was almost irrelevant because the daily, seasonal and annual tasks went on uninterrupted unless an army caused havoc in the four manors. People were born and married; they ploughed, sowed and reaped; they bought and sold; they engaged in land transactions; they travelled and they died. Such activities were of paramount importance to the people involved and they carried on inexorably despite the political machinations of kings and those who would be king; certainly that is the impression given by the surviving medieval evidence for Brent. As stated above, the Anglo-Saxon evidence is sparse and indeed for the ninth century, entirely lacking for Brent.

Perhaps major political events did have an indirect effect on Brent. The near catastrophe of the Danish presence during the ninth century and the heroic reversal of the Danish advance by Alfred, resulted in changes in the structure of Wessex in response to the need for precautionary measures against the possibility of future attacks. Measures such as the building of a navy and the establishment of burhs must have increased the fiscal burden on the population, probably manifesting itself by extra demands in feorm or services or even cash. The nearby burh of Axbridge contained a mint and was the marketing centre for the food rents surplus to requirements at the royal palace at Cheddar, thus it may also have served as a market for the surplus commodities of Brent tenants and the demesne.⁵² Domesday Book states that there were thirty-two burgesses in Axbridge so it certainly had urban status and although no market was mentioned perhaps their recorded payment of twenty shillings reflects their ability to trade.⁵³ Axbridge was designated as a destination for carrying services by the early fourteenth century, indicating that produce would either be deposited or collected there and, by implication, purchased or sold.⁵⁴ Thus, it seems likely that it was performing a marketing function in

⁵²M.Aston, 'The Towns of Somerset', in J.Haslam ed., Anglo-Saxon Towns in Southern England (1984), p.173. R.Hodges, Dark Age Economics; the origins of towns and trade AD600-1000, (1982), p.168.

⁵³Thorn, Domesday, p.86b. Frome, by contrast, had a market but no burgesses.

⁵⁴Geoffrey de Fromond's survey c.1307, in BL Eg. 3321, f.396 et seq. Axbridge is specified in this survey, along with Glastonbury and Wells, as a place to which tenants were liable to perform carrying services. In the earlier, less detailed, surveys of the 12th and 13th centuries, particular towns are not specified for carrying services, which are simply required quando opus est. Thus, the urban nature implied by Axbridge's burh status, would indicate the likelihood of it being used as a market by Brent.

late Anglo-Saxon times.

External threats to the security of the realm did not begin or end in Alfred's reign. The defeat of the Danes at the mouth of the Parrett in AD 848 by the men of Somerset and Dorset brought much credit to ealderman Eanwulf whose leadership must have been a significant factor. To be an ealderman he must have been a man of substance and a key figure in the hierarchy of Wessex, thus he had a vested interest in defending his shire from attack. Even before the Danish raid he was held in some esteem as King Æthelwulf granted his princeps Eanwulf '25 "cassati" at Ditchet and 5 in Lottisham, free of all but the three common dues'.⁵⁵ As with early bookland grants to the church there is no requirement for military service, but in his position as alderman such service would have been obligatory for Eanwulf, irrespective of this grant of AD 842. Thirty hides is a substantial estate, so when he led the defence against the Danes he was protecting his own status, income and home as well as his social obligations to king, kith and kin. He probably had more estates than Ditchet and Lottisham, but we know about these because he gave them to Glastonbury along with Hornblotton which Æthelbald granted him between 855-60 and Binegar which he received from Burgred between 852-774.⁵⁶

⁵⁵Finberg, Charters of Wessex, p.121.

⁵⁶Finberg, Charters of Wessex, p.123.

There was a finite amount of land to grant out to men of the quality of Eanwulf. Those who served the king well in relatively peaceful times could probably be rewarded by grants of land out of royal estates, but even here this would eventually lead to the break-up of the multiple estate economy. During times of crisis, 'there is evidence that Alfred alienated church property in an attempt to provide more land for retainers and ensure their loyalty'.⁵⁷ Further subdivisions occurred in the tenth century with lords rewarding their own followers and providing for their military obligations.⁵⁸ Thus we can understand the possibility of Berrow being the subject of the grant to Wulmer in AD 973. A much earlier grant to Eanwulf, by Cuthlac, abbot of Glastonbury, in a lost charter of AD 824, gave one 'cassatum' in Brunham in exchange for 500 shillings.⁵⁹ There is a possibility that this is a reference to Burnham because the transposition of Burn for Brun was not uncommon, so this would support the notion that perhaps Burnham was part of the Brent estate in AD 693.⁶⁰

THE MINSTER HYPOTHESIS

The provision of a Benedictine monastery at Glastonbury with an economic base meant that if the Abbey was to flourish

⁵⁷Costen, The Origins of Somerset, p.114.

⁵⁸Costen, Origins of Somerset, p.118.

⁵⁹Finberg, Charters of Wessex, p.121.

⁶⁰See entries for OE burna, Burnaston, Burnby, Burnham, Burnley and Burnsall in Ekwall, English Place-Names, p.76. Finberg suggests Brunham might be Brompton Ralph, but in Ekwall although it has prefixes Burne-, Brump- and Brune-, the suffix -ham does not appear.

it could not cut itself off from the realities of its hinterland. Lines of communication were necessary to facilitate the provision of food and services to the caput and also for lordly obligations in the opposite direction. In addition to the temporal necessities, the Abbot had to consider how best to perform his spiritual responsibilities. Whereas pastoral care could be provided for all within the immediate environs of the abbey, consideration had to be given about how best to serve the perceived spiritual needs of people within its barony but situated some distance from the monastery. The solution was to set up monasteria, or minsters, which were mission stations, staffed by groups of priests to provide pastoral care over areas much larger than later medieval parishes. Minsters tended to be situated at the centre of discrete estates of some antiquity, of royal or ecclesiastical ownership with an endowment of at least a hide. Some were situated within Iron Age hill-forts, but more commonly, summits or shoulders of low hills and islands in flood plains were favoured locations. There was usually one minster for a hundred, it would have comprised several buildings, including at least two churches, one of them being dedicated to St.Mary.⁶¹

⁶¹M.J.Franklin, 'The identification of minsters in the Midlands', R.A.Brown, (ed), Anglo-Norman Studies VII, Proceedings of the battle Conference, (1984), 69-71, 81. J.Blair, 'Local churches in Domesday book and before', J.C.Holt, (ed), Domesday Studies, (1987), p.267. J.Blair, 'Secular churches in Domesday book', P.Sawyer, (ed), Domesday book; a Reassessment, (1985), p.106. J.Blair, 'Anglo-Saxon minsters: a topographical review', J.Blair and R.Sharp, (eds), Pastoral Care Before the Parish, (1992), pp.227, 234, 239, 246, 249.

E.Cambridge & D.Rollason, 'Debate: the pastoral organization of the Anglo-Saxon church: a review of the 'Minster Hypothesis'', Early Medieval Europe, vol.4(1), (1995), pp.89,92, argue that there was a more diverse ecclesiastical organization and that it was the responsibility of bishops to provide pastoral care. J.Blair, 'Debate: ecclesiastical organization and pastoral care in Anglo-Saxon England', Early Medieval Europe, vol.4(2), (1995), pp.193-212, defends the integrity of the hypothesis and points out that the tasks

The isolated nature of Brent's topographical setting, not only in relation to other Glastonbury Abbey estates, but also to the rest of the county, rendered it a likely situation for a minster.⁶² The Brent estate was also a hundred, Brent Knoll formed an island in a flood plain, the hill-fort contained a tower similar to the one on Glastonbury Tor according to an illustration in the enclosure award, and East Brent church's dedication is to St.Mary. If these topographical conditions provide a likely backdrop for there to have been a minster for the Brent estate we need to look for stronger clues and evidence that clinches the existence of a minster and establishes its likely location within Brent.

Among the named sub-tenants in the Domesday entry for Brent was a certain Godwin the priest, who held 1½ hides.⁶³ Such a large endowment together with a named ecclesiastic satisfies two of Blair's criteria for identifying a minster in the Domesday book.⁶⁴ Later medieval clues can be found in the papal tax of c.1291 in which, under the deaconry of Axbridge, East Brent church paid £16.13.4, Lympsham church £12.8.4 and Berrow church £16. South Brent church is absent from the Axbridge deanery list but appears together with Huish as a prebend of the Archdeacon of Wells who paid the relatively

of bishops and monasteries was so intermeshed that even contemporaries could not separate them; thus I would expect the Abbey to provide pastoral care on its estates rather than leave this to the bishop.

⁶²I am grateful to Prof.Charles Phythian-Adams for this observation.

⁶³It is the Exon Domesday that describes Godwin as 'the priest'.

⁶⁴Blair, 'Secular minster churches', p.106.

enormous sum of £66.13.4.⁶⁵ We cannot tell what proportion of that sum originated from South Brent, it would certainly have been far greater than that of Huish and the chances are that the sum would have been greater than that paid by the other Brent manors; much depends on the other resources of the Archdeacon of Wells. The indications are that South Brent had a value and status superior to the other Brent churches and thus becomes the prime candidate for being the minster church for the Brent estate.

Since Saxon times the churches of St. John's Glastonbury, Meare, Street, Butleigh, Shapwick, Moorlinch and Middlezoy had been held by Glastonbury exempt from episcopal jurisdiction. About 1170, Reginald of Bath had persuaded the Abbot to place these seven churches under the jurisdiction of an abbot's archdeacon, and to compensate the archdeacon of Wells for surrendering his claim to the seven churches, he was to be given the income from South Brent church. Despite protests and an appeal by the monks to the Pope, Henry of Sully, to ensure undisputed control over the seven churches, finally relinquished the churches of South Brent and Huish to Wells.⁶⁶ If South Brent had been considered a suitable token to exchange for seven churches, this is a flattering valuation of South Brent, but it marked the surrender of a peripheral asset in order to strengthen control in the main body of the

⁶⁵Taxatio Ecclesiastica Angliae et Walliae Auctoritate P. Nicholai IV, c.1291, (1802), pp.197, 199.

⁶⁶J.P. Carley, Glastonbury Abbey: the Holy House at the head of the Moors Adventurous, (1988), pp.21-22, 24.

Glastonbury barony.

By the twelfth century the minster system had been replaced by parish churches. By looking at the valuation of the Brent parish churches, the higher status accorded to one church provides another clue to its having originally been the mother church in the estate. The evidence that appears to clinch South Brent's status as the minster is the payment of church-scot, which by law was reserved for old minsters and according to Blair was the 'clearest "hard" test of ancient minster status'.⁶⁷ In Sully's survey, tenants of all the Brent manors were expected to pay church-scot. In all the later surveys the requirement to pay church-scot is not listed, thus if it was Henry of Sully who finally agreed to the income from the church of South Brent going to the Archdeacon of Wells, then the disappearance of church-scot from the Glastonbury Abbey surveys indicates that tax was paid to the beneficiary of the income of St. Michael's, South Brent and that therefore this church had been the minster. The minster criteria does point to South Brent church as a 'best fit', but there are a few unresolved anomalies that prevent the case for South Brent being absolutely conclusive. Firstly, what was the relationship between the churches of South and East Brent? It was East Brent that was dedicated to St. Mary, and the two or more churches of a minster site tended to be within feet of each other rather than on opposite sides of a hill. Secondly, when the land of Robert de la Pulle in

⁶⁷Barlow, English Church, p.195. Blair, 'Secular Minster Churches', p.116.

East Brent finally returned to the Abbot of Glastonbury in the early fourteenth century, its few tenants are recorded as paying church-scot.⁶⁸ Despite these anomalies, the weight of evidence favours South Brent, while the very existence of a minster in Brent helps to strengthen the case for the identity of Brent as being an estate of substance.

DOMESDAY

The extents of Glastonbury Abbey's four manors of Brent; East Brent, Lympsham, Berrow and South Brent, are all set out separately but contiguously in the surveys of Sully, Amesbury, Ford, Fromond and Beere, while in the accounts and court-rolls the four manors are all treated as one estate. In Sully's survey of 1189, South Brent is referred to as Brentemareis, which, interpreted as 'Brent Marsh', is the name Brentemerse given to the whole estate in Domesday. Does this suggest therefore, that all four manors, or just south Brent, formed Brentemerse in 1086, or that the division of Brent into four smaller manors occurred between 1086 and 1189?

To begin the examination of the extent of Brent at the time of Domesday, it will help to look at Figure 2.06; a map showing Brent and its adjacent manors with details of tenants, hideage, ploughlands and Domesday values. The obvious bounds to Brent in 1086 were set by the properties of the Bishop of Winchester, Count Eustace of Bologne and Walter of Douai.

⁶⁸BL.Egerton Ms.3321. Longleat Mss.11216 mm12-15, 10656 mm.19-24, 10766 mm.29-32, 10761 m.22, 10632 m.12.

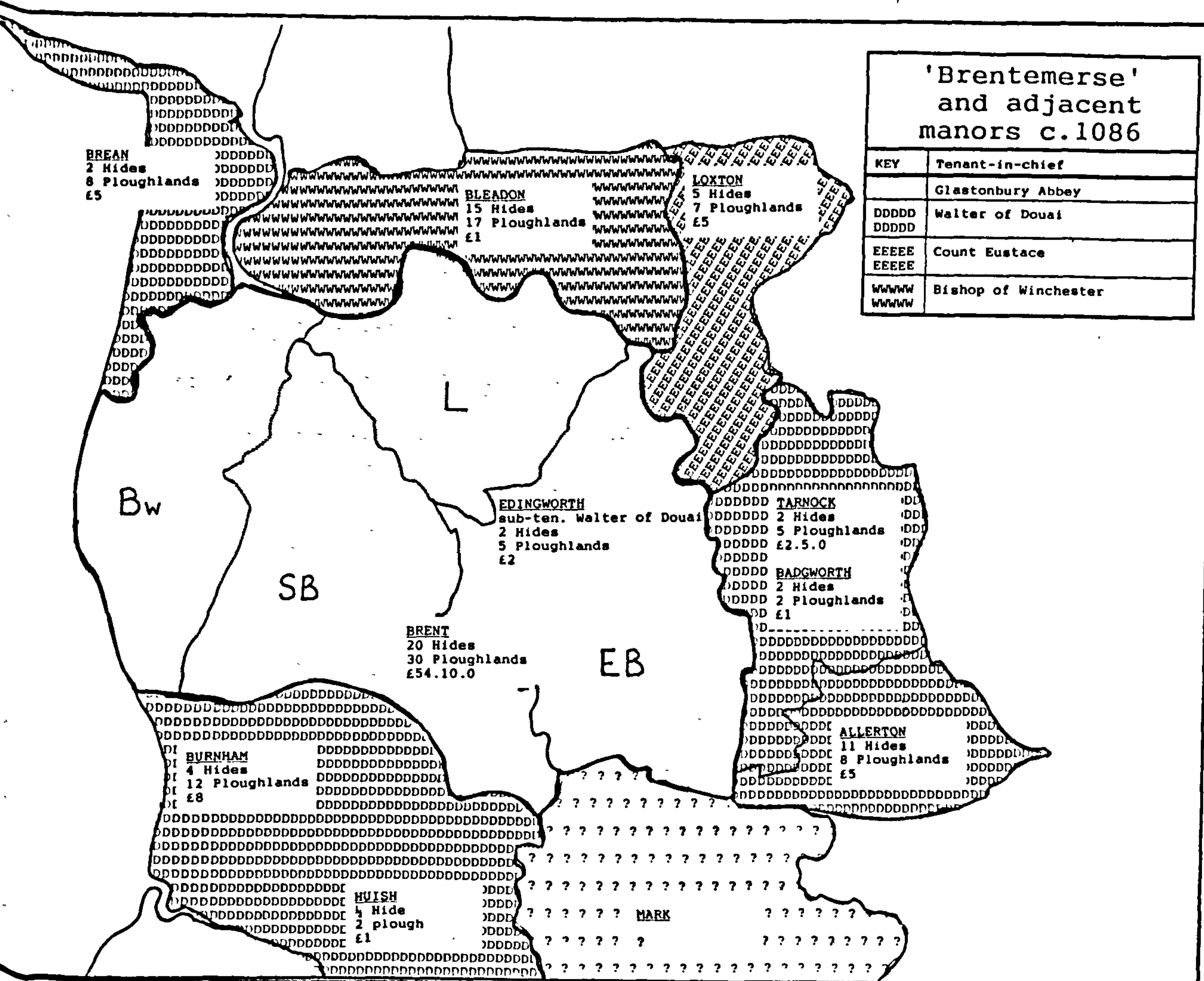


Figure 2.06: Brentemerse and adjacent manors c.1086

There is a question mark under Mark because this village is not mentioned in Domesday. Could it have been part of the Bishop of Wells' ten-hide Wedmore estate for which the Exon Domesday states that the moors pay nothing, or Bishop Giso's Wet More of the royal estate of Cheddar that yielded £12? Could it have been part of Allerton which had only recently had its five hides increased to eleven, or was it part of the larger twenty-hide Brentemerse?⁶⁹ Later evidence indicates the moorland nature of much of Mark and that tenants from surrounding parishes held land within its bounds.⁷⁰ A further problem in sorting out Brent's boundary with Mark in 1086, is that because the modern boundary does not follow a natural water-course, that might counter any credibility of it being an ancient border.

Modern parish boundaries can give clues to original boundaries and later sub-divisions of ancient estates where one or more parishes are enclosed by a continuous natural line. Tarnock, Badgworth and Allerton would appear to have been one estate, the boundary between the latter two having been a later division. The sum of fifteen hides lends some support to the integrity of this unit in so far as there was a tendency for assessment to be in multiples of five hides. The assessment of Tarnock and Badgworth at two hides apiece, plus their allocation in Domesday to sub-tenants, represents

⁶⁹C. & F.Thorn, (eds.), Domesday Book (1980), ff.86b, 89c, 90d, 95a.

⁷⁰Saxton's map of Somerset (1575) shows much of Mark to be within 'Brentm[ar]she'. See also Somerset County Record Office Q/RDe 115, (1784); D/D/RT 264, (1839).

further support to the idea of fragmentation of an older estate.

The twenty hide assessment for Brent could indicate that there were four component manors of this estate at the time of Domesday. The nature of the boundaries in Figure 2.06 suggests that Lymsham might at one time have been administratively hived off from East Brent, but there is no evidence to show that it was alienated from Glastonbury Abbey's Brent estate. If Lodenwrde is the East Brent hamlet of Edingworth in Domesday, held by Walter of Douai as a sub-tenant of Glastonbury Abbey, this represents a pre-conquest fragmentation of Brent as it was held by athane in the time of King Edward. This gap in the integrity of Brent in 1086 was probably filled by 1189 as in the Sully survey for East Brent there were two hides held by Robert de Curtenai, a free tenant. This is such an enormous holding, in fact there are no others as large as this in any of the medieval surveys for Brent, that this is likely to have been the Lodenwrde of Domesday. No trace of this holding can be found after 1189. Furthermore, there are no separate accounts or court rolls for Edingworth in the Longleat collection.

Doubt has been expressed as to whether Berrow formed part of Brentemerse in Domesday. Collinson's view was that Berrow was held by Walter of Douai as Berve, and using Adam de Damerham as his source, stated that it was granted, together with Burrington, by William Rufus to Glastonbury and that the

grant was later confirmed by Henry I and afterwards by Pope Alexander in 1168.⁷¹ However, the Pope's confirmation in the chartulary makes no mention of Berrow and neither are there any references to Burrington in the Wrington charters. The Thorn interpretation of the Berve entry in Domesday is that it was for Barrow near Castle Cary.⁷² The problem is to decide which of these contrasting opinions is more likely to be correct.

In support of Collinson, Figure 2.06 does show that Brent south of the River Axe is bounded by properties held by Walter of Douai, which if the Edgar charter is genuine and Adam de Damerham's reference to it being granted to the Abbey by William Rufus is correct, does strengthen the Collinson case.⁷³ The geographical clustering of manors in Domesday can provide assistance in identifying those whose location can be in doubt. Thus as Berve appears at the end of a cluster including Wincanton, Castle Cary, Sparkford and Ansford, it is understandable that the Thorns located it at Barrow. However, following on from Berve are Bridgwater, Wembdon, Bawdrip, Bradney, Horsey, Pawlett, Burnham, Huntspill and Brean; so was Berve part of this cluster or the Wincanton-Ansford group? That the Domesday Berve is more likely to be Barrow near Castle Cary is due to a number of clues. The authenticity of

⁷¹J.Collinson, History and Antiquities of the County of Somerset (1791), p.201.

⁷²C.& F.Thorn, (eds), Domesday Book; Somerset, (1980), f.95b. This interpretation is also supported by the more recent The Somerset Domesday, Alecto Historical Editions (1989).

⁷³See above, p.55.
Collinson, Antiquities, p.201. Thorn, Domesday Book, Somerset, f.95b.

the Edgar charter has to be questioned, not just because of the extent of its bounds and the lack of earlier medieval references, but also because its name in the charter, Burgh, is such a common place-name element that it might even refer to another five hide estate with a similar name.⁷⁴ Another clue is that the Domesday hideage for Brent was twenty, which is suggestive of some integrity despite the loss of Edingworth, and of a likely composition of four vills.⁷⁵ In the Bridgwater-Brean cluster a more logical location for Berve would have been in the Huntspill-Brean group. A further clue to Berve representing Barrow rather than Berrow is that the entry in Domesday includes woodland measuring three furlongs long by one furlong wide. It is very unlikely that such extensive woodland in Domesday would not still be evident in the landscape today.⁷⁶ A glance at the 1:25000 ordnance survey map for Berrow shows not a scrap of woodland and there is no reference to woodland in the Domesday entries for either Brent, Burnham, Huntspill, Brean, Bradney, Bawdrip or Horsey; whereas the Wincanton-Ansford cluster all contained woodland. Furthermore, the reference to Wulmer's rights to woods in the Edgar charter, unless this was merely a repetition of common-form, would also add to the doubts over that charter's authenticity. It thus seems likely that by 1086 the manors of East Brent (excepting Edingworth), Lympsham, Berrow and South

⁷⁴L.Abrams, Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury: Church and Endowment, (1996), pp.57-8. M.Gelling, Place-Names in the Landscape, (1984), p.127.

⁷⁵H.R.Loyn, Anglo-Saxon England and the Norman Conquest (1962), pp.314, 337-8. G.A.Loud, 'An introduction to the Somerset Domesday', The Somerset Domesday, Alecto Historical Edition, (1989), pp.9-10.

⁷⁶O.Rackham, The History of the Countryside, (paperback edition, 1987), pp.62-118.

Brent were all included in the following entry for Brentemerse:

'The Church holds BRENT itself. Before 1066 it paid tax for 20 hides. Land for 30 ploughs, of which 4 hides are in lordship; 8 ploughs there; 5 slaves;

50 villeins and 47 bordars with 16 ploughs and 11 hides. Meadow, 20 acres. 1 cob; 73 cattle; 60 pigs; 82 sheep.

Value to the Abbot £50; when the Abbot acquired it, £15.

Of these 20 hides Roger of Courseulles holds 1 hide from the Abbot, Ralph of Conteville 5 virgates, Aelfric son of Everwacer 5 virgates, Godwin the priest 1½ hides. Those who held from the Abbot before 1066 could not be separated from the Church. In lordship 4 ploughs, with one slave;

3 villeins, 5 bordars and 10 cottagers with 3 ploughs. Value between them £4.10s.'

The Edingworth entry followed on immediately:

'Walter of Douai holds Edingworth from the Abbot. A thane held it before 1066; he could not be separated from the church. It paid tax for 2 hides. Land for 5 ploughs. In lordship 2 ploughs; 4 slaves; 1 hide.

4 villeins, 5 bordars and 5 cottagers with 4 ploughs and 1 hide.

1 cob; 15 cattle; 5 pigs; 5 sheep

Value 40s; when Walter acquired it, as much."

The revelation of the amount of Brent's hideage and ploughland, its social structure, demesne livestock and cash value needs to be set in its contemporary context by measuring these features against comparative entries for other manors. The map in Figure 2.06 indicates in a small way that the manors adjacent to Brent were much smaller in terms of hides, ploughlands and value, emphasising the stature and dominance of Brent in that part of Somerset. A more realistic analysis

⁷⁷Thorn, Domesday, ref.90d. This translation includes the extra details from the Exon Domesday.

of Brent's relative value can be made by comparing its status with other manors in the Glastonbury barony at the time of Domesday. By 1086 Glastonbury was the richest monastery in England with an income of £827 18s 8d and important enough for William the Conqueror to impose a Norman abbot, Thurston, upon the monks.⁷⁸ Brent's place within Abbot Thurston's power-base thus has more than passing interest.

Sally Harvey noted that hidage was the assessment used in the time of King Edward and that in 1086 assessment was being expressed in terms of ploughlands.⁷⁹ She quotes Orderic Vitalis as her source and states that 'it is instructive that the usage of the ploughland in Normandy in the twelfth century is of a notional 60 acres of land, often including pasture and woodland as well as arable, whereas the hide in England comprised a notional 120 acres.' This supports her observation that ploughlands amounted to almost double the assessment of hides in Domesday.⁸⁰ The case of Brent and Edingworth, in which 22 hides became 35 ploughlands, does not tally with Sally Harvey's observation and poses the question as to what exactly was meant by ploughland in Domesday. Nick Higham postulated that 'ploughland' is literally arable in Domesday, with an unspecified amount of meadow and pasture to

⁷⁸Carley, Glastonbury Abbey, p.14.

⁷⁹S.P.J. Harvey, 'Taxation and the ploughland in Domesday Book', in P.Sawyer, ed., Domesday Book - A Reassessment (1987), p.99.

⁸⁰S. Harvey, 'Taxation & Ploughland', p.101.

be assumed.⁸¹ The idea that the hide was not restricted to a measurement of arable is supported by Sally Harvey who states that it was arable 'plus attendant resources', reinforcing this by quoting Finberg that the hide was 'a unit of assessment....with behind it some rough and ready notion of actual or potential value, without enquiring whether the value is derived mainly from pasture or ploughland'.⁸² In trying to associate hides and ploughlands with a notional area in Domesday Book we are shaking an emulsion that prevents us from seeing that in this document the prime use of the two terms is simply one of assessment, because the figures used are too neat and rounded to represent accurate measurements. By comparing Brent's hideage, ploughlands and other resources with those of other Glastonbury estates we can obtain a better perspective of Brent's relative value within the Glastonbury Barony at the beginning of the Norman era.

In Table 2.02 we can see those Glastonbury manors assessed at ten or more hides set against their ploughland assessment and cash value. It is readily apparent that there is no relationship between the assessment in hides or ploughlands and the value of the manors to the Abbot and his sub-tenants. Only four manors had their hidage figures doubled by the number of their ploughlands; Shapwick, Pilton, Winscombe and Glastonbury. Marksbury, Cranmore, Pennard and

⁸¹N.Higham, 'Settlement, land use and Domesday ploughlands', in Landscape History; Journal of the Society for Landscape Studies 12 (1990), p.36.

⁸²S.Harvey, 'Taxation and ploughland', p.102.

Batcombe had fewer ploughlands than hides, thus Sally Harvey's notion of the number of ploughlands being double that of hides is not borne out. Brent stood out as the Abbot's most valuable Somerset estate and yet it, plus Edingworth, was only rated at twenty-two hides. The question that is immediately posed is why was Brent so much more valuable than the thirty hide estates of Shapwick and Walton, both of which having been part of the old Poholt estate?

Table 2.02: Comparison of hideage, ploughlands and value for Glastonbury Abbey estates assessed at 10 hides or more.

Estate	Hides	Ploughlands	Value (£.s.d)
Walton	30	40	23
Shapwick	30	60	38
Ditcheat	30	30	20.10
BRENT ⁸³	22	35	56.10
Wrington	20	32	33
Pilton	20	50	40.10
Mells	20	20	11.11.6
Doultling	20	20	19
Butleigh	20	20	17.10
Batcomb	20	16	12.10
Pennard	20	12	13.10
Ham	17	20	15.10
Winscombe	15	30	8
West Monkton	15	20	11.10
Middlezoy	12	20	24
Glastonbury	12	31	21.19
Cranmore	12	10	4
Marksbury	10	8	11
Camerton	10	10	7.10

⁸³In this table and the following tables based on Domesday data, Edingworth figures have been included with Brent to reflect as complete as possible the medieval Brent estate. However, the Edingworth figures make no significant difference to the overall impression of Brent as a large and valuable estate.

Table 2.03: Estates ordered by plough:ploughland ratio.				
Estate	P'lands	Ploughs	p:pl	Value
Pennard	12	13	0.92	13.10
Brent	35	37	0.94	56.10
Ditcheat	30	29½	1.02	20.10
Wrington	32	31½	1.02	33
Butleigh	20	19	1.05	17.10
Walton	40	33	1.21	23
West Monkton	20	16½	1.21	11.10
Middlezoy	20	16	1.25	24
Ham	20	15	1.33	15.10
Pilton	50	36½	1.37	40.10
Shapwick	60	42½	1.41	38

If Shapwick and Pilton had so many more ploughlands than Brent, it would seem that the amount of arable is not a reliable guide to manorial profitability. Thus we need to look at how the arable was exploited in Table 2.03. This table is ordered according to the ratio of ploughs to ploughlands. Brent is second among a group of six manors, all of which have approximately the same number of plough-teams as plough-lands, suggesting an efficient use of resources and an indicator, according to Higham, of 'a well regulated and extensive open-field system'.⁸⁴ Whether or not that was true of Brent, remains to be seen. If we look at Pilton and Shapwick, both among the richest of Glastonbury's manors and with considerably more ploughlands than Brent, they were making do with a much smaller proportion of plough-teams; therefore either they were more efficient than Brent, or more

⁸⁴Higham, 'Domesday ploughlands', p.40.

likely, they were unable to exploit their arable as fully as Brent owing to insufficient plough-teams. Even so, we should still expect those manors with more plough-teams than Brent to plough more arable and obtain a greater return, but this they were patently not doing.

Sally Harvey noticed Glastonbury Abbey's interest in demesne agriculture, remarking that it had large demesnes on its main manors and that the ratio of demesne plough-teams to tenants' plough-teams was high, quoting Pilton at 10:10 and Glastonbury at 5:5. The implication of this is that there is a link between the Abbey's interest in demesne agriculture and its ranking as the wealthiest abbey, especially since 'its manors had all risen in value since the 1070's'.⁸⁵ The matter of increased values I shall return to later; meanwhile let us look at the breakdown of plough-teams between demesne and tenantry in Table 2.04:

Table 2.04: Estates ordered by Demesne plough-teams.				
Estate	demesne ⁸⁶	tenant	d:t	Value
Pilton	17½	19	1.09	40.10
Shapwick	16	26½	1.66	38
Brent	14	23	1.64	56.10
Wrington	10½	21	2.00	33
Butleigh	10	9	0.90	17.10
West Monkton	7	9½	1.36	11.10
Walton	7	26	3.71	23

⁸⁵Sally Harvey, 'Domesday England', *The Agrarian History of England and Wales 1042-1350* 2 (1988), p.107.

⁸⁶The team columns include demesne and tenantry figures for the sub-tenants as well.

In Table 2.04 there is clearly a tendency for those manors with large numbers of demesne teams to be the most valuable, Butleigh being the exception possibly due to its small number of tenant teams. Walton with its large number of teams has a relatively low value and this may have something to do with the small number of demesne teams. The ratio between demesne and tenant teams appears to be irrelevant to the assessment of manorial value. Brent had the third largest number of demesne teams but this still poses the question as to why it was more valuable than Pilton and Shapwick.

A significant factor has to be the sheer size of Brent compared with other manors of high value, as shown in Table

Table 2.05: Comparative size of valuable manors				
Manors	Hides	Value	1841 Acreage	Value per acre (d.)
Shapwick	30	£38	3690	2.47
Pilton	20	£40 10s	4760	2.04
Wrington	20	£33	5150	1.54
Brent	22	£56 10s	11254	1.20

2.05, in which nineteenth century parish acreages have been set against Domesday values, indicating that Shapwick, Pilton and Wrington were all worth more per acre than Brent. It is unlikely that the extent of these parishes in 1841 was identical to their Domesday counterparts, but the differential between Brent and the others is so large that it must have

been similarly significant in 1086. As Shapwick, Pilton and Wrington possessed more ploughs and ploughlands than Brent, then we need to look beyond arable resources to explain Brent's high value.

Plough-teams, while indicating a capacity for cultivating arable, also imply a grazing capacity to maintain those teams. Later medieval extents leave us in no doubt that meadow was valued much more highly than either arable or pasture. However, when we look at the meadows recorded in Domesday, we see that Brent has a very modest amount. Again, Shapwick and Pilton appear to have far greater areas of meadow than Brent, on top of their arable resources. Walton, another large manor, has more than four times the amount of Brent's meadow acreage, while modest sized Camerton and eleven other manors all have more than Brent. The wide disparity between the area

Table 2.06: Meadow set against hides, plough-lands and value.				
Estate	hides	plough-lands	meadow (acres)	value £.s
Shapwick	30	60	160	38
Pilton	20	50	132½	40.10
Ditcheat	30	30	95	20.10
Camerton	10	10	90	7.10
Walton	30	40	82	23
and 11 other manors before we get to....				
Brent	22	35	20	56.10

of Brent meadow and its high Domesday value makes us question the reliability of the Domesday record in this respect, especially when c.1260 Roger of Ford's survey indicates that there were 296 acres of demesne meadow.⁸⁷ That there was an almost fifteen-fold increase in demesne meadow over 180 years may not seem impossible if set against a background of large-scale land reclamation after Domesday, but the evidence for such activity is sparse. A more likely explanation may be that most of the demesne meadow was rented out at the time of Domesday. Certainly in the later account rolls there are frequent references to income from 'Winterhay' showing that such a system was commonplace.⁸⁸ However, we must take care not to make too much of this possibility; it is no more than a suggestion when considering what Domesday Book is not telling us. In reporting only 20 acres of demesne meadow, the Domesday scribes might have been technically correct. However, the cash value of Brent, the amount of meadow attributed to other high value manors, the nature of the landscape and later documentary evidence; all indicate that Domesday book is not telling us the whole story about Brent's meadowland.

The idea that lords boosted their income from renting-out grazing, woodland and moorland has been mooted by Sally Harvey. The new political and social divisions made by the

⁸⁷BL Add.17450.

⁸⁸Longleat Mss.11244 m.20-1; 11273 m.22-3; 11272 m.41-44; 11272 m.1-4; 11215 m.35-8; 11216 m.12-5; 10656 m.19-24; 10766 m.29-32; 10761 m.22; 10632 m.12.

Conquest facilitated an increase in the exaction of rents and services from a large number of people. Such policies were possible owing to fear of the power behind the sweeping aristocratic changes; but also because small producers, partly because of extensive livestock-raising, seem to have produced high margins. To support this Sally Harvey brings attention to the considerable raised returns from manors in the south, which with the continued levy of taxation suggests 'the tapping of very considerable surpluses from small producers in the eleventh century'.⁸⁹ Not only is this suggestive of what had happened to meadow in Brent, but also to pasture. Shapwick had 60 acres of demesne pasture, Walton had pasture measuring seven furlongs by one furlong, Glastonbury had 200 acres of pasture. Pasture is a commonplace resource listed in Domesday and yet, for Brent, no mention is made of this resource. The very name in Domesday, Brentemerse, is indicative that there should have been extensive rough grazing available. In 1189 Ralph de Sancta Barbara, for military service held inter alia, 110-acres in marisco.⁹⁰ Sancta Barbara was one of the major free tenants in Brent, but among the sub-tenants listed in Domesday such marshland would have been subsumed among their hides and virgates. References to de Mora, Mordych, Westmore occur in later medieval documents, reinforcing the notion of the existence of moorland whose most likely use was as rough grazing. Welldon Finn and Wheatley

⁸⁹Sally Harvey, 'The extent and profitability of demesne agriculture in England in the later eleventh century', in T.H.Aston, P.R.Coss, C.Dyer, J.Thirsk, eds, Social Relations and Ideas; essays in honour of R.H.Hilton (1983), p.70.

⁹⁰Jackson, Soliaco, p.2.

suggested that because there are few references to marshes in Domesday Book that they were of little or no value.⁹¹ It is perhaps more likely that because marsh and moor was extensive and unfenced, it was available to all and its value either unrealised or difficult to quantify. Whatever the explanation, pasture must have been available.

If livestock raising enabled tenants to produce high margins so that they could afford raised rents, perhaps we may find further clues to Brent's high value by studying livestock figures from Exon Domesday in Table 2.07. As these figures are for demesne livestock only, we have to take care in using them as indicators of livestock rearing by tenants. It seems likely that demesne livestock holdings reflected the general tenor of tenant livestock holding as the nature of the terrain and local expertise are likely determinants of the type of agriculture followed. Thus it would not be unreasonable to surmise that if Brent demesne held more cattle than any other Glastonbury demesne in 1086, it is possible that Brent

Table 2.07: Livestock sorted by descending order of cattle							
Estate	Cob	cat	pig	shp	gts	hor	Val
Brent	2	88	65	87			56.10
Glastonbury	5	58	20	20	50		21.19
Wrington		46	30	278	47		33
Pennard	2	42	25	55			13.10
Pilton	4	35	56	500	42		40.10
Shapwick	2	34	44	251		13	38

⁹¹R.Welldon Finn & P.Wheatley, 'Somerset', in H.C.Darby & R.Welldon Finn, eds, The Domesday Geography of South West England (1967), p.187.

tenants would have been top of the cattle league as well. Brent demesne also topped the pig league in 1086 and the tenants may also have followed suit. In sheep, the only other significant livestock category, Brent's position is modest. It is hardly surprising that Pilton would head the sheep list as this estate included Shepton Mallet. Similarly, we should not be surprised by Shapwick's large number of sheep. In the later account and court rolls there are no references to demesne sheep in Brent because the Abbey's flocks were all accounted centrally. This does not mean that there were no sheep on Brent demesne, apparently the flocks were moved from manor to manor.⁹²

Brent demesne's primacy in cattle and pigs, the major meat producing animals, is an indicator of Sally Harvey's idea of the importance of livestock in enabling tenants to produce high margins from which lords were able to exact increasing rents. We can also understand the importance of sheep in contributing to Pilton and Shapwick's high value. Now against this we have to consider what Domesday Book reveals about population. Table 2.08 sets out figures for tenants listed in the most populous of Glastonbury's holdings. Here again Brent appears in a high position, second only to Pilton. A significant portion of Pilton's population were slaves. Brent's relatively small number of slaves may indicate a greater performance of labour services by the tenants, or perhaps a renting out of demesne.

⁹²I am grateful to Dr.H.S.A.Fox for this information.

Table 2.08: People								
Estate	Vil	Bord	Cot	Slav	fish	smit	tot	Value
Pilton	42	79	0	31	0	0	152	40.10
Brent	57	57	15	6	0	0	135	56.10
Shapwick	46	47	0	22	0	0	115	38
Ditcheat	42	30	15	6	0	0	93	20.10
Glastonbury	21	35	0	17	10	8	91	21.19
Walton	42	24	0	10	0	0	76	23

The constant use of the terms 'Villeins', 'Bordars' and 'Cottars', indicates recognized ranks of rural society in 1086. Sally Harvey has put forward the hypothesis that a large number of bordars was a mark of population and agricultural expansion, having examined the etymology of 'bordar' and reckoning that it originated from two meanings of the French borde: hut and edge. She provided further support for her hypothesis in stating that in the west and south-west some paid a small rent that looked neither old or customary and that they were associated with forests and grazing rights, but not with ploughs. She also equated the Norman-French 'bordar' with the English 'cottar'.⁹³ It is unlikely that Sally Harvey's hypothesis can be supported by the Brent evidence. Table 2.08 reveals that both Brent and Ditcheat had cottars in addition to bordars and the implication is that the status of cottars was inferior to that of bordars. The idea that the existence of large numbers of bordars indicated evidence of agrarian expansion also seems unlikely as this was such a common class of manorial subject that they are more

⁹³S.P.J.Harvey, 'Evidence for settlement study: Domesday Book', P.H.Sawyer, (ed), Medieval Settlement: continuity and change, (1976), pp.197-199.

likely to represent a clearly recognizable social group based on a tenurial system involving varying sizes of holding and obligation. That agricultural expansion was happening at the time of Domesday, and especially in a large estate like Brent, is quite probable, but not in every manor with a bordar population. The reporting of numbers of villeins, bordars and cottars in Domesday represents differentials that must have been generally acknowledged at the time and are reminiscent of the differences in status and obligations of the Geneat, Gebur and Cottar in the earlier eleventh century survey, the Rectitudines Singularum Personarum, as well as the half-virgater, ferdeller and 5-acreman of the later medieval surveys. The likelihood is that the villeins did have the larger holdings like the later half-virgaters and perhaps the bordars' lands simply bordered that of the villeins. Certainly ferdellers were the rank from which smiths and carpenters were drawn in the twelfth to fourteenth centuries, but these specialist skills were not associated with people on the edge of Brent but formed a vital technological role in the agrarian economy for which there were substantial discounts on their obligations as ferdellers. Ferdellers were at the core of the rural economy and the number and positioning of references to bordars in Domesday suggests a similar status. This structure still existed in Tudor times, thus it embodied tradition, stability and a sense of security. The Rectitudines Singularum Personarum indicates that such a structure was not a Domesday or post-Domesday phenomena; the names may have altered owing to the different cultures and

languages of the scribes, but the concept of social differentiation remained.⁹⁴

The size of Brent's recorded population in Domesday relative to other Glastonbury Abbey manors must be partly as a consequence of the physical size of the Brent estate, which also has a bearing on Brent being the fourth largest Glastonbury estate in terms of hides and ploughlands, the third largest in terms of ploughteams, and with the largest numbers of demesne cattle and pigs. Although physical size has to be a factor, it cannot be the sole factor, as the ability to sustain the second largest of the barony's recorded population introduces a qualitative element as well, because if much of Brent had been unproductive wasteland this would have negated much of the value of its size. The qualitative aspect of Brent is reflected in its ability to produce a bigger cash return for the Abbot than any other of his Somerset estates.

The high value of Brent was a recent development because the Exon Domesday entry for Brent reveals that when the Abbot acquired it, it was worth only £15. The Abbot in question was Thurstan, the first Norman Abbot at Glastonbury, appointed in 1077-8, whose stay at Glastonbury is remembered for his use of armed men to co-erce the monks to accept the chant of William of Fécamp in place of the Gregorian chant, resulting in three

⁹⁴H.R.Loyn, Anglo-Saxon England and the Norman Conquest, (1962), pp.189-192. R.E.Latham, Revised Medieval Latin Word-list From British and Irish Sources, p.53.

dead and eighteen wounded and his own recall to Normandy in 1096. His later payment of £500 to William Rufus to be allowed to resume the abbacy gives some indication of how much he valued his position there.⁹⁵ One reason why he wanted to return, was that under his abbacy between 1077 and 1086 he had increased its income so that it became the richest Abbey in the kingdom. Clearly he had seen its potential and he must have set about improving it with considerable vigour. Perhaps we should not be surprised that in Table 2.09 Brent exhibited the biggest percentage increase in cash value considering its relative performance in the Domesday components already considered. Shapwick, by contrast, having been the most valuable of Glastonbury's manors on 1077, had stagnated if Domesday entries are to be believed. Ditchheat also made

Table 2.09: Increased Value between 1077-86				
	Hides	old Val.	new Val.	inc. %
Brent	22	21.10	56.10	163
Middlezoy	12	10	24	140
Batcomb	20	6	12.10	108
Glastonbury	12	11.19	21.19	84
Pennard	10	7.10	13.10	80
Walton	30	13	23	77
Mells	20	6.11.6	11.11.6	76
Doulting	20	11	19	73
Butleigh	20	10.5	17.10	71
Ham	17	9.10	15.10	63
Pilton	20	32.10	40.10	31
Camerton	10	6.10	7.10	15
Ditchheat	30	19	20.10	8
Wrington	20	33	33	0
Marksbury	10	11	11	0
West Monkton	15	11.10	11.10	0
Cranmore	12	4	4	0
Winscombe	15	8	8	0
Shapwick	30	38	38	0

⁹⁵Carley, Glastonbury Abbey, pp.14-5.

little improvement. Walton had made some improvement, but it was modest in comparison with Brent. So what brought about the dramatic improvement in the value of Brent to the Abbot of Glastonbury?

Clearly it had a lot to do with Thurstan's leadership who saw to it that the potential of Brent was exploited. The existence of a relatively large population was indicative of the level of resources that enabled them to live in this manor, while the presence of large numbers of demesne cattle and pigs suggest that these may have been the key factors in the wealth of the tenancy. If Sally Harvey's recognition of the importance of livestock among the tenancy is relevant to Brent, as it seems to be, then the tenants had access to resources upon which the lord could capitalize. Meanwhile the matching of ploughs to ploughlands indicates that the arable of the manor was well within its capacity to cultivate. Thus the impression of Brent given by Domesday is of a manor with a good balance of arable and pastoral agriculture, abundantly resourced and while being managed by a lord with an eye to improving his fortunes, was enjoying a period of economic growth. Its prospects for the future seemed propitious.

THE CENTURY AFTER DOMESDAY

Demesne agriculture in the twelfth century has been the subject of debate among eminent historians during the latter half of the twentieth century. Postan opened the debate by

stating that the twelfth century was a time of slowly contracting demesne; supporting his argument by claiming that plough-teams on demesnes declined by two-fifths, labour services were commuted for cash, livestock numbers declined and rents increased.⁹⁶ Lennard argued that the actual decline in demesne plough-teams was only 14% and that this apparent reduction could be due to reducing the size of the teams from eight to six oxen. The amount of demesne let out to farmers Lennard did not consider to be enough to warrant the idea of 'contracting demesne', while the reduction in livestock could simply have been farmers failing to maintain herd sizes. He considered that sub-infeudation arising from the burden of knights' fees was of greater significance in an apparent decline of demesnes held by tenant-in-chiefs. The civil war would also have taken its toll on agriculture.⁹⁷ Postan responded by arguing that the decline in plough-teams on Glastonbury demesnes was mirrored by similar declines on other monastic estates. The underlying themes seem to have been a growing population between 1100 and 1130 and receding cultivation after 1130.⁹⁸

Two decades later, Bridbury quoted Stacy in considering that 'the available evidence does not warrant a conclusion that demesnes were diminished and severely run down while the

⁹⁶M.M.Postan, 'Glastonbury estates in the 12th century', Economic History Review (1953), pp.358-367.

⁹⁷R.Lennard, 'The Demesnes of Glastonbury Abbey in the 11th and 12th centuries', Ec.H.R. (1956), pp.355-363.

⁹⁸M.Postan, 'Glastonbury estates in the twelfth century: a reply', Ec.H.R. (1956), pp.106-118.

Glastonbury estate was in the hands of firmarii' and that agriculture did not alter much in the century after Domesday.⁹⁹ Farming out of manors was normal and seems to have been common in Anglo-Saxon times. It was a flexible system that freed the lord from looking after the demesne himself while guaranteeing him a regular and fixed income. He could hand over all or just some of the demesne for whatever length of time suited him. If whole demesnes were let out, then this suggests that there were men of substance who were engaged in farming, although in many cases it would seem that demesne was leased out in modest parcels to customary tenants. The issuing of life-term leases assumed stable economic conditions, but when prices rose it was only those farms paying rent in kind that enabled landlords to keep pace with inflation.¹⁰⁰

Inflation, along with population growth and decreasing reserves of new land, appear to have been the major factors in bringing about an end to the farming-out of demesnes.¹⁰¹ The idea of population growth is supported by the apparent subdivision of virgates in late 12th and early 13th century surveys, the creation of customary holdings out of demesne and increasing numbers of cottages and smallholdings. The twelfth century, as well as the thirteenth, contains features of

⁹⁹N.E.Stacy, 'The Estates of Glastonbury Abbey c.1050-1200', unpubl. D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford (1971), p.112.

¹⁰⁰A.R.Bridbury, 'The Farming out of manors', Ec.H.R., second series, 31 No.4 (1978), pp.503-520.

¹⁰¹E.Miller, 'Farming of manors and direct management', Ec.H.R. 26 1 (1973), p.138.

increasing economic activity, the beginnings of which may be seen in the ninth century. There were troughs in this period of growth, due to political troubles and civil disorders, but these do not seem to have seriously affected the long-term trend. Miller considers that the move to direct management was a result, not so much of differences in the basic economic situation rather than in the policies and attitudes of landlords. The growth in population meant that there were more mouths to feed and this, combined with rising prices, resulted in farmers increasing their profits while landlords' incomes from leases remained static. Colonization was no longer a realistic option for increasing income. Real incomes were falling for landlords and when it was necessary to spend money in repairing damage due to careless farmers this could spark a re-appraisal of the way in which demesnes could be managed. Customary tenants' obligations of service represented a valuable resource in inflationary times and with a growth in population those services could be supplemented by the growing numbers of cheap wage workers.¹⁰²

To consider how Brent compares to the general picture of agrarian estates in the twelfth century, we need first to consider the lordly background. In 1126, King Henry I appointed his nephew Henry of Blois as Abbot of Glastonbury. Henry of Blois was one of the major ecclesiastical figures of the twelfth century who, because of his ability and royal

¹⁰²E. Miller, 'England in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries: an economic contrast?', Ec.H.R., 24 1 (1971), pp.2-13.

blood, was appointed Bishop of Winchester in 1129. Nevertheless, he kept his position as Abbot and remained in office for forty-five years until his death in 1171. The energy with which he set about restoring the fortunes of the Abbey suggests that before his time there had been neglect or misfortune.¹⁰³ He restored properties that had been alienated due to the actions of autocratic abbots and crown administrators, nepotism and the need to provide for knights' fees.¹⁰⁴ Among the redresses he obtained was some land that Ralph de St.Barbara claimed had been granted by Abbot Herlewin to him in Brent Marsh without rent because it was useless. Bishop Henry visited this during harvest-time and found aurco colore rutilantem, ad lenes auras fuaviter murmurantem, and so cancelled the grant.¹⁰⁵

After Bishop Henry's death the Abbey was in the hands of crown administrators until 1189. In 1183 there was a devastating fire at the abbey and Henry II authorised the abbey's revenues to be used for the re-building of the Abbey. Richard I's disinterest caused a halt to the rebuilding programme but at least he did allow an election for a new Abbot, the monks choosing Richard's nominee, Henry de Soliaco, the third son of William the Simple. Henry de Soliaco commissioned a survey of all the Glastonbury manors. In this

¹⁰³Carley, Glastonbury Abbey, p.18.

¹⁰⁴T.S.Holmes, 'The endowments of Glastonbury Abbey', in Rentalia et Custumaria, Michaelis de Amesbury 1235-52 et Rogeri de Ford 1252-61, Somerset Record Society (1891), p.xiii.

¹⁰⁵Adam de Damerham, Historia de Rebus Gestis Glastoniensibus (1727), pp.307-8.

survey he was particularly interested in all land that had been freed from service by or since the time of Bishop Henry, and whether demesne had been let out and whether it should be recovered.¹⁰⁶ Thus we are able to use this survey to examine how Brent fared in the 100 years after Domesday Book.

One of the first things that the Soliaco survey deals with is knights fees and it is interesting to see how these relate to the sub-fees in Domesday entry for Brent. In 1086, five of Brent's twenty hides were held by sub-tenants. One hide was held by Roger of Courseulles, who was a tenant-in-chief with many holdings in the county, his caput being at Curry Mallet. Five virgates were held by Aelfric, son of Everwacer, whose name suggests that he was an Englishman who managed to hold on to his land after the conquest. Aelfric was quite a common name in the Somerset Domesday, but these five virgates are the only ones that can be attributed to Aelfric with this particular patronymic surname. Another five virgates were held by Ralph of Conteville who also held close-by Allerton and Huish, Adber in Dorset; and whose descendants were prominent free tenants in Brent throughout the time covered by this study.¹⁰⁷ Godwin the Priest's one and a half hides seem likely to have been an ancient allocation for the support of the old minster. The knights fees apportioned to Brent, according to the Sully survey, are set out in Table

¹⁰⁶Jackson, 'Preface', Soliaco, p.xiv.

¹⁰⁷The second letter of this surname in Brent documents of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries is usually 'u'.

2.10. Reckoning on a hide equating with 160 acres, then the total hidage tied to knights fees in 1189 was five, plus a few acres and the mill and the castle. The initial impression is that the major sub-tenants holdings in Domesday could provide for the knights fees by 1189, but it is probable that Godwin the Priest's one and a half hides remained with the church of South Brent, so it was necessary for the Abbot to allocate holdings of an equivalent hideage to meet his quota. To a certain extent this was covered by the apparent recovering of the two hides of Edingworth, although there is no mention of its 1189 holder, Robert de Curtenai, having a knight's fee; and furthermore, the Abbot benefitted from renders in money and honey from these men. The fees of Sowi, Santa Barbara and Cotele were made up with substantial holdings in other manors. Richard Cotele was the only one who owed one complete knight's fee, the others owing fractions while Simon de Bergis appears to have commuted his for cash. Santa Barbara's mill was rendering £2 each year and he was paying a further £1 for his holdings and running the hundred court. Richard Cotele was not only the governor of the castle, presumably sited within the hill-fort, but for all his holdings within the Glastonbury estates, he could be called upon to be the Constable.¹⁰⁸ A certain amount of continuity can be observed between the sub-fees of Domesday and the Knights' fees of 1189; Courseulles' 1 hide, 6 acres of underwood and 5-acres of meadow would seem to tally with Thomas Spirewit's holding in 1189, while the Cunteville family holds 5-virgates in both documents. These

¹⁰⁸Jackson, Soliaco, pp.2-5.

knights' fees, which form the core of the medieval Free Tenant holdings, seem to have been more of an asset than a burden to the Abbot.

Table 2.10: Knights Fees in 1189	
'Knight'	Brent Holdings
Henry de Sowi	a) ½ hide in Brent Marsh
Ralph de Santa Barbara	a) 110 acres in the moor b) Mill c) 1 virgate in South Brent d) 1 virgate in Berrow e) 1 virgate in Berrow for the custody of the Hundred.
Thomas Spirewit	a) 1 hide in Brent Marsh b) 5 acres of meadow c) 6 acres in the moor
Simon de Bergis	a) 1 virgate in Berrow b) 1 virgate and 3-acres in Berrow c) 1 virgate in South Brent d) 5 acres
Richard de Cuntevilla	a) 5 virgates at Battleborough
Richard Cotele	a) Castle

Postan placed some emphasis on the reduction in demesne plough-teams and livestock in his deduction of contracting demesne.¹⁰⁹ Examples of considerable reduction in both these

¹⁰⁹M.Postan, 'Glastonbury estates in the twelfth century', *Ec.H.R.* 5 (1953), pp.358-367. Much of Postan's case rested on data extracted from four 'brief and fragmentary' surveys in a fourteenth century compilation transcribed by Aelred Watkin from Trinity Manuscript 724 (R.533) fo.115 seq. The dates attributed to the surveys are: c.1135, 1176, c.1190, and 1201. Brent was omitted from his calculations because he considered that its composition had altered since 1086. Where he does give declining figures for Brent livestock, they do not add to what can be ascertained from survey of 1189 and probably reflect the effects of farming-out; and for sheep the centralization of accounting.

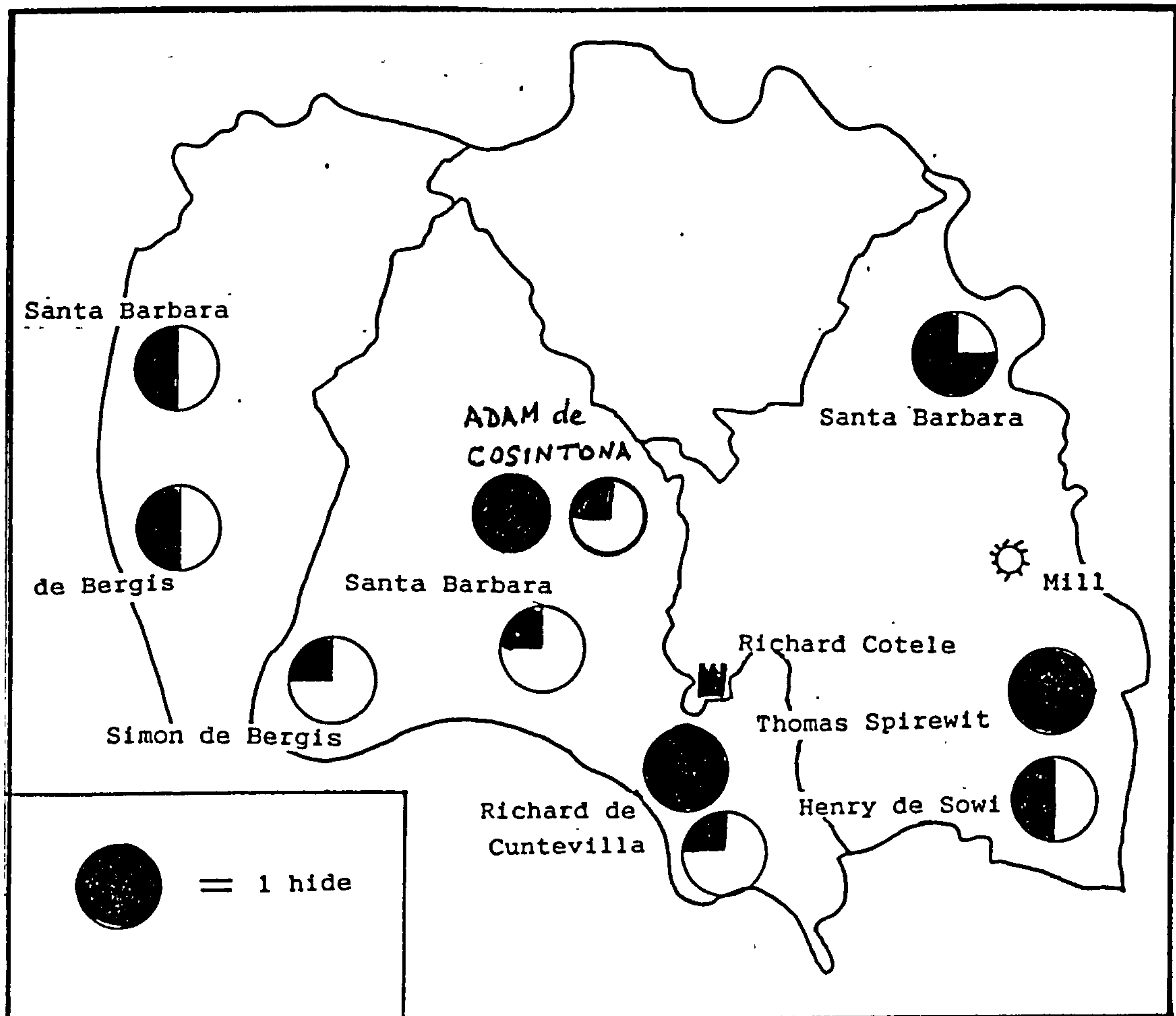


Figure 2.07 Holdings associated with Knights Fees in Brent.

The locations of some of these are conjectural because we cannot be sure of where in the 'moor' or 'marsh' or even within specific manors where these holdings were situated.



Figure 2.08 The centre of the Cunteville holding of five virgates at Battleborough and the probable site of Richard Cotele's castle in 1086.

items can be found in Brent between 1086 and 1189. There were eight plough teams on the demesne according to the Domesday Book, which equates to 64 oxen if we assume there were eight oxen per plough-team. By 1189 these numbers had been drastically reduced. At first sight, the figures in Table 2.11 may give the impression that the demesne had been badly neglected, but these figures have to be studied in the context of farming-out. Evidence of farming out can be found in the summaries of crops and livestock in Soliaco's survey. In Berrow we learn that 'the farmer has received 86 acres of wheat seed' and that 'two hay-stacks are to go to the farmer'. In South Brent the 'farm has received 106 acres of wheat seed'. In East Brent, 'four oxen the farmer received', while

Table 2.11: Demesne Oxen in 1189		
Manor	Numbers of oxen now	Numbers of oxen there had been; or could be
East Brent	4	16
Lympsham	6	12
Berrow	6	12
South Brent	8	10
Totals	24	50

in the time of Bishop Henry there were two half-plough-teams, one averus, 12 cows and 100 sheep, 'now there are just 4 oxen'. Only in Lympsham is there no mention of a farm, but the same critical tone is to be found in the livestock survey, 'There should be 6 oxen and 10 cows and 50 sheep. Now there

are enough except that two cows are too old, but they have the ability to have 12 oxen and 100 sheep'. If Lympsham was not at farm, if there was a malaise in agrarian management then it seems that it may not have been due to farming-out.

Clearly the compiler of the survey felt that the demesne had a potential that was not at that time being fulfilled when he informs us that in South Brent there are eight oxen but there should be ten; that in Lympsham there are 50 sheep but there could be 100; and frequently resorts to the expression utilius esset quod esset in manu domini when referring to ex-demesne. Although there is criticism of the efficiency of the farmers, years of managerial neglect by the Abbey, or rather the crown administrators, is implied in the Soliaco survey which uses the time of Bishop Henry in 1171 as its yardstick. Perhaps it is since then that the monks had perceived a decline in the Abbey's fortunes, part and parcel of which was the absence of efficient monitoring of demesne agriculture. The fixed rents coming in regularly from farmed demesnes may have relieved the administrators of the detailed oversight of the capital invested in those farms, of which the livestock may have been part. The farmers, on the other hand, provided they could afford the rent may not have seen the need to maintain the level of stock that they took over at the beginning of their farms, especially if they were not being regularly inspected.



The detailed services expected of customary tenants are

listed at length in the Soliaco survey. Even at farm these services were required on the demesne and this may go some way towards explaining the drop in the numbers of oxen. While there was a substantial number of customary tenants owing ploughing-service there may not have been the same need to maintain large demesne teams. A factor supporting the reduction in oxen is that by 1189 a considerable amount of demesne had been let out to customary tenants as can be seen in Table 2.12:

Table 2.12: Ex-demesne in 1189		
Manor	Nos. of tenants	Ex-demesne (acres)
East Brent	8	42-62
Lympsham	4	18
Berrow	3	17½
South Brent	25	97

Much of this is categorized in the survey as ex-demesne and in two manors represents no great loss. In South Brent, although there are 37 acres clearly labelled as ex-demesne, closer examination reveals another 60 acres that had been split up between Free Tenants and half-virgaters in 2½- and 5-acre plots. Thus if some of the demesne had been parcelled out in modest plots, then the requirement for the levels of plough-teams and livestock evident in Domesday Book would have diminished. How much land was left in demesne by 1189 we do not know, but it appears to have been substantial as the surveyors took the trouble of measuring the crops in the barns of three of the manors definitely at farm:

Table 2.13: Contents of Barns in 1189 (in cubic feet)				
Manor	Wheat	Oats	Barley	Beans
East Brent	1330	1352	-	8232
Berrow	2688	1960	-	4004
South Brent	3648	2106	490	1183

Despite losing much more demesne than the other manors, South Brent's cereal productivity was still larger than the other two, whose main concentration was on beans. Thus although the demesne had been contracting by parcelling some of it out among tenants, the farmers of what was left did not need the same amount of oxen and other livestock, yet were still able to be productive.

There was some commutation of labour services in all manors. Richard de Bikemere of East Brent paid 1/8 pro omnia servitio ex dono Henrici episcopi for his half-virgate.¹¹⁰ William Suein of Berrow paid 1/- each year for 5-acres of demesne, but as it was utilius esset in dominico, William was possibly about to lose this five acres.¹¹¹ The bulk of tenants were still obliged to work on the demesne, but even then there was the opportunity to commute built into the services as in the case of Ailmarus de Grava of Brent Marsh who si est ad gabulum dat xxv denarios and performed a reduced

¹¹⁰Jackson, Soliaco, p.73.

¹¹¹Jackson, Soliaco, p.69.

rate of service.¹¹² This same opportunity applied to most of the half-virgaters of Brent Marsh, i.e. South Brent. A similar arrangement can be found for Huerewardus Yrp and other 5-acremen in Berrow and Philip Balle and other half-virgaters in East Brent.¹¹³ So there was flexibility built into the services, but if the farmer took the gabulum instead of the service, this suggests that there was wage labour available at terms that were advantageous to the farmer. If this was the case then this might help to explain the attractiveness of resuming direct cultivation if perhaps there was more customary service than was needed and if cheap labour was available. If the lord could see lucrative rents going to the farmer while he had to content himself with a fixed income from the farm, then the incentive to end the lease became stronger.

The ability to commute labour services and utilise cheap wage labour suggests that the population had been growing so that the numbers of men in Brent outstripped the number of land-holdings available. If, as illustrated in Table 2.14, Domesday villeins could be equated with half-virgaters, bordars with ferdellers and cottars with five-acremen, then the net increase of just two landholdings among the half-virgaters and ferdellers is suggestive of a controlling interest by these customary tenants in the number of

¹¹²Jackson, Soliaco, p.65.

¹¹³Jackson, Soliaco, pp.70-1, 73-74. The move from labour services to commutation and back again as circumstances required, was a typical sequence, according to M.Postan, 'The chronology of labour services', Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, (1937), p.189.

substantial tenancies, while the shift in the balance from ferdellers to half-virgaters is indicative of an acquisitive trend arising out of either the releasing of demesne, the availability of land from former free tenancies, or assarting of waste. The marked increase in the cottar/five-acre holdings hints at an extension of land-use to meet a growing population, while the relative stability of the total number of larger customary holdings suggests the possibility of a strengthening of the control by those tenants over the agricultural economy of Brent.

Table 2.14: Comparison of holdings in 1086 and 1189				
Domesday		1189		Difference
<u>Villeins</u>				
Brent	53			
Edingworth	4			
Total	57	½-virgaters	79	+22
<u>Bordars</u>				
Brent	52			
Edingworth	5			
Total	57	Ferdellers	33	-24
<u>Cottars</u>				
Brent	10			
Edingworth	5			
Total	15	5-acremen	64	+49

There are also indications that pressure on the land supply was a much greater driving force than mere acquisitiveness. If the Ferdel holdings had been reduced by twenty-four, these may have been divided into two to form

forty-eight five-acre holdings, which is remarkably close to the corresponding increase in the cottar/five-acre holdings, thus indicating a downgrading of holdings to accommodate an increasing population. The increase in half-virgate holdings would seem to refute this, but examination of the Sully survey shows that thirteen of the half-virgate holdings in East Brent were each held by two men, indicating that these were about to be split up into separate ferdels. Meanwhile, six five-acre holdings were also shared. In Berrow, fifteen half-virgate holdings were shared. Although the sharing of holdings adds to the impression of pressure of population growth affecting the demand for land, it is difficult to explain the increase in numbers of half-virgates between 1086 and 1189 unless they were created from land alienated from demesne, former free-tenancies or assarting of waste.

An increase in the number of landholdings would have resulted in an increase of revenue from rents to the lord, while a concomitant reduction in demesne would have reduced the requirement for customary services, thereby allowing for commutation that would further increase the lord's cash income. A population growing at a rate that demanded subdivision of holdings might also imply that the demand could never be satisfied and that there would be a landless population in search of wage-labour, a situation that could be attractive to lords and farmers if this labour force was large enough to depress wage-rates, thus encouraging commutation of labour services further.

If the reduction in livestock and plough-teams can be understood partly as a consequence of parcelling out of demesne, it does not necessarily mean that because the demesne diminished in size that the quality of agriculture suffered. The size of the stacks revealed in the barns indicates that there was still a considerable acreage remaining in demesne, thus the farmers had to be men of substance if they could afford the farm. The Soliaco survey is evasive about who the farmers were; occasionally there are references to firmarii but this seems to refer to all those tenants who have taken on small parcels. However, in East Brent, we learn that John the clerk held a half-virgate and a cotsettle ex presto firmariorum Reginaldi scilicet de Waltona, indicating that Reginald was an outsider.¹¹⁴ If he could afford to farm in Brent and still possibly hold land in Walton, then he was indeed a farmer of substance. The demesne was a source of income to him, not as a means of mere subsistence; thus it was in his interest to succeed in his aim of earning a profit and as such his management of the demesne was unlikely to be any less effective than the Abbot's should he decide to manage his demesne directly.

* * * * *

By 1189 Brent was an old estate. As far back as the Iron Age the terrain around Brent Knoll almost certainly comprised an estate whose allegiance was to whoever controlled the hill-

¹¹⁴Jackson, Soliaco, p.75.

fort. During the Roman era there were substantial buildings on the Knoll and at Lakeside farm suggestive of temple and villa sites. The discovery of Romano-British potsherds and masonry at a number of different sites is indicative of general occupation from the first to the fifth centuries A.D. It seems likely that the West Saxon estate granted by Ine to Glastonbury Abbey was a sub-Roman estate acquired by the king of Wessex from the previous rulers of that part of what was now Somerset. Even if it did not follow the classic example of the 'multiple estate', it would seem that each of the discrete farms within its boundaries had owed some sort of obligation to a lord and now that the lord was the Abbot of Glastonbury the lord/tenant relationship is unlikely to have been significantly different. It appears that parts of the estate were alienated during the later Anglo-Saxon period, but some, if not all were reinstated by 1189. Domesday reveals that Brent was the most valuable of the Glastonbury estates in Somerset. This exalted position was partly due to its size but also appears to have had something to do with reforming zeal during the abbacy of Thurston. Three at least of the four manors were farmed out in the twelfth century and probably in the eleventh as well. There was a diminution of demesne in so far as new holdings were created out of it and small parcels rented out to tenants, but the core of the demesne remained productive with clearly defined services still in place but with the option for many of commutation. By 1189 the Abbey was clearly of a mind to recover the farms and some of the holdings created from demesne and by embarking

on direct management, partake of the profits to be made from agriculture. Whether they were aware of the effects of inflation and population growth on the economy of the time is debateable, but certainly they would have been aware of the consequences of rising food prices and the apparent fortunes of the farmers set against the safety of fixed rents that in reality were diminishing returns. The need to restore its own fortunes after being in the hands of crown administrators since the time of Bishop Henry, coupled with the enthusiasm of a new abbot to lead a flourishing abbey, together with a likely awareness of developments on other ecclesiastical estates, was to lead to a change to direct management and the accumulation of an abundance of documentary material geared to making the estate accountable to its lord. The survival of much of that evidence enables us to analyze the economy and society of Brent in some depth over the next hundred and sixty years.

Chapter 3

Brent Landscape in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

When W.G.Hoskins wrote, 'There are certain sheets of the one-inch Ordnance Survey maps which one can sit down and read like a book', he could have added the 2½-inch, the 6-inch and the 25-inch versions as well, because all of them present to the student a coded display of mankind's moulding and management of his basic resource; the land.¹ Such authoritative maps form the backbone of any landscape study and constitute a yardstick against which we can measure the usefulness of other maps such as tithe maps, estate maps and county maps. To these have to be added the powers of observation by the student on the ground looking at fields, boundaries and buildings if the work is to be imbued with an in-depth knowledge of the landscape. The chief documentary evidence deals with people in a particular location; thus to know and to understand the landscape enables the historian to add the perspective of place that helps to determine ideas, activities, values and a sense of community.

The basic topography of Brent has been described in the opening chapter. It is sufficient here to reinforce the facts that by the twelfth century the estate was divided up into four manors: Berrow on the coast protected by sand-dunes;

¹W.G.Hoskins, The Making of the English Landscape (1970), p.95.



Plate 3.01 The River Axe just to the east of Hobb's Boat in Lympsham at ST 342559.



Plate 3.02 This extensive range of dunes protected Berrow from the sea.



Plate 3.03 Tarnock Stream, Brent's eastern boundary.



Plate 3.04 East Brent at the foot of the Knoll, with the alluvium stretching beyond towards the Mendips.



Plate 3.05 Brent Broad Rhyne, curving towards Burnham in the middle distance, marks the course of the erstwhile River Siger. Traces of ridge and furrow can be seen in Brent Hill Field in the foreground.



Plate 3.06 Brent Knoll from the west, showing possible medieval crofts.

Lympsham on the alluvium to the north with the River Axe as its northern boundary; East Brent with a share of the knoll and alluvium and bounded on the east by the Tarnock stream; South Brent similarly sharing knoll and alluvium and bounded on the south by Brent Broad Rhyne, formerly the River Siger. Considering that the bulk of the Brent estate is situated only 6 metres above mean sea level on the alluvium, it would be understandable if there was some anxiety about the danger from frequent flooding to this landscape. However, we must beware against overstating the flood hazard: it was an ancient estate by the 13th century, being one of Glastonbury Abbey's oldest and largest possessions; it was also one of the wealthiest of its estates in the Domesday book. Such importance would not be possible if frequent flooding had been catastrophic.

SETTLEMENT PATTERNS

To ascertain the nature of the landscape in Brent during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, a start can be made by looking at likely patterns of settlement. Figures 3.01 - 3.04, based on the tithe surveys, feature coloured dots representing evidence of buildings likely to have occupied those sites during the medieval period. The red marks represent farms containing place-name elements evident in medieval documentation for Brent. The brown dots represent the sites of medieval archaeological finds, mostly pottery but also including the four churchyards, two deserted sites and a

Ladywell.² The light green highlights plots of land suggestive of domestic tenements, especially the row of 'croft and toft' so clearly evident in South Brent and continuing into East Brent.

The colouring of possible settlement sites enables us to study any apparent pattern that may have some significance in understanding the management of this landscape. In this we are assisted by the work of Roberts who established a system of categorization of village plans. In one section of his book, Roberts applies his complex system to Somerset and classifies East Brent as a 'linked hamlet cluster', Lympsham as an 'irregular agglomeration without green', Berrow as an 'irregular single-row street plan' and South Brent as a 'regular one-row street', while Eastertown and Edingworth appear to have also been included as 'linked farm clusters'.³ Such classification may be useful when studying village morphology on the grand scale but its significance when applied to particular villages is not so apparent. Another problem is that Roberts's classification applies to settlement patterns as they are in the twentieth century and these patterns are not necessarily identical to medieval shapes.

In Fig. 3.01 the concept of 'linked hamlet cluster' is not obvious although a case can be made for it if we consider

²Somerset County Council Sites and Monuments Record Nos.10051, 10081, 10083, 10085, 10087, 10091, 10092, 10093, 10094, 10095, 10097, 10104, 10105, 10106, 10107, 10109, 10110, 10453, 10455, 10481, 10482, 10483, 10484, 10486, 10488, 10544, 10989, 10991, 10992, 11005, 11011, 11156, 11222.

³B.K.Roberts, The Making of the English Village; a study in historical geography (1987), pp.182-3.

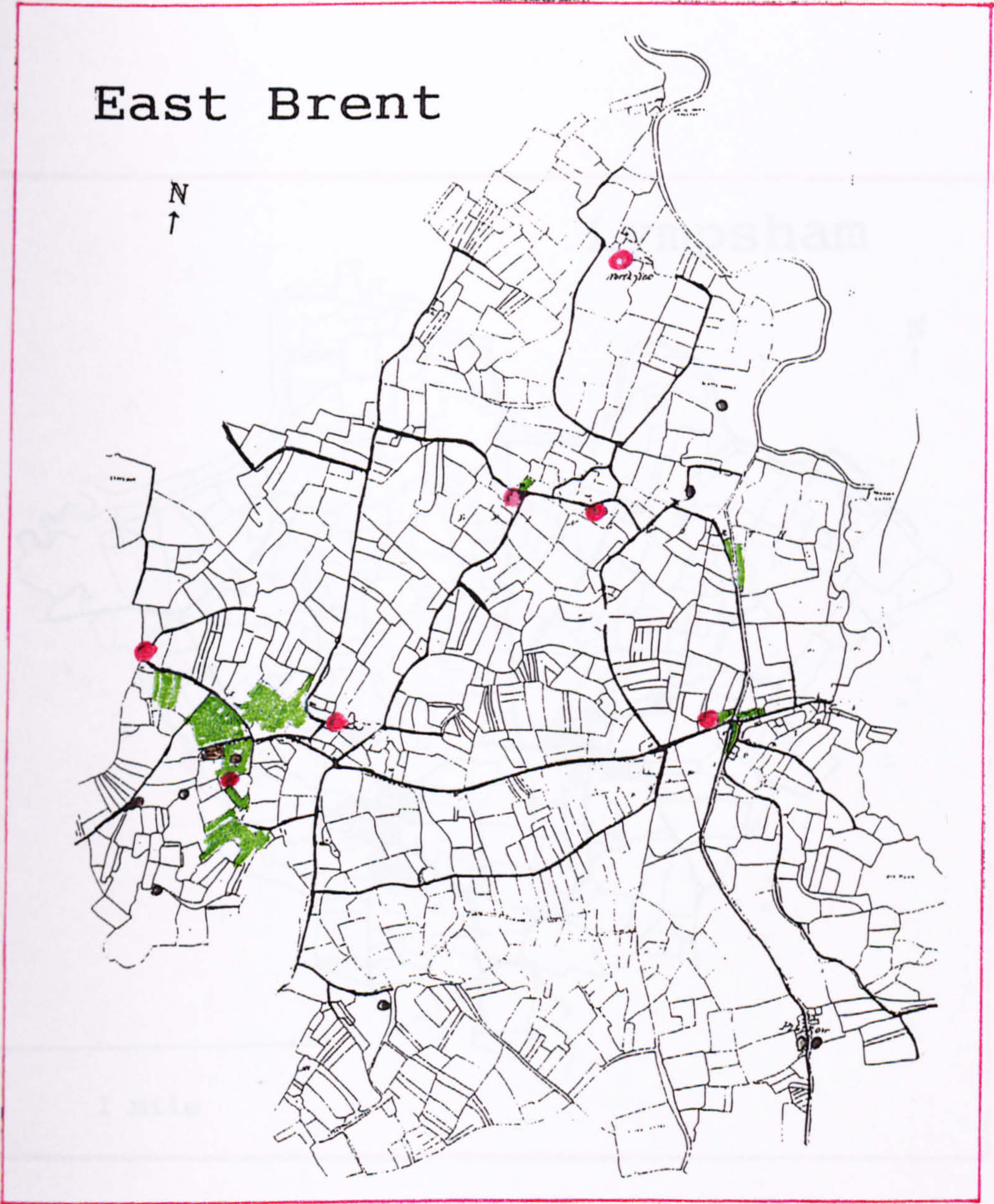


Fig. 3.01 Medieval settlement distribution in East Brent.

- Red = Farmsteads containing place-name elements extant in medieval documents.
- Brown = sites with medieval archaeological evidence.
- Light green = plots suggestive of domestic occupation, including 'toft & croft'.

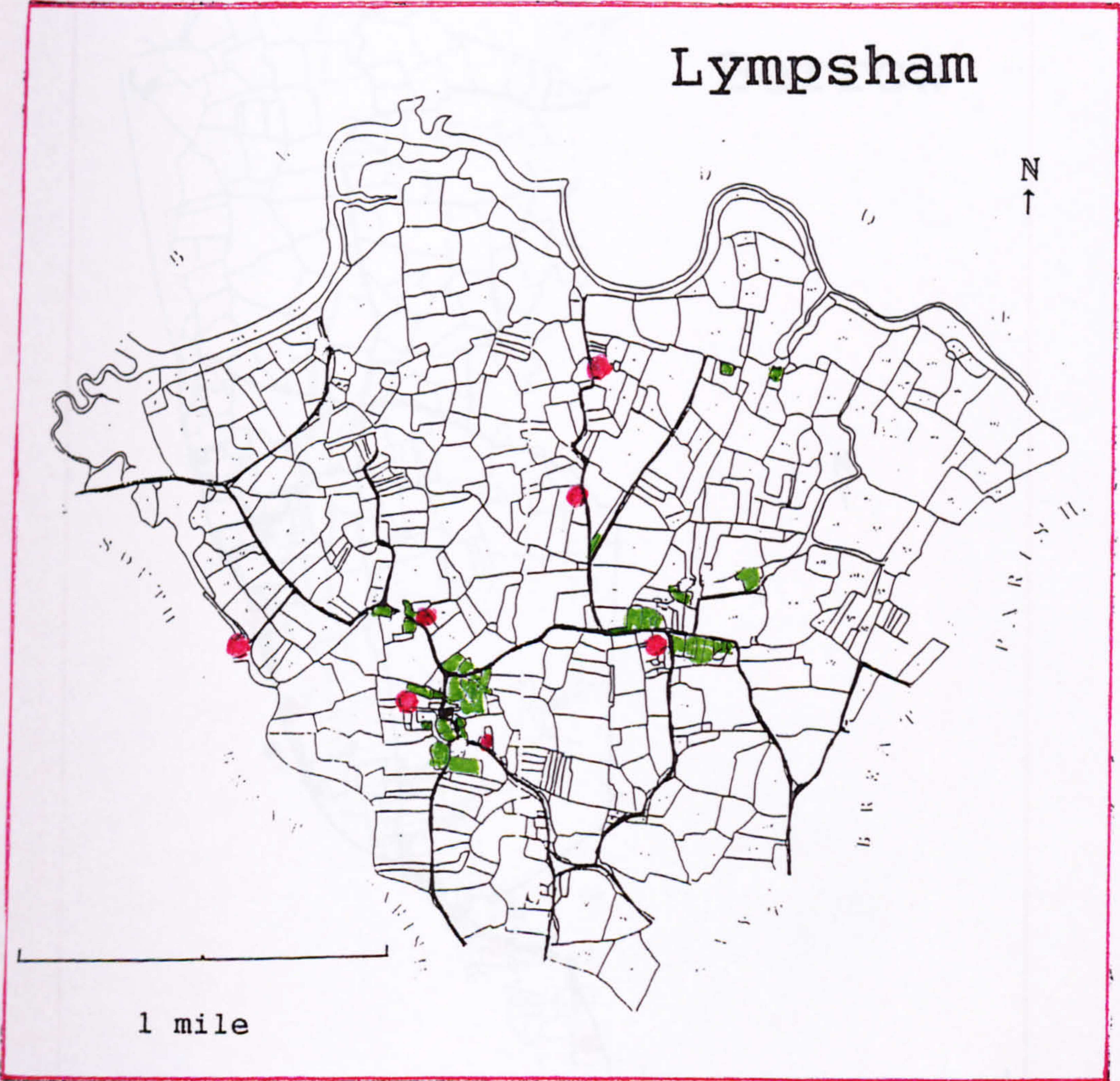


Fig. 3.02 Medieval settlement distribution in Lymppsham

- Red = Farmsteads containing place-name elements extant in medieval documents.
- Brown = sites with medieval archaeological evidence.
- Light green = plots suggestive of domestic occupation, including 'toft & croft'.

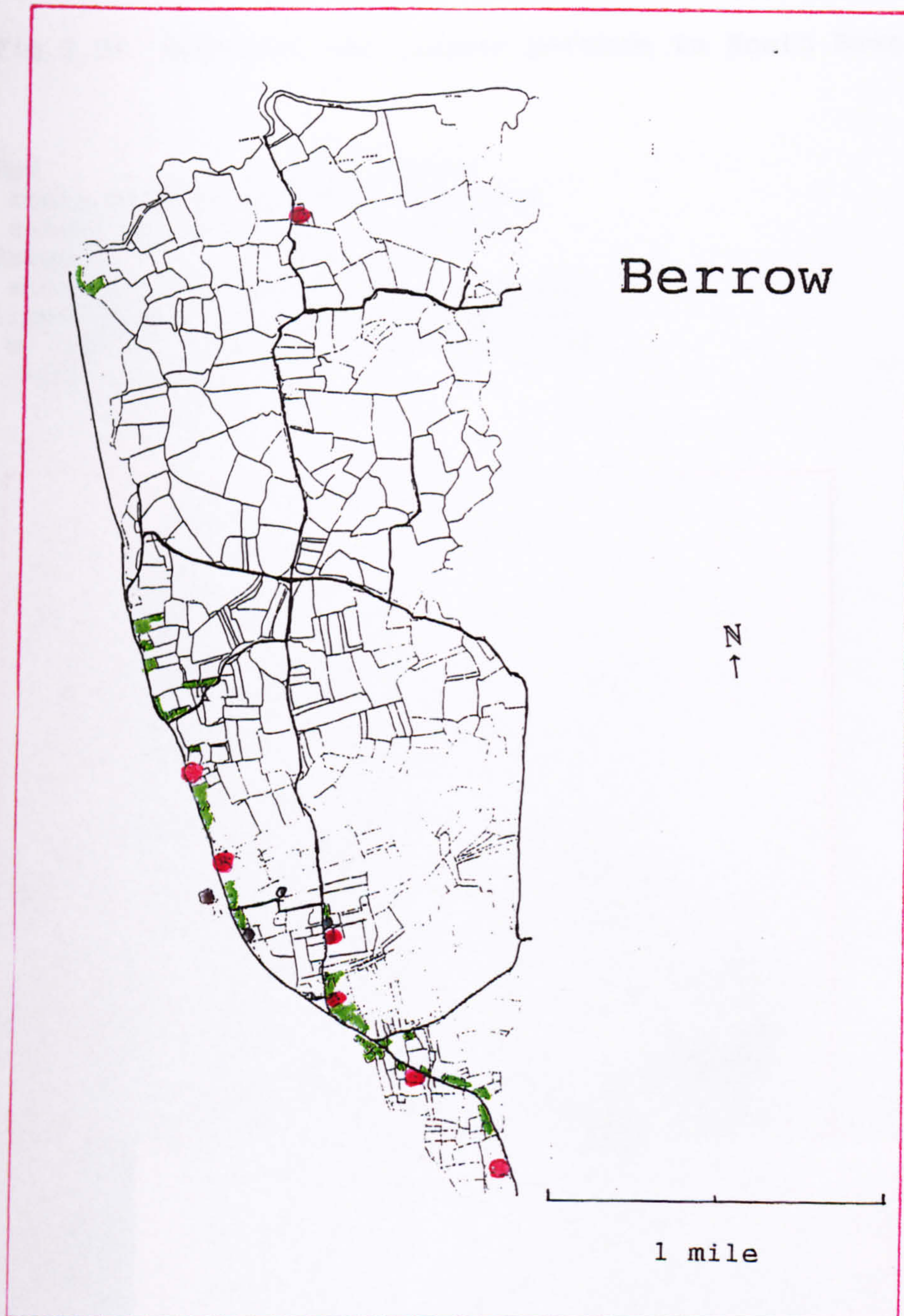


Fig.3.03 Medieval settlement distribution in Berrow.

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| Red | = Farmsteads containing place-name elements
extant in medieval documents. |
| Brown | = sites with medieval archaeological evidence. |
| Light green | = plots suggestive of domestic occupation,
including 'toft & croft'. |

Fig.3.04 Medieval settlement pattern in South Brent.

Red = Farmsteads
containing place-name elements
extant in medieval documents.
Brown = sites with
medieval archaeological evidence.
Light green = plots suggestive
of domestic occupation, including
'toft & croft'.



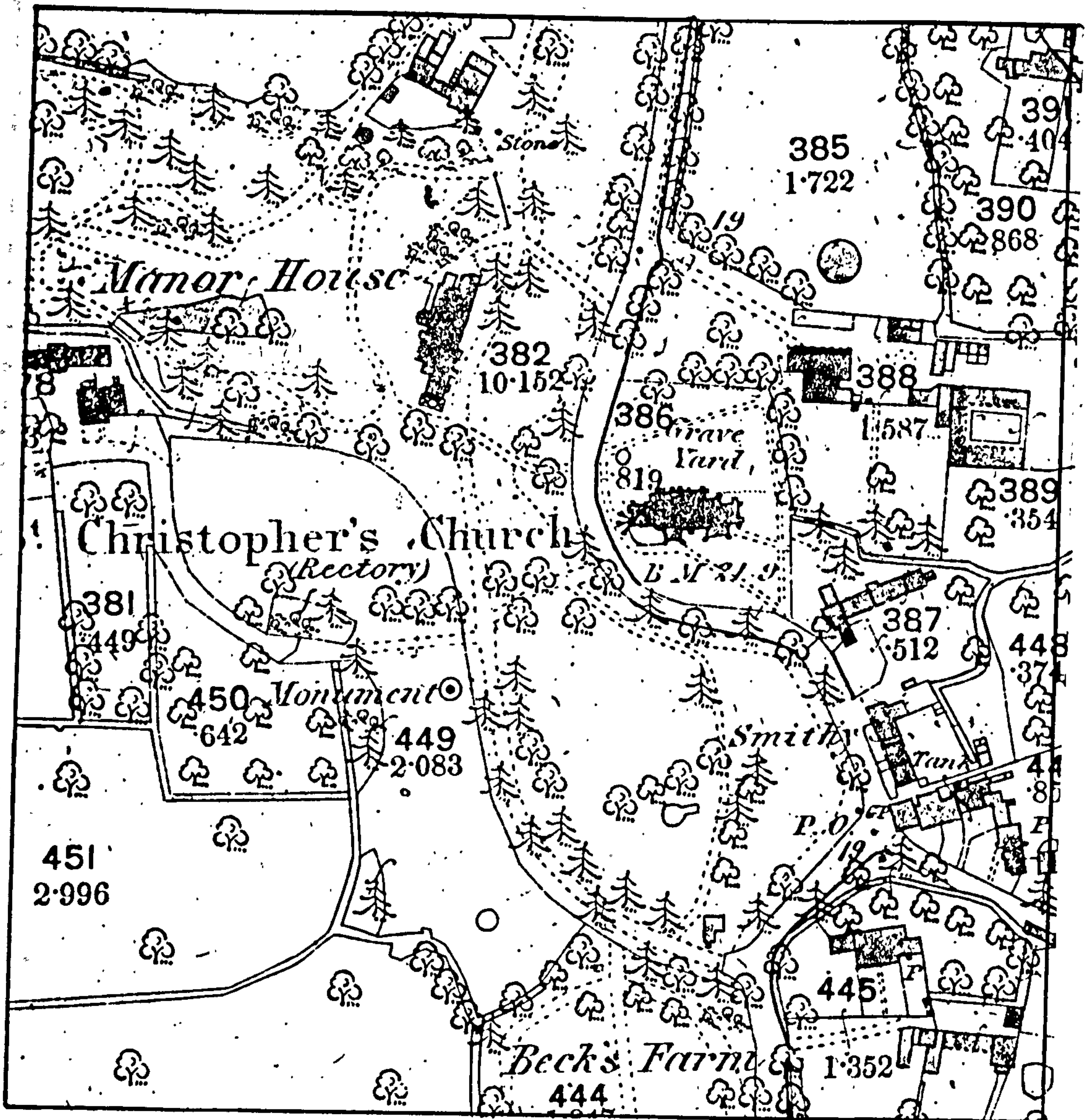


Fig.3.05 Central Lymsham

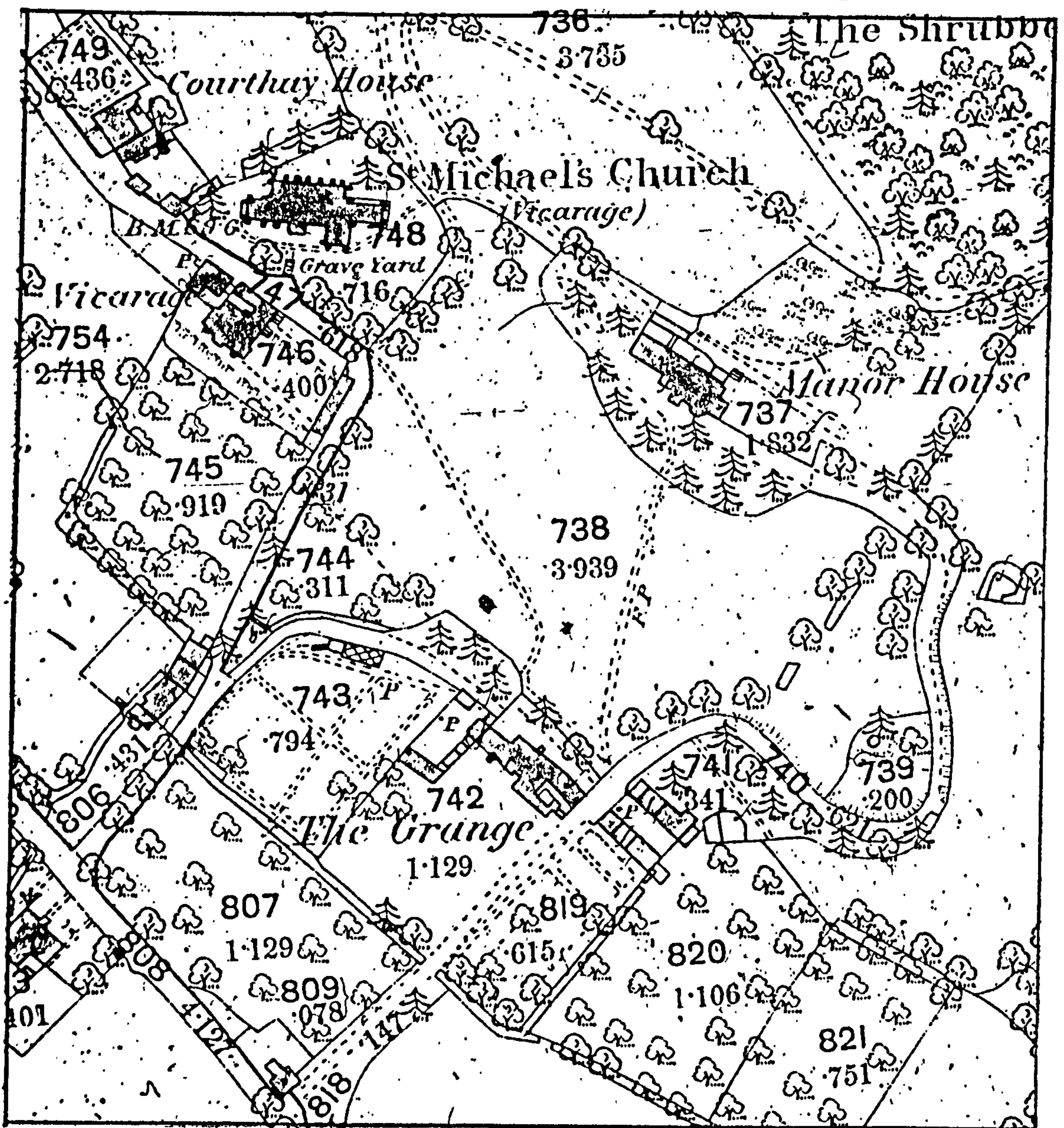


Fig. 3.06 Central South Brent; possible site of 'curia' ?

the hamlets of Rooksbridge and Edingworth together with the village of East Brent. In the Beere survey for East Brent, customary tenants were usually described as being of 'Borton' or 'Sistenhampton' or 'Snyghampton'.⁴ These three habitative names appear as tithing names in fourteenth century hundred court rolls so it seems likely that the tithings in East Brent were based on settlement groupings although we cannot assume that those tithing names can be equated with the modern hamlet names, especially as in 1310/11 there was a further tithing name of 'Yadenworth' whose similarity to Edingworth cannot lightly be dismissed.⁵ The linked hamlets apparent on a modern map does not necessarily mean that there was tight nucleated settlement in the hamlets in the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries. A certain amount of nucleation along Burton Row and the approach to the Church is suggested and smaller plots are evident at Rooksbridge but similar evidence is lacking for Edingworth. What is more pronounced is the dispersal of farmstead sites from west to east and north-east, while the emptiest area is to the south and south-east.

Lympsham's 'irregular agglomeration without a green' may be applicable to Lympsham and Eastertown on Fig.3.02, but once again the dominant impression is of a landscape with dispersed farmsteads. There may also have been a green in Lympsham. In Fig.3.05 the bend of the road on the south side of the church and the location of the smithy looks suspiciously as though a

⁴BL Eg. 3034.

⁵L.10767 m.8r-v and 21v. Several tithings in this manuscript have personal names, e.g. 'Edwards'.

later lord of the manor acquired the green for himself.

Roberts's 'irregular single-row street' pattern would appear to fit Berrow. The coastal road and the protection offered by the dunes both dictate the position of the farms with just a small scatter of isolated farmsteads to the north. Even with most of the settlement sites being confined to the coastal road, there is no obvious focal point to the village; the cluster in the vicinity of the two road junctions toward the south of the village is the nearest there is to a focal point, but even then this is half a mile from the church. What is more apparent in Berrow is how strung out the settlement is along the coast road.

South Brent has a series of settlement sites stretching loosely from north-west to south-east in addition to Robert's 'regular one-row street' of toft and croft. If there is a focal point to this village, it has to be around the church where there are large houses with names suggestive of the estate 'caput': Manor House, The Grange and Courthay House, as can be seen in Figure 3.06.

Looking at Figures 3.01 - 3.04 overall, the general impression of the settlement form is that although all four villages have focal centres, there is little in the way of dense nucleation. The nearest we get to a condensed settlement site is the apparent line of toft and croft adjacent to the knoll periphery road, marking a boundary

between alluvium and upland. Whatever clustering is evident in this landscape, it clearly existed alongside dispersed settlements. Such a pattern forms a contrast to that observed in other Glastonbury manors. Sheet 165 of the one-inch O.S. map reveals that the four Brent manors have a higher number of named houses and farms than most other Glastonbury manors. Roberts's map shows an interesting contrast in the row of villages on the northern slopes of the Poldens: Woolavington, Cossington, Chilton Polden, Edington, Catcott, Shapwick and Ashcott are all classified as having 'irregular grid plans'.⁶ These were all once part of the ancient Pouholt estate and of these, only Shapwick has a number of dispersed farmsteads similar in number to the Brent manors. However, nucleation is the most marked feature in Shapwick, and it is within the nucleation of Shapwick and its Pouholt sisters that we can see indications of planning. Indeed Corcos has established that Shapwick was the subject of deliberate re-organization, probably coinciding with the break-up of the Pouholt estate and the adoption of the open-field system, possibly in the tenth century.⁷ Certainly two-field systems seem to have been commonplace on Glastonbury's Somerset estates and Shapwick clearly had a two-field system.⁸ Among his many tables, Kiel indicates that the four Brent manors used a two-field system, but unfortunately he does not back up that information with

⁶Roberts, The Making of the English Village, p.183.

⁷N.J.Corcos, 'Early estates on the Poldens and the origin of the settlement of Shapwick', P.S.A.N.H.S. 127 (1984), p.49.

⁸H.S.A.Fox, 'Approaches to the adoption of the Midland system', T.Rowley, ed., The Origins of Open-Field Agriculture, (1981), p.80.

any supporting evidence.⁹ This is puzzling because no matter how deeply we analyze the primary documentary evidence, it cannot be shown that the Brent manors used a two or three-field system. Perhaps the dispersed nature of settlement in Brent and its modest amount of nucleation in comparison with other Glastonbury manors may be a clue to the sort of field system it did operate in medieval times.

THE SEARCH FOR AN OPEN-FIELD SYSTEM: NAMES

The essential features of the open-field system have long been a common diagrammatic feature of school text-books; showing two or three large open fields divided into strips, meadow on either side of a stream, waste and woodland on the periphery and a small nucleated settlement at the centre. The impression given by the simplest texts is that all English villages were like that despite the fact that there were large parts of Britain that were not subjected to the system and that where it did operate there were numerous variations on the theme, even without the added complication of creeping enclosure.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the pattern etched on one's mind during formative years does tend to dictate the popular perception of what we should be looking for. As a two-field system is not readily apparent when we study maps or look at

⁹I.J.E. Keil, 'The Estates of Glastonbury Abbey in the Later Middle Ages', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Bristol (1964).

¹⁰B. Campbell, 'Commonfield origins - the regional dimension', in T. Rowley, ed., The Origins of Open-field Agriculture, (1981), pp. 113-5, is just one example of a paper dealing with the variety to be found within the open-field system.

the medieval documents relevant to Brent, then we have to consider what the academic criteria are for the existence of such a system. Here we are helped by the Orwins who list four main features:

1. Large arable fields which often run into hundreds of acres.
2. Holdings scattered in small strips through the fields.
3. Fields lying in fallow every second or third year.
4. Grazing rights exercised in common in the arable fields.¹¹

It is commonplace in medieval extents for demesne holdings to be listed under headings such as in Campus Orientalis and Campus Occidentalis. Not one of the medieval extents for Brent divides up the demesne lands in that way. Abbot Beere's survey of 1515 which is far more comprehensive, does give a breakdown of individual tenants holdings as this example shows:

'John Gyles of Sistenhampton holds one messuage, curtilage and orchard containing 1 acre and one croft annexed containing 3 acres 1 perch.

Also, 28 acres $\frac{1}{2}$ -perch of land, meadow and pasture, of which:

Lez Cliffe	13 acres 1 perch in three enclosures
La Warth	19 acres 2 perches in two enclosures
Vermelond	5 acres 1 perch

Also 8 acres of land:

La Warthe	4 acres in three parcels
Estfeld	4 acres ¹²

There are three main elements to these entries; the dwelling, garden, orchard and associated croft plus two categories of

¹¹C.S. and C.S.Orwin, The Open Fields, (1938), p.61.

¹²BL Eg.3034 (East Brent).

land. At first sight this might be thought to be indicative of a two-field system, but the division is actually between 'land, meadow and pasture' which is usually enclosed, and 'land'. The latter is clearly arable while it is difficult to particularise about the specific use of the composite elements of the former, although meadow is usually labelled as such. Another indicator that the separate categories of land do not refer to a two-field system is the unequal size of the two categories.

Gray used a Jacobean survey of East Brent from which he deduced that by the early seventeenth century there was a predominance of enclosed pasture and that;

'of the arable most was enclosed, but some lay in small open fieldsreduced in condition though they were, a West field and an East field still had precedence; in them lay most of the open field arable acres, although no longer with two-field precision.'¹³

In his Appendix III he lists his arable open-fields as:

Super le Downe
Sharpham alias West Field
Yea Field
Bicknell Field
Lympsham Field
Horsecroft
East Field
Hardland
Myl Field
Ewe Field
North Ewe Field.¹⁴

¹³H.L.Gray, English Field Systems, (1969 edition) originally published in 1915, p.98. His source is Land Revenue Miscellaneous Book 225, ff.53-114. 4 James I.

¹⁴Gray, English Field Systems, p.525.

Gray's interpretation appears to be a valid one if we just have his Appendix III to go by. However, it only contains the holdings of fourteen people and a modest amount of acreage: 25 acres 3 perches in West field, 20 acres in East field among a total of $47\frac{1}{2}$ acres. The significance is lessened if we compare Gray's figures with figures abstracted from Beere's survey of 1515 in which West Field contained 64 acres 2 perches, Sharpham a further 15 acres and East field 57 acres 3 perches, among a total acreage for East Brent of just over 2482 acres. Expressed in percentage terms, East and West fields in East Brent in 1515 amounted to no more than 5% of the total, so it is difficult to construe this as firm evidence of the existence of a former two-field system. Furthermore, there is not a single reference to either a west field or an east field among the hundreds of place-names in all the medieval documentation for the four manors up to 1350, which almost suggests that those terms were post-medieval for two particular fields in East Brent.

The lack of any clear reference to east or west fields should not, by itself, be accepted as evidence for the absence of the classic open-field system. By looking at the demesne land listed in the Fromond survey of 1307/8 in Tables 3.01 - 3.04 we may find some clues to the presence of the classic Midland system. The absence of very large fields numbering in excess of a hundred acres is immediately apparent. There are some units listed in the tables of considerable size, such as Nywelond in Berrow at 79 acres, Overefordham at 55 acres and

Table 3.01: East Brent Demesne c.1307		
Arable	Acres	Value per acre
Ganelacre	5½	4d
Bythemersch	2¾	4d
Esteregarston	24	4d
Westeregarston	11½	4d
Sylydeworth	13	9d
Bradehamme	30½	9d
Oriental de Rokesmull	10½	10d
" "	5¼	10d
Saltelonde	39½	10d
Hardelonde	32½	1/-
Lytelhywych	9	10d
Droseneworth	11¼	1/-
Total arable =	194¼	
Meadow	Acres	Value per acre
Droseneworth	24	2/-
Nywehamme	33	2/4
Pasture	Acres	Value per acre
Nywehamme	40¼	2/4
Pullenelonde ¹⁵ arable:		
Pullencroft <u>alias</u> Horsecroft	32½	1/-

¹⁵This was land formerly held by Robert de la Pulle, granted to Glastonbury Abbey by Reginald de Mere by final accord in 1273. This included the fort on the knoll and land around the top of the hill. A further charter of 1305 by which the Abbey gives 230 marks for a further seven acres on Brent Knoll 'in la Pulle'. 'This fine was raised because it was found that the Abbot was seised of the aforesaid tenements a long time before the statute of Mortmain'. A. Watkin, ed., *The Glastonbury Chartulary*, Somerset Record Society, Vol. 59 (1947), pp. 215, 218; Vol. 63 (1952), pp. clxxxii-clxxxv. Reginald de Mere, and probably Robert de la Pulle, had held this land by knight service. As it was a relatively recent acquisition and some trouble has been taken to record its return to the Abbey, then it is understandable it should be the subject of such singular recording.

TABLE 3.02: Lympsham Demesne c.1307		
Arable	Acres	Value per acre
Utterefordham	17	10d
Overefordhamme	55 + 2a pool	10d
Warpole & Saltpull	35	10d
Nywenham Major	35¼	10d
Nywecroft	35 + 2a pool	10d
Nywenhamme Minor	13½	10d
Werham	54¼ + 3a pool	1/-
Bradeworth	9¼	10d
Welpesham	32¼	5d in alternate years
Total arable =	287½	
Meadow	Acres	Value per acre
Heghmede	53¼	2/-
pasture, pools and ditches, per annum	?	5/-

Table 3.03: Berrow Demesne c.1307		
Arable	Acres	Value per acre
Natelond	28¼	11d
Rougheworth	10½	8d
Redyforlong	21¾	1/-
Vyfacres	12	8d
Forthay	15	9d
Isyngcroft	11¾	11d
Holdeheygh	11½	1/-
Wulfrynghele	23¾	10d
Bubbleheygh	13	1/-
Netelwurthy	27¾	8d
Nywelonde	79	1/-
Nywenhamme	24½	9d
" "	½	6d
Rodiforlang	½	5d
Dollyngcroft	½	5d
Byestpulle	1	9d
Roughelonde + pool	1½	10d
Total arable =	282¾	
Meadow	Acres	Value per acre
Ganellonde	11½	2/-
Smethemedede	11¼	2/-

Table 3.04: South Brent Demesne c.1307

Arable	Acres	Value per acre
(Curia with garden)	3½	(6/8 total)
Puryhey	1¾	1/2
Halleforlong	19	4d
Worthy de super molend	2½	3d
Mulforlang	20	4d
Crofforlang	1	4d
Rothenhulle	11	3d
Flexlonde	5½	3d
Brokeshened	2½	3d
Ganelacre	5	3d
Berbruttesclyne	1½	4d
" "	1	4d
Balforlang	10	4d
Horscroft Major	14½	1/-
Horscroft Minor	8½	1/-
Wydenham Major	39½	1/3
Wydenham Minor	9¾	1/2
Estwydenham	34	1/2
Hutterwydenham	35	1/-
Wydenhamchelfheye	8½	1/2
Senerlang	17	1/-
Pullenclyne	7½	2d
Total arable =	257	
Meadow	Acres	Value per acre
Henacre	49½	2/-

Werham at 54½ acres, while there are another ten furlongs in excess of thirty acres. The size of these units was not static; the demesne in Nywelond measured 82 acres in c.1260, yet by 1515 the total area in Nywelond was only 20 acres, suggesting that it had been broken down into smaller units, each of which received a new name.¹⁶ Neither do the furlongs listed in Fromond's survey appear to be discrete demesne units; where these measure only a few acres they probably represent strips in larger furlongs because even with the larger demesne units we know that customary tenants also held land in the same furlongs as evidenced in 1307 by Richard Sewy paying 5/- to exchange half an acre in La Pullonde for half an acre in Saltelonde 'next to demesne'.¹⁷

A study of place-name elements may help to clarify the nature of the field-system in the four manors. Baker and Butlin state that,

'The elements butt, dole, selion, furlong, shott, flatt, rigg, gore, and others may be indications of former open fields, as such terminology is usual in open field areas, but this use was not exclusive to open fields, and substantiating evidence must be sought in the form of intermixed holdings, general descriptions and, where possible, maps.'¹⁸

There are several hundred field-names mentioned in Brent's medieval documentation and in Table 3.05 I have grouped them by their most significant element into three categories that

¹⁶BL Add.17450; BL Eg.3034.

¹⁷L.10770 m.15-16.

¹⁸A.R.H.Baker and R.A.Butlin, eds., Studies of Field Systems in the British Isles (1973), p.33.

reveal something about the nature of the Brent landscape. The table excludes field-name elements for which there are only one or two examples.

The categories in Table 3.05 are simply analytical conveniences giving at best, in percentage terms, a broad indication of the division between what may have been open fields, enclosed fields and land perhaps more suited to pasture than arable. Nevertheless, it does pose the question that if a two-field system was a means of regulation, 'for integrating, on the same soil, both grazing and crop production in settings poorly endowed with permanent pasture', then with the suggestion in Table 3.05 of open-fields only

Table 3.05: Place-name elements in Brent		
Type	Element	Number
Arable/Open	-Acre	10
	-Hull	13
	-Land	25
	-Furlong	15
	Total	63 (29%)
Enclosure	-Ton	10
	-Huish	3
	-Worth	18
	-Croft	15
	-Hay	11
	Total	57 (27%)
Wet	-Mere	7
	-Pulle	16
	-Ham	28
	-Mede	16
	-Ditch	5
	-More	4
	-Rine	3
	-Bridge	15
	Total	94 (44%)

occupying 29% of the available land within the boundaries of Brent, was there a need for such a strict system?¹⁹

Acre, land, and furlong are clearly place-name elements that we should expect to find where an open-field system was being practised. Bearing in mind Baker and Butlin's note of caution above, we must remember that such terms were not exclusive to open-fields. Acre may be suggestive of an individual strip in a furlong; indeed there are many documentary references to small parcels of land measuring half or one acre in size; but when fields called Ganelacre and Vyfacres have demesne holdings of 10½ and 12 acres respectively, then clearly acre has lost some of its original connotation.²⁰ Hull has to be grouped as open arable because it means 'hill', thus the land should be drier and better suited to arable, except perhaps near the summit of the Knoll where steep slopes and thin soil serve better as pasture. We should expect hull names to appear on Brent Knoll where Brent Hill Field and Mill furlong were still divided into strips at the time of the Tithe Map. However, not all hull names are on Brent Knoll; Nettelhulle and Nettelwortheshulle are in Berrow, devoid of any obvious hills except the coastal dunes. Furthermore, the element worth suggests an enclosure.

Enclosure elements ton, huish, worth, croft and hay are

¹⁹H.S.A.Fox, "Some ecological dimensions of medieval field systems", in K.Biddick, ed., Archaeological Approaches to Medieval Europe (1984), p.127.

²⁰See Tables 3.01, 3.03 and 3.04 above.

not straightforward either. Some of these must have been divided into strips by the fourteenth century for in Lympsham in 1307 Bartholomew Pruet exchanged his acre in Bradeham for William Stephen's acre in Westesutton; in 1346 John Crey exchanged his acre of land in La Hamme for William Selyman's acre in Hywysh; in 1307 Thomas Sarresone exchanged his acre in Bynortheyedeneworth; in 1314 Galfrid Foughel exchanged two acres in Bencroft and in 1340 William Stephen paid £1 for 3 acres in Abbotshaye.²¹ It is clear that despite their enclosure type suffixes, these examples had all been subdivided into smaller parcels as had happened elsewhere in Somerset.²² Thus to categorize field-names according to whether their final elements are suggestive of open-field subdivisions or of enclosures is irrelevant for the fourteenth century.

If subdivision of furlongs was commonplace in Brent in the fourteenth century, then the need to search for evidence of a two- or three-field system becomes a little more exigent. The wetland place-name elements may provide a clue, in so far that this category comprises such a large proportion in Table 3.05 and reinforces the impression given by the map evidence and what is obvious to the naked eye when looking at the landscape; that the bulk of Brent lies on alluvium only 16-18ft above sea-level and bounded by three rivers and a stream.

²¹L.11252 m.16-17v; L.11251 m.11, 38-39v; L.11252 m.16-17v; L.10771 m.10r-v; L.10773 m.12, 33-34v.

²²M.Costen, 'Huish and Worth: Old English Survivals in a later Landscape', Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History 5 (1992), p.81.

It is unquestionably a wet landscape necessitating large-scale drainage; thus the boundaries of fields are ditches or the larger rhynes.

Pulle and Mere names would seem to indicate furlongs including or adjacent to pools or lakes, although there is the possibility that mere may refer to a boundary. Despite the wet nature of the field-name, there are still examples of such furlongs being divided into parcels suggestive of arable use; John le Wroughte exchanged his acre of land in Gesemere between the lands of Radulf Ellef and Richard Cole in 1348; Berrow demesne included an acre in Bystepull in 1307.²³ Names ending in ditch and brigg tend to be what they purport. Most mede names refer to meadow although occasionally an arable use is evident as when workers from East Brent were presented for damaging crops in Langemedede in 1307.²⁴ Ham, or rather hamme, is the most common place-name suffix in Brent. This is hardly surprising considering the convoluted boundaries to the estate on the north and south. Certainly the topography and the predominance of the hamme form over the ham in the medieval documentation would support Gelling's preferred interpretation of hamme as 'place hemmed in by some feature of topography, often by water or marsh'.²⁵ Once again, the fact that it is a wetland name does not mean that its use was restricted to pasture or meadow; it is commonplace

²³L.11179 m.45r-v. See also Table 3.03 above.

²⁴L.10770 m.15-16.

²⁵M.Gelling, Place-Names in the Landscape (1984), pp.41-50.

to find hammes in arable use as in Bradehamme in East Brent in 1307.²⁶

If the attempt to group place-name elements into categories that had implications for their use appeared to have a negative outcome, that does not mean that the exercise is without profit. It showed that by the fourteenth century furlongs with old English names had undergone changes. There was an implied flexibility in land-use as evidenced by names ending in londe being used for meadow and those ending in mede being under the plough; furlongs with enclosure names could be use for arable, pasture or meadow as also could hammes. The widespread evidence of furlongs of all three groups in Table 3.05 being subdivided and the extensive drainage works necessary to enable arable agriculture to flourish on the alluvium, are all indicative of a high degree of organization.

THE SEARCH FOR AN OPEN-FIELD SYSTEM; MAPS.

If the Orwins' second criteria for open-field agriculture appears to hold true for Brent, that there were holdings scattered in small strips through the fields, then perhaps by locating these within the landscape we may gain some understanding of the field system in use. In Figures 3.07 - 3.10 I have plotted medieval field names that survived to be included in the Tithe Map schedule of 1839, along with names from the Tithe survey that may be of use in analyzing the medieval landscape, such as Challenge Mead, East Field,

²⁶See Table 3.01 above.

Shephards Wall and Mill Field. In an attempt to clarify something of the shape of the medieval fields, most of the smaller boundaries have been taken out, leaving only the roads and longer field boundaries, that is those having four or more boundaries abutting them.²⁷ This does leave a number of longitudinal divisions that would seem to lend themselves to further division into strips in all four manors, for example: in Brent Hill Field and East Field in East Brent; Great Leaze, High Mead and Honey Mead in Lympsham; in Langland and Sandridge in Berrow and in Burmede and Wick in South Brent.

In East Brent, the 25¼ acres of demesne in Hardland was sown with oats during 1313-4 and with beans in 1330-1.²⁸ Longland seems to have been meadow as there are numerous references to the sale of winterhay, an understandable use as it is situated adjacent to the course of the River Siger.²⁹ There are a few indications that Longland was also used for arable, for example when Reginald Sparke exchanged an acre of land in Langelond in 1350.³⁰ We have to take a little care over references to Longland as Figure 3.09 shows that an area of Berrow was also so called and rarely do the documents indicate in which of the four manors a field was situated.

²⁷This is similar to an approach used in T. Williamson, 'The Roman countryside: settlement and agriculture in NW Essex', *Britannia* 15 (1984), pp.225-230.

²⁸L.10656 m.19-24 and L.10761 m.22.

²⁹L.11271 m.1-4 contains one example for 1302-3, but there are many other examples.

³⁰L.11222 m.28r-v, 30.

The Pound Field, if it was the same as La Pondfalde in 1300, had timber bought for new gates.³¹ The boundaries of this field in Figure 3.07 indicate two droveways leading into it and as this may be located at a division between arable and pasture, perhaps it is a more logical situation than adjacent to the East Brent crossroads. It is possible that there were pounds in the other manors as John, son of John Batecock atte Wyke acquired 1½-perches in La Poundfelde in 1311-2 and it is possible from the wording of the document that this was next to half an acre of land called La Drofwaye that he had already illegally taken out of demesne 'in the western part of his messuage at La Wyke'.³² Wick is quite clearly in South Brent, so it seems that John Batecock's 1½-perches was in a different Pound Field.

Rowmoor, if this was La Roghemore, was the subject of an exchange of three acres in 1350.³³ However, such an assumption is not safe as the prefix Rogh can be found in Rogheworth in Berrow. La Warth appears to have been pasture in 1333-4.³⁴ Yeo Field is adjacent to its namesake in Lympham on Figure 3.08, reminding us that although we are dealing with four manors, much of the evidence concerns Brent as a single entity and differentiating between the four manors can be difficult. Although Yeo Field appears in the Tithe

³¹L.11272 m.41-44.

³²L.11216 m.12-15.

³³L.11222 m.28r-v,30.

³⁴L.10632 m.12.

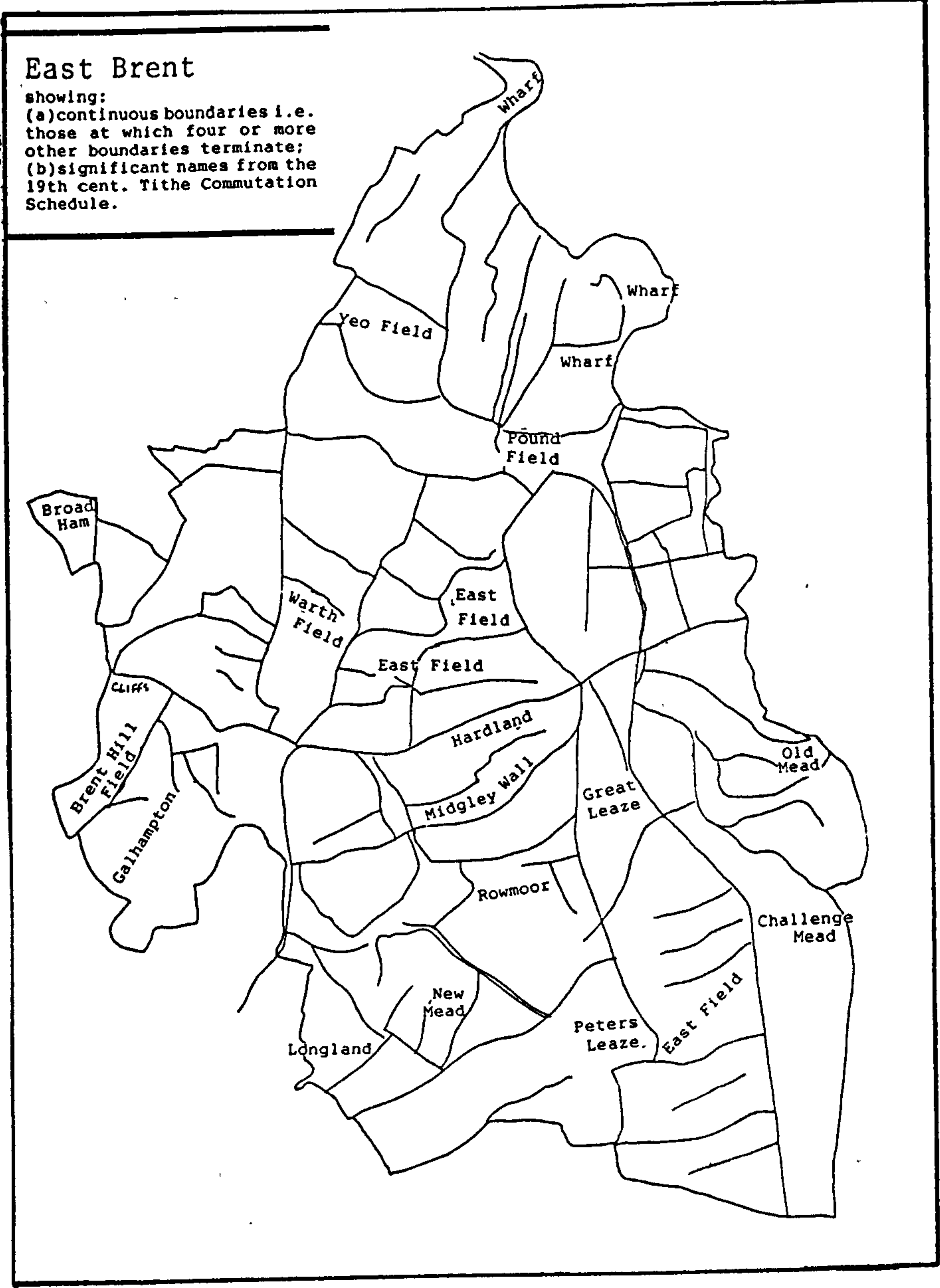


Fig. 3.07

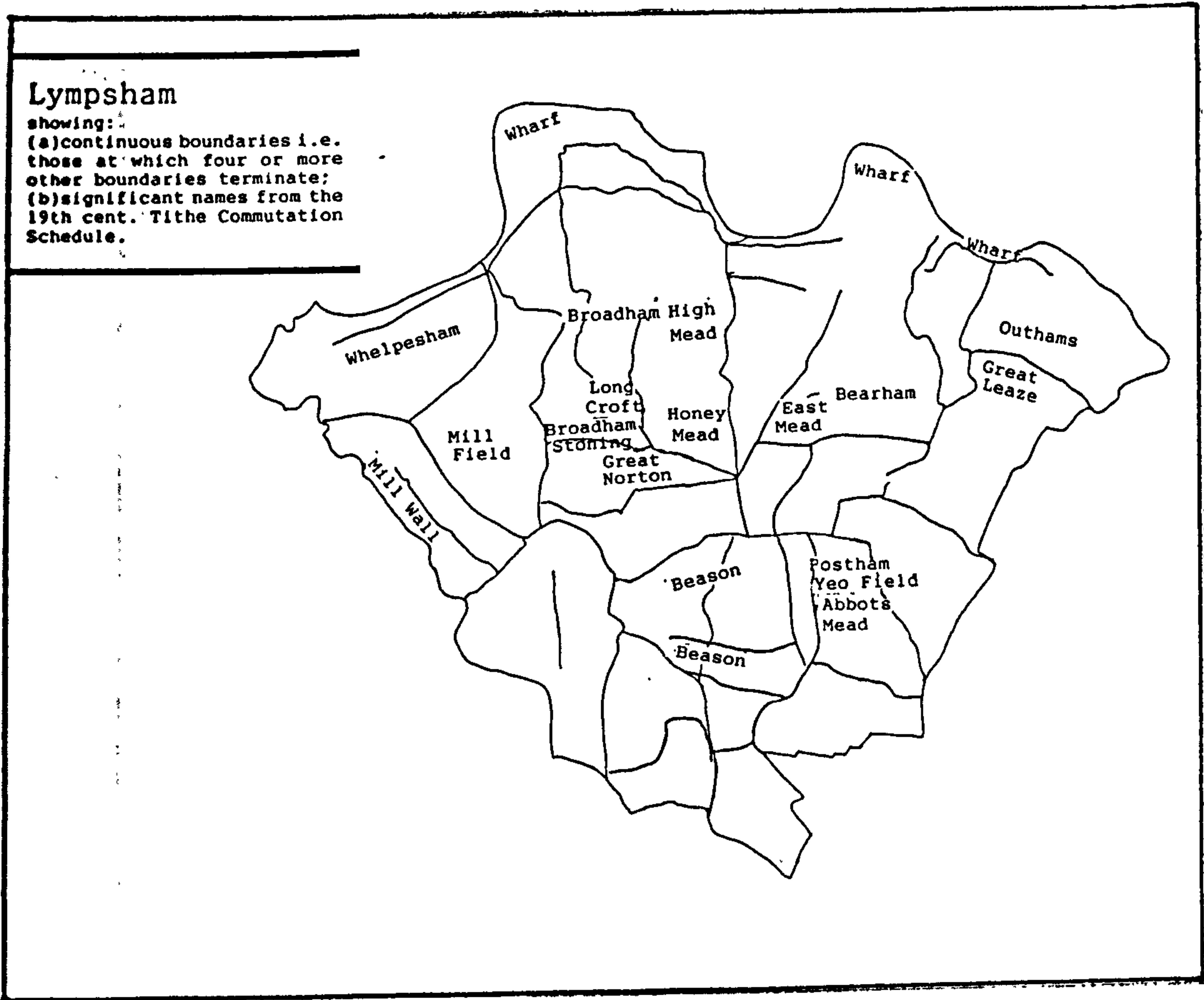


Fig. 3.08

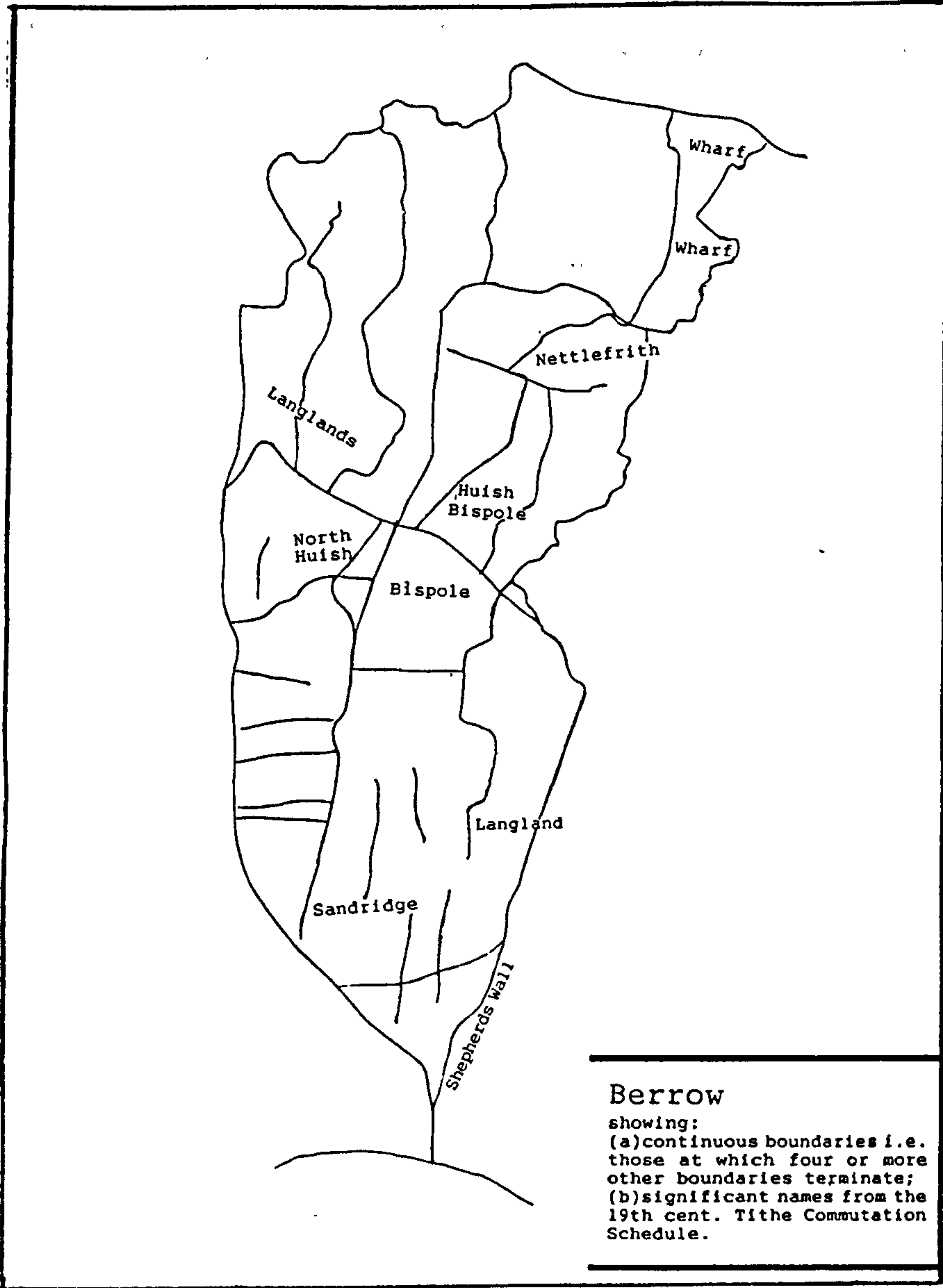


Fig. 3.09

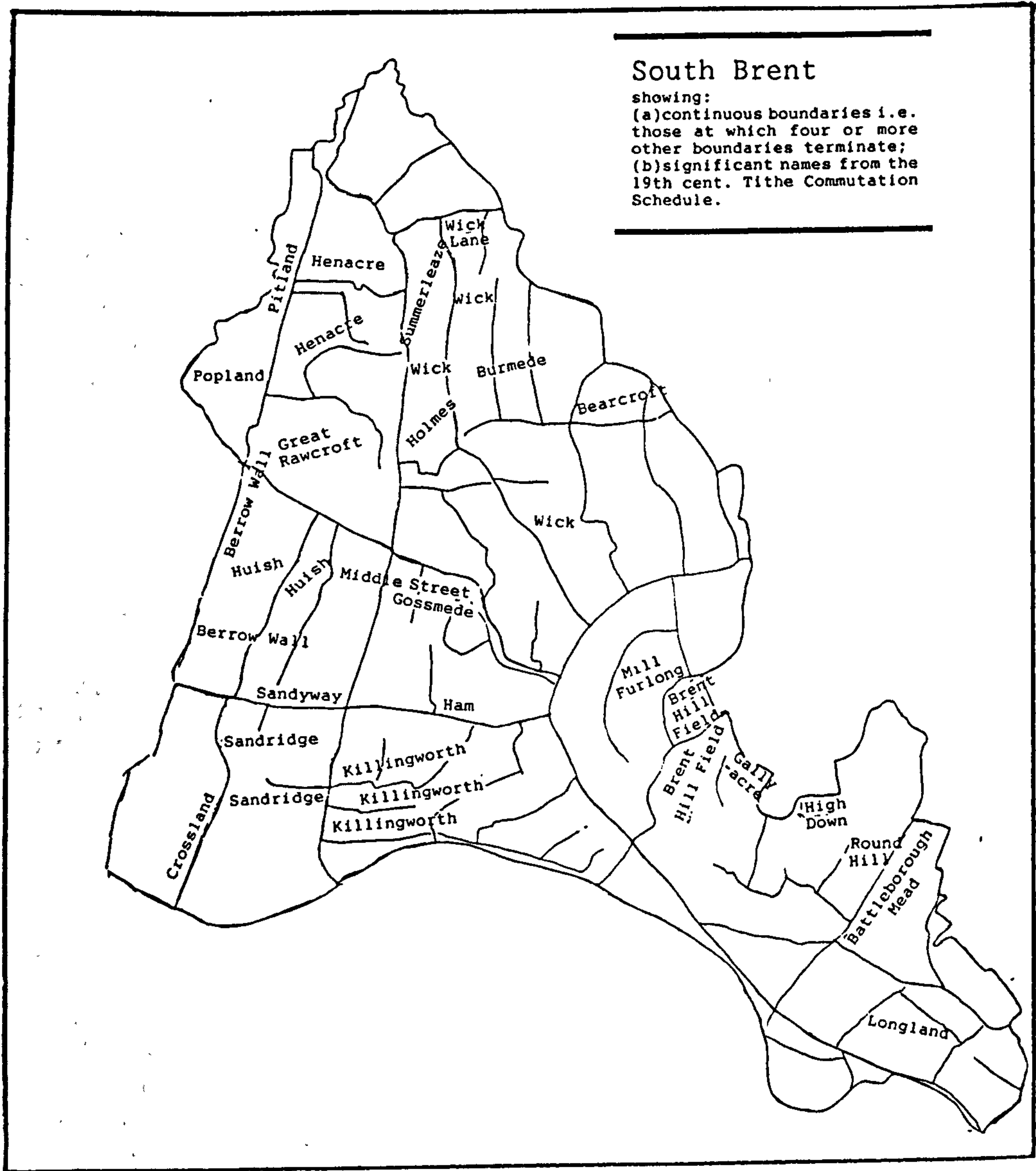


Fig. 3.10



PLATE 3.07 Brent Hill Field. This field was divided into strips as recently as 1839.



PLATE 3.08 Hardland.

schedule for 1839, the nearest references in the medieval documentation are to La Yoo, a probable corruption of Yeo, the local variant of the old English ea meaning 'river'.³⁵ The medieval references support the river interpretation as in 1307 there are exchanges involving William le Tayllour's acre 'next to La Yoo in La Hamme' and Thomas Harding's acre in 'Northfurlong next to La Yoo' and John le Bole's acre 'next to La Yoo at Sarrputt'.³⁶ La Yoo could refer to the River Axe, but it could also be the Pilrow Cut, otherwise known as the Mark Yeo. As the name Yeo field does not appear to be found adjacent to either watercourse in 1839, it is unlikely to be connected with our references for 1307.

Broadham was clearly an arable furlong, as 30½ acres of demesne were growing wheat there in 1311, lying fallow in 1313, growing oats in 1314 and beans in 1333.³⁷ This is suggestive of a three-course rotation of oats, wheat and beans followed by fallow, or spring/autumn/spring crops followed by fallow. Information on one field is insufficient to come to general conclusions about the manor, but it does raise the interesting issue of rotation that will be examined below.

Brent Hill Field, although not named as such in medieval documents, was still divided into strips in 1839 and in Plate 3.7 we can observe its arable use to this day and the shape of

³⁵Gelling, Place-Names, p.20.

³⁶L.11252 m.16-17v.

³⁷L.11216 mm.12-15; L.10656 mm.19-24; L.10766 mm.29-32; L.10632 m.12.

the hedgerows reminiscent of the ox-drawn plough's reversed-S furrow. Challenge Mead is an interesting remnant of a category of landholding headed 'Moremen al[ius] Challengelondmen' under South Brent in the Bere survey of 1515. These men had the duty to gather firewood for the lord and his steward for two days each year and were exempt from certain customary services. There were twelve moormen in South Brent in 1189, one in East Brent and seventeen in South Brent in 1235, nineteen in South Brent in 1260 holding 269 acres and eighteen in South Brent in 1307 holding a total of 270½ acres of moor.³⁸ It would seem that, with one exception, moormen were restricted to South Brent, although in 1260 there is a reference to all villagers in East Brent holding 151 acres of land and moor as overlond.

Thus in East Brent in the fourteenth century it seems that arable could be found in Broadham, Brent Hill Field, Rowmoor, Hardland and probably the area designated later as East Field; meadow was in Longland and perhaps New Mead, Challenge Mead and Old Mead; pasture could be had on Brent Knoll, along the wharves and after harvest in the arable.

In Lympsham, Whelpeshamme as listed in Table 3.02, suggests that a crop-fallow system was in operation because according to Fromond's survey the value per acre was only 5d in alternate years when it was cultivated. However, the account rolls show that it was normally let out to all the men

³⁸Jackson, Soliaco, p.67; BL Add.17450; BL Eg.3321.

of Lympsham for pasture at five shillings per annum. The fact that account rolls for even and odd numbered years show that it was let out for pasture indicates that in reality it was not cultivated in alternate years. Furthermore, in the Beere survey of 1515 its 37 acres are divided up among the tenants as pasture for 37 animals.³⁹ Beans were grown in 32 acres 3 perches in 1314 and in 1330, so there were occasions on which it was cultivated but apart from some of it being used as meadow in 1333 the other account rolls clearly refer to its use as pasture.⁴⁰

Beason, as Beston, and Norton were also arable fields as each have a reference to the payment of cornbote on wheat in those two fields in 1349.⁴¹ Abbot's Mead may be suggestive of meadow, but a reference to an easement on one acre of land in this field in 1344 is indicative of arable usage.⁴² The duplication of Yeo Field in Lympsham and East Brent applies also to Broadham, but unfortunately our medieval references are all to the East Brent field of that name.

Honey Mead is a reminder of the honey renders due from free tenants and also from customary tenants who took on 5 acres or 2½ acres of overlond evident in the surveys.⁴³

³⁹BL Eg.3034 f.147.

⁴⁰L.10766 mm.29-32; L.10761 m.22.

⁴¹L.11222 m.9r-v.

⁴²L.10774 m.9r-v.

⁴³Jackson, Soliaco, p.64 et seq.

Although the tithe map shows this area to be in Lympsham, the three medieval references to Honey Mead in the court rolls all come from East Brent and South Brent entries. In East Brent, Radulf Sabine paid an entry fine of £1.10s for a ferdel and 2½ acres of Honey Mead and 3 acres of Morland in 1308.⁴⁴ In South Brent, John Janot entered half a ferdel and inter alia 1½ acre of meadow in Honey Mead of overlond in 1340.⁴⁵ The examples of Yeo Field and Broadham above might indicate that there were Honey Meads in several of the Brent manors, but there is a strong suggestion here that despite the provenance of the tenant, he was able to hold land in any of the four manors, or at least this might be the case if he was taking on overlond. Thus in Figure 3.08, arable could be found in Beason, Norton, Abbot's Mead and occasionally in Whelpesham; meadow lay in Honey Mead and pasture in Whelpesham. If Outhams is a corruption of Outerfordham, then Table 3.02 would indicate that 17 acres of this was arable, although the account rolls show that as much as 30 acres could be rented out as pasture.⁴⁶

In Berrow, exchanges in 1314 and 1346 are suggestive of arable in Huish and Bispole.⁴⁷ Nettlefrith in the tithe schedule is not mentioned as such in the medieval documents but is clearly related to Nettleworthy, Nettelhulle and

⁴⁴L.11253 m.12.

⁴⁵L.10773 m.12.

⁴⁶L.11272 mm.41-44; L.11216 mm.12-15.

⁴⁷L.10771 m.10r-v; L.11251 m.38-39v.

Natelandworth. Natelandworth's 27 acres of common was nearly arable in 1283, but it also brought in 12/9 as rent for fallow-pasture in 1283-84 and 1284-85. Apart from a few references to 2 acres of land in Cambridge, the overwhelming evidence reveals that this was meadow. It is not clear whether the 27 acres appear in Table 3.03, but



PLATE 3.09

Honeymede, Lympsham



PLATE 3.10

Bispole, Berrow

Netelwortheshulle. Nettleworthy's 27 acres of demesne was clearly arable in Table 3.03, but it also brought in 12/9 as rent for fallow-pasture in 1311-12 and 11/10 in 1313-14.⁴⁸ Apart from a few references to 2 acres of land in Sandridge, the overwhelming evidence reveals that this was meadow. It is a little surprising that it does not appear in Table 3.03, but perhaps that can be explained by the fact that as much as 22½ acres was let out in life-rents in 1302-3 although by 1313 five acres of demesne in Sandridge were being mown by the customary tenants of Berrow.⁴⁹

Longlands is duplicated in quite different parts of Berrow and it is difficult to differentiate between the medieval Longlands in Berrow, East Brent or South Brent. It is possible that these fields once formed part of the holding of Lord Nicholas de Langelond who held four half-virgates and three ferdels in East and South Brent in the early fourteenth century, but there is no reference to Longlands specifically in Berrow. Lord Nicholas also held land in Popland, which in the absence of particular description is suggestive of arable.⁵⁰ Sandridge and Huish are duplicated in South Brent but only occasionally do the documents differentiate between them in the two manors.

Henacre was a rich meadow that frequently brought in

⁴⁸L.11216 mm.12-15; L.10656 mm.19-24.

⁴⁹L.11271 mm.1-4; L.10656 mm.19-24.

⁵⁰L.10654 m.32-34; BL Eg.3321.

revenue in the form of winterhay varying between 1/1 in 1330-1 to 16/8 in 1313-14, although in the latter year 49 acres of corn were weeded in Henacre as part of winter-works.⁵¹ This apparent contradiction can perhaps be explained by the numerous holdings of overlond in Henacre especially noticeable in the Fromond survey and that the total area of Henacre measured in Beere's survey amounted to 116½ acres.⁵²

The Wick was held by Wickmen who ranked as ferdellers or five-acremen, but were excused services and charged a lower rent for holding a wick.⁵³ Philip de Wika in 1235 held a ferdel and one ewe and twelve cows for a rent of 1/-. If he did not hold the wick he was to pay 1/3 rent and to do the same customary services as other ferdellers.⁵⁴ The key differences between wickmen and other tenants was that they held livestock, presumably of the demesne, on their wick holding, for a reduced rent and relaxation of normal services for their rank in Brent society. Although not specified, it would seem possible that to hold the wick would enable the tenant to have the use of the extra pasture for his own livestock while sharing with the demesne animals. This arrangement was also optional and indeed there are cases of people commuting their wicks; Robert le Whyte paid 1/- for

⁵¹L.10761 m.22; L.10656 mm.19-24.

⁵²BL Eg.3321; BL Eg.3034.

⁵³There has been an impression that it was the wickmens' task to maintain walls and sluices, but this was a commonplace service among customary tenants in Brent.

⁵⁴Rentalia, p.39.

this in 1311-12.⁵⁵ Wickmen were not confined to South Brent. In 1235, East Brent had one wickman, Lympsham one, Berrow two and South Brent two; while Lympsham church was obliged to have six oxen with the lord's oxen, six cows with the lord's cows, six calves with the lord's calves, one affer with the lord's affers, one sow with twelve piglets with the lord's piglets, four hens and one cock. Meanwhile the whole township of Lympsham held twelve cows and six ewes in their communal capacity as wickmen.⁵⁶ Once again, irrespective of the situation of the field, tenants of any of the four manors may have an interest in it.

Burmede, adjacent to the wick, was being let as meadow in 1302-3 and 1304-5.⁵⁷ Bearcroft appears to have been arable as was Brent Hill Field like its namesake in East Brent.⁵⁸ If this was also Brentehull, it was the subject of an inter-tithing grazing dispute in 1345.⁵⁹ Gallyacre, as Ganelacre on Brent Knoll, was also arable as it had 10 acres sown with wheat, but the crop failed in 1345.⁶⁰ Battleborough was held by Richard de Cunteville in 1235 as five virgates; this was one of the sub-tenancies identifiable in Domesday and subject to military service.

⁵⁵L.11216 mm.12-15.

⁵⁶Rentalia, p.51.

⁵⁷L.11271 mm.1-4; L.11215 mm.35-37.

⁵⁸L.11251 m.38-39v.

⁵⁹L.11251 m.10r-v.

⁶⁰L.10774 m.36-37v.



Plate 3.11 Part of the Wick, looking towards Brent Knoll.



Plate 3.12 South Wick



PLATE 3.13

Henacre, South Brent



PLATE 3.14

Burmead, South Brent

A feature of the landscape that is not revealed in Figures 3.07 - 3.10 is a series of strip lynchets on the Knoll. Believed to be medieval, they perhaps represent the strongest evidence of strip agriculture left on the ground and can be seen in Plates 3.17 and 3.18 below. Macnab calculated that a flight of terraces of 5-6 acres would have been needed to support one family.⁶¹ One family would have found it difficult to shift sufficient earth to create just one of the Brent Knoll lynchets and it is doubtful if the total area of these examples constitute five acres. The nearest settlement to the lynchets is Battleborough, at one time the holding of free tenants of some substance, the Cuntevilles; perhaps they had the manpower and motivation to create the lynchets? Another possibility might be that the strips were associated with a castle on the Knoll, because they are closer to the summit than to Battleborough. Whittington notes that the thirteenth century was one of deteriorating climate with variations between drought and superfluity of rain so that acreage which was marginal owing to a tendency to marshiness would have to be given up.⁶² This might apply to Brent, although the indications so far are that the alluvium seemed to be fully exploited. As will be shown later, flooding could be a problem, but the additional arable provided by these lynchets was no more than marginal. It has been suggested that lynchets may have been used for special crops like hemp,

⁶¹J.W.Macnab, 'British strip lynchets', Antiquity 39 (1965), p.287.

⁶²G.Whittington, 'The distribution of strip lynchets', Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers (1962), p.122.

flax or vines.⁶³ If the lynchets in Brent did constitute a vineyard, they must have been operated by one of the free tenants for his own use because vineyard work was a prominent tenurial service among the customary tenants, but not in Brent.⁶⁴ Flax is more intriguing because in 1307 two tenants in East Brent, John Cais and Richard Seaman, whose basic holdings were 3 acres and 1½ acres respectively, were both recorded as paying 1½d for an unspecified amount of land in Flexhulla.⁶⁵ Might this have been an oblique reference to lynchets on the hill where flax was grown? While we can speculate about the lynchets, there is a limit to the deductions we can make owing to the scarcity of supporting archaeological and documentary evidence.

The analysis of Figures 3.07 - 3.10 may have given us some insight into the nature of the landscape of Brent. The continuous boundaries make it easier for us to think about a landscape divided into sub-rectangular units, slightly reminiscent of Romano-British field systems, that would lend themselves to further sub-division.⁶⁶ We have an understanding of the location of meadow and some of the arable. We have learned that tenants could farm holdings in any of the four manors. It is clear that geographical

⁶³P.Wood, 'Second excavation of the strip lynchets at Bishopstone, near Swindon, Wiltshire, June 1955', Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine, 57, p.22.

⁶⁴Vineyard service took place in Mark and Panborough.

⁶⁵BL Eg.3321.

⁶⁶See especially details of Dunstan's Clump and Grassington in B.Jones and D.Mattingly, An Atlas of Roman Britain (1993), pp.251-2 and 255-7.

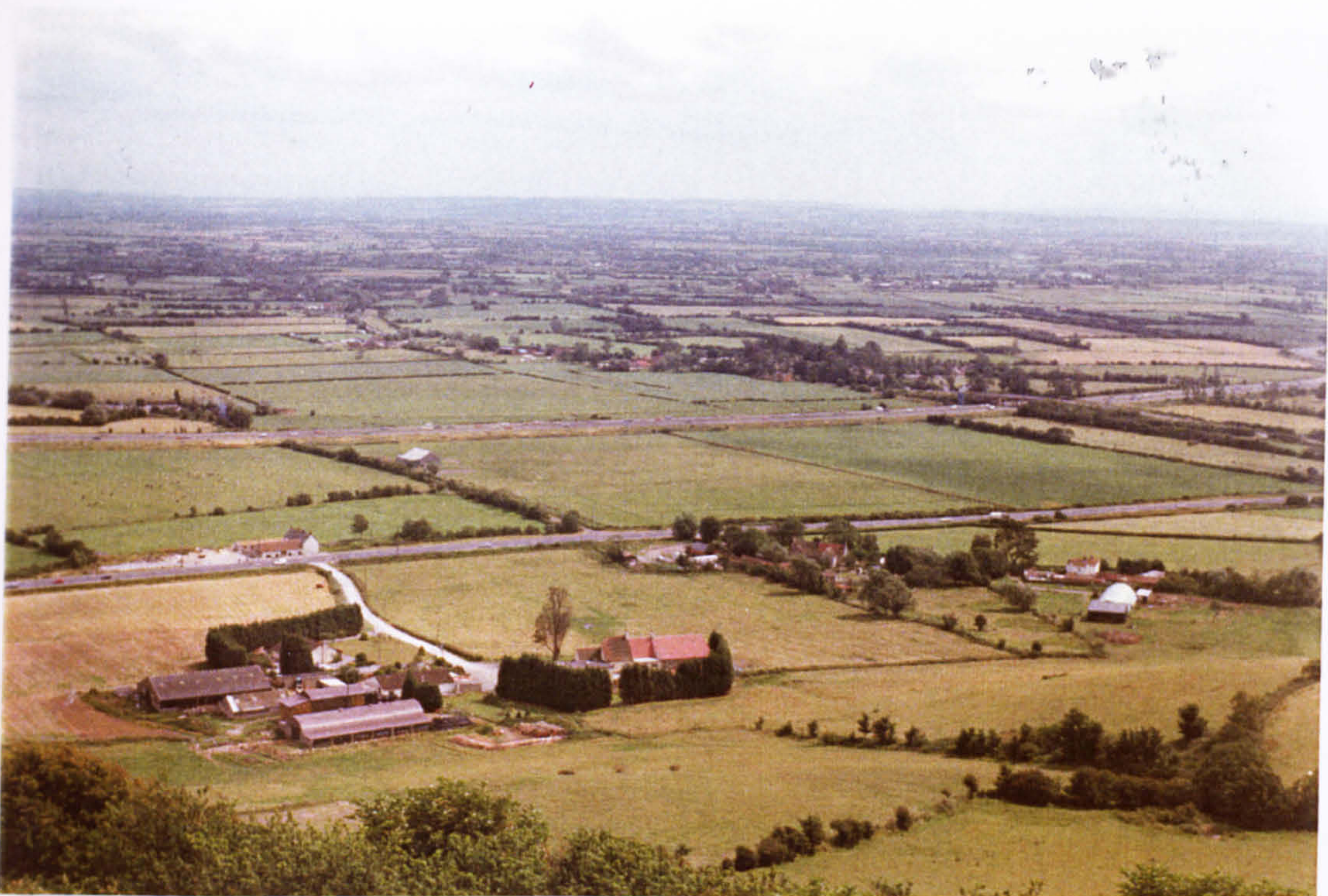


Plate 3.15 Battleborough. The farm in the foreground is Upper Battleborough Farm. Battleborough House is situated in the cluster of trees before the main road. The farm to the right of the picture is Lower Battleborough Farm.



Plate 3.16 Killingworth



PLATES 3.17 and 3.18 Strip Lynchets. Note the people in these photographs; they give some idea of scale, indicating the large earth moving operation involved.

remoteness on the alluvium was no bar to arable farming in medieval times. Indeed at the other extreme, the lynchets evident in Plates 3.17 and 3.18 indicate that even on the steep slopes of Brent Knoll, the soil could be persuaded to grow crops. However, the maps only show us the location of a very small proportion of the furlong names contained within the medieval documentation and they have not really brought us any closer to discovering if there was a two- or three-field system in operation. To do this, we need to return to the demesne fields of 1307 and pick up on the point prompted by the crop rotation revealed in Broadham.

THE SEARCH FOR AN OPEN-FIELD SYSTEM; ROTATION.

In Tables 3.06 - 3.09 are set out the demesne fields listed in the Fromond survey together with details of acreage sown with wheat, beans and oats according to the account rolls of 1311-12, 1313-14 and 1314-15. These particular rolls are the nearest we get to a continuous run, as well as being the most detailed. The absence of a roll for 1312-13 makes it difficult to discern any particular system of rotation, while the sowing of one winter and two spring crops adds to the problem. Whereas there was a tendency for numerous furlongs in East Brent and South Brent to grow the same crops in 1311-12 as in 1313-14, the same pattern cannot be deduced in Lympsham and Berrow. That rotation was practised there is no doubt; Saltelonde in East Brent shows this clearly, but we look in vain for a repetition of its pattern of Oats/possible fallow/wheat/beans elsewhere. There is no identifiable

TABLE 3.06: East Brent Crop Rotation					
Furlong	Acres 1307	Acreage of crops sown (W=wheat, O=oats, B=beans, P=pulse)			
		1311- 2	1312 -3	1313- 4	1314- 5
Ganelacre	5½	5½ W		5½ W	
Bythemersch	2¾	2¾ W		2¾ W	
Esteregarston	24				24 W
Westeregarston	11½				11½ W
Sylydeworth	13	13 B		13 B	
Bradehamme	30½	30¾ W		F	30½ O
O.de Rokesmull	15¾	15¾ B			
Saltelonde	39½	39½ O		39½ W	39½ B
Hardelonde	32½			25¾ O	4 P
Lytelhywych	9	9 B			9 B
Droseneworth	11¼				11¼ B
Horscroft	32½	32½ W		32½ B	17 B 15 O
Totals					
WHEAT		71½		47¾	35½
BEANS		37¾		45½	76¾
OATS		39½		25¾	46
FALLOW		79		108¾	65½

TABLE 3.07: Lympsham Crop Rotation					
Furlong	Acres 1307	Acreage of crops sown (W=wheat, O=oats, B=beans)			
		1311- 2	1312 -3	1313- 4	1314- 5
Utterefordham	17			15 W	
Overefordham	55			53 W	
Warpole/S'pull	35	36 O		35½ O	
Nywenham Maj.	35½	35½ W			17½ B
					18 O
Nywenham Min.	13½	13½ O			13½ B
Nywecroft	35	25 W			33 W
					35 O
Werham	54½	51½ B		51½ B	37½ W
					7 O
Bradeworth	9½	9½ B		9½ W	9½ B
Welpesham	32½				32½ B
Totals					
WHEAT		60½		79¾	70½
BEANS		61		51½	73½
OATS		49½		35½	60
FALLOW		116¾		121½	117

TABLE 3.08: Berrow Crop Rotation

Furlong	Acres 1307	Acreage of crops sown (W=wheat, O=oats, B=beans)			
		1311- 2	1312 -3	1313- 4	1314- 5
Natelond	28 $\frac{1}{4}$			28 $\frac{1}{4}$ W	
Rougheworth	10 $\frac{1}{2}$	10 $\frac{1}{2}$ O			
Redyforlang	21 $\frac{3}{4}$	20 $\frac{1}{4}$ B		24 W	23 B
Vyfacres	12			15 O	
Forthay	15	15 $\frac{1}{2}$ O			16 B
Isyngcroft	11 $\frac{3}{4}$				
Holdeheygh	11 $\frac{1}{2}$	11 $\frac{1}{2}$ O		11 $\frac{1}{2}$ B	11 $\frac{1}{2}$ B
Wulfrynghele	23 $\frac{3}{4}$	9 O		25 O	
Bubbeleheygh	13			13 O	
Netelworthy	27 $\frac{3}{4}$				
Nywelonde	79	79 W		57 B	56 $\frac{1}{2}$ O
					22 $\frac{1}{2}$ W
Nywenhamme	24 $\frac{1}{2}$	25 $\frac{1}{4}$ B			26 $\frac{1}{4}$ B
Totals					
WHEAT		79		52 $\frac{1}{4}$	22 $\frac{1}{2}$
BEANS		45 $\frac{1}{2}$		68 $\frac{1}{2}$	76 $\frac{3}{4}$
OATS		46 $\frac{1}{2}$		53	56 $\frac{1}{2}$
FALLOW		107 $\frac{3}{4}$		105	123

TABLE 3.09: South Brent Crop Rotation

Furlong	Acres 1307	Acreage of crops sown (W=wheat, O=oats, B=beans)			
		1311- 2	1312 -3	1313- 4	1314- 5
Curia/garden	3¼				
Puryhey	1¼				
Halfurlong	19	18¾ W		19 W	
Worthy de Mol.	2½	2½ W		2½ W	
Mulfurlong	20	20 W		20 W	
Crofforlong	1	1 W		1 W	
Rothenhulle	11	11 W		11 W	
Flexlonde	5½	5 W		5½ W	
Brokeshened	2½				Comm.
Ganelacre	5	5 W		5 W	
Berbruttesclyn	2½	1½ W		1½ W	
Balfurlong	10	10 W		10 W	
Horscroft Maj.	14½				7½ B
Horscroft Min.	8¼				8¼ B
Wydenham Maj.	39½				
Wydenham Min.	9¾	9½ B		9¾ B	
Estwydenham	34	30 B		34 B	34 O
Hutterwydenham	35			32 W	12¼ B
W'hamchelfheye	8½				
Senerlang	17			18 O	17 B
Pullenclyne	7½	7½ W		7½ w	
Utomostewyck		14 O			
Totals					
WHEAT		82¼		115	Nil
BEANS		39½		43¾	45
OATS		14		18	34
FALLOW		135¼		80¼	178

pattern in Tables 3.06 - 3.09, but that does not mean that the rotation of crops and the operation of fallow was haphazard. The total figures in Tables 3.06 - 3.09 include figures for fallow, which can be no more than estimates arrived at by deducting the total area under crops from the total acreage listed for 1307. A portion of demesne fallow brought in further income for the lord by being let out for pasture. In Table 3.10 is listed the acreage rented out for 1313-14 and 1314-15, the only years for which we have such details, and it is clear from these figures that there is a pattern in the letting of pasture. Apart from the three furlongs described as meadow, quite a different set of furlongs, or rather portions of furlongs, were let out in 1313-14 than had been let out in the previous year. Some of these furlongs may have been long-term pasture, such as Netelworthy in Berrow, but most were regularly used as arable. The difference between the two totals is small enough to suggest that there was some logic being exercised in the amount of pasture being let out each year. At face value it might be thought that pasture was being alternated each year between these furlongs, but as only a portion of a small number of furlongs in each manor was the subject of annual letting, it would seem that any rotation of pasture letting was more complex.

By expressing Tables 3.06 - 3.09 in graph form in Figures 3.11 - 3.13 it is still not possible to identify any particular pattern. Wheat was the dominant crop in six of the twelve sets and beans in the other six, although the dominance

of beans was mainly in 1314-15, a wet year in which spring crops were substituted for winter crops in Nywelongde and Nywecroft and no wheat was sown at all in South Brent, an indication that this was an unusual year. What does stand out is the large amount of apparent fallow; as much as 48% in East Brent in 1313-4 and 69% in South Brent in 1314-5; but we have to be aware that the recorded area of demesne in 1307 may well have been larger than in 1313-5 while fluctuations in particular demesne fallow is more likely if Brent was managed as one estate.

Despite the discovery of a significant amount of fallow, the tables and figures still do not reveal the operation of a particular type of field system in any of the individual manors. However, if we group them all together, as in Figures 3.14 and 3.15, there is a remarkable consistency in the area of land under crops in each of the three years. The only apparent difference is in the fall in the amount of wheat sown in 1314-15 which may have been due to a wet autumn, but we must take care not to accept this reason too readily. The only direct evidence that we have for wet weather effecting the crops is when we are told that 35 acres in Nywecroft in Lympsham were sown with oats as the 35 acres of wheat there were flooded.⁶⁷ The fact that no wheat was sown in South Brent in 1314-15 may have been a deliberate policy irrespective of the weather, bearing in mind that as much as 48% of South Brent was growing wheat the previous year.

⁶⁷L.10766 mm.29-32.

TABLE 3.10: Letting of Demesne Fallow Pasture				
Furlong	Manor	1313-4 acres	1314-5 acres	Unlet acres
Brokeshende	SB	2½		
Maj.Horscroft	SB	½		
Min.Horscroft	SB	1		
Brodehamme	EB	30½		
Netelworthy	Bw	17¾		10
Nywelonde	Bw	20		59
Nywenham	Bw	19¾		4¾
Warth	Bw	16 animals	14 animals	
Newecroft	L	33		2
Newenham Maj.	L	6		29¾
Newenham Min.	EB mdw	5	5	
Newenham Maj.	EB mdw	13	5	20
Heyemede	L mdw	10	10	43¾
Herdelonde	EB		4	28½
Natelonde	Bw		6½	22
Wolvrynghole	Bw		20¾	3
Fiveacres	Bw		15	-3
Rughwhurthy	Bw		3	7½
Otterfordham	L		17	
Overnortham	L		20	35
Werham	L		14	40
Bubbeleye, Salterhulle & Warepol				
Morlonnd	Bw & L		48	8
Totals		159	176	
less meadow		131	156	

Furthermore, wheat was sown in the other three manors, although in considerably reduced amounts in East Brent and Berrow. It may be that bad weather had seriously hindered the sowing of wheat, but Figures 3.14 and 3.15 show the flexibility inherent in the system to compensate in the following spring. The small variation in the percentage of overall fallow, only four per cent, indicates strong regulation. The analysis has been hampered by the lack of sufficient data, but it does appear that the demesne fields were not managed as four discrete entities but as one estate.

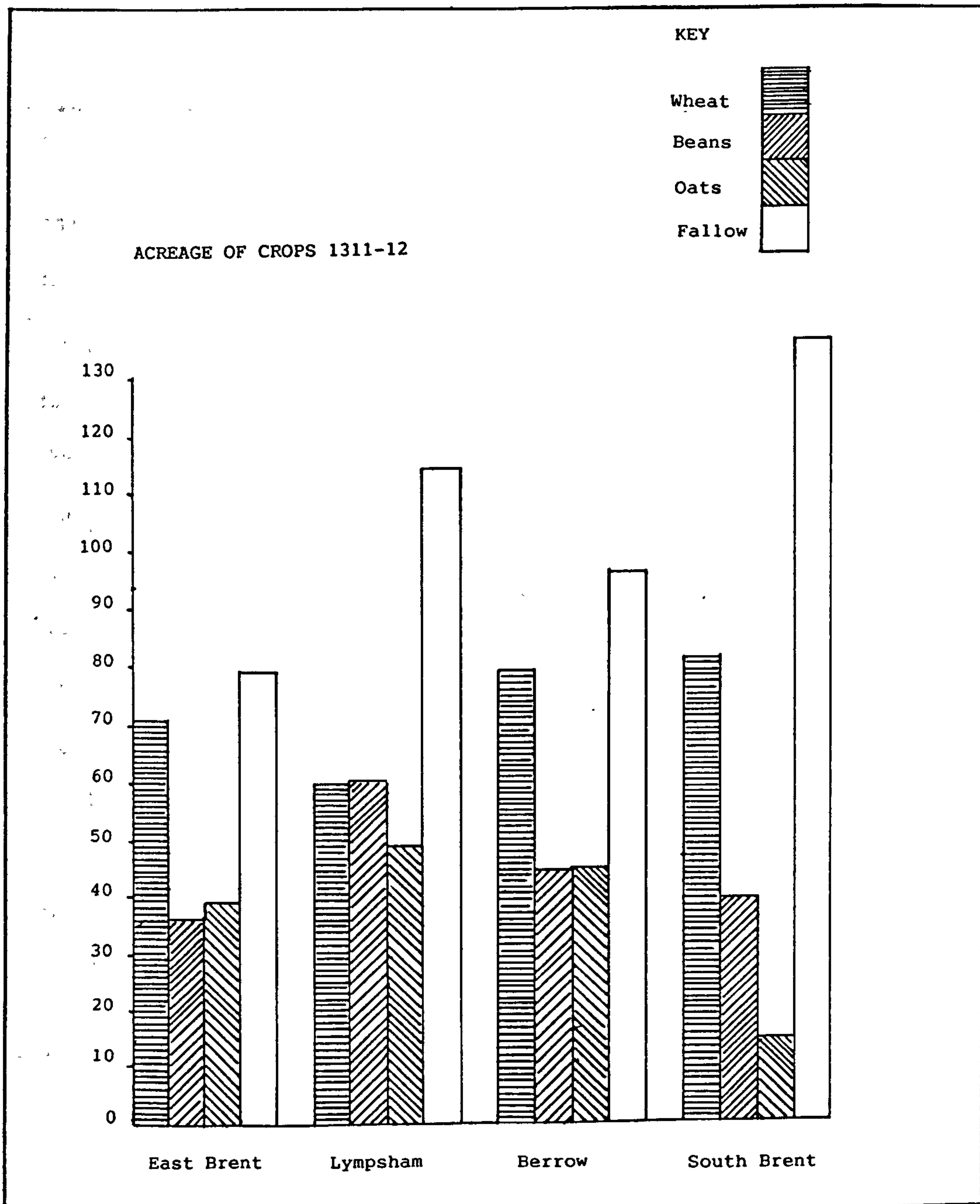


Figure 3.11 Acreage of Crops 1311-12

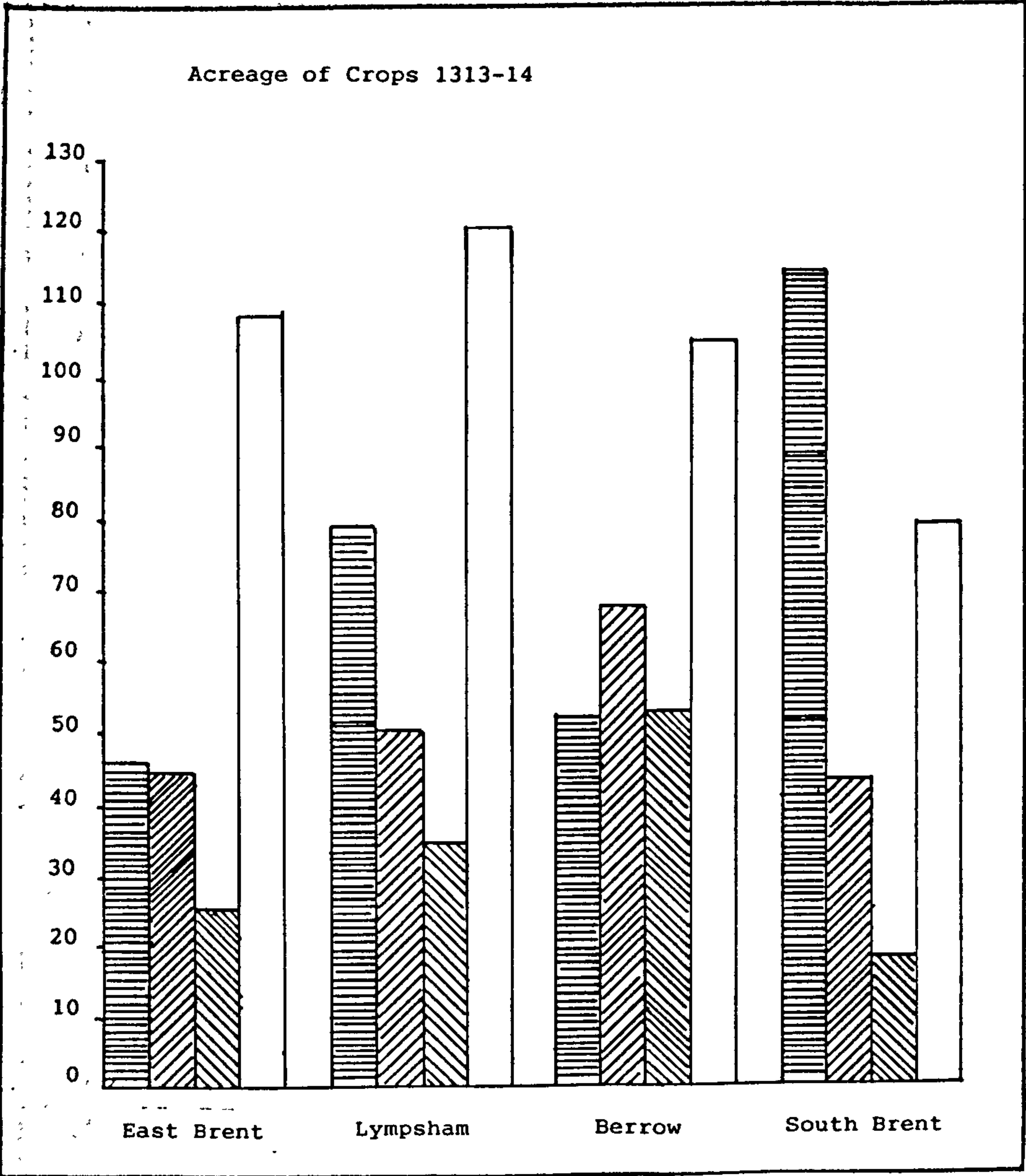


Figure 3.12 Acreage of Crops 1313-14

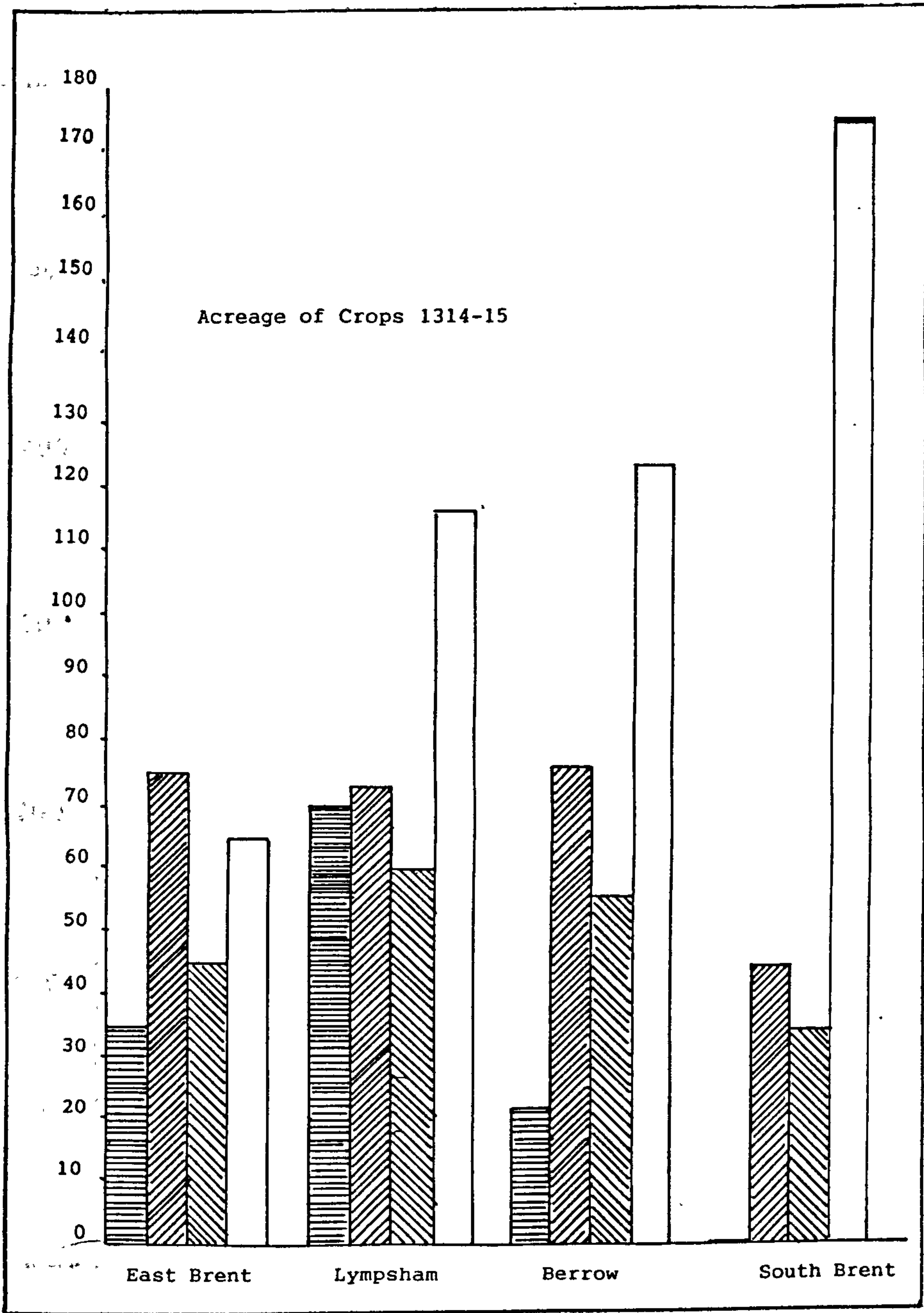


Figure 3.13 Acreage of Crops 1314-15

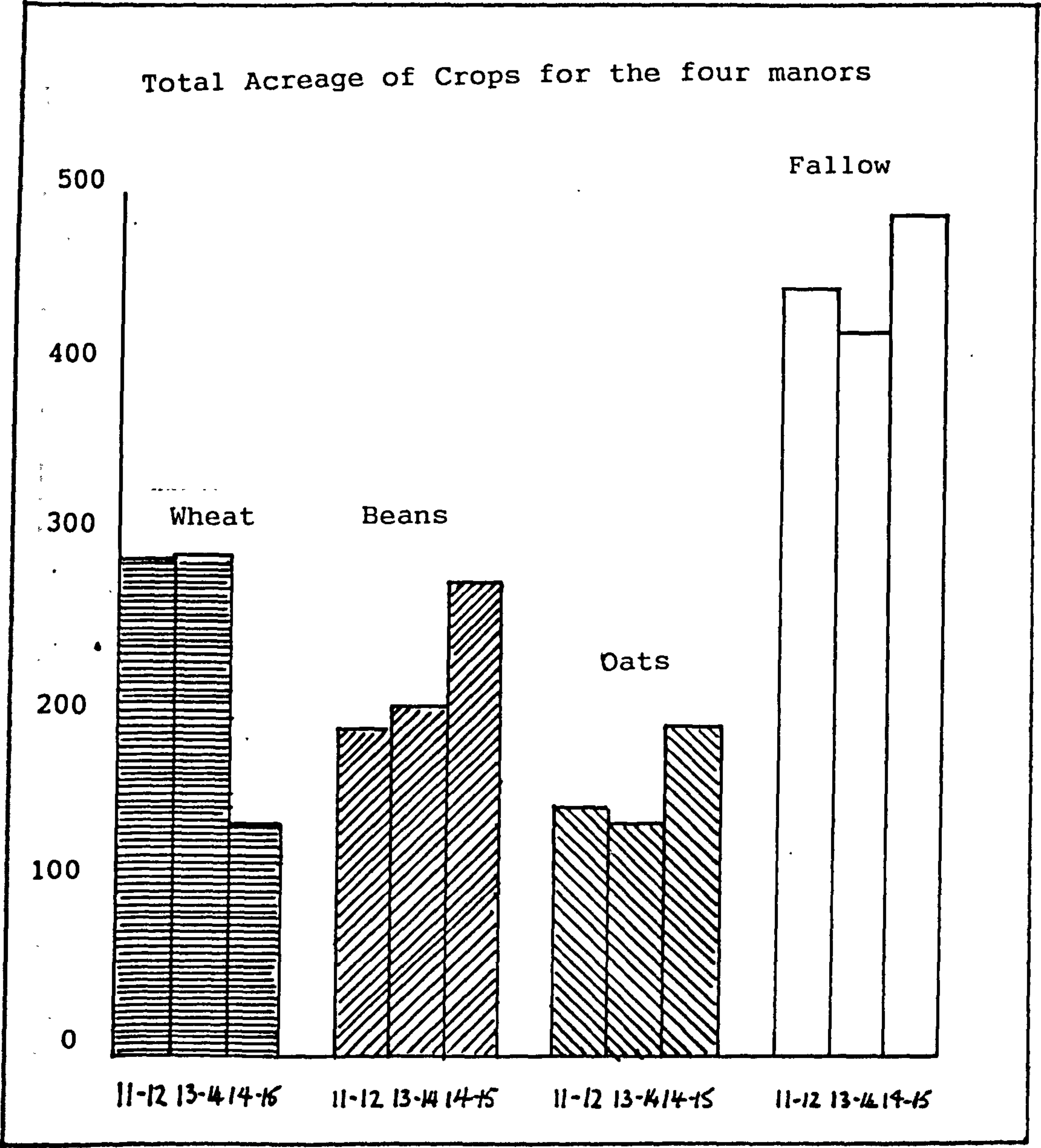


Figure 3.14 Total acreage of crops for the four manors

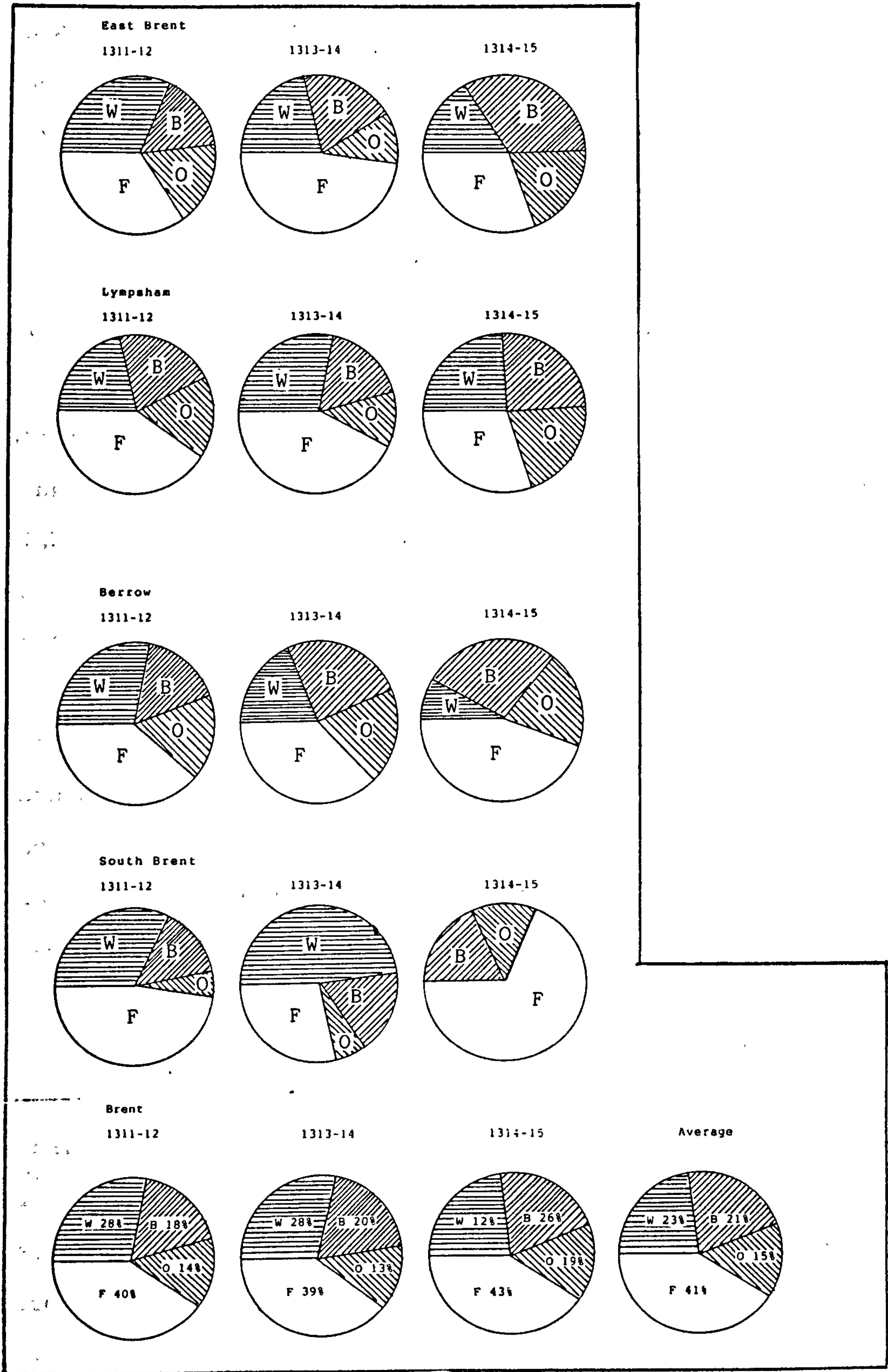


Figure 3.15 Percentage of Arable and Fallow for each of the four manors, and in the fifth row for all of Brent.

This is reinforced by the fact that the surviving accounts and court rolls deal with Brent as one entity, only distinguishing between the individual manors within the Brent rolls when deemed necessary by the clerk.

The amount of fallow evident in Brent may seem surprising in the light of the availability of external pasture in Thurlemere, alias Mark Moor. Mark was a Wells property and as Glastonbury and Wells had a long history of disputes, the monks had taken the precautions of recording Glastonbury's rights as agreed by the Dean of Wells. Among these agreements was the right of the men of the four villages of Brent to pasture their animals in Thurlemere for a modest render each year by the Abbot of five cheeses and three quarts, two bushels of oats. It appears that even the major sub-tenants such as Richard de Santa Barba and Richard de Cunteville and their men also had rights of commoning in Thurlemere.⁶⁸ This was an extensive area of pasture measuring in excess of 1200 acres.⁶⁹

The availability of Thurlemere and the growing of beans on a large scale must have reduced the pressure to fallow within Brent. Nevertheless, a substantial amount of arable was lying fallow in Brent during the early fourteenth century. The Orwins' third criteria, that fields lay fallow every second or third year seems to apply to Brent; Tables 3.06 -

⁶⁸BL Eg.3034, f.131.

⁶⁹P.R.O. Ms. LR 2/202, f.268. A schedule of the Survey of the Moors and Low Grounds, measured 1638.

3.09 show that the vast majority of fields were fallow at least once over a four year span in which one year's data is missing. The fourth criteria, that grazing rights were exercised in common in arable fields also appears to hold true, even if such rights were subject to dispute as in 1345 when the tithings of Snyghampton and Burton pleaded that they had been stopped from grazing on Brentehull for which they claimed they had customary rights of common.⁷⁰

Thus Brent possessed the major features of an open-field system. Perhaps there were not very large arable fields, but there were holdings in strips, there was regular fallowing and there were jealously guarded grazing rights in common. If we cannot establish the pattern of a two- or three-field system, then perhaps it is of no great consequence. To tie down such a large estate to the regulation of its fallow in two or three large blocks of land would have been unnecessarily restrictive. Apart from the furlongs on the knoll, demarcation of furlongs on the alluvium was done by ditching. The need for good drainage was vital; thus furlong sizes were determined partly by drainage. It is also likely that furlongs were subdivided by ditching as individual furlongs could be subdivided for different functions at the same time; Horscroft was growing both oats and beans in 1314-15; parts of some furlongs were set aside for pasture or meadow while the rest was arable. We cannot call it an irregular open-field system; it had such a sophisticated system of regulation to

⁷⁰L.11251 m.10r-v.

maintain a balance between arable, meadow and fallow, that the surviving evidence is inadequate for us to quite understand the full process. What is particularly impressive is the flexibility and organization; thus the conclusion I draw is that Brent enjoyed a 'pragmatic field system'.

WOODLAND

According to Rackham, 'by 1270 woods were valuable property: the return from underwood alone....averaged 6d per acre per year, which was more than from arable land'.⁷¹ Had there been demesne woodland in Brent worth half of Rackham's average figure, then it would have been listed in the medieval surveys. In the Beere survey there is a mention of eight acres of pasture and brushwood in East Garston, but that the brushwood and trees growing there were reserved for the maintenance of the sea-walls.⁷² In the Sully survey of 1189, one of the free tenants of East Brent, William de Hamma held one hurst for the rent of 2d.⁷³ Apart from those two references, there is a paucity of specific references to woodland in surveys dedicated to listing the resources of the estate, and even more significantly, the lack of any reference in Domesday to woodland in Brent when the overwhelming majority of Glastonbury manors have an amount of woodland or underwood given in acres or lineal measurements, would seem to

⁷¹O.Rackham, The History of the Countryside (1986), p.86.

⁷²BL Eg.3034.

⁷³Jackson, Soliaco, p.73.



Figure 3.16 Remnants of woodland in Brent



PLATE 3.19 Giles's Copse to the left of the farmstead.



PLATE 3.20 The Shrubby can be seen above the Church.

represent convincing proof that there was little woodland of significance in Brent. If documentary sources reveal little woodland, that does not necessarily mean that it was entirely absent from Brent. The initial impression would appear to be supported by Rackham's mapping of woodland in Domesday England, indicating that the coastal clay belt and the Levels were devoid of woodland, perhaps suggesting that for geographical reasons trees did not grow in this area in sufficient quantities for them to be recognized as discrete units.⁷⁴ However, in Figure 3.16, Ball Copse, Giles's Copse, The Shrubbery in South Brent and Shipton's Copse in East Brent represent remnants of what would appear to be natural woodland, an idea reinforced by Plates 3.19 and 3.20. However, this woodland is situated on the steep slopes of the knoll and it may be the very marginal nature of this land that has permitted the trees to grow. There is a tendency for woodland to be found on the perimeter of a manor, reflecting the need for arable resulting in assarting towards the periphery. Brent does not fit this mould; fields are found along all the boundaries except the coastal dunes. The irregular nature of Brent's woodland boundaries and the common name 'copse' is suggestive of long use as underwood. Possibly the woodland on the north of the knoll formed part of William de Hamma's holding, but that on the south side is in South Brent.

Plates 3.21 and 3.22 show that along with ditches,

⁷⁴Rackham, History of the Countryside, p.77.



PLATE 3.21 Hedgerows in abundance in East Brent....



PLATE 3.22and in the background of this view of Brent
Broad Rhyne.

hedgerows are commonplace and could be a provider of both timber and firewood. The Beere survey supports this notion when it describes Abbot Selwood's house in East Brent having an orchard circumscribed by 'forest trees, namely elms and oaks....the fuel thence arising is not estimated, because it is kept for the store of the manor house'.⁷⁵ It may be that access to wood from hedgerows and perhaps the moors may have been so free that the need to conserve it in some form of woodland management and to think of it being worth so much per acre was unnecessary. Even so, there was an awareness of the value of individual trees as evidenced in 1345 by the presenting of Alice de Bergh for selling an elm without permission. This tree was growing in her holding, but as she sold it for 1/6 and was fined the same amount, this would suggest that the lord considered timber growing on customary holdings to be his property.⁷⁶

There are no timber-framed buildings in Brent, which might indicate that medieval buildings in this area were of stone. We know that in 1345 William le Ferr, blacksmith, was permitted to erect a new building either of stone or elm which he could cut with the permission of the lord, but such documentary clues to building materials are rare.⁷⁷ Most of the houses in Brent today are modern; very few can be dated to the sixteenth century or earlier, even along the knoll

⁷⁵BL Eg.3034.

⁷⁶L.10774 m.10r-v.

⁷⁷L.10774 m.10r-v.

perimeter road with its 'croft and toft' lay-out. Old stone houses are commonplace on the south facing slopes of Bleadon Hill just across the River Axe. If stone had been a common building material in Brent it is surprising that relatively few stone houses have survived. Even if the walls of the houses were built of stone, there would still have been a demand for wood for doors, rafters, shutters and furniture. Outbuildings, agrarian tools and equipment such as ploughs, harrows and carts; all these formed a demand for a supply of wood.

Orchards provided another source of wood. Figure 3.16 indicates how common these are in Brent and again this notion is supported by the Beere survey in which the messuage descriptions frequently included an orchard, such as Richard Dun of South Brent who held a messuage with curtilage, garden and orchard containing 1 acre 1 perch.⁷⁸ We may not envisage apple or pear trees providing timber, but they were certainly used as underwood in providing implement handles and as teeth in cogged wheels.

The search for Brent's own woodland has revealed a very modest acreage with limited access, plus miles of hedgerows and numerous orchards. Access to the latter may well have been sufficient for the tenants' domestic requirements and perhaps to fulfil the customary obligations of the smaller tenants such as East Brent's 3-acremen who in the early

⁷⁸BL Eg.3034, f.152.

TABLE 3.11: Timber Imports ⁷⁹		
Place	Date	Notes
Bacweresmore	1333/4	for theta & milldam
Glastonbury	1302/3	8 boatloads for theta
	1314/5	Shaft & yard for mill
Northlode	1302/3	
Northwude	1300/1	for thetas
	1302/3	2 trees for mill, theta and bridges
	1314/5	4 oaks
Palmeresmor	1333/4	3 elms
Wales	1314/5	2 joists
Westhay	1274/5	8 boatloads
Shapwick	1282/3	Carpentry
Wrington	1313/4	Sawn beams

TABLE 3.12: Underwood Imports ⁸⁰		
Place	Date	Notes
Glastonbury	1311/2	24 bundles of spars
Godney	1311/2	branches for mill and woven brushwood for ditching.
Hartimore	1311/2	200 saplings for sea defence
Westhay	1274/5	20 alder poles
	1311/2	200 poles for mill
	1314/5	branches for hoist
The More	1314/5	140 alder saplings
Beckery	1311/2	90 hurdles
Wrington	1304/5	300 tines for harrow
	1314/5	2 bundles of withies 400 tines
	1333/4	300 tines 6 bundles of withies

⁷⁹L.10632; L.11271; L.10766 L.11272; L.11244; L.11273 and L.10656.

⁸⁰L.10632; L.11271; L.10766; L.11272; L.11244; L.11273 and L.10656.

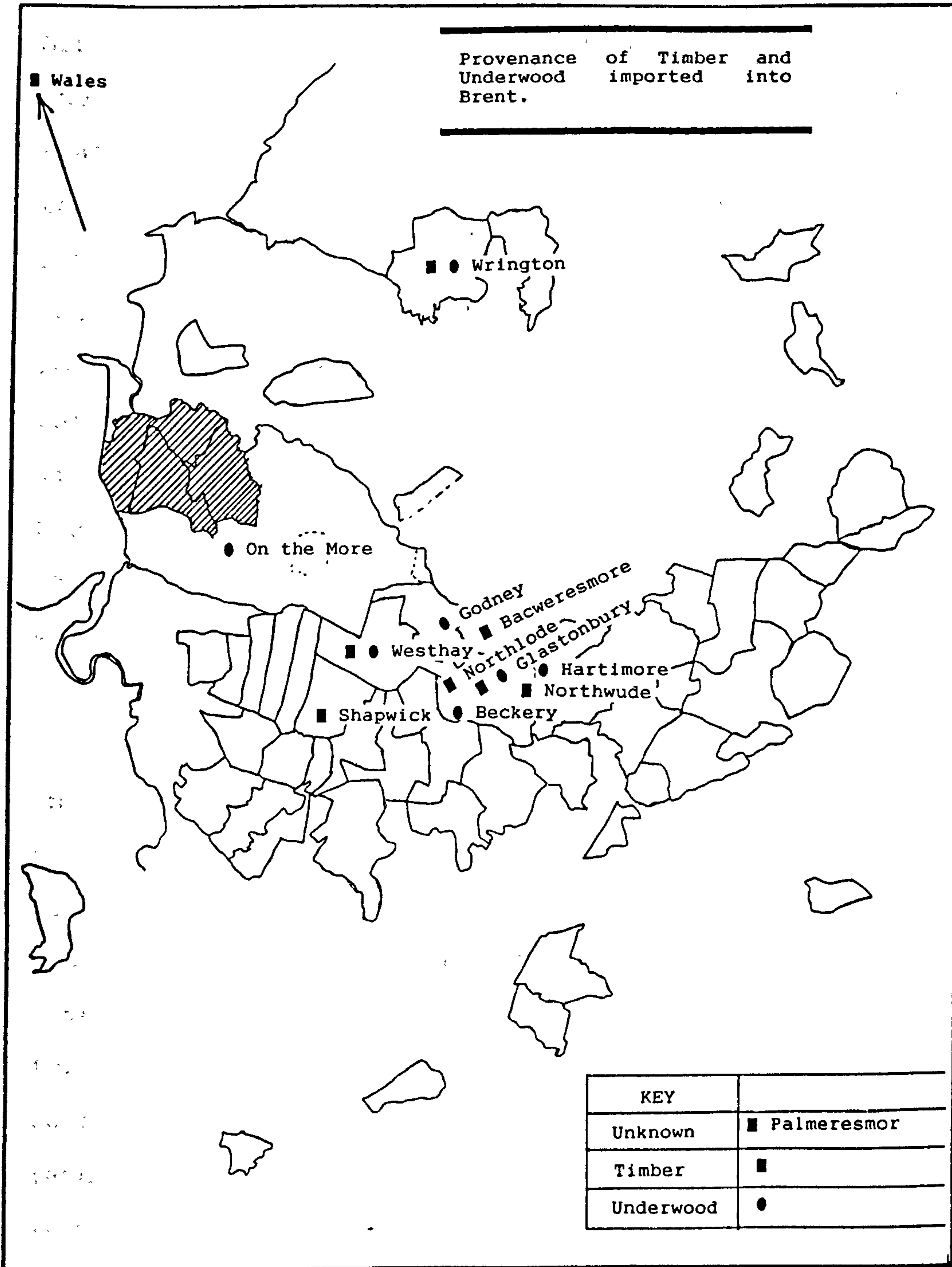


Figure 3.17 Provenance of timber and underwood.

fourteenth century were expected to cut wood for the coming of the Abbot as often as that may be, or the Mora tenants of South Brent who had to cut wood for two days a year and before the coming of the lord whenever he should come.⁸¹ It may be that such firewood originated in Brent, but there is a clue in the same document that alerts us to the possibility that such produce could come from much further afield; Henry Berebred was expected to cut wood in Henhangar and to bring it in a boat for two half-day works. We do not know where Henhangar was. There is an area called Henacre in South Brent and it is likely that wood could have been transported from there to the base of the knoll by way of Pitland Rhyne and Brent Broad Rhyne. However, the place-name element hangar suggests woodland on a slope; Henacre, on the alluvium, is very flat.

The danger in looking for woodland resources in Brent is in expecting there to be self-sufficiency in this ancient estate. If wood resources had been sparse for centuries, and Domesday perhaps suggests this, then it is understandable that wood was imported. Having been a Glastonbury estate since the seventh century, it is only natural that Brent should have looked to its fellow manors with an abundance of wood to supply its needs. Brent had geographic bounds to its landscape, but its economic bounds were much more flexible. In Tables 3.11 and 3.12 we can see the variety of places from which timber and underwood were imported for use on the demesne. In the construction of Figure 3.17, only Palmeresmor

⁸¹BL Eg.3321.

proved elusive. Apart from two joists imported from Wales, all the timber and underwood requirements have been satisfied from within the barony of Glastonbury Abbey. Oak, elm and alder are the only named species. Oak is the great timber provider. Elm also can be used for building but it can also be pollarded and is especially useful 'in a wet environment; it was used for piles, coffins and water mains....the naves of wheels, the seats of chairs, and the heads of mallets'.⁸² Similarly, alder was found useful for 'piles or other submerged purposes'.⁸³ The uses of elm and alder in wet conditions and several references to the use of boats to transport wood, highlight the essential feature of this landscape apart from the knoll; it is a wetland.

WETLAND

The wetland notion is strongly reinforced by Figure 3.18 in which every boundary marked represents a line of water. In most cases these boundaries are marked by ditches or rhynes and many of these are accompanied by hedgerows. Even where roads and tracks form boundaries, these are accompanied by ditches on either side. The large white patch in the central southern part of Figure 3.18 is where the knoll is situated and field boundaries on that tend to be marked just by hedgerows. There are hundreds of ditches, but these are not discrete units of drainage; they form a complex network of

⁸²Rackham, History of the Countryside, p.237.

⁸³W.J.Stokoe, The Observer's Book of Trees, (revised edition 1960), p.127.

waterways providing irrigation as well as drainage. The depth of water in the ditches is controlled by sluice-gates which can be opened to allow excessive water to be drained, or closed to maintain an adequate water-table for optimum grass growth and to provide water for livestock. Such a system requires considerable co-operation among the tenants if it is to operate successfully and here the manorial structure would appear to provide the means to ensure its effectiveness.

Figure 3.18 is based on the first edition of the six-inch ordnance survey, dated 1884. In Plate 3.23 a detailed map of Berrow, dated 1773, indicates that most of the boundaries evident in 1884 existed a hundred years earlier.⁸⁴ It seems likely that a similar situation would apply to the three other Brent manors. Possibly some of the ditches in Figure 3.18 are creations of the 16th - 18th centuries but the lack of a strong lordship over the area after the dissolution of the monasteries must have made the task of co-ordinating drainage very difficult.

Map evidence cannot take us further back than the 18th century, but a glance at Figures 3.07 - 3.10 reminds us that whereas Figure 3.18 shows us all the minor vessels, there are in fact some main arteries, many of which must be very old. Indeed, there is considerable evidence among the surviving medieval documentary evidence to indicate the existence of a sophisticated system of water control in Brent.

⁸⁴Somerset Record Office DD/CC 11467.



Figure 3.18 Ditches and rhynes in Brent



Plate 3.23 Map of Berrow dated 1773.

There are numerous examples of presentations for failure to scour ditches, such as Andrew Springhose whose shortcomings in 1311 had led to the obstruction of the water-course at Paperescrofte and Edyngwie.⁸⁵ In 1348, John Selyessone and six others were amerced for failing to scour sufficiently the course of Rokespulle and Brockespull and the ditch at the Morwall next to Thurlemere.⁸⁶ In the account rolls we get some idea of the work put into drainage from references to as much as eighty dayworks being allocated in 1313 to scouring 100 perches by the house of Robert Bole.⁸⁷

It is the specification of ditching and walling in the surveys that indicates just how important this work was to the lord. The Sully survey contains little evidence of drainage activity; Simon de Berga, a free tenant of Berrow, owed just one service; adjuvit ad Gulet. In South Brent, Richard de Wica, a ferdeller, had custody of one Gulet, as also did John de Greitona, a 5-acreman. The South Brent 3-acreman had to scour the Gulet Maris, which Latin term may be translated into the English Mordych which is frequently mentioned in the later surveys.⁸⁸ Williams reasonably suggests that the Mordich was the Pilrow Cut, alias the Mark Yeo, and infers from a reference to dykes, sluices and walls at Mark, 'for the preservation of the course of water flowing towards the sea',

⁸⁵L.10767 m.21v.

⁸⁶L.11179 m.45r-v.

⁸⁷L.10656 mm.19-24.

⁸⁸Jackson, Soliaco, pp.69, 65 & 67.

that this cut was completed in 1316.⁸⁹ Reference to Tables 3.13 - 3.16 indicate that the Mordich was commonly mentioned in 1235 and it is unlikely that a ditch as important as this would not have an outflow to the sea at that time. Aston also attributes the Pilrow Cut to the thirteenth century, but if the Gulet Maris of the Sully survey does refer to the Mordich, then it pre-dates that century.⁹⁰ Perhaps Williams misinterpreted his source of 1316, as 'preservation of the course of water' would seem to imply maintenance or improvement of a water-course. The plethora of references to the Mordich in thirteenth-century documents certainly proves that it existed then, but they do not show that it was built during that time. The sixteenth century map delineated by Christopher Saxton leaves us in no doubt about the importance of the waterway connecting the Brue and Axe rivers, while Plate 3.24 shows that even today this man-made waterway is a significant monument to a centuries old accomplishment.

In Tables 3.13 - 3.16 I have marshalled a summary of ditching services as specified in the Amesbury, Ford and Fromond surveys. At first glance they may seem to reinforce the notion of new drainage in the thirteenth century, but we must take care against accepting that interpretation too readily. We have to consider the purposes of our documentary evidence. The Sully survey contains few references to ditching, but that survey was compiled when much of the

⁸⁹M.Williams, The Drainage of the Somerset Levels (1970), p.69.

⁹⁰M.Aston, Monasteries, (1993), p.123.



Figure 3.19 Christopher Saxton's Map of Somerset (1575) [Maps C 7 c.1 British Library Board (1981)] showing the Pilrow Cut joining the Axe and Brue rivers.



PLATE 3.24 The Pilrow Cut, alias the Mark Yeo, alias Mordich.

TABLE 3.13: DITCHING; East Brent

Tenants	1235	1260	1307
Half-virgater	Ditch Mordich for 1 day. Dig 10 perches of the water-course.	Ditch Mordich every 2nd year, $\frac{1}{2}$ d. Ditch at Thurlemere for $\frac{1}{2}$ -day every 2nd year, $\frac{1}{2}$ d.	Walling at Thurlemere. Scouring Brockesdore - Rokesbrigg. Scouring Rokesmull - Lockesbrigg. $\frac{1}{2}$ -day each, $\frac{1}{2}$ d.
Ferdeller	Ditch Mordich for 1 day. Dig 10 perches of the water-course.	Ditch Mordich every 2nd year, $\frac{1}{2}$ d. Ditch at Thurlemere for $\frac{1}{2}$ -day every 2nd year.	Walling at Thurlemere. Scouring Brockesdore - Rokesbrigg. Scouring Rokesmull - Lockesbrigg. $\frac{1}{2}$ -day each, $\frac{1}{2}$ d.
5-acreman	Ditch Mordich. Dig 5 perches of the water-course.	Ditch Mordich every 2nd year, $\frac{1}{2}$ d. Ditch at Thurlemere every 2nd year, $\frac{1}{2}$ d.	Walling at Thurlemere. Scour water-course Brockesdore - Rokesbrigg. Scouring Rokesmull - Lockesbrigg. $\frac{1}{2}$ -day each, $\frac{1}{2}$ d
3-acreman	Ditch Mordich. Dig $2\frac{1}{4}$ perches of water-course.	Ditch every 2nd year at Mordich and Thurlemere, 1d.	Walling at Thurlemere. Scour Brockesdore - Rokesbrigg. Scour Rokesmull - Lockesbrigg. $\frac{1}{2}$ -day each, $\frac{1}{2}$ d
Wickman			Walling Lockesbrigg - house of Lord William Gilling.

TABLE 3.14: DITCHING; Lympsam

Tenants	1235	1260	1307
Half-virgater	Ditching at Mordich. Moor service.	At Mordich and Thurlmere in alternate years, 1d.	Scour Mordich, $\frac{1}{2}$ -day, $\frac{1}{2}$ d. If to do more, 1 day walling at Thurlmere for $\frac{1}{2}$ -day. Scour Brockesdore - house of Simon Bulion, $\frac{1}{2}$ -day. Scour 18 perches in chief waterrun.
Ferdeller	Ditching at Mordich. Moor service, $\frac{1}{4}$ d.	At Mordich and Thurlemere in alternate years, 1d.	Scour & wall Mordich, Thurlemere & Brockesdore - house of Simon Bulion, 1d. Scour 9 perches in chief waterrun.
5-acreman	Ditching at Mordich.	Ditching at Mordich & Thurlemere in alternate years, 1d.	
3-acreman			Scour & wall in Mordich, Thurlemere & between Brockesdore & house of Simon Bulion. Scour 3 perches in chief waterrun.
12/7-acreman			Scour & wall in Mordich, Thurlemere & between Brockesdore & house of Simon Bulion as much as $\frac{1}{2}$ -V, 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. Scour 6 perches of chief waterrun.

TABLE 3.15: DITCHING; Berrow

Tenants	1235	1260	1307
Half-virgater	Ditching at Mordich & Thurlemere for 1 day.	Ditching at Mordich & Thurlemere every 2nd year, 1d.	Scouring: Mordich $\frac{1}{2}$ -day, more counts as 1 day; Brockesdore - house of Simon Bulion $\frac{1}{2}$ -day; 38 perches in chief waterrunnis.
Ferdeller	Ditching in Mordich and Thurlemere.	Ditching at Mordich & Thurlemere every 2nd year, 1d.	Scour Mordich $\frac{1}{2}$ as much as $\frac{1}{2}$ -V, $\frac{1}{2}$ d, more counts as 1 daywork. Ditching & walling at Thurlemere once a year. Scour: Brockesdore - house of Simon Bulion, $\frac{1}{2}$ d. 19 perches in chief waterrunnis.
5-acreman	Digging at Mordich for one day.	Ditching at Mordich & Thurlemere every second year, 1d.	
3-acreman		Ditches at Mordich & Thurlemere every second year, 1d.	Wall Thurlemere. Scour: Mordich & Brockesdore; 5 perches in waterrunnis.
12-acreman & 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ -acreman			Wall & ditch Thurlemere $\frac{1}{2}$ -day. Scour: Mordich $\frac{1}{2}$ -day. Brockesdore - house of Simon Bulion, $\frac{1}{2}$ d. 13 perches in chief waterrunnis.

TABLE 3.16: DITCHING; South Brent

Tenants	1235	1260	1307
Half-virgater	Mordich	Thurlemere once every 4 years. Mordich $\frac{1}{2}$ -day, $\frac{1}{2}$ d, once every 3 years.	Ditching Rokesmull - Lockesbrigg, Brockesdore - house of Simon Bulion. Walling at Thurlemere.
Ferdeller	Mordich	Dig Mordich once every 3 years, $\frac{1}{2}$ d; Thurlemere once every 4th year, $\frac{1}{2}$ d.	Scour water-course Brockesdore - house of Simon Bulion, $\frac{1}{2}$ -day. Walling Thurlemere $\frac{1}{2}$ -day ----- Scour Rokesmull - Lockesbrigg, Brockesdore & Bulionsdore.
5-acreman	Mordich	Thurlemere once every 4th year, Mordich once every 3 years.	Dig Mordich & Thurlemere, 2 days. Dig watercourse Brockesdore - house of Simon Bulion, 1d.
3-acreman	Mordich	Mordich once every 3 years, Thurlemere once every 4 years.	
Moorland	Mordich	Mordich once every 3 years, Thurlemere once every four years.	Ditch Thurlemere & Mordich. Wall Lockesbrigg.
12-acreman			Digging Thurlemere & Mordich for two $\frac{1}{2}$ -days. Scour water-course Brockesdore - house of Simon Bulion, $\frac{1}{2}$ -day.

Glastonbury estate was farmed out and attention was being given to the advantages of moving into direct demesne management. Under direct management, the surveys became increasingly detailed so that by 1307 every service was costed. Each survey is bigger than its predecessor; thus it is not surprising that there is more information about ditching in 1260 than in 1235, or in 1307 than in 1260; this does not reflect greater civil engineering activity so much as greater attention to detail by the Glastonbury scribes, as part of a desire to maximise the potential of their estate.

An interesting facet of the ditching services is that many of them involved work outside Brent. While manors were farmed out, the emphasis on the customary services would be on matters intrinsica. The move into direct management would enhance a confederate attitude in which the individual manors could be made to contribute to schemes affecting the whole barony and from which it might be argued that benefits would accrue. The drainage of central Somerset would be one such scheme, facilitated by the strong lordship of Glastonbury and perhaps working in tandem with the other major ecclesiastical landlord in the area, the Dean of Wells. Thus it is that scouring the Mordich and walling in Thurlemere are the dominant subjects of Brent's ditching services.

Work on the Mordich was a common service for most tenants in all four manors in 1235. By 1260 the service alternated with work in Thurlemere, except that South Brent tenants only

had to work once every three years in Mordich and once every four years in Thurlemere. By 1307 the most work that was required of a tenant on either of these locations was one day a year and that was over a period of 72 years, which is hard to think of as the building of a major new drainage channel. Clearly this service was for maintenance of the Mordich.

Another ditching service involved 'the water course', which only applied to East Brent in 1235. 'Water-course', or cursum aque, is a generic term commonly used in the medieval documents; it is frustrating because as the subject of the document its location is usually impossible to discern. It was of greater importance than the Mordich in 1235 because the half-virgaters were expected to dig 10 perches, i.e. 165 feet which is a lot more than one man could manage in a day.

By 1307 Mordich service was only performed by the tenants of Lympsham and Berrow, but all four manors were involved in scouring the cursum aque, lengths of which were described as: from Brockesdore as far as Rokesbrigg, from Rockesmull as far as Lockesbrigg, from Brockesdore as far as the house of Simon Bulion. The location of Rokesbrigg is self evident and it would seem likely that Rockesmull would be adjacent; thus the water-course involved in this service virtually has to be the Pillrow Cut. Possibly Lockesbrigg was situated where the Pillrow Cut met the River Axe, at point A on Figure 3.20, where a footpath leads to a footbridge across the River Axe to the parish of Loxton. Presumably, Brockesdore and the house

of Simon Bulion were located further south along the course of the Pillrow Cut, but we cannot be certain as to their exact location, although the summary of South Brent services in the Fromond survey hints at the possibility of the house of Simon Bulion being situated at Rokesbrigg.⁹¹ It is revealed that South Brent half-virgaters performed 18 works in scouring between Rokesmulle and Lockesbrigg and the same number between Brockesdore and the house of Simon Bulion. The ferdellers were expected to provide 30 works for scouring between Rokesbrigg and Brockesdore and the same number between Rokesmulle and Lockesbrigg. The substitution of the house of Simon Bulion for Rokesbrigg in the ferdeller summary, the equal number of works expected for the two stretches of water-course and the fact that no group of customary tenants has more than two stretches of water-course to scour are highly suggestive that the two lengths were of approximately equal distance and that Bulion's house was at Rokesbrigg. Simon Bulion was a ferdeller and messor of East Brent who also held 7½-acres and 1-perch of arable and 2-acres of meadow in la Morlond and ½-acre in Vermelonde; which is mildly supportive of the location of his house and indicative of the value of the water-course to him as it must have crossed the Morlond, possibly an alias for Thurlemere.⁹²

The issue raised by the consideration of the cursum aque is that if it was the Pillrow Cut, then where was the Mordich?

⁹¹BL Eg.3321.

⁹²BL Eg.3321; L.11253 m.12.

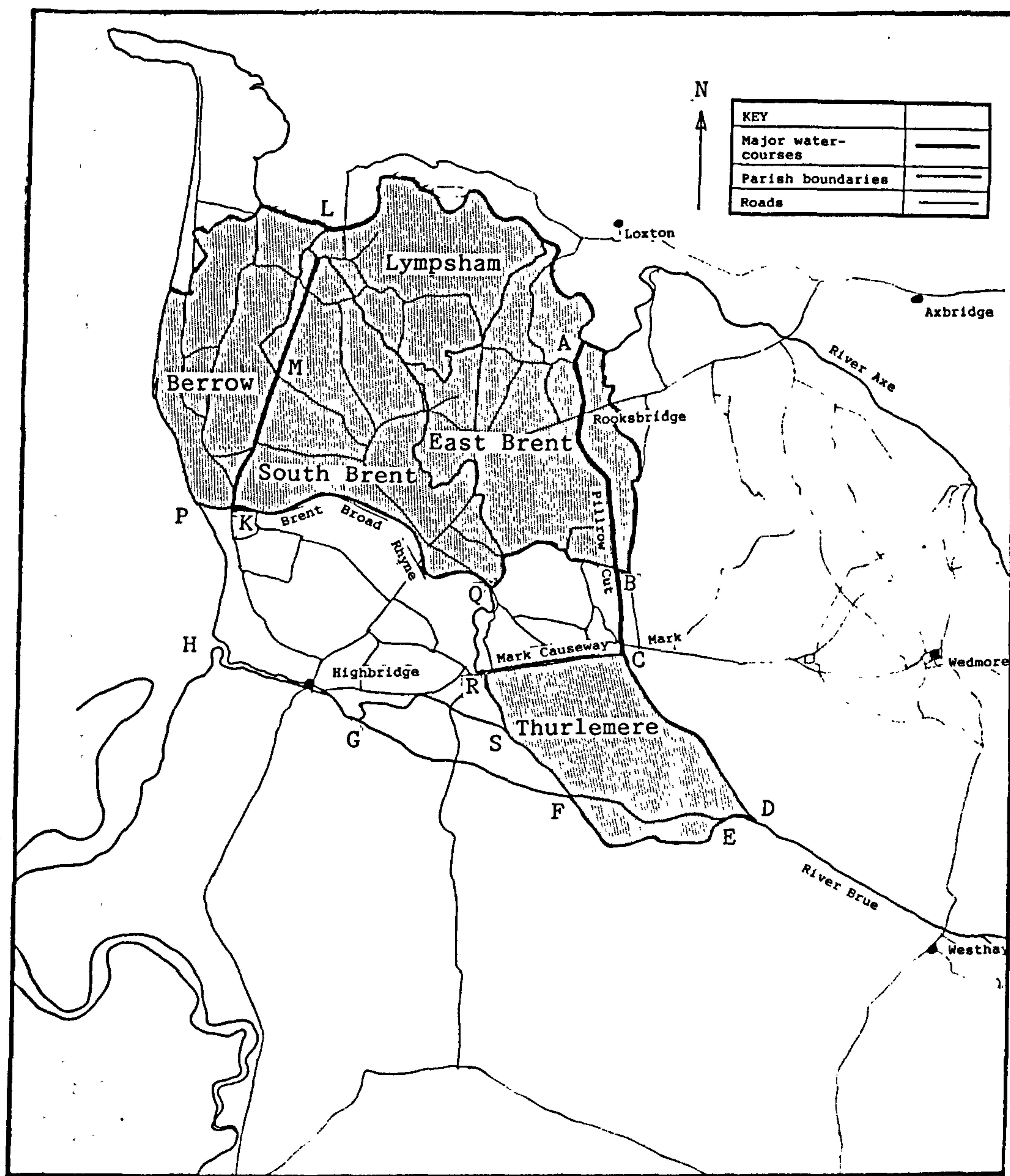


Figure 3.20

Thurlemere and the major water-courses.



Plate 3.25

Enclosure Map of Mark Moor, alias Thurlemere.

On Figure 3.20 the Pillrow Cut commences at point A, its junction with the river Axe, running through points B and C to join the River Brue at point D. We have a clue as to the location of the Mordich in an amercement of 1348 in which Michael Wilecok and six others were charged with failing to scour 'the ditch at the Morwall next to Thurlemere as much as they should'.⁹³ If, as would seem likely, that the 'ditch at the Morwall' was the Mordich, then it appears that this ran alongside Thurlemere, which Plate 3.25 shows to have been Mark Moor. This photograph of the late eighteenth century enclosure award map, indicates that Thurlemere stretched as far south as the irregular northern boundaries of the parishes of Chilton and Edington which for most of its length is suggestive of a natural water-course.⁹⁴ The reference to 'Old Enclosures' in Plate 3.25 suggests that the natural western boundary of Thurlemere was once along the parish boundary between East Huntspill and Mark which still today follows a water-course for most of its length up to Mark Causeway, while the parish boundary north of point R on Figure 3.20 is so convoluted before it joins Brent Broad Rhyne that it could be argued that the line D E F S R Q K P marked the course of the defunct River Siger and that perhaps by 1307 at least, points R S F and round to E marked the Mordich. However, this has to remain only a possibility owing to the absence of more solid evidence. Nevertheless, it is clear from the Fromond survey that the water-course going through Rooksbridge is a separate

⁹³L.11179 m.45r-v.

⁹⁴Somerset Record Office Q/RDe 115, 1784.

one from the Mordich. It might be argued that the line Q R S F E was too sinuous a watercourse to have been regularly scoured, while the canal-like features of the Pillrow Cut make it an obvious candidate for regular scouring, in which case perhaps the designated lengths of the water-course to be scoured were within Brent, while the Mordich was the same water-course but external to Brent.

Mark Causeway, or rather the tenements on its south side, marks sharply the northern boundary of Thurlemere and poses questions of the territory Q B C R in Figure 3.20. This is called Vole Moor and the Tithe Map also indicates that holdings in this area were divided between several parishes. Perhaps at one time, this area formed part of Thurlemere; certainly Vole is not a name that appears in any of the Brent documents before 1350, although William Alwyne's entry fine of 2/6 for one acre of meadow 'in the Moor towards Mark' indicates the lack of a need for a name other than 'Moor' at that time and possibly the lack of a strictly defined manor boundary in the moor.⁹⁵

Pitland Rhyne, clearly a man-made water-course between points K M and almost as far as L on Figure 3.20, is not mentioned in medieval documentation as such. Between points K and M it forms the boundary between Berrow and South Brent, but the only common ditching services these two manors shared in 1307 was on the Pillrow Cut and the Mordich. Berrow

⁹⁵L.11253 m.12.

tenants were also required to scour so many perches of the 'chief waterrunnis', but if this was the Pitland Rhyne, the question arises as to why Lympsham tenants had the same service to perform when it was not even bounded by the Pitland Rhyne?

The tenuous nature of the evidence makes it difficult to locate water-courses in medieval times. Wherever the 'waterrunnis', cursum aque or Mordich were, their maintenance constituted services of importance to the Abbot and were a key feature in the management of the landscape. All three of these nominated water-courses were concerned with drainage and irrigation, while the larger waterways would have served transport needs as well. We know that Robert Malerby of Sowey was responsible for providing a boat capable of carrying eight men and the Abbot to Mere, Brent, Butleigh, Nyland, Godney and la Bowe c.1235 and that he had custody of waterways between Clewer Bridge and Street Bridge and between Mark Bridge and Glastonbury.⁹⁶ Mark Bridge is just to the north of point C on Figure 3.20, crossing the Pillrow Cut, which being so broad and having a strategic purpose in connecting the rivers Axe and Brue, was bound not only to improve the drainage of the inland moors but also to serve as a transport link.

The lighter load that Berrow and Lympsham bear in the scouring of ditches was made up for in their obligation to maintain sea defences. Table 3.17 sets out the

⁹⁶Rentalia, pp.176-7.

Table 3.17a: Sea defence in Berrow

Free Tenants	Maintain BicWynewyk, 7 perches of wall. Maintain wall in Schyprekewall. Maintain 8 perches of sea wall in eastern Wykschete and 8 perches in Schyprekeswalle.
Half-virgaters	Maintain sea wall and thetas. Maintain 7 perches of sea wall. Maintain 17 perches of Schyprekeswalle. Working when the cry is raised.
Ferdellers	Maintaining sea wall and thetas. Maintain 4 perches of wall against the sea. Maintain 4 perches of Schyprekeswalle. Working when the cry is raised.
Three-acremen	Maintain the sea wall in Schyprekeswalle, 2 perches and 2 parts of a perch.
Twelve-acremen	Maintain 3 perches of sea wall and 3 perches Schyprekeswalle, and when cry is raised etc.
10½-acremen	Thetas and walls against the sea. When the cry is raised etc.

Table 3.17b: Sea defence in Lympsham

Half-virgaters	Repair sea wall and thetas. When cry is raised, mend the wall with freemen and others without allocation. Maintain the sea wall against his land.
Ferdellers	Repairing the sea wall as for ½-virgaters.
Three-acremen	Repairing the sea wall as for ½-virgaters.
Twelve-acremen	Repairing the sea wall as for ½-virgaters.

Table 3.17c: Sea defence in South Brent

Wickmen	Custody of one theta against the sea.
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responsibilities of the tenants of those two manors, plus wickmen from South Brent. It is understandable that these two manors should bear the brunt of sea defence because Berrow is on the shore while Lympsham borders the River Axe which was tidal along the whole length of that manor's northern boundary. References to sea defence are surprisingly restricted to the Fromond survey, but the incorporation of statements in the services of Peter Parsonsone and other ferdellers of Berrow, such as 'comes to the sea peril when the cry is raised and works from day to day until the peril is mended', is suggestive of a recent occurrence that has caused the lord to have spelt out in some detail what was expected of the manor in the case of a breach of the sea wall. This type of service was common to the customary tenants of both Lympsham and Berrow.

The threat of a marine inundation would not have been directly from the Bristol Channel as the coastal sand-dunes gave adequate protection there. The main threat came from the tidal River Axe, on the banks of which vestiges of old sea walls can be seen, as in the background of Plate 3.27 where low earthen banks offer protection against flooding in the region of Whelpesham Wharf and Middle Rhyne. Figure 3.21 shows the extent of river banks as revealed by the current edition of the 2½-inch O.S.map.⁹⁷ We cannot be sure that these banks are medieval in origin, but bearing in mind the restriction of sea defence service to the tenants of Berrow

⁹⁷Ordnance Survey, Pathfinder 1197 (ST25/35).

BRENT

based on
1st edition
6" O.S. map
surveyed
1884

N

Whelpesham Wharf

Middle Rhyne

Tarr Farm

Lower Wick Farm

Wick Farm

Pitland Rhyne

Middle Street

Berrow Wall

Berrow Lane

Shipparow Wall

1 mile

Fig. 3.21 Sea Defence in Berrow and Lympsham. Pitland Rhyne continues in a southerly direction, adjacent to Berrow Wall and along the boundary between Berrow and South Brent to join Brent Broad Rhyne. Sea walls are marked in green.



Plate 3.26 Berrow Wall, hidden by rushes.



Plate 3.27 Ancient sea walls can be seen in the background.

and Lympsham, plus the South Brent wickmen, the likelihood is that the low earthen banks evident today were the subject of medieval flood defences. On the other hand, we must avoid the conclusion that the walls evident on the map were the only ones. There are a number of references to sea-walls in East Brent: in 1235 three-acremen had custody of the sea-wall, while in 1340 John Lyonn was ordered to superintend defects in the sea-wall and cursum in East Brent.⁹⁸ That stretch of East Brent bordering the River Axe is so far upstream that we really have to question the concept of it being a sea wall. Possibly it received that name because the Axe may have been tidal that far inland.

Pitland Rhyne flows out to the River Axe via Middle Rhyne. Further south, Pitland Rhyne runs alongside Berrow Wall, between Middle Street and Berrow Lane. The term 'Wall' is commonly used for a road or track running on a flood barrier in estuarine marshes.⁹⁹ The adjacent ditches and sluices could then be used to accelerate the evacuation of the floodwater as the tide receded. Although Pitland Rhyne could perform the same function, Berrow Wall is not long enough to play its part; its prime role would appear to be the defence of the territory on its landward side.

Berrow has the most specific sea defence requirements,

⁹⁸Rentalia; L.10773 m.33-34v.

⁹⁹In the Essex marshes bordering the Thames, there are Manor Ways running along such walls, tangentially to the river, acting not so much as a river bank, but as a means of penning flood waters in when they burst the river banks.

even the Free Tenants being obliged to play their part. As well as the sea wall, there were the walls of Bicwynewyk, Wykschete and Schyprekewall. If the sea-wall was situated along the southern bank of the River Axe, then possibly Bicwynewyk and Wykeschete walls ran due south from the Axe towards Lower Wick Farm and Tarr Farm to afford protection from Middle Rhyne. The chance survival into the tithe award schedule of the field-name 'Shipparow', just to the south of Berrow Wall, makes it very tempting to deduce that Berrow Wall was once upon a time the fourteenth-century Schyprekewall. However, if 'Schypreke' means 'ship wreck' then surely this wall has to be adjacent to the River Axe, while 'Shipparow' is more likely to have meant 'sheeprow'.

THETAS

Incorporated into the obligations to maintain sea-walls in Table 3.17 was the requirement to maintain thetas, which would appear to have been sluices.¹⁰⁰ I have set out a selection of references to these thetas in Table 3.18. Thetas are mentioned in the manorial accounts, the costs of their maintenance frequently justifying their own section as 'Upkeep of thetas' and occasionally 'Upkeep of bridges and thetas', indicating the necessity to provide crossing points in a

¹⁰⁰The origin of this word is elusive. Theta and its medieval Latin variations, (Thete, Thetan, Thetarum), cannot be traced in Latin dictionaries, word-lists or glossaries. Neither can it be found in the Oxford English Dictionary. A similar spelling, Theca, appears to be a long chest or coffin, which may have some relevance to its use in Brent. Differentiating between 'c' and 't' in medieval documents can be difficult, but this word does generally appear to be written as theta. In the earlier documents it is commonly spelt as peta, suggesting an early English origin; but searches through various Anglo-Saxon dictionaries have also drawn a blank.

Table 3.18 Thetas

Date	Location	Details
1189	South Brent ?	Richard de Wica has custody of one theta.
1260	South Brent	Henry Slug has custody of one sluice.
1274/5	Werham, next to the house of Aghemundi	The smith made nails, hinges and bearings.
1300/1	next to the house of Edith atte Wyke	4 pieces of iron to make nails and hinges, 1/8. Paid to the carpenter for mending theta, 5/-
1300/1	Rokesmulle ?	paid to John Molend for felling and sawing timber in Northwode for mending thetas and mill, 7/-
1302/3	Rokesmulle	Nails for securing boards between the thetam and the mill, 7½d.
1304/5	next to the house of Henry Slugg	mending the theta, 3/-
1307	Lympsham and Berrow. Sluices of Rockesmull and Slugg.	main customary tenants repair thetas and sea wall as often as there is work to be done. Mora tenants to work day by day if sluices of R. and S. are destroyed and flooding.
1311/12	next to house of Richard atte Wyke in Berrow. Next to house of John Scenene. Next to house of Thomas Sparke. Next to the house of Adam Slugg.	Wages of one carpenter for four days, 1/-, and 200 large spikes, 2/-.
1313/14	Next to the house of Richard atte Wyke and John Batecock. Rockesmulle.	Mending, 8 works. New hinge, 6d. Scouring.

Date	Location	Details
1314/15	Next to the house of Richard atte Wyke.	Spikenails, 1/4 Mending carpentry, 1/-.
	Next to the house of Henry Sparke.	Boards, 4d. Wages for carpenter for making the door and mending the sluice, 6d. Hook, hinge and nails, 1/6.
	Rokesmulle.	Nails and spikes for mending carpentry, 1/- 8 hurdles, 6d. Wages of 4 men for clearing theta and walling for 2 days, 1/4.
	Werham	Spikes for mending the sluice, 8d. Mending carpentry, 6d.
1333/34	Warplesttheta and theta next to the house of Henry Spark	Wages to mend carpentry, 11/7½ and 1 bushel of wheat. Making and raising the two thetas and the sea-wall over them, 21 works
	Next to the house of Walter Spark and another next to the house of John Batecok.	Wages of carpenter to mend, 1/-. 2 planks measuring 7½ft x 1½ft, 10d. 100 large spikenails and other planks, 1/8
	Rokesmulle	Building New Theta

landscape criss-crossed by so many water-courses. We learn of repairs to bridges in 1314 at Croftesbrigg, Bendenesbrigg, Hornesbrigg, Danielsbrigg, Comesbrigg and Vordesbrigg, but unfortunately we have no further evidence to indicate where these were located.¹⁰¹

That thetas were sluices seems to be confirmed by the occasional substitution for theta by the word exclusam, as in the case of the theta associated with Henry Slugg in 1260 and 1304/5.¹⁰² It is difficult to ascertain how many of these structures controlled the waters of Brent as some of those mentioned in Table 3.18 may have changed their name during the time covered. It seems likely that Richard de Wica, Edith atte Wyke, Richard atte Wyke and John Batecok are associated with the same theta, which was perhaps in the vicinity of Wick Farm.¹⁰³ The Wick, Sparke, Rokesmulle, Werham and Warplestheta thetas are clearly separate thetas; but whether the Slugg and Scenene thetas were additional ones we cannot be sure as they may have been known by other names with the passing of time. Identifying the location is also difficult; apart from Wick the only other one that we can possibly locate is at Rokesmulle.

Rokesmulle was a water-mill and the major mill in Brent. There were windmills in South Brent and Berrow. The field-

¹⁰¹L.10766 mm.29-32.

¹⁰²BL Add.17450; L.11215 mm.35-37.

¹⁰³John Batecok was the son of Edith atte Wyke. L.10656 mm.19-24.

name 'Mill Furlong' in Figure 3.10 indicates the area in which one would expect to find a windmill, on a high plateau just above South Brent's stretch of toft and croft and facing the prevailing south-westerlies. Similarly, the location of the Berrow mill on the Warren in Plate 3.23 is also logical. However, Rokesmulle's greater frequency of appearances in the medieval documentation and its higher volume of business, as well as maintenance costs, leave us in no doubt as to its relative value.

Rokesmulle was a transshipment point. There are numerous references to the freighting of wine from Bristol as far as Rokesmulle and then carrying it to Glastonbury.¹⁰⁴ This must refer to a sea passage from Bristol to Rokesmulle because to take the wine by road to Glastonbury via Rokesmulle would have been unnecessarily circuitous, while a relatively direct road route would have involved the crossing of the Mendips. An implication of this is that Rokesmulle marked the point beyond which sea-going vessels could not navigate further inland, either because the waterway was too shallow or narrow or because the way was barred, perhaps by the wall or the theta. The wall at Rokesmulle may just have been a landing stage or wharf which would hint that there was insufficient room for a lighter or barge to come alongside. A more likely scenario is that the ship would not be able to tie up alongside a wharf and as the tide receded she would be stuck in the mud. The unloading operation involving planks, block and tackle and

¹⁰⁴L.11272 mm.41-44 is just one reference.

manpower would eventually heave the cargo onto the river bank. The ship could be floated off at the next tide. If the wall barred the ship from progressing further inland then it would have had to have incorporated a theta to release the water penned in on the landward side.

Some understanding of the importance of a theta can be assessed from the details recorded in the accounts of the rebuilding of the theta at Rockesmulle in 1333/4. The old wooden theta had to be raised and foundations dug, cement made, a 20ft x 14ft shed erected for the mason and stone quarried at South Brent, Shiplate, Bleadon, Badgworth and Allerton. Reeds, faggots and poles were brought in to make a landing stage. The major carting operation was concentrated into four days, involving as many as 80 men with 40 wagons and 14 boats. Large elms were brought in from Palmeresmore and Mere. A large boat was hired for five days for carrying stone and one cart was employed for five weeks carrying stone from Allerton. Twenty-four barrows were bought for carrying stone, presumably on site. Forage and grass was needed for eight oxen for twelve weeks and three horses for four weeks. Expenses were provided to the Cellarer, Rector of Wrington and others who supervised the works; compensation given to the men of Bleadon and Shiplate whose crops were damaged by the wagons carrying stone across their fields from the quarries and wages paid to 'the men who carried earth to the new wall, filling in the outside part of the new stone theta'. Some work was allocated as sixty day-works for six workers helping to make

the sea-wall on both sides of the new stone theta for ten days.¹⁰⁵

The reconstruction of the theta at Rokesmulle was clearly a civil-engineering project of some magnitude. Details of maintenance of numerous demesne buildings are commonplace among the accounts, while sections on the upkeep of the mills are particularly detailed; but nothing matches the drama evident behind the building of the new theta at Rokesmulle. The mill itself was out of action for fourteen weeks, the fishery of Rokesmulle was relinquished for a year, foal production was down because most of the mares were working on the theta; even the Abbot came to see the new work.¹⁰⁶ Whether the Rokesmulle theta controlled the water of the Pillrow Cut or the water flowing into a millpond or mill-race, we cannot be sure. The mill was still operating in 1515 when Richard Grygge held it and in the second entry above Grygge's we learn that John Alyn of Rooksbridge held a messuage with a new building next to Rokesmulle, which is probably the closest clue we shall find in the documentary evidence to the possibility of Rokesmulle being sited at Rooksbridge.¹⁰⁷ In Plate 3.28 we can see one possible site for Rokesmulle, adjacent to the Pillrow Cut at Rooksbridge. The modern sluice across the Pillrow Cut at Rooksbridge in Plate 3.29 might be on the site of the new theta of 1333, but archaeological

¹⁰⁵L.10632 m.12.

¹⁰⁶L.10632 m.12.

¹⁰⁷BL Eg.3034.



Plate 3.28 One possible site for Rokesmulle. There are stone footings to the boundary wall just above the water-line. Rooksbridge is in the background.



Plate 3.29 A modern sluice-gate just to the south of Rooksbridge on the Pillrow Cut. Was this the site of the Theta?

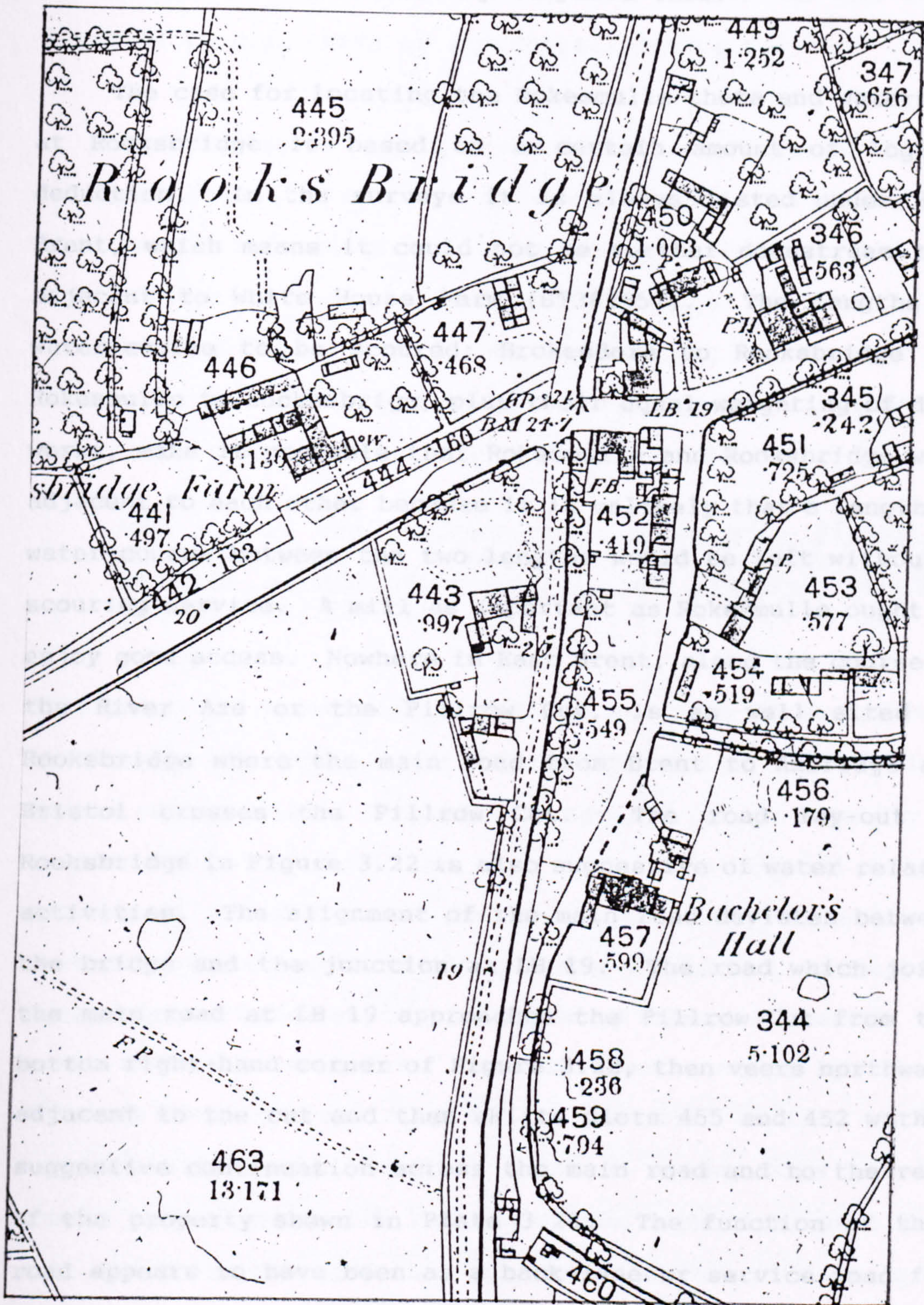


Figure 3.22 Rooksbridge.

excavation would be necessary to prove this.

The case for locating the Rokesmulle theta and watermill at Rooksbridge is based on a certain amount of logical deduction. In the surveys it is always listed under East Brent, which means it could not be further downstream than adjacent to White House Farm (ST362557). The lengths of water-course to be scoured; Brokesdore to Rooksbridge and Rokesmulle to Lockesbrigg, plus their equal weighting of day-works, make it probable that Rokesmulle and Rooksbridge were adjacent to each other because it is unlikely that a length of water-course between the two lengths would be left without a scouring service. A mill as important as Rokesmulle ought to enjoy good access. Nowhere in East Brent, along the course of the River Axe or the Pillrow Cut, is as well sited as Rooksbridge where the main road from Brent to Axbridge and Bristol crosses the Pillrow Cut. The road lay-out at Rooksbridge in Figure 3.22 is also suggestive of water related activities. The alignment of the main road deviates between the bridge and the junction at LB 19. The road which joins the main road at LB 19 approaches the Pillrow Cut from the bottom right-hand corner of Figure 3.22, then veers northward adjacent to the cut and then skirts plots 455 and 452 with a suggestive continuation across the main road and to the rear of the property shown in Plate 3.28. The function of this road appears to have been as a back-lane or service road for the properties on either side of the bridge and adjacent to the Pillrow Cut. Clearly the Pillrow Cut and the main road

are the prime routes for the adjacent properties and their location is suggestive of industrial/service use.

Rooksbridge is a propitious site for a water-mill, yet evidence exists that casts some doubt on this being the location of Rokesmulle. A reference in 1311/12 to work on 171½-perches of sea-wall next to Rokesmulle, Saltelonde and the house of Thomas Foghel makes one wonder if the mill was closer to the sea.¹⁰⁸ The Beere survey also poses a question over the siting of Rokesmulle with this statement:

John Lyvyng ten. quinque stacion in solo D[o]m[in]i
ex[tr]a la Baye de Rokesmyll in aque Sabrina, in loco
ib[ide]m consuet[udini] p[ro] lez Elevares ib[ide]m
capiend p[er] r[edit] XXd.¹⁰⁹

This gives the impression that there are five posts, perhaps to support eel traps, just beyond Rokesmulle in the River Severn or the Bristol Channel. Rokesmulle cannot possibly be in the Bristol Channel and even if it was located on the estuary of the River Axe that would put it outside Brent. Perhaps the posts were in the estuary of the Axe, or perhaps aque Sabrina referred to that part of the Pillrow Cut and River Axe that was tidal. Some earthworks noted by the M5 Research Committee and observed on the first edition of the six-inch and twenty-five inch ordnance survey maps look as though they could be the remains of the stonework associated with the theta and also what may have been the mill-dam a

¹⁰⁸L.11216 mm.12-15.

¹⁰⁹BL Eg.3034.

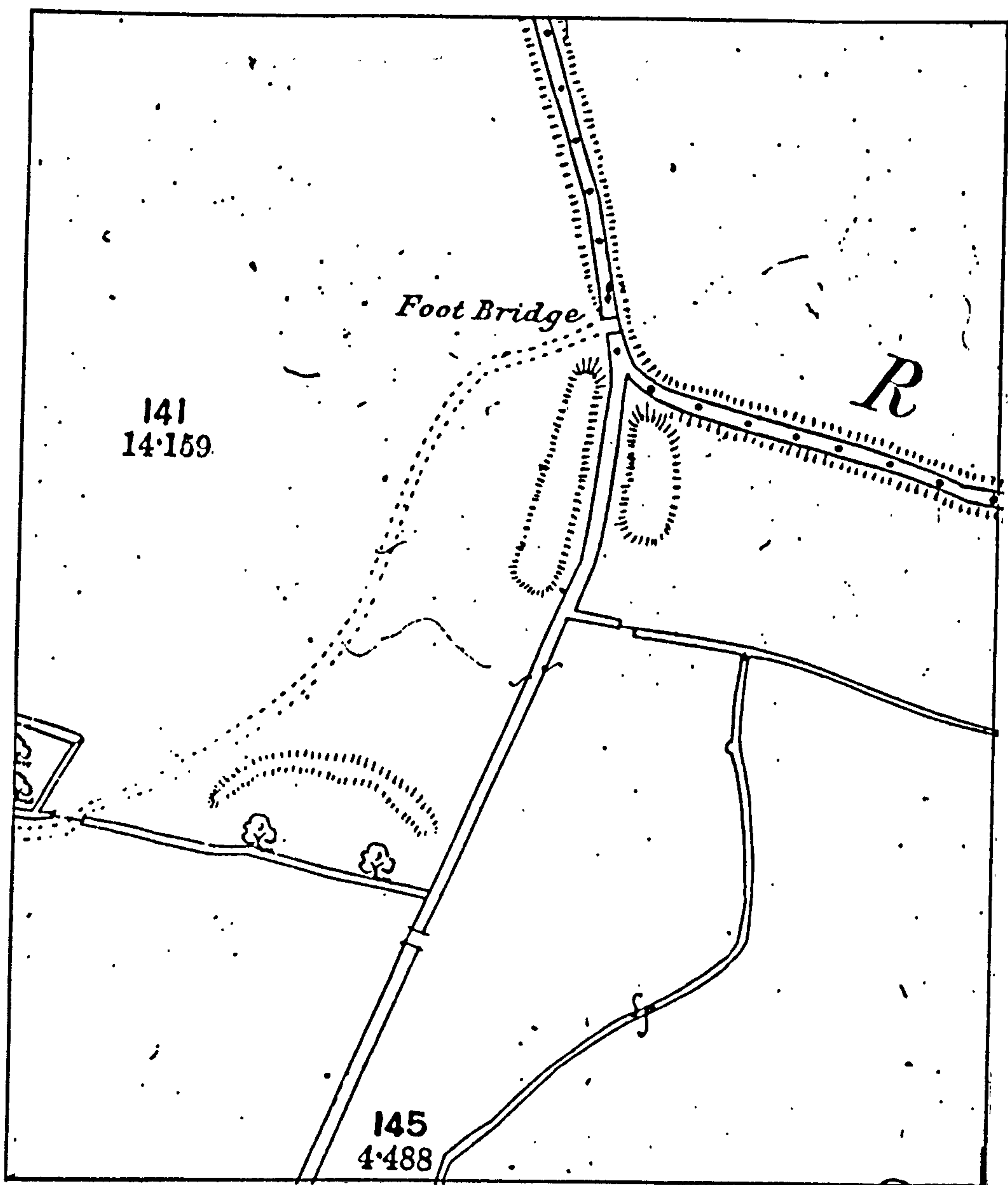


Figure 3.23 The 25" O.S. map reveals earthworks at the confluence of the Pillrow Cut with the River Axe that must be strong contenders for the site of the Rokesmulle theta. The curved bank to the south may have been the mill-dam.



Plate 3.30 Two pieces of dressed stone found by Mr. Fletcher close to the earthworks at the junction of the Pillrow Cut with the River Axe. These had been dredged up by the water board. Note the mason's marks on the larger stone.

little to the south.¹¹⁰ These earthworks are situated at the confluence of the Pillrow Cut with the River Axe and technically form a more likely site for a sluice. The discovery by the farmer, Mr. Fletcher, of two pieces of dressed stone lifted from the Pillrow Cut during a recent scouring, adds to the intrigue. A land transport link was provided by an adjacent track linking Edingworth with a footbridge across the River Axe. These earthworks are intriguing, for if they do represent the former site of Rokesmulle, they pose questions of the location of the scouring services on the cursum aque as described in the surveys. Until the earthworks are subjected to further archaeological work, we cannot be absolutely sure about the location of the watermill and its theta.

* * * * *

In this study of the Brent landscape of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries we are very aware of the importance of controlling water in a potential wetland. Most boundaries are ditches and it is very easy to take these for granted, but they all form a drainage network that required a level of overall control. The thetas were necessary, not only to prevent flooding from high tides in an area of extreme tidal variation, but also to maintain sufficient levels of water to encourage grass growth and to water livestock. The maintenance of water levels facilitated fisheries that could

¹¹⁰ Medieval Archaeology 15 (1971), p.170; Somerset Sites and Monuments Record, No.10051.

be rented out, such as the one between Mark Bridge and Rokesmulle.¹¹¹ Just as importantly, they controlled the outlet of water from Brent and its hinterland. The theta at Rokesmulle appears to have had even greater importance in that it controlled the waters of the Pillrow Cut, an artificial waterway connecting the rivers Brue and Axe, serving as a transport link between Glastonbury and the sea and also as a major drain for the Somerset Levels. Flooding was a perennial problem for the Levels and as the Abbot of Glastonbury was the major landlord in this area, it is understandable that he took a great interest in matters that concerned such a large part of his barony. When the Rokesmulle theta was rebuilt it was at the cost of the demesne and therefore ultimately of the Abbey, thus the supervision of the works was carried out by Abbey officials, not just because of the costs, but also because these waterworks concerned the well-being of many of the Abbots properties in central Somerset.

The concern over the control of water enabled Brent to flourish. Without the drainage, arable activity would probably have been confined to the knoll. Not only was there a 'copious amount of arable activity on the alluvium, there also seems to have been a relatively high degree of dispersed settlement which might militate against the operation of a classic open-field system of agriculture.

A straightforward open-field system did not operate in

¹¹¹L.11179 m.23r-v.

Brent and yet many of its features were present. Furlongs were worked in common, crops were rotated, grazing was strictly controlled and there was a substantial amount of fallow; but the large arable fields associated with open-field farming were not there. Perhaps a combination of the ditching system that dictated smaller units made a large field system unnecessary. Certainly the demesne operation was far more sophisticated; operating the four manors as one agrarian unit and maintaining a balance between crops and fallow based on flexibility determined by current needs and good practice.

The parochial boundaries evident on maps may not have been the boundaries of the four manors in the fourteenth century. The existence of four separate manors implies that there were boundaries, at least for administrative purposes; but if the abbey treated the four largely as one unit and if it was possible for tenants to have holdings in more than one manor, then the boundaries were elastic. Brent enjoyed resources outside its nominal bounds; its modest acreage of demesne meadow and lack of woodland could be supplemented by the access enjoyed by its tenants to the considerable pasture of Thurlemere, while timber and underwood could be imported from other parts of the Glastonbury barony. Furthermore, Brent was able to benefit from capital injection into major improvement schemes by its rich lord.

Now we can examine the ways in which the lord was able to exploit the abundant resources of this ancient estate.

Chapter 4

Demesne Economy

THE DEBATE ON DEMESNE AGRICULTURE

According to Edward Miller, the thirteenth century was an age of expansion in which landlords moved towards directly managing their estates as speculative enterprises geared to expanding markets, rather than farming them out for fixed rents.¹ Significant factors behind this policy change were price inflation, which was reducing real income from fixed rents; population growth and decreasing reserves of land, both of which combined to increase demand for agricultural produce and thereby drive up prices and thus increase the incentive to increase production and benefit from a seller's market.²

Kathleen Biddick delved deeper into the causes of the shift from farming to direct management and saw a root in the increasing demand for cash by English kings which was spent on wars and expanding regal administration at a time when European trade was in depression and silver scarce. As kings passed on their demands for cash to their tenants, agrarian lords sought loans, in the form of advanced payments for

¹E.Miller, 'England in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries: an economic contrast?', Ec.H.R. 24 1 (1971), p.2.

²E.Miller, 'Farming of manors and direct management', Ec.H.R. 26 1 (1973), p.138.

agrarian products. The danger was that lords would spend their cash advances before the merchant creditors collected the committed crops. This led to expanding production to repay increasing debts, the benefits accruing to the financiers who dominated the exchange of agricultural products from the points of production to the market place. The structural indebtedness that the lords found themselves locked into, led them into direct management.³

The underlying economic situation provided pressure begging for a response. The attitudes and policies of reforming landlords were vital according to Miller.⁴ They saw opportunities to move towards solvency and to reap the benefits offered by increasing demand. Dynamic leadership had led to improved fortunes for Glastonbury Abbey in the past. We have seen how Brent's value was dramatically increased during the time of Abbot Thurstan.⁵ Henry of Blois was another exceptional abbot, the brother of King Stephen and a product of the great abbey of Cluny. Henry has been credited, thanks to his administrative ability, with rescuing the tottering finances of Cluny, and the thriving of his bishopric of Winchester as well as his abbacy of Glastonbury.⁶ Thus when Henry de Soliaco commissioned his survey of his Glastonbury estates, he was concerned with what had happened

³K.Biddick, The Other Economy; pastoral husbandry on a medieval estate (1989), pp.48-51.

⁴Miller, 'England in the 12th and 13th centuries', p.12.

⁵See chapter 2 above, p.86-88.

⁶A.L.Poole, From Domesday Book to Magna Carta, 1087-1216, (second edition), (1955), pp.186, 190 & 193.

to them since the time of Bishop Henry and whether it would be useful if those demesnes at farm would be better under direct management.⁷ Meanwhile, at Canterbury Cathedral Priory, financial administration was being centralized; a single treasurer taking over from three separate obedientiaries. This arrangement had been defined by Pope Alexander III in 1179, indicating a wider ecclesiastical concern over the need for tighter financial control, leading the way for the talented administrators John Pecham and Henry of Eastry, under whom the need for long-term credits ceased. It was Pecham who simplified the system of accounts resulting in the establishment of central receiving offices in many monasteries, including Glastonbury.⁸ Parallel reforming leadership was performed at Peterborough by Geoffrey of Crowland and at Bolton Priory by John of Laund.⁹

Stronger financial control in a literate society was bound to lead to the keeping of accounts and a means of auditing them. It is understandable that the bishopric of Winchester was the first of the great lordships to embark on the keeping of accounts, owing to its proximity to the Exchequer in Winchester, whose pattern it followed. Legally trained officials were concerned in making the estates profitable, and to aid them, a number of treatises such as

⁷J.E.Jackson, ed., Liber Henrici de Soliaco, (1882).

⁸R.A.L.Smith, Canterbury Cathedral Priory, a study in Monastic Administration, (1943), pp.14-15, 22, 27.

⁹I.Kershaw, Bolton Priory; the economy of a northern monastery, 1286-1325, (1973), p.13.

'The Rules of Robert Grosseteste' (c.1242), 'The Seneschaucy' (c.1260-76), 'Walter of Henley' (c.1286) and 'The Anonymous Husbandry' (post-1286), were written to show how this could be achieved.¹⁰

The survival of compotus rolls has provided historians with a very rich source from which to study the state of demesne agriculture in late medieval England. Much work has centred on the subject of productivity of cereal crops with its implications for the standard of living of the population, especially in the fourteenth century. This is an understandable pursuit because the documents present details of particular crops grown, the amount of seed used and acres sown, quantities harvested, the yield per seed, payments in expenses and sometimes even the price per bushel at which corn was sold. When such information can be gleaned from as many as eighty-one rolls over the time-span of 1209-1349 as in the case of the estates of the bishopric of Winchester, then it begs for attention from economic historians with an aptitude for statistics.

Beveridge made an impact when he studied the yields of nine Winchester manors, concluding that there was a slight improvement over time.¹¹ Postan took quite a different view, arguing that yields were declining as arable was expanded at

¹⁰D.Oschinsky, Walter of Henley, and other treatises on estate management, (1971), pp.3, 66-67, 89, 144, 196 & 200.

¹¹W.H.Beveridge, 'The Yield and Price of Corn in the Middle Ages', E.M.Carus-Wilson, Essays in Economic History (1954), pp.13-25.

the expense of pasture which in turn reduced the number of animals available to manure the arable, leading to soil exhaustion and lower yields.¹² Titow noted that on many estates arable cultivation was shrinking from the end of the thirteenth century onwards and that the usual explanation was that landlords were finding that renting out was more profitable, but as this was not a universal move, he considered that a knowledge of what was happening to productivity would be an important factor in determining the reasons. His study of yields indicated that although there was a decline towards the end of the thirteenth century, in many cases there was recovery in the first half of the fourteenth century, possibly aided by improved animal ratios, marling, new crops and rotation systems, but acknowledging that these would only give marginal improvements unless there was a significant input of these factors.¹³ Farmer fired a warning shot by explaining that soil fertility was only one factor behind yields and that a number of other factors which did not lend themselves to statistical analysis also had to be considered, for example: weather, management and the quality of the seed.¹⁴

The major player in the pursuit of productivity in recent years has been Bruce Campbell. In his study of Norfolk

¹²M.M.Postan, The Medieval Economy and Society (1975), pp.63-70 & 79.

¹³J.Z.Titow, Winchester Yields; a study in medieval agricultural productivity (1972), pp.1-2, 20, 30-1.

¹⁴D.L.Farmer, 'Grain yields on the Winchester manors in the later Middle Ages', Ec.H.R. 30 4 (1977), p.561.

estates he was able to show that some demesnes could produce remarkably good yields.¹⁵ There is a suggestion that the growing of legumes may have contributed towards Norfolk's yields as Campbell states that Norfolk was exceptional in that it devoted 13% of its cropped acreage to legumes. The importance of legumes has also been noted by Brandon in coastal Sussex where they were grown at the expense of other spring crops and that there were hints of legumes substituting fallow.¹⁶ Campbell is unhappy with the equating of crop yields with productivity, on the grounds that they take no account of other products of the land or the frequency with which the land was cropped. He has devised a system of measurement for cereal crops only, known as 'weighted aggregate cereal yield', from which he has been able to show that in Norfolk the 'evidence reverses the prevailing assumptions about trends in medieval yields....yields tended to be higher before the Black Death, when arable husbandry was at its fullest stretch and intensive methods were encouraged by high prices and low wages'.¹⁷ Campbell has taken productivity a stage further by considering the place of livestock; calculating livestock units and densities to reveal a mixed farming system with dairying, the most productive of

¹⁵B.M.S.Campbell, 'Arable productivity in medieval England: some evidence from Norfolk', Journal of Economic History 43 (1983), pp.379-404.

¹⁶P.F.Brandon, 'Demesne arable farming in coastal Sussex during the later middle ages', Ag.H.R. 19 (1971), p.124.

¹⁷B.M.S.Campbell and M.Overton, 'A new perspective on medieval and early modern agriculture: six centuries of Norfolk farming c.1250-c.1850' Past & Present 141 (1993) pp.58-9, 66-7, 74.

human food per unit area, forming a significant part.¹⁸

Kathleen Biddick has derided the 'studies of cereal agriculture, which have concentrated almost exclusively on the narrow issue of gross productivity', focusing instead on the links between consumption, production and exchange of livestock and pastoral resources. Concentrating on the estates of Peterborough Abbey, Biddick was able to demonstrate that in the thirteenth century they changed from producing for their own consumption to producing for the market. She shows that the numbers of horses, cattle and sheep increase 100% compared with oxen in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, reflecting the diversification and growing commercialization of dairying, transport, and wool in the estate economy'. Biddick dispels the notion that there was a simple linear relationship between animal and cereal husbandry, emphasising instead 'diverse and multiple links'.¹⁹

Another broad spectrum of study has been introduced by Jules Pretty who sees the manorial economy as an example of an agroecosystem in which productivity was just one component. Pretty states unequivocally that medieval productivity was poor, thus the managers of demesnes must have valued more highly the other components of the agroecosystem: stability, sustainability and equatability. It was the integration of diverse agricultural activities that promoted stability, which

¹⁸Campbell and Overton, 'A new perspective', pp.80-1.

¹⁹Biddick, The Other Economy, pp.5, 50, 64-5.

together with varied strategies enhanced sustainability, while equity was sustained by co-operation.²⁰

It is understandable that the initial extraction of yield figures from the Winchester rolls should focus attention on cereal productivity, while there is an element of common sense in arguing that if yields were low then one way of overcoming that problem, especially if population was increasing, was to increase the area of land under the plough; and that the cost of that was a reduction in pasture with its deleterious effects on the numbers of livestock that could be kept and the consequent reduction in manure for fertilizing the arable, leading to population growth outstripping food resources so that nutritional values declined to the point whereby a large number of people succumbed to natural disasters. Closer examination indicates that the picture is not so simple: yields varied from manor to manor and from crop to crop. When a historian discovers that yields on his patch were remarkably good, this provides an incentive to show why they were so good and to develop metrological analysis to demonstrate what was happening; but although this was valuable, it did prolong the emphasis on productivity. Biddick and Pretty have performed a valuable service in widening the debate to investigate the role of livestock more thoroughly and to acknowledge that there had to be a lot more to medieval agriculture than arable productivity.

²⁰J.N.Pretty, 'Sustainable agriculture in the Middle Ages: the English manor', Ag.H.R. 38 1 (1990), pp.1-2.

Such is the background against which we can now examine Brent to see how it compared with trends elsewhere. The concept of productivity, that is the ratio of outputs to inputs can serve as a basis for the order in which the examination will be carried out.²¹ Although farming-out of the demesne appeared to be the norm at the time of Henry de Soliaco's survey in 1189, the only reference to farming in Michael of Amesbury's survey c.1235 was the old demesne holding with croft reckoned at three acres held by Leticia in Berrow for a rent of 6d and donum of 4d.²² There are just eleven surviving account rolls spanning the period 1257-8 until 1333-4.²³ This paucity militates against the statistical analysis that is possible when there are long continuous runs of rolls as in the case of the Winchester estates, but nonetheless they provide sufficient information for some interesting work. Over this period of 76 years there are changes of hand and style, but a basic uniformity in that they deal first with income, then with expenses, while on the reverse, or 'dorse', they kept their accounts of crops and livestock. Extraction of data can be fraught with difficulty, not only because the ravages of time can render sections illegible, but also because they were compiled by different human beings, all of whom were capable of making mistakes and were inconsistent in the categorization of different items.

²¹Campbell & Overton, 'A new perspective', p.66.

²²Rentalia et Custumaria de Michael de Amesbury, Somerset Record Society, (1891).

²³Longleat Mss.10762 m.30 (1257-8), 11244 mm.20-1 (1274-5), 11273 mm.22, 23 (1282-3), 11272 mm.41-4 (1300-1), 11271 mm.1-4 (1302-3), 11215 mm.35-7 (1304-5), 11216 mm.12-5 (1311-2), 10656 mm.19-24 (1313-4), 10766 mm.29-32 (1315-6), 10761 m.22 (1330-1) and 10632 m.12 (1333-4).

It is also important to understand that they were manorial accounts rather than simply concerned with agricultural activities of the demesne, thus they include income and expenditure that would be involved irrespective of whether the demesne was farmed out or not. So, with those caveats in mind, let us look first of all at what the landlord had to put into his estate in order to make it productive.

INPUT 1; EXPENSES

An overview of cash investment can be seen in Table 4.01 in which seven categories of expenditure have been listed. The largest areas of expenditure were on wages and expenses, which were markedly increasing up to 1314-5 apart from one short dip in 1304-5, and on corn and stock which fluctuated according to variable local demand. A different perspective can be seen in Table 4.02 in which the same expenses are expressed as a percentage of the aggregate totals. The percentage figures show how stable expenditure was on customary expenses and rolling stock, while investment in drainage and flood defence was only significant occasionally. Building costs reflect the landlord's roll in providing, repairing and renewing capital fixtures. On average, over a quarter of expenditure went on either supplementing the production of the demesne or renewals of seed and livestock; while a third of all expenditure was on administrative costs and wages. Some of the costs only give part of the picture

Table 4.01 CASH EXPENDITURE (in £)								
Year	C = customary expenses R = rolling stock B = buildings CS = corn and stock W = water work WE = wages and expenses M = miscellaneous T = total							
	C	R	B	CS	W	WE	M ²⁴	T ²⁵
1257-8	1.97	0.86	3.58	6.30		4.89	8.20	25.8
1274-5	2.11	2.07	3.95	7.38	0.02	6.79	6.46	28.8
1282-3	2.14	1.27	6.88	4.97		7.08	5.71	28.1
1300-1	4.53	1.05	5.59	40.44	1.07	10.02	1.85	64.6
1302-3	2.75	1.10	2.02	9.18	3.21	14.98	3.32	36.6
1304-5	2.56	1.30	5.05	14.40	0.20	12.42	2.35	38.3
1311-2	2.73	1.01	5.80	0.88	3.11	16.62	1.07	31.2
1313-4	2.69	1.75	8.89	6.84	0.62	16.73	0.03	37.6
1314-5	2.39	1.69	7.65	6.38	1.10	17.54	3.08	39.8
1330-1 ²⁶	0.89	0.67						1.56
1333-4	1.73	4.09	1.05	13.38	6.74	13.02	2.30	42.3
Ave.	2.41	1.53	4.59	10.01	1.46	10.92	3.12	36.9

²⁴This includes a variety of minor expenses, largely arising from work outside Brent.

²⁵These figures are the totals of the constituent figures in this table. It is very difficult to reconcile exactly these totals with the total expense figures in the account rolls. However, the figures are reasonably close, the largest margin of error being 2.7%.

²⁶The account roll seems to have disintegrated, thus we have an incomplete set of expenses for this year.

Table 4.02 Cash Expenditure (%)							
Year	Cust- omary exp.	Roll- ing stock	Build- ings	Corn & stock	Water work	Wages & expen- ses	Misc.
1257 -8	8	3	14	24	0	19	32
1274 -5	8	7	14	26	0	24	22
1282 -3	8	5	25	18	0	25	20
1300 -1	7	2	9	63	2	16	3
1302 -3	8	3	6	25	9	41	9
1304 -5	7	3	13	38	1	32	6
1311 -2	9	3	19	3	10	53	3
1313 -4	7	5	24	18	2	45	0
1314 -5	6	4	19	16	3	44	8
1330 -1 ²⁷	57	43	0	0	0	0	0
1333 -4	4	10	2	32	16	31	5
Ave. less 1330 -1	7	5	15	26	4	33	11

²⁷The lack of detail in this roll for expenses distorts this year's figures.

however, because we have to remember that Table 4.01 contains only cash expenditure whereas some items would have an input from day-work.

A greater insight into the nature of cash expenditure can be obtained by breaking the components down further. In Table 4.03 we can see how customary expenses have three components. Defaults on rent tend to decline in the first fifteen years of the fourteenth century. Most of the large figure for 1300-1 was for pasture in the lord's hands, suggesting either that this pasture had been confiscated, or maybe the tenant had died and the new tenant had not been formally granted this overlond.²⁸ Only one of these defaults was on a customary holding. There is no direct clue as to why defaults should be significantly higher in 1300-1, but demesne arable yields dipped noticeably in that accounting year, so possibly tenants were affected by lower yields as well, leading to lower cash income, thus causing embarrassment when it came to paying cash rents. Discharges were acquittances of rent for manorial officials such as the reeve, grainger, haywards, gooseherd, oxherds, cowherd, carpenters and smiths. The significant fall between 1314-5 and 1330-1 would seem to support the notion of a cutback in demesne agriculture between those dates. The small customary payments were long standing payments to villagers, the church of South Brent and the four men of Pullenlonde.

²⁸Overlond was technically demesne surplus to requirements which was rented out to tenants, but on the death of the tenant or the surrender of his customary tenancy, was not automatically handed over to the inheritor.

Table 4.03 Customary expenses (£)				
Year	Default of Rent	Discharges	Customary Payments	Total
1257-8		1.53	0.44	1.97
1274-5	0.73	0.94	0.44	2.11
1282-3	0.36	1.34	0.44	2.14
1300-1	2.74	1.35	0.44	4.53
1302-3	0.96	1.35	0.44	2.75
1304-5	0.78	1.34	0.44	2.56
1311-2	0.65	1.55	0.53	2.73
1313-4	0.50	1.66	0.53	2.69
1314-5	0.20	1.66	0.53	2.39
1330-1		0.89		0.89 ²⁹
1333-4	0.33	0.74	0.66	1.73
Average	0.66	1.30	0.44	2.41

Table 4.04 Rolling stock (£)					
Year	Ploughs	<u>Carrae</u>	<u>Carectae</u>	Shoeing	Total
1257-8	0.68	0.18	inc.with carts		0.86
1274-5	0.74	1.17		0.16	2.07
1282-3	0.51	0.53	0.18	0.05	1.27
1300-1	0.43	0.48	0.06	0.08	1.05
1302-3	0.29	0.44	0.29	0.08	1.10
1304-5	0.40	0.50	0.31	0.09	1.30
1311-2	0.29	0.28	0.44		1.01
1313-4	0.38	0.71	0.66		1.75
1314-5	0.47	0.41	0.81		1.69
1330-1	0.67				0.67 ³⁰
1333-4	2.16 ³¹	0.75	1.18		4.09

²⁹There is very little information on expenses for 1330-1.

³⁰Information on expenses is sparse for this year.

Rolling stock included the ploughs and two types of cart, carrae and carectae, both of which were two-wheeled. The carrae was the heavier of the two and according to Langdon was hauled by oxen.³² The costs here are for raw materials such as timber, wainscot and iron, or specialized items such as wheels. No wages are involved because the work was done by carpenters and smiths who were customary tenants, such as the carpenter of South Brent, who according to Fromond's survey was quit of 1/- rent and all services pertaining to the ferdellers for the maintenance of two foot-ploughs and one harrow.³³ Dead stock lists indicate that there were four carrae and four carectae in 1313-4 and one less carectae the following year. Plough numbers appear to have varied from six to ten, but eight seems to be the commonest figure.³⁴ What stands out about these figures is that there was little variation in expenditure over the years and the small amount of investment they represented when set against the figures in Table 4.01.

In his exemplary study of Cuxham, Harvey was able to draw a conjectural plan of the curia.³⁵ Unfortunately, it is not possible to do a similar exercise for the four manors of

³¹This figure includes £1.39 for pasture bought at La Grove for pasturing 22 demesne oxen this year.

³²J.Langdon, Horses, Oxen and Technological Innovation, the Use of Draught Animals in English Farming from 1066 to 1500 (1986), p.77.

³³BL Eg.3321.

³⁴This is the actual number of implements, not the number of teams.

³⁵P.D.A.Harvey, A Medieval Oxfordshire Village, Cuxham, 1240-1400 (1965), p.30.

Brent, partly because the lack of evidence on the ground and partly because of the lack of specific references in manorial documents that generally treat the four manors as one estate. What can be deduced is that at East Brent there was a grange, a hall, a cattle shed and an oxshed. La Pulle also had an oxshed. At South Brent there was a hall, stable, bakery and a kitchen. There was a New Grange with a hall, kitchen, oxshed, cattleshed, pigsty, chicken shed and stable. The locations of La Pulle and New Grange have so far defied examination; the most that can be said is that New Grange was not in East Brent, because in the thirteenth century accounts grain storage appears to have been divided between 'The Grange of East Brent' and 'New Grange'.

In Table 4.05, apart from a new oxshed built in 1313-4 at a cost of £2.23, all the figures in the houses column refer to maintenance costs of demesne buildings and replacement of equipment. A number of them appear to have been built of stone and roofed with shingles. Roof repairs were commonplace and there were frequent purchases of nails, hinges, hasps and locks for doors and gates. Other costs could be on things as diverse as repairs to stone walls (one as high as seven feet), rushes for the oxshed, welsh boards and timber for rafters, wages for roofers and their assistants and the occasional mason. Trestles and canvas for table-cloths, dishes, bowls, plates, saucers, sieves, mats, towels, troughs, saddlebags and forks for manure were among the equipment replaced. The dairy seems to have been a two-story building as there were repairs

Table 4.05 Buildings (£)						
Year	Houses	Dairy	Rooks- mulle (water mill)	South Brent wind- mill	Berrow wind- mill	Total
1257-8	0.50	0.33	2.23	0.26 ³⁶		3.58
1274-5	1.73	0.53	1.09	0.30		3.95
1282-3	3.68	0.35	2.85			6.88
1300-1	4.11	0.17	1.31			5.59
1302-3	1.66	0.17	0.19			2.02
1304-5	3.19	0.14	1.72			5.05
1311-2	2.14	0.17	2.30	0.58	0.61	5.80
1313-4	4.90 ³⁷	0.56	1.98	0.57	0.88	8.89
1314-5	4.26	0.21	1.71	1.06	0.41	7.65
1330- 1 ³⁸						0.00
1333-4	0.97		0.08	³⁹	⁴⁰	1.05

³⁶The figure for this year and 1274-5 probably refer to South Brent windmill. There is no reference to Berrow mill before 1311-2, but South Brent windmill was at farm in 1307.

³⁷This figure includes the cost of a new oxshed.

³⁸No information has survived owing to the poor condition of the roll.

³⁹This mill was farmed out for £2.

⁴⁰Berrow mill had fallen down.

to stonework around the windows of an upper-room. Purchases for the dairy could include rennet, salt and linen, while churns and pails could be repaired or replaced. Upkeep of the mills was relatively expensive in comparison with other demesne buildings, mainly because they contained moving machinery which wears out. However, the costs involved in maintaining mills do help us to understand why lords were ever watchful for any threat to their monopoly.⁴¹ Iron was needed for shafts, spindles, bands to tie wheels together and bills for sharpening millstones. Blacksmiths were frequently employed for steeling and sharpening the bills and other forge work. Brass was needed for bearings as also was grease. Millstones were very expensive, generally varying between 5/- and 8/- each, but of course they were usually purchased in pairs and the cost of transportation added significantly to their final cost. In 1281-2 two millstones were bought from La Penne for £1.7.0, but on top of that it cost 15/- to transport them from La Penne to Glastonbury and a further 2/- from Glastonbury to Rockesmulle. Wooden items included cog-wheels, rung-wheels, boards for rollers, roofs, walls and floors, sluices and troughs. Hundreds of nails were needed for the various repair jobs. The windmills required canvas and laths for their sails. Rokesmulle's costs were clearly higher than the windmills, yet its longevity and volume of business outstripped the others and its value in 1307 was reckoned at £12 per annum whereas the windmills were only

⁴¹There are over fifty cases of presentment for failure to do suit of mill in the court rolls that have survived between 1265 and 1350.

farmed out for £2 or £3 per annum.⁴²

In Tables 4.01 and 4.02 it seems that a relatively high percentage of expenditure went on the purchase of corn and stock. Closer examination reveals that there were some atypical figures that distorted an otherwise stable and modest outlay. Generally, corn was bought in for seed, but sometimes amounts were bought in to meet demands that the net issue could not satisfy. In Tables 4.06 and 4.07 the biggest leap in expenditure was the purchase of 100q 4b of wheat in 1300-1. Of this, 63q were bought from the Steward, and although it did not specify that this was for seed, 63½q is what was actually required for sowing. There was nothing unusual in purchasing a certain amount of seed from outside the manor, as continuously sowing from your own seed was acknowledged to lead to lower yields. The problem in 1300-1 was that 105q were sent to Glastonbury. As this was in excess of the net yield, then the 105q could not have been sent voluntarily, but must have been ordered by the landlord, thus as much as 100q 4b had to be purchased to cover all the requirements for that year. Similarly, in 1333-4, of the 49q 5b of oats purchased, 35q 5½b was sent to the hospice at Glastonbury on the orders of the Abbot. There was a further 60q 6b purchased which did not find its way into the expenses account, yet was essential for Brent to meet its needs that year as the Abbey took 185½q of oats whereas the demesne only grew 149½q. It may be that the Abbey was being kind this year, realising that its demands

⁴²BL Eg.3321 and L.10632 m.12.

Table 4.06 Corn Bought in quantity					
Year	Wheat	Barley	Beans	Oats	Mixture
1257-8		12q 4b		8q 3b	
1274-5		6q	1q	2q	
1282-3	6q 6b			27q 3b	
1300-1	100q 4b			54q	
1302-3	27q 2b			60q	
1304-5	30q		15q 6b	31q 1b	
1311-2			1q 3b		
1313-4	2q 3½b			38q 4b	
1314-5				42q	
1330-1					
1333-4	12q	5½b	5q 1b	49q 5b	9q 2½b

Table 4.07 Corn bought in £.p						
Year	Wheat	Barley	Beans	Oats	Mix.	Total
1257-8		3.13		1.64		4.76
1274-5		1.30	0.17	0.20		1.67
1282-3	2.44			2.53		4.97
1300-1	34.04			5.40		39.44
1302-3	5.45			3.34		8.79
1304-5	8.00		3.18	2.89		14.06
1311-2			0.23			0.23
1313-4	0.67			5.47		6.14
1314-5				6.30		6.30
1330-1						
1333-4	3.00	0.11	0.86	7.10	1.55	12.63

for oats were more than Brent could satisfy of itself and did not debit the reeve for those 60q 6b which were "received from the lord's purchase of the corn of Jacob de Wilton at East Brent without tally".⁴³ Alternatively, this perhaps was a clawback of a quantity of corn that had been sold in advance by the Abbey to a financier in Wilton, indicating that Glastonbury was no different from other monasteries in requiring banking services to maintain its liquidity.

In seven out of the eleven surviving accounts, the demands for at least one crop outstripped the ability of Brent demesne to supply that demand from its net issue. This applied to wheat production in 1300-1, 1304-5, 1330-1 and 1333-4 and for three out of those four years there were significant purchases of wheat. For oats, the shortfalls were in 1257-8, 1302-3, 1313-4 and 1333-4 and there were purchases in all those years, although 1257-8's purchase was modest. There was a shortfall in beans for 1302-3 and 1330-1 but no purchases were necessary because new grain was available to help satisfy demand in 1302-3 and probably also in 1330-1 when the shortfall was only 5q. Occasionally the shortfall was due to the following year's sowing requirements being significantly larger for a particular crop, but generally the cause was a large quantity being despatched to Glastonbury, presumably on demand. The implications of that for the direct management of the demesne and for the wider issue of the four manors are considerable, because the reasons behind the

⁴³L.10632 m.12.

purchase of grain alerts us to the inability of the demesne to meet its own requirements, largely because of the demands of its landlord. It was not a stand-alone estate, it had a role to play in the larger barony of Glastonbury, thus much of what happened in Brent was determined by external factors, some of which bolstered Brent while others would use Brent's resources to support requirements elsewhere on the Abbot's estates.

Livestock purchases represented a fraction of crop purchases as Tables 4.08, 4.09 and 4.10 indicate. The only significant purchase was of fifteen young cattle in 1274-5, which partly replaced livery and sales of 34 cattle that year. The indications are that Brent was reasonably self-sufficient in livestock.

Table 4.08 Livestock bought in numbers						
Year	Mares	Ctle	Pigs	Geese	Fowls	Shp
57-8	1	4	4	22		
74-5		15	3			7
82-3						
00-1			9	12	37	
02-3				33	24	
04-5			1	6	15	
11-2		1			16	
13-4	1	2				
14-5						
30-1						
33-4		1	2	15	40	

Table 4.09 Livestock bought in £.p							
Year	Mares	Cattle	Pigs	Geese	Fowls	Sheep	Total
57-8	0.12	1.10	0.23	0.09			1.54
74-5		4.98	0.35			0.44	5.71
82-3							
00-1			0.78	0.10	0.13		1.00
02-3				0.34	0.05		0.39
04-5			0.15	0.06	0.13		0.34
11-2		0.34			0.08		0.65
13-4	0.45	0.25					0.70
14-5							
30-1							
33-4		0.35	0.04	0.15	0.17		0.75

Table 4.10 Corn and Stock bought in £.p			
Year	Corn	Stock	Total
1257-8	4.76	1.54	6.30
1274-5	1.67	5.71	7.38
1282-3	4.97		4.97
1300-1	39.44	1.00	40.44
1302-3	8.79	0.39	9.18
1304-5	14.06	0.34	14.40
1311-2	0.23	0.65	0.88
1313-4	6.14	0.70	6.84
1314-5	6.38		6.38
1330-1			0.00
1333-4	12.63	0.75	13.38
Average	9.01	1.01	10.01

Table 4.11 Water works (£)				
Year	Ditching	Upkeep of Thetas	Upkeep of sea defence	Totals
1257-8				
1274-5		0.02		0.02
1282-3				
1300-1		1.07		1.07
1302-3		3.21		3.21
1304-5		0.20		0.20
1311-2	1.58	0.15	1.38	3.11
1313-4		0.03	0.59	0.62
1314-5		0.66	0.44	1.10
1330-1				
1333-4		6.74		6.74

The costs involved in drainage, maintenance of thetas and other flood defence seems infinitesimal bearing in mind the nature of the landscape and all that has been written in the previous chapter. We have to remember that the bulk of the work on water-works was the subject of customary labour and was thus not a direct cost to the lord, so the costs that appear in Table 4.11 are for materials and equipment. The biggest item was the construction of the new theta at Rockesmulle in 1333-4. The reason for there being a ditching cost in 1311-2 is because it involved digging 112 perches around the demesne garden of South Brent, a hedge of 80 perches, two boatloads of fencing brought in from Stakedhamme

and brushwood collected from Mere and Godney.⁴⁴

That wages and expenses amounted to a third of all cash expenditure might bring sage nodding of heads among modern accountants, although perhaps many would congratulate the Abbot for keeping such costs down to that level. The bulk of these payments are in the form of expenses to the steward and bailiff who supervised the running of the estates. An example of the sort of payments they received can be gathered from the steward's expenses for 1311-2 viz:

In expenses of the steward and cellarer for holding the hundred and hallmoots, 28/4½.

In expenses of the steward for his coming to superintend the manor, 22/5½.

In wages for three garciones for navigating the steward four times towards Glastonbury, 3/-

In wages of the same for the said steward and his men, navigating towards Glastonbury once, 6d.

The autumn, or harvest, expenses also included payments to manorial officials such as the reeve, berebrutt, messor and cook while the allowances and wages column includes payments to the bailiff and that rather elusive body of men, the famuli, who were the stipendiary workers on the demesne. In the early fourteenth century the core of this workforce comprised two inhinor[um]⁴⁵, one ploughman, five oxherds, one dairymaid and one miller. Their stipends amounted to £1.19.6,

⁴⁴L.11216 mm.12-5.

⁴⁵These would seem to be famuli who lived in what Kershaw referred to as le hinehous, an alternative name for the bovaria, or oxhouse. See Kershaw, Bolton Priory, p.53. This is reminiscent of the later term 'Backus' or Backhouse boy, see G.E.Evans, Ask the Fellows who Cut the Hay, (re-printed 1975), pp.23-7.

while the bailiff received £2. During the second decade the bailiff received £4.8.0 for the seven weeks of harvest plus an annual stipend of £1.⁴⁶ In addition to their stipends, the famuli received payments in kind; generally this was tolcorn of which a standard amount was set aside viz: 38q 2b for the eight ploughing staff and one dairymaid for seven weeks, 6b for one garcio for custody of five oxen for twelve weeks, 3½q for three stackers, one ploughman and three hired men for six weeks and 1b for one gooseherd for two weeks.⁴⁷ These tolcorn allowances highlight the seasonal nature of much famuli employment, so that it was unnecessary to provide

Table 4.12 Wages & Expenses (£)					
Year	Steward	Autumn	Allowa- nces & wages	Thresh- ing	Totals
1257-8			4.89		4.89
1274-5	0.42	1.06	5.31		6.79
1282-3	0.63	0.30	6.04	0.11	7.08
1300-1	1.23	2.02	6.77		10.02
1302-3	1.21	4.73	6.95	2.09	14.98
1304-5	3.91	2.00	4.58	1.93	12.42
1311-2	2.72	2.73	7.50	3.67	16.62
1313-4	1.12	4.49	7.15	3.97	16.73
1314-5	3.92	3.05	4.35	6.22	17.54
1330-1					0.00
1333-4	2.30	2.03	5.00	3.69	13.02

⁴⁶L.11271 mm.1-4 and L.10656 mm.19-24.

⁴⁷L.11271 mm.1-4.

accommodation for more than the two inhinorum and the dairymaid, while the seasonal requirement for the ploughing staff and various stockmen could be satisfied by customary tenants hiring out their services in return for acquittances of redditus, as happened for example with six ploughmen in 1300-1 who were acquitted 1/- each, and also a cowherd acquitted 4d while employed from Hock to Michaelmas.⁴⁸

Expenditure on threshing is puzzling because it was a commonly specified service for 5-acremen and 3-acremen in all the surveys. Yet there are numerous examples of the landless garciones, like Michael, son of Thomas Michel who was amerced 2d in 1314 for failing to thresh.⁴⁹ Yet it was the subject of waged labour because there are payments to men for supervising the threshing and men were employed to do it, such as John Lallet who was paid 1½d per day for thirty-nine weeks while he stayed on the demesne to thresh.⁵⁰ One possible explanation for the employment of threshers is that it became a commuted service. However, such commutation agreements do not appear in the court rolls. Formal commutation agreements tend to involve the more substantial tenants, for whom threshing was not a customary service. It may be that some five- or three-acremen had nominated their sons to do the threshing service. Interestingly, without the increase in threshing costs, the wages and expenses bill was reasonably

⁴⁸L.11272 m.41-44.

⁴⁹L.10654 m.32-4.

⁵⁰L.10632 m.12.

stable during the first third of the fourteenth century.

The expenses dealt with above represent a form of investment in the estate. Without those costs being met the estate would have degenerated and income would have declined rapidly. Postan commented that investment was about 5% of total revenue on Winchester estates and 4% on 'the colonizing estates of Sedgemoor'.⁵¹ It is not clear how he calculated those figures, but Hilton was much more specific when he reckoned capital investment to include expenditure on equipment, buildings, ditching and fencing; calculating these as a proportion of cash liveries, because these gave a 'rough and ready indication of the profitability to the lord of the estate'.⁵² By applying Hilton's criteria to Brent we get a measure of capital expenditure in Table 4.13, indicating that the average level of investment of 4.9% compares very favourably with the general levels of investment reckoned by Postan. Interesting although this comparison may be, it has several flaws as a measure of capital investment as to render it of little use in assessing the role of investment in the Brent economy. One major flaw is that the bulk of expenditure on buildings, equipment and ditching was on maintenance, only occasionally was money spent on something new. Furthermore, we only have evidence for expenditure during ten accounting years, the estate would have benefitted not only from

⁵¹M.M.Postan, 'Investment in Medieval Agriculture', Journal of Economic History, 27, (1967), pp.578-8.

⁵²R.H.Hilton, The English Peasantry in the Later Middle Ages; the Ford Lectures for 1973 and related studies, (1975), p.187-8.

expenditure between those years but also from investment before our written records begin, as buildings can be used for centuries. Also, capital projects such as the new theta at Rockesmulle, brought benefits far beyond Brent, thus it is

Table 4.13: Investment			
Years	Livery (£)	Investment (£)	Investment as a percentage of Livery
1257-8	187.81	4.44	2.36
1274-5	114.94	6.04	5.25
1282-3	153.12	8.15	5.32
1300-1	146.66	7.71	5.26
1302-3	100.41	6.33	6.30
1304-5	152.91	6.55	4.28
1311-2	200.60	9.92	4.95
1313-4	184.76	11.26	6.09
1314-5	194.51	10.44	5.37
1330-1 ⁵³			
1333-4	253.24	11.88	4.69
Averages	168.90	8.27	4.90

conceivable that capital investment elsewhere in the Somerset Levels would bring benefits to Brent. It can be seen therefore, that to isolate investment in Brent according to Hilton's criteria, is of limited value. If most of the capital resources were already in place, little was needed to

⁵³The poor state of this year's account roll prevents us ascertaining the appropriate figures.

improve the infrastructure of the estate. Only the theta at Rockesmulle, although this was technically a renewal, the ditch around the Garden of South Brent and the building of the new oxshed can really be considered to be positive forms of investment. The other costs were reactive expenditure, or running costs, but they were a vital input if the estate was to function on behalf of the landlord and thus can be considered to be a valid form of investment. The only costs that we can disregard as investment are the payments in kind to officials and famuli. These were in any case disbursements from issue and are effectively deducted from the real profits of demesne agriculture when these are discussed later.

INPUT 2: LABOUR

The famuli were not the only ones who received disbursements; much more generous ones were handed over to the Steward and Bailiff as part of their expenses. The Steward was the Cellarer at Glastonbury and he was the Abbot's representative in dealings with Brent; it was he who held the Hundred and Hallmoots. The Bailiff was a Glastonbury appointee, the Steward's right hand man and probably responsible for supervising a number of manors. Between these Glastonbury officials and the famuli were a considerable number of manorial officials who were elected by the tenants and upon whom the brunt of working the demesne and managing the whole of the Brent estate fell. The custumal within the Fromond survey of 1307 details the various posts and the

substantial discharges that went with them.⁵⁴ Each of the four manors had a reeve, a grainger, a hayward/messor, and an oxherd.⁵⁵ Berrow had its own burghayward, but this post was of relatively minor importance as it enjoyed only half the acquittance and none of the perquisites of the Berrow messor. Berrow also had a carpenter, while South Brent had a carpenter plus a smith, a fish-carrier and a marshward. Cowherds and swineherds were found in Lymsham, Berrow and South Brent.

Although the custumal allowed for all those posts, it is debateable whether they were all filled. In the autumn expenses, five of the compoti list the officials that received a payment and the usual pattern was for there to be one reeve, one berebrut, four messors, one rider, one clavig[er]⁵⁶ and occasionally a cook. In 1302-3 recipients of money even included threshers, tallymen, a gooseherd and seven carters, two of whom were there to collect the tithe for the Church of East Brent.⁵⁷ So it is puzzling that although the custumal suggests that each of the manors had a reeve and a berebrut, the compoti give the impression that only one of each was required for the whole of Brent. This is supported by the fact that only once are two reeves mentioned in one year, John Batecock and Stephen de Buggleg in 1274-5, while references to

⁵⁴BL Eg.3321.

⁵⁵Technically the hayward and messor are different posts, but in Brent the terms were interchangeable. See H.S.Bennett, Life on the English Manor; a study of Peasant Conditions 1150-1400 (1965), pp.178 & 338.

⁵⁶This can be interpreted as key-keeper or accountant.

⁵⁷L.11271 mm.1-4.

grangers are sparse. Furthermore, it would be easier for the bailiff to deal with just one reeve and of course the accounts and court rolls rarely differentiate between the four manors.

At first sight, many of the manorial posts seemed very attractive because not only did they carry some status but the holders had their redditus cut down to a nominal sum and they were excused most, if not all of their feudal services. On top of that they could gain extra pasturage for their livestock and a few acres of demesne arable and meadow. There were differences between the four manors in the allowable perquisites, but they followed a similar pattern. The Reeve of Lympsham's perquisites were particularly generous; to be quit of rent and all works and to have:-

- his mare fed with the lord's hay in winter and to share the lord's pasture in summer
- 3 pools measuring 3 acres in Forthamme
- 2 pools measuring 1 acre in Nywecroft
- $\frac{1}{2}$ acre pasture in Beston and to have straw
- 1 acre of meadow in Sandrigg
- 5 acres of meadow in Henacre
- 1 acre in Henacre
- $\frac{1}{2}$ acre in Stowurth
- 1 acre in Killingworth
- Pasture in Murthenebrock value 1/-
- 1 acre of meadow in Meresmere
- 23 acres of pasture
- 1 acre in Verschmere value 8d

and to be at the lord's table with the bailiff from 1st August until Michaelmas. The other officials had more modest perquisites, such as the Hayward of South Brent who was quit of 1/3 rent and all services pertaining to ferdellers and to have:

- ½ acre of meadow in Killingworth
- 3 Scroftdoles containing one acre of arable
- 1 perch of wheat
- 1 perch of beans
- all the demesne oat straw

and to be at the lord's table from 1st August until Michaelmas. These two examples of perquisites are sufficient to give the flavour of the type of rewards available. The perquisites frequently make it clear that there were landholding qualifications for particular posts, most of them were expected to be filled from the ranks of the more substantial customary tenants such as the half-virgaters and ferdellers. Even so, there are numerous examples of people who did not want to do these jobs and were willing to pay extra rent to avoid these responsibilities: Michael le Ryche paid £2.10.0 in 1304 to commute his works plus 7/- per annum and to be quit of the offices of reeve, grainger, hayward and wickman; William Loveybonnde paid 6/8 in 1333-4 to be quit of the offices of pigman, oxherd and grainger for life; John, son of Boviar, paid 4/- in 1306 to demise the office of reeve on this occasion.⁵⁸ There were all sorts of reasons for tenants

⁵⁸L.10778 m.5r-v; L.10632 m.12; L.10770 m.14.

showing some reluctance to take on a manorial post: time spent on this job might be better spent on his own holding, the reeve could be penalised if the demesne did not produce as much as the bailiff required, officials could be unpopular if their pursuit of their duties was contrary to the interests of other tenants. This latter difficulty was particularly noticeable with haywards when they impounded stray animals; William Gille had impounded four oxen and two affers in 1306 that belonged to William Page that had trespassed on the lord's beans, but William Page took them out of the pound without payment. Haywards could also find themselves the subject of malicious accusations, although the manor court was unlikely to be taken in, for example when William Gilrych was amerced 6d for a false complaint against William le Hayward in 1308.⁵⁹

The manorial officials provided a vital task in managing the major labour input into the demesne; customary services. In return for their landholdings, tenants paid not only cash rents, but performed a wide variety of services, most of which were concerned with the operations of the demesne. All of the surveys described the type of services the tenants owed and these increased in detail over time. The Ford and Fromond surveys are particularly valuable not only because of the greater detail they provide but also because they placed a value on individual works that enables us to add this value to the cash input studied above.

⁵⁹L.10678 m.6v.

In Table 4.14 I have set out the details of the main customary services together with their cash values for 1307.⁶⁰ The works are set out in what appears to be their order of importance with the figures setting out either an area worked in acres, a length dug in perches or a number of works performed. A number of these works were only required occasionally, for example, Stephen de Burghton was only required to put in half a daywork once in a year in which it was deemed necessary to reap reeds.⁶¹ Walling and ditching in Thurlemere included scouring various lengths of the watercourse, but just for half a day on each length in the year, so Robert Reynold, a half-virgater of East Brent was only required to put in 1½ days on this work in 1307. His earlier counterpart, Stephen de Burghton only had the same work required of him in alternate years. Similarly with enclosing the lord's park at Pilton, Stephen had to dig one perch once every four years. Digging the vineyard at Mere by the men of Lympsham is likely to be a case of inconsistent recording by the clerk in compiling his summary as a sum of 1/3 was now added to the redditus for each of the other three manors in place of the work requirement.⁶² Carrying forensica was another work that could only have been required occasionally because of the high value placed upon it. Even

⁶⁰This is made possible by convenient summaries in the Fromond survey which the Ford survey lacks.

⁶¹BL.Add.17450.

⁶²It seems likely that Mere vineyard had been decommissioned by this time. Most tenants owed digging/ditching at Panborough vineyard, but this work is not specified in the summaries, so is probably included in the 'catch-all' daywork category.

Table 4.14 Value of Customary Work 1307

Works	East Brent	Lymp- sham	B'row	South Brent	Total value
Ploughing, winter & spring	150½a £2.51	174a £2.91	164½a £2.74	175½a £2.90	£11.06
Dayworks	2544 £6.18	2400 £5.80	2160 £5.25	2076 £4.65	£21.88
Reaping Corn - boonwork	168a £2.10	100a £1.25	129a £2.78	135½a £1.74	£7.87
Carrying Hay	nil £0.55	£0.69	£1.18	£0.95	£6.19
Carrying Corn	88 £2.20	£0.62			
Carrying <u>intrinseca</u>	nil £1.81	£1.24	£1.80	£2.25	£7.10
Carrying <u>forensica</u>	37 £0.34	£0.30	40 £0.33	£0.43	£1.40
Enclosing Pilton Park	7p £0.13	£0.11	£0.14	£0.15	£0.53
Digging Vineyard at Mere		£0.06			£0.06
Walling, ditching in Thurlemere etc	221 £0.48	£0.31	£0.34	168 £0.43	£1.56
Mowing	16½a £0.21	5a £0.06	(5a) £0.01		£0.28
Weeding	42 £0.17				£0.17
Ricking, raking, measuring	nil £0.95	£0.25	£0.04	£0.17	£1.41
Collecting wood	nil £0.06				£0.06
Hauling lord's wine	nil £0.13	£0.07	£0.09		£0.29
Reaping reeds	32 £0.07	(24) £0.06	£0.10		£0.23
Threshing			£0.03	£0.03	£0.06
Totals	17.89	13.73	14.83	13.70	60.15

carrying intrinseca could be valued at 5d or 6d for each service which made it more valuable than a ploughing work at 4d per acre. However, an East Brent half-virgater's carrying forensica was valued at 1/6 and this could be for carrying to Glastonbury, Wells, Axbridge or wherever necessary. This emphasised the value of the manor as part of a wider economy and the importance attached to moving produce within and without the barony, which notion is supported by the fact that whenever a tenant was engaged on summagium he was excused daywork.

The bulk of the work extracted from the tenants involved the preparation of the ground and the harvesting of the crops. Boonwork was the basic harvesting requirement, for which half-virgaters and ferdellers reaped two acres representing four harvest-works, while 5-acremen and 3-acremen did the tying and stacking. If the harvesting requirements went beyond the boonwork allocation then the extra work counted towards dayworks, generally at the rate of half an acre being equated to one daywork, although in Lympsham ferdellers were granted three dayworks for reaping one acre. Daywork was the catch-all category and was performed one day a week for forty-eight weeks of the year by all customary tenants.⁶³ All those works that were necessary beyond the customary requirements owing to the volume of work involved in ploughing, haymaking or harvesting, could be deducted from a tenants annual daywork

⁶³The Beere survey refers to daywork as Mondayworks, divided up into forty winterworks and eight harvestworks.

requirement. The major dayworks appear to have been ditching within the four manors, maintaining flood defences and weeding in the fields. The prominent customary agrarian task evident in medieval documents was ploughing. Interestingly, this service was only expected of the half-virgaters and ferdellers, perhaps because they were the only customary tenants expected to possess the necessary oxen. Half-virgaters were generally expected to plough four or five acres for wheat and plough and harrow about two and a half acres for spring crops, while ferdellers were expected to do half as much, although there were variations such as five acres work expected from some ferdellers in Lympsam for wheat. These ploughing services supplemented the demesne ploughing performed by the famuli, which in 1311-2 were recorded as:

Ploughing:	64 acres for wheat
	112 acres for beans
	44 acres for oats
	102½ acres for fallow
	102 + 3 acres <u>rebinand</u>

Harrowing:	112 acres for beans
	44 acres for oats.

On top of that the customary ploughing requirement was for 664½ acres, which was broken down as:

Wheat	241 acres
Beans	78½ acres
Oats	104½ acres
Commuted	169½ acres
Acquittances and defaults	71 acres

Now the fact that the customary ploughing requirement stood at 664½ acres in 1307 and remained at that figure certainly until 1333-4, begs questions of the level of commutation of ploughing services in 1311-2. Further investigation reveals that in 1313-4 185½ acres were commuted; the following year it

had increased to $244\frac{3}{4}$ acres and by 1333-4 all ploughing services were commuted. It certainly reveals a move away from the use of customary service for this major agricultural activity and a preference for cash, perhaps with which to employ casual labour for work beyond the capacity of the famuli. Does it also reveal a diminution in demesne agriculture in Brent?

INPUT 3: LAND

It is not known how far prior to 1307 that $664\frac{1}{2}$ acres was the expected customary ploughing requirement.⁶⁴ What we can do is to study Table 4.15 to compare the amount of demesne land, meadow and pasture in 1260 with 1307 to answer the question posed at the end of the previous paragraph. This clearly demonstrates that demesne land was being shed between 1260 and 1307, to the tune of $170\frac{1}{4}$ acres of arable and $114\frac{1}{4}$ acres of meadow; so the interest in direct management of the demesne had peaked before 1307, but how much before then we do not know. Table 4.15 also indicates a growth in the value of arable in Lympsham and Berrow compared with East and South Brent. This might seem a little surprising considering that neither Berrow or Lympsham have a share in the higher and better drained land on the knoll which is at the core of the Brent estate. However, such growth should not be overstated as by 1307 there was a slightly more equitable distribution of

⁶⁴My calculation for 1260 is 627 acres of ploughing service, but this figure needs to be treated with caution to allow for human error and the difficulty in interpreting thirteenth century conventions for fractions of a perch.

Table 4.15 Demesne change 1260-1307						
Manors	1260		1307		Change	
	acres	£	acres	£	acres	£
EB						
Arable	325½a	£8.98	227¾a	£8.77	-97¾a	-0.21
Meadow	125a	£6.69	57a	£6.25	-68a	-0.44
Pasture	46½a	£1.16	40¼a	£4.70	-6¼a	+3.54
L						
Arable	312½a	£9.61	287a	£12.43	-25½a	+2.82
Meadow	51a	£3.83	53¼a	£5.33	+2¼a	+1.50
Pasture	?	£0.45	?	£0.25		-0.20
B						
Arable	364a	£10.58	282¾a	£12.41	-81¼a	+1.83
Meadow	34a	£2.55	22¾a	£2.28	-11¼a	-0.27
Pasture	?	£0.45	nil			-0.45
SB						
Arable	222¾a	£10.35	257a	£10.47	+34¼a	+0.12
Meadow	87a	£7.25	49½a	£4.95	-37½a	-2.30
Pasture	nil		?	£0.03	?	+0.03
Totals						
Arable	1224¾a	£39.52	1054½a	£44.08	-170¼a	+4.56
Meadow	297a	£20.32	182½a	£18.81	-114¼a	-1.51
Pasture	46½+a	£2.06	40¼+a	£4.98	?	+2.92

demesne arable. Only in South Brent was there an increase in demesne arable, but the increase in value of this land was minimal, especially in comparison with Berrow and Lympsham who lost a significant amount of arable yet increased their value considerably more than South Brent.

How much the increased values can be apportioned to inflation or increased productivity or reassessment in the light of perceptions of contemporary land values, it is difficult to say. By looking at the increase in the mean value in pence per acre in Table 4.16, it is evident that in both 1260 and 1307 that meadow was considered to be more than

twice as valuable as arable. Furthermore, the major increases in value between 1260 and 1307 applied to both meadow and pasture, while the arable increases in value were modest and in fact fell in South Brent. The implication here is that relatively greater value was being attached to land as a resource for the sustenance of livestock rather than for growing crops. However, some of the reality of what was happening can get hidden by using mean figures, so really we need to look at the detailed composition of the demesne that the Ford and Fromond surveys supply, so in Tables 4.17a-d we can study the changes in individual demesne fields.

Table 4.16 Change in Demesne value per acre 1260-1307			
Manor	Mean Value 1260 pence (p) per acre	Mean value 1307 pence (p) per acre	Change
EB			
Arable	2.76	3.85	+1.09
Meadow	5.35	10.96	+5.61
Pasture	2.50	11.66	+9.16
L			
Arable	3.08	4.32	+1.24
Meadow	7.50	10.00	+2.50
Pasture	?	?	
B			
Arable	2.91	4.39	+1.48
Meadow	7.50	10.02	+2.52
Pasture			
SB			
Arable	4.65	4.07	-0.58
Meadow	8.33	10.00	+1.67
Pasture			
Total			
Arable	3.35	4.16	+0.81
Meadow	7.17	10.25	+3.08
Pasture	?	?	?

Although East Brent reduced its demesne arable by almost a hundred acres, of the fields it did keep we can see that a number of them were valued no differently in 1307 than they had been in 1260, while the significant increases in value were in Syrideworth, Oriental of Rockesmulle, Saltelonde, Hardelonde and Litelhywis plus the addition of what had been the free tenancy of La Pulle. There was a significant reduction in the amount of meadow, yet the value had doubled in the case of Droseneworthe and multiplied by three and a half in Nywenhamme while the value of Nywenhamme pasture had quadrupled. In Lympsham, out of the nine demesne fields remaining in 1307, six were in excess of 30 acres while values had increased almost everywhere. Only in Welpershamme was there a marked depreciation in value, a possible explanation being that as this field was adjacent to the River Axe and it was used for pasture and meadow; perhaps it was too wet for an arable field. There was general improvement in Berrow as well but the most important area of improvement was in Nywelonde where although three acres had been lost the value of the remaining 79 acres had increased 50% so that it was worth almost a third of Berrow's total arable in 1307. The meadow was reduced by a third but, as with Lympsham, its value per acre increased. The picture was quite different in South Brent where as many as six fields actually decreased in value and holdings in a further nine fields were dispensed with. The major areas of improvement were the Wydenhammes and Horsecroft, while there were numerous additions that more than made up for the losses. Among the latter was arable in'

Table 4.17a East Brent Demesne Fields

Field names	1260 acreage	1260 v.p.a.	1307 acreage	1307 v.p.a.
<u>Arable</u>				
Theganelacre	6½	4d	5½	4d
Byestebrente	16	4d		
Juxta la mersch	2½	4d	2¾	4d
Estergarston	21	4d	24	4d
Westergarston	10	5d	11½	4d
Thethorte	6	6d		
Syrideworth	15	6d	13	9d
Brodehamme	25	6d	30½	8d
Roghenhamme	19	6d		
Ardeworthehele	19½	7d		
Tunforlang	25	7d		
Brestetonforlang	11	6d		
Oriental de Rockesmulle	17	7d	15¾	10d
Saltelond	46½	8d	39½	10d
Medhamme	23	8d		
Pederedehamme & Brisebut	22½	6d		
Hardelonde	30	8d	32½	1/-
Litelhywis	9	6d	9	10d
Droseneworthe	10	1/-	11½	1/-
Feremere	1	6d		
Pullenelond i.e. Pullencroft alias Horsecroft			32½	1/-
total	325½	£8.98	227¾	£8.77
<u>Meadow</u>				
Droseneworthe	29	1/-	24	2/-
Donedesmere	3½	1/-		
Oriental de Rockesmulle	13½	8d		
Langelonde	27½	1/6		
Welfvolde	16½	1/-		
Nywenhamme	35	8d	33	2/4
Total	125	£6.69	57	£6.25
<u>Pasture</u>				
Nywenhamme (after mowing)	36½	6d	40¼	2/4 (4/-)
Saltelonde etc		1/-		
Benches circa Brent	9	6d		
Drodehamme	1	6d		
Total	46½	£1.16	40¼	£4.90
Total	497	£16.83	325	£19.72

Table 4.17b Lympsham Demesne Fields				
Field names	1260 acreage	1260 value per acre	1307 acreage	1307 val. per acre
<u>Arable</u>				
Fordham	30	7d	17	10d
Offerfordham	50	7d	55 ⁶⁵	10d
Worpole	35	8d	35	10d
Nywenhamme	36	6d		
Nywenhamme Major			35 $\frac{1}{4}$	10d
Nywecrofte	33	6d	35 ⁶⁶	10d
Nywenhamme Minor			13 $\frac{1}{2}$	10d
Werham	60	8d	54 $\frac{1}{4}$ ⁶⁷	1/-
Verenelond	6	7d		
Nywelond	1 $\frac{1}{2}$	6d		
Brodeworthe	9 $\frac{1}{2}$	8d	9 $\frac{1}{4}$	10d
Waremede	5 $\frac{1}{2}$	6d		
Welpershamme	33 $\frac{1}{2}$	8d	32 $\frac{3}{4}$	5d ⁶⁸
total	312 $\frac{1}{2}$	£9.61	287 $\frac{1}{2}$	£12.43
<u>Meadow</u>				
Heghmede	51	1/6	53 $\frac{1}{4}$	2/-
Total	51	£3.83	53 $\frac{1}{4}$	£5.33
<u>Pasture</u>				
Warth	?	5/-	?	
Pools & ditches	?	4/-	?	5/-
Total		£0.45		£0.25
Total	363 $\frac{1}{2}$	£13.89	340 $\frac{1}{4}$	£18.01

⁶⁵Plus pool of 2 acres.⁶⁶Plus 2a pool.⁶⁷Plus 3a pool.⁶⁸Minus this sum in alternate years when it is not cultivated.

Table 4.17c Berrow Demesne Fields				
Field names	1260 acreage	1260 value per acre	1307 acreage	1307 val. per acre
<u>Arable</u>				
Natelond	26	6d	28½	11d
Rogeworthe	9	6d	10½	8d
Rediforlang	28	8d	21½	1/-
Vifacre	12	7d	12	8d
Forteye	14	7d	15	9d
Bacworthe	5½	6d		
Ysi[ng]croft	15	6d	11½	11d
Helleheye	12	8d	11½	1/-
Netelworethhulle	5½	8d		
Wedicrofte	11	6d		
Walfinghele	31	6d	23½	10d
Mulehamme	27	7d		
Calnecrofte	23	7d		
Bulbeheye	14	8d	13	1/-
Netelworthe	27	5d	27½	8d
Nywelond	82	8d	79	1/-
Nywenhamme	22	7d	24½	9d
Nywenhamme			½	6d
Rodiforlang			½	5d
Dollyngcroft			½	5d
Roughelonde & pulle			1½	10d
total	364	£10.58	282½	£12.41
<u>Meadow</u>				
Gavellond	12	1/6	11½	2/-
Smethemedede	11	1/8	11½	2/-
Rogeworthe	11	1/4		
Total	34	£2.55	22½	£2.28
<u>Pasture</u>				
Vifacrepulle & Rogewortheland	?	5/-		
Saltelond	?	3/-	?	?
Dollingcrofte pulle	?	1/-		
Total		£0.45		
Total	398	£13.58	305½	£14.69

Table 4.17d South Brent Demesne Fields				
Field names	1260 acreage	1260 value per acre	1307 acreage	1307 val. per acre
<u>Arable</u>				
Chelveforlang	20	8d		
Mulleforlang	20	6d	20	4d
Balleforlang	10	6d	10	4d
Roghenuille	10	6d	11	3d
Theflexlonde	7	6d	5½	3d
Ganelacre	5	6d	5	3d
Berebreccline	1½	6d	2½	4d
Major Horsecroft	20	8d	14½	1/-
Gabbellesmere	3½	7d		
Est Wydenham	30	8d	34	1/2
Utemuste Wydenham	34	8d	35	1/-
Mydmuste Wydenham	36	8d		
Kyllingeworthe	12	7d		
Minor Horsecrofte	8½	8d	8½	1/-
Sandrigge	21	9d		
Kenepeshywys	16	6d		
Henacre	13	8d		
Wydenhamme	24¾	8d		
Syforlang	27	8d		
Garden	1	1/-	3¼	6/8 ⁶⁹
Puryhey			1¾	1/2
Worthy de Super Mill			2½	3d
Crosseforlang			1	4d
Brockesmede			2½	3d
Hallforlang			19	4d
Wydenhamme Major			39½	1/3
Wydenhamme Minor			9¼	1/2
Wydenham Chelfeye			8½	1/2
Senerlang			17	1/-
Pullenclyne			7½	2d
total	222¾	£10.35	257	£10.47
<u>Meadow</u>				
Sandrigge	36½	1/8		
Henacre	50½	1/8	49½	2/-
Total	87	£7.25	49½	£4.95
<u>Pasture</u>				
Pullenclyne			?	6d
Total	309¾	£17.60	306½	£15.87

⁶⁹This represents the total value of the garden.

Sandrigg and Killingworth, areas more renowned for meadow than arable.

In examining the diminution of demesne it would seem that inflation was not a major player in the overall increase of land values as there were a number of fields in which the value decreased. It seems more likely that values ascribed in 1307 reflected contemporary assessments based on the relative worth of individual fields and this must have been linked to a sense of productivity or usefulness as some fields were deemed to be less valuable than they had once been, while others were thought to be worth far more. So although we can see that some land was released, other fields were kept despite their declining value and some land was added to demesne; the overall picture is of a demesne of increased value but reduced in size by 170 acres or 14% of arable, 114 acres or 39% of meadow. Inevitably this would have an impact on the amount of physical labour input required from the customary tenants, but the reality as far as the Abbey of Glastonbury was concerned was that the labour that was not required could be safely commuted, so a typical half-virgater owing $6\frac{1}{2}$ acres of ploughing service might only have to plough five acres but pay sixpence commutation for the remaining $1\frac{1}{2}$ acres; or, accepting ploughing services from some and persuading others to commute their ploughing in entirety. Either way, the lord was not going to lose. It is interesting that in both the Ford and Fromond surveys, all the services are allocated a cash value so that as the need to commute

arose it was easily calculated.

In evaluating the inputs into demesne agriculture we have the expenses, or running costs, as revealed in the accounts, plus the value of customary labour. We ought to add the value of the land as a fixed cost because the value per acre quoted in the surveys, despite the valid points made in the previous paragraph, probably represent in accounting terms, the amount of money that could be charged as rent should the lord decide to unload it from the demesne. This means that by directly managing the demesne, the abbey is not benefiting from what it could earn in rent; thus technically the land being directly managed should be a fixed charge to demesne costs. Buildings were another fixed cost, but no record has survived indicating their value. We have the costs of a theta and an oxshed in the expenses, but we have not got a value for the variety of buildings within the demesne. Herds and flocks of livestock are also a type of fixed cost although the sizes varied from year to year. Additions to and subtractions from the herds and flocks appear under expenses and income but while a herd or flock existed on the demesne it represented money invested in those items that was unavailable for use elsewhere. Unlike buildings, there are prices quoted for sales and purchases of animals and birds, but these are so infrequent and they vary so much depending on age and condition of the creature that it is not possible to calculate an accurate or meaningful value for the livestock. If capital value of buildings and livestock cannot be expressed in a cash figure, then perhaps

Table 4.18a Input values (£)				
Years	Land	Customary labour	Expenses	Totals of labour & Expenses
1257-60	61.90	55.51	25.8	81.31
1304-7	69.71	60.15	38.28	98.43

the capital value of the land should be set aside for the purposes of comparison of input with output. In Table 4.18a I have summarised the inputs as far as we can safely take them by restricting our values to a combination of figures from the two surveys with data extracted from the nearest previous account, which at least gives us an indication of the upward movement of input costs. To add the 1260 customary labour costs to the other two account roll figures for the thirteenth century might stretch credibility a bit far. A stronger case could be made for applying the 1307 labour costs up to 1314-5 for two reasons: we know that the customary ploughing requirements were static and the amount of customary labour is unlikely to have significantly altered. Thus in Table 4.18b we can see the likely movement of input costs into the second

Table 4.18b Input values (£)				
Years	Land	Customary labour	Expenses	Totals of labour & Expenses
1311-2	?	60.15	31.22	91.37
1313-4	?	60.15	37.55	97.70
1314-5	?	60.15	39.83	99.98

decade of the fourteenth century. The considerable reduction of demesne activity after 1315 and the lack of information for 1330-1 would render the customary labour figures unsafe. It seems that in trying to be as comprehensive as possible in evaluating inputs, the categories that can usefully be compared become very restricted, so that the only input that gives us a reasonable chronological range of evidence, and pattern of movement, is the expenses; but, at least we have an awareness that annual expenses represent only part of the input and we do have a reasonable measure of the levels of other costs that would have some bearing on the managers of the demesne and its role within the estate of Brent and the barony of Glastonbury.

OUTPUT 1: REVENUE

In reading the work of any scholar, no matter how erudite he may be, it is his interpretation with which we are presented. In putting himself between the sources and the reader, he controls the selection of evidence and the presentation of the material so that the reader is dependent to a certain degree on a subjective view of the past. Valuable though such secondary work is, when the time comes to put aside the published erudition and delve into primary source material, our innermost being is affected by what we find; because we journey into the minds of those who created the documents and other artefacts of the past and understand

that evidence from their perspective.

Ever since Beveridge published his seminal paper in 1927 there seems to have been a preoccupation among medieval agrarian historians on the subject of yields and productivity. The importance of this topic, especially in the bearing it had in the years leading up to the catastrophe of 1348, understandably became the subject of an interesting and worthwhile debate. However, a browse through the Brent compoti reveals that the medieval accountants were indeed interested in how well their crops and livestock were reproducing themselves, but that such topics were not their top priority. The fact that details of demesne agriculture were on the dorse of the document is symbolic of its place in a wider scenario. What came first, and thus what was most important, was the overall income of the four manors.⁷⁰ The clerk who wrote out those accounts was only following a format that he had been taught to follow, no matter how tedious, because the landlord's major concern with these documents was to keep tabs on the financial health of his estates.⁷¹ The better informed he was about his financial position, the more able he was to effectively assert his influence economically, socially, politically and in the case of the Abbot of Glastonbury, in affairs of the church.

⁷⁰Actually, it was the sum of arrears from the previous year that was listed first, perhaps as a reminder that before anything else that the reeve was technically required to make up any losses from the previous year's account.

⁷¹The occasional marginal drawings of young men in conical hats, tonsured monks and the use of a hand as a pointer; all bear witness to tedium and daydreaming.

It is the placing by the Glastonbury accountants of demesne agriculture in the wider perspective of the four manors of Brent that helps us to identify and explain the movement away from direct management of demesne agriculture during the period 1257 -1334. In Table 4.19 I have shown the four main categories of cash revenue in terms of both cash and percentage. In support of these figures Fig.4.01 illustrates Table 4.19 in graph form and Fig.4.02 shows the pattern of total Brent income set against a cost of living pattern. There were fluctuations in income, but the overall trend was for income to increase. There were only three marked falls: between 1257-8 and 1274-5 when there was a large drop especially in sales income; between 1300-1 & 1302-3 and again between 1311-2 & 1313-4 owing to significant reductions in court activity. The relative patterns in Fig.4.02 suggest that overall Brent's income over the period 1257-1334 kept ahead of inflation, although this is more easily seen in Table 4.20 where the fluctuations between the individual yearly figures result in Brent's overall growth measuring +2.8 compared with prices falling 3.1 and wages increasing 1.2. However, much of that result was due to a particularly good performance in 1333-4 relative to 1330-1 when there was a marked fall in wages and prices. It was not until 1311-2 that the total income exceeded the income of 1257-8 and that the most significant leap in income appears to have been between 1304-5 and 1311-2 due to hikes in rents and commutation that were sustained in later years. Perquisites also increased but

Table 4.19 Cash Revenue (in £ and %)						
Year	Rents	Commu- tation	Sales	Perqui- -sites	Misc. ⁷²	Totals
1257- 8	68.67 33%		94.18 45%	45.32 22%		208.17
1274- 5	78.44 57%	0.22	37.48 27%	20.74 15%	0.10	136.98
1282- 3	81.86 43%	1.55 1%	41.03 22%	63.39 33%	1.85 1%	189.68
1300- 1	80.00 47%	3.33 2%	15.11 9%	71.94 42%	0.10	170.48
1302- 3	79.02 52%	4.71 3%	27.00 18%	40.42 27%		151.15
1304- 5	78.57 44%	2.77 2%	13.56 8%	61.55 35%	21.64 12%	178.09
1311- 2	107.29 43%	23.67 9%	13.78 5%	96.71 38%	10.34 4%	251.79
1313- 4	107.46 49%	23.55 11%	16.69 8%	66.85 31%	5.13 2%	219.68
1314- 5	119.00 49%	18.81 8%	53.85 22%	47.95 20%	5.37 2%	244.98
1330- 1	136.92 62%	24.00 11%	1.46 1%	57.05 26%	1.13 1%	220.56
1333- 4	138.16 49%	23.75 8%	14.10 5%	96.94 34%	8.58 3%	281.53
Ave.	97.76 48%	11.49 6%	29.84 15%	60.81 30%	4.93 2%	204.83

⁷²This column includes a variety of minor items such as venditio super compotum, external receipts and recognitio.

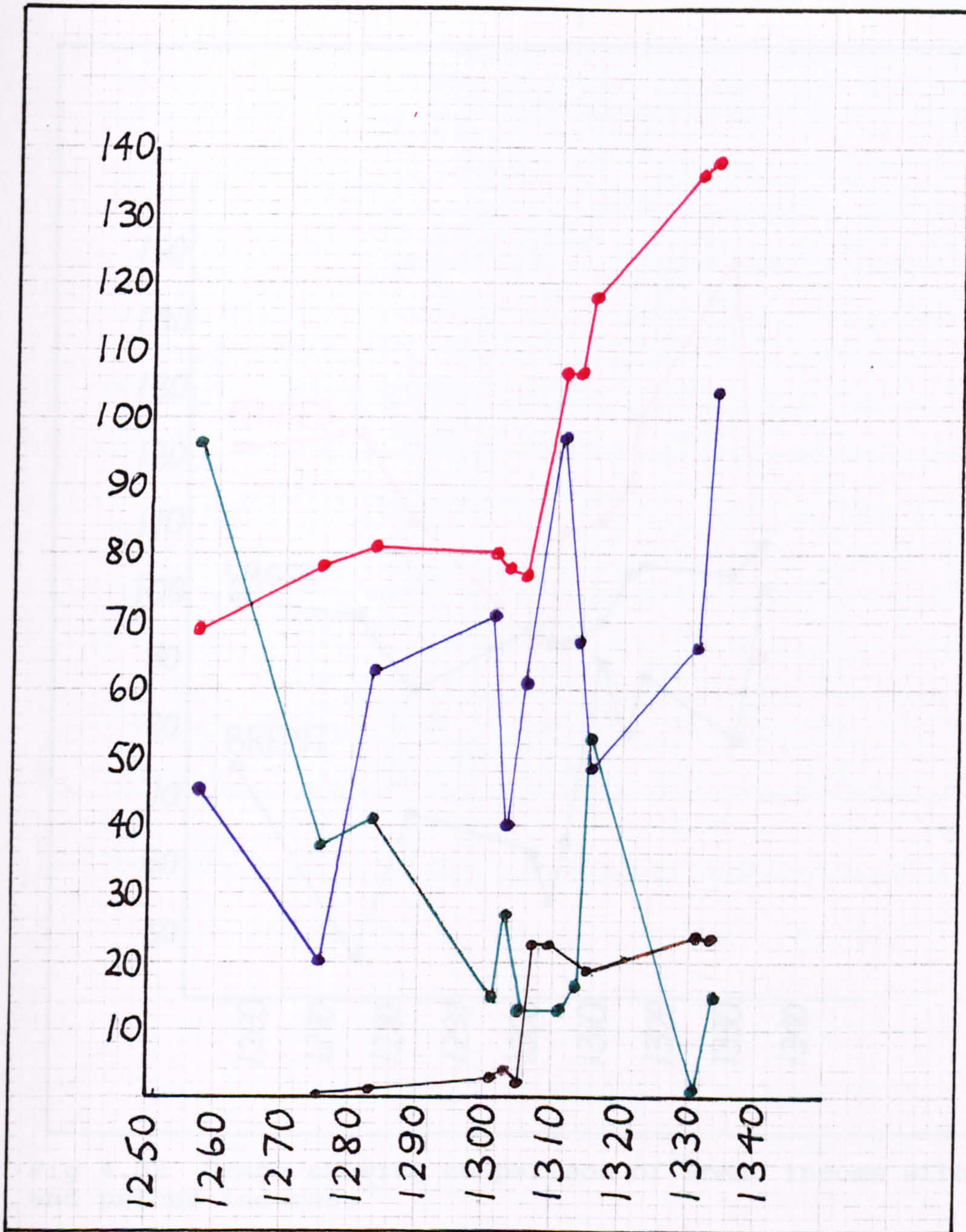


Fig 4.01 Graph showing major components of Brent income.
 Red = Rents
 Brown = Commutation
 Green = Sales
 Blue = Perquisites



Fig 4.02 Graph showing comparison of Brent income with wages and prices indexes.⁷³

⁷³Wages and Prices indexes are taken from D.L.Farmer, 'Prices and Wages', in H.E.Hallam, ed., The Agrarian History of England and Wales, 1042-1350 Vol.2 (1988), pp.776-7.

Table 4.20 Comparison of Brent Income with Cost of Living Index. (Wages & Prices: 1330-47 = 100. Brent 1333-4 = 100)						
Years	Prices		Wages		Brent	
	Index	Fluc.	Index	Fluc.	Index	Fluc.
1257-8	121		98		74	
1274-5	123	+2	97	-1	49	-25
1282-3	110	-13	83	+6	67	+18
1300-1	92	-18	94	+11	61	-6
1302-3	92	0	92	-2	54	-7
1304-5	108	+16	92	0	63	+9
1311-2	110	+2	97	+5	89	+26
1313-4	115	+5	102	+5	78	-9
1314-5	125	+10	103	+1	87	+9
1330-1	148	+23	102	-1	78	-9
1333-4	90	-58	107	-12	100	+22
Mean fluct.		-3.1		+1.2		+2.8

they tended to fluctuate. Sales were reasonably stable in 1304-5 and 1311-2 but they had fallen from the heady heights of 1257-8 when they made up 45% of total income and were to fall again in later years so that they only formed 5% of total income by 1333-4. This illustration of growing rents and commutation of services against a background of falling sales suggests a significant reduction of the size of the demesne and diminishing agricultural activity which would go "hand in glove" with renting out demesne land to tenants and benefiting from the accruing rents.

We can get a closer view of what was happening to Brent rents in Tables 4.21a,b & c. The major component of rents was redditus, the basic cash rent on a holding, which increased from £29.92 in 1257-8 to £104.90 in 1333-4. Redditus was fixed by custom, indeed the difficulty that lords had in trying to increase this annual payment was thought to be one reason behind the move into direct management. However, the number of half-virgate and ferdel holdings remained fairly stable between 1260 and 1307, so the cause of the increased redditus lay in the creation of new holdings mostly without work service requirements, viz:

East Brent	51
Lympsham	29
Berrow	12
South Brent	29
Total	121

Of these, only 33 holdings measuring 167 acres were specifically described as ex-demesne, so the provenance of the other holdings is a bit of a mystery, especially considering the lack of concrete evidence for ascertaining. Most of the other rents were fairly stable. The Lardar originated as a donum which became a fixed annual payment to the lord long before documentary evidence appeared. The Moor Rent, or moorgabel, was a payment for rights in common over the moors. Nothing was received for the windmills between 1311-2 and 1314-5 because they seem to have been back in direct management for those years. Moneys appearing under the heading of "new rents" probably became absorbed into redditus after a short period of time. Pasture income was remarkably stable until the fall by 1330-1 which co-incided with a marked

Table 4.21a Rents (£ & %)						
Year	Red-itus	<u>Lardar</u>	Moor Rent	Vine-yard ⁷⁴	Wind-mills	New Rent ⁷⁵
1257-8	29.92 44%	10.01 15%	4.10 6%	0.25	1.67 2%	0.20
1274-5	34.19 44%	10.32 13%	6.81 9%	0.25	2.33 3%	0.81 1%
1282-3	36.95 45%	10.32 13%	6.81 8%	0.25	2.33 3%	2.27 3%
1300-1	36.23 45%	10.32 13%	6.81 9%	0.25	3.00 4%	14.34 18%
1302-3	36.23 46%	10.32 13%	6.81 9%	0.25	3.00 4%	13.00 16%
1304-5	36.27 46%	10.32 13%	6.81 9%	0.25	3.00 4%	13.27 17%
1311-2	77.85 73%	10.38 10%	6.75 6%	0.27		0.32
1313-4	78.42 73%	10.38 10%	6.77 6%	0.27		
1314-5	78.34 66%	10.38 9%	6.77 6%	0.27		0.10
1330-1	108.38 79%	10.38 8%	6.77 5%	0.27	2.00 1%	0.33
1333-4	104.90 76%	10.38 8%	6.77 5%	0.27	4.00 3%	0.67

⁷⁴Although always classified as a rent, this was really commutation for digging in the vineyard at Mere.

⁷⁵These tend to be for additional lands taken on by tenants for a purely cash rent. Entries under these categories for relaxation of works have been extracted and inserted in the commutation tables.

Table 4.21b Rents (continued)					
Year	Pasture	Fishing Rights	Winter-hay	Stubble	Meadow
1257-8	6.38 9%	3.37 5%	0.71	1.28 2%	10.68 16%
1274-5	8.70 11%	1.99 3%	0.93 1%	2.19 3%	9.01 11%
1282-3	7.04 9%	2.33 3%	1.24 2%	1.32 2%	10.09 12%
1300-1	4.72 6%	1.33 2%	0.76 1%	0.63 1%	0.50 1%
1302-3	4.83 6%	1.33 2%	0.72 1%	0.62 1%	1.00 1%
1304-5	4.88 6%	1.33 2%	0.74 1%	0.56 1%	0.23
1311-2	5.09 5%	1.33 1%	0.81 1%	0.38	4.00 4%
1313-4	7.34 7%	1.33 1%	0.81 1%	0.23	1.98 2%
1314-5	8.44 7%	1.33 1%	0.81 1%	0.20	1.75 1%
1330-1	0.68	1.33 1%	0.37		
1333-4	0.33	1.33 1%	0.45		2.05 1%

Table 4.21c Rents (continued again)					
Year	Lact-age	La Pulle ⁷⁶	Hearth-penny	Were ⁷⁷	Total Rents
1257-8				0.10	68.67
1274-5		0.90 1%	0.01		78.44
1282-3		0.90 1%	0.01		81.86
1300-1		0.90 1%	0.01	0.10	80.00
1302-3		0.90 1%	0.01		79.02
1304-5		0.90 1%	0.01		78.57
1311-2			0.01	0.10	107.29
1313-4			0.01	0.10	107.46
1314-5	10.50 9%		0.01	0.10	119.00
1330-1	6.30 5%		0.01	0.10	136.92
1333-4	6.90 5%		0.01	0.10	138.16

⁷⁶Formerly the land of Robert de la Pulle, a free tenant, this was rented out to tenants after 1304-5.

⁷⁷This small rent was secreted in a variety of categories in the compti. It proved elusive in four rolls, but is probably absorbed elsewhere in this table.

drop in demesne acreage. The reduction of meadow rents at the end of thirteenth century indicates that although some meadow was relinquished between 1260 and 1307, from the beginning of the fourteenth century it was mostly needed to sustain demesne livestock, thus it was more valuable to the demesne than its nominal 2/- per acre rental value. Thus the increased level of rent in Table 4.19 is basically due to the increase in redditus from new tenant holdings. We should not be surprised at the general level of rent as a proportion of Brent income, as on the Winchester estates the rentier element increased by 25% in the century after 1258 while the Ely and Ramsey estates were also very much concerned with augmenting their rents.⁷⁸

The closer Table 4.19 is studied, the more apparent it becomes that there was a significant shift in policy for managing the Brent estate between 1304-5 and 1311-2 during the Fromond administration and that the timing of the survey of 1307 was probably linked to that shift. It would seem likely that the creation of so many new holdings must have been since 1304-5 for there to have been a significant jump in redditus between then and 1311-2, thus the 1307 survey was required to ascertain a revised situation in Brent and to have it recorded in a reasonably accessible and updated document. The situation is reinforced by Tables 4.22a & b in which we can see that although commutation of services for the life term of some tenancies is evident from as early as 1274 and annual

⁷⁸E. Miller and J. Hatcher, Medieval England, Rural Society and Economic Change, 1086-1348, (third impression, 1985), p.234.

sale of some ploughing works from 1282, it was in 1311-2 that commutation and sale of works became evidently commonplace across the board. So not only were new holdings being set up, but on existing customary holdings a small but increasing number of tenants were taking advantage of the opportunity to commute their services for the term of their lives. Most of these were half-virgaters and three out of the seven tenancies with commuted services evident up to 1315 belonged to the Batecock family; John Batecock, William and Juliana Batecock and John and Agnes Batecock.⁷⁹ The Batecocks were prominent in Brent and it is understandable that commutation of services for life was limited to families with the more substantial holdings and that their surnames were among the commonest to appear in the surviving documentary evidence. A wider spectrum of tenants must have benefitted the annual sale of the works set out in Table 4.22, reflecting a reduced demand for labour service, especially from between 1305-11, indicating that demesne acreage under cultivation was diminishing. The reduced need for labour on the demesne, coupled with the creation of new holdings, facilitated an increased labour input into tenant holdings which with an enhancement of employment opportunities for the landless, would in turn improve the prospects of the overall productivity of tenant holdings.

Further support would seem to come from the upsurge in entry fines from 1311-2 onwards within the perquisites of the

⁷⁹Longleat Mss.11216 mm.12-15, 10656 mm.19-24, 10766 mm.29-32.

Table 4.22a Commutation and Sale of Works (£)					
Year	Commutation & (numbers)	Mul- ture	Plough- ing	Winter works	Mowing
1274-5	0.21 (3)				
1282-3	0.22 (3)		1.33		
1300-1	0.48 (4)		1.62	1.23	
1302-3	0.48 (4)		1.62		
1304-5	0.48 (4)		1.48		
1311-2	2.88 (7)	0.03	2.94	8.59	0.31
1313-4	2.98 (7)	0.03	3.09	8.73	0.13
1314-5	2.98 (7)	0.03	4.00 ⁸⁰	4.30	0.06
1330- 1 ⁸¹	6.82 (20)		2.77	2.14	0.06
1333-4	8.71 (27)		4.71	1.30	0.27

Table 4.22b Commutation & Sale of Works (continued)						
Year	Boon- works	Harvest works	Mowing reeds	Pilton Park	Ext. Carry- ing	Total
1274-5						0.21
1282-3						1.55
1300-1						3.33
1302-3		1.22			1.39	4.71
1304-5		0.81				2.77
1311-2	6.17	0.20	0.11	0.58	1.28	23.09
1313-4	6.11	0.50	0.11	0.58	1.29	23.55
1314-5	5.10	0.36	0.11	0.58	1.29	18.81
1330-1	5.61	2.76	0.10	0.58	1.16	24.00
1333-4	5.61	1.34	0.10	0.58	1.13	23.75

⁸⁰The pence figures were illegible.

⁸¹A small question mark hangs over the veracity of the figures for this year owing to roll being so feint to be almost illegible.

hundred and manorial courts. The perquisites column in Table 4.19 fluctuates so much that no particular pattern can be discerned, but by looking at Table 4.23, the breakdown of perquisites into its major components does reveal an increased income from entry fines from 1311-2. However, we must beware against making too much of this, because of the thirteen entry fines recorded in the 1311-2 accounts, seven were for ancient customary holdings of half-virgates or ferdells. Also, the account rolls only give a partial view of what was happening with entry fines; a better idea can be gleaned from the court rolls, but even these do not give a complete picture, although a flurry of activity can be spotted in the first decade of the fourteenth century. It is also unlikely that there was a lack of entry fines during the thirteenth century, so it would seem that they were generally absorbed into the general court revenue in the earlier compoti.

As noticeable as the increase in rents in Table 4.19 was the remarkable drop in sales, apart from a marked upward rise in 1314-5. Table 4.24 shows that most of the sales income came from the sale of corn and livestock, anything else was virtually insignificant. As such this gives the impression that demesne farming was in decline, that the high point of "high-farming" was in 1257-8 or maybe even before, or that it was a ghastly mistake occasioned by slack management and a dependence on labour services. Alternatively, it indicates that there had been a general move away from demesne agriculture and a boosting of income from rents by increasing

Table 4.23 Perquisites (£)								
Year	Hund Mich	Hall Mich	Hund Hock	Hall Hock	Poll Tax ⁸²	Other C'rts	Entry Fines	Misc
1257-8	13.37	9.09	5.43	10.18				2.25
1274-5	2.10	4.14	3.31	8.68			1.00	0.80
1282-3	4.25	29.85	3.93	25.32				0.05
1300-1	2.25	11.59	4.46	19.93		4.37		24.77
1302-3	17.70	4.86	9.57	4.62		1.01	2.67	
1304-5	18.50	5.94	3.62	12.69		13.99	5.78	
1311-2	7.83	3.84	6.00	6.00	6.94	1.57	63.87	0.66
1313-4	6.72	4.71	5.25	7.88	6.35		33.60	2.34
1314-5	7.11	5.05	0.66	2.37	5.95	4.16	16.17	6.48
1330-1	8.05	4.08	0.68	2.49	4.40	0.93	35.39	1.03
1333-4	8.25	4.70	6.38	2.46	4.63	24.97	44.92	0.63

⁸²This tax on garciones was absorbed into the hocktide hallmoot totals before 1311-2.

Table 4.24 Sales + Exit. Man. sales (in £)					
Year	Corn & Stock	Hay	Heriots	Hides & Carcasses	Total
1257-8	94.18				94.18
1274-5	36.98		0.50		37.48
1282-3	40.98		0.05		41.03
1300-1	14.33	0.75	0.03		15.11
1302-3	26.45	0.50	0.05		27.00
1304-5	13.21	0.25	0.10		13.56
1311-2	13.49	0.25	0.04		13.78
1313-4	16.61		0.08		16.69
1314-5	53.65		0.20		53.85
1330-1	1.46				1.46
1333-4	12.42	0.72	0.07	0.89	14.10

the size and number of tenant holdings from the mid-thirteenth century, with a marked boost to this movement during the Fromond administration when the level of demesne activity was reasonably stable but with signs of increased output between 1313 to 1315.

OUTPUT 2: CROPS

The overall comparison of inputs to cash outputs indicates that Brent was a sustainable estate, although if we added on the nominal sum for land values as indicated in Table 4.17 any notion of profit might appear to be relatively slim. However, the compoti were not profit and loss accounts as we

might understand them today and it is a little puzzling that greater priority was not given to the produce of demesne agriculture so that its profits could be added to the cash revenue. The sales of crops and livestock did find their way into the cash accounts, but by doing what was correct accounting procedure at that time, the real value of demesne issue was overlooked. The placing of the crops and livestock accounts on the dorse of the account and expressing produce in terms of volume and numbers gives a hint of the purpose in accounting in that way, but underplays the value of demesne agriculture in the economy of the estate.

To ascertain a value that can be added to the cash values in Table 4.19 it is necessary to analyze the demesne agrarian production. To begin this exercise I have set out the yields of the arable crops in Tables 4.25a, b, c & d. The figures in the issue columns represent the threshed crops in the barns in the current accounting year representing the produce of the previous accounting year, net of purchases, new grain, mixture, tollcorn and tithe; although in the case of wheat the figures include currall.⁸³ The habit of the auditors of writing a marginal note in the compoti to indicate the rate of return as se altero or se tertio or se quarto, plus or minus

⁸³Accounting years ran from Michaelmas to Michaelmas, so the issue for the accounting year 1257-8 represents the crops grown and harvested in 1256-7.

There is just one reference to the collection of tithes in the fields by the Rector of East Brent as the advowson of this church was held by the Dean of Wells. Differentiating between the quantity of crops grown in East Brent and the other three manors is not possible, but even if it was a quarter this would only make a difference of one decimal point to the yield per acre and even less to the yield per seed.

so many quarters and bushels, together with the known sowing rates, enables a calculation to be made resulting in the information in the other four columns.⁸⁴ Only for 1314-5 do we have the benefit of the previous year's account roll but ironically the marginal notes are so illegible that it was not possible to double check the veracity of the marginal comments on rates of return.

To help compare the performance of the different crops in Table 4.25 an asterisk has been used to denote a best performance for each year in a particular column. Thus it can be seen that beans were usually the most prolific crop, outperforming wheat and oats in the ratio of 6:1:4 and that the suitability of this crop for the soil of Brent was recognized by the greater acreage it usually occupied. In terms of yield per acre, only in the remarkably productive year of 1314 did beans do better than oats. The comparatively high yield per acre produced by oats seems to have been due to its much higher seeding rate of five or six bushels per acre, only coming down to four bushels per acre in 1330-1 and 1333-4, whereas wheat and beans were constantly sown at the rate of two bushels per acre. The yield per seed perhaps gives us a fairer comparison, and once again beans outperformed wheat and oats in the ratio of 5:3½:1½. Of course, it might be argued that a larger issue might be expected from beans owing to the greater volume of an individual bean compared with a grain of wheat, and also that its size might lead to less wastage

⁸⁴The method of calculation is demonstrated in the Appendix.

Table 4.25a Wheat Yields					
Account -ing year	Issue	Sown acres in previous year	Sown seed in previous year	Yield per acre	Yield per seed
1257-8	260q 1b	No <u>respondit</u> given for these years			
1274-5	238q 3b				
1282-3	144q 2b	288½	72q 1b	4.0	2.0
1300-1	117q 1b	272	68q	3.4	1.7*
1302-3	167q 1b	308¼	77q 1b	4.3	2.2
1304-5	97q 2b	298*	74q 4b	2.6	1.3
1311-2	232q 3b*	260.6*	65q 1b	7.1	3.6*
1313-4	123q 3½b	179	44q 6b	5.5	2.8
1314-5	312q 1½b	296*	72q 4b	8.4	4.3
1330-1	36q 5b	44.3	11q 1b	6.6	3.3*
1333-4	39q 5b	43½	10q 7b	7.3	3.6*
Average				5.5	2.8

Table 4.25b Oat Yields					
Account -ing year	Issue	Sown acres in previous year	Sown seed in previous year	Yield per acre	Yield per seed
1257-8	151q 4b	No <u>respondit</u> given for these years			
1274-5	289q 0b*				
1282-3	210q 1b	151.3	94q 4b	11.1*	2.2*
1300-1	280q 3b	219.6	164q 6b	10.2*	1.7*
1302-3	359q 6b	228	171q	12.6*	2.1
1304-5	307q 5½b*	203.5	150q 4b	12.1*	2.1
1311-2	226q 7b	179.2	109q 6b	10.1*	2.1
1313-4	213q 7b	170.5	106q 4b	10*	2.0
1314-5	190q 2b	131	82q 6½b	11.6	2.3
1330-1	140q 1b*	86.7	43q 5b	12.9*	3.2
1333-4	149q 5b*	95.25	47q 5b	12.6*	3.1
Average				11.4	2.2

Table 4.25c Bean Yields					
Account -ing year	Issue	Sown acres in previous year	Sown seed in previous year	Yield per acre	Yield per seed
1257-8	457q 4b*	No <u>respondit</u> given for these years			
1274-5	227q 6b				
1282-3	431q 1b*	800.25*	200q	4.3	2.2*
1300-1	321q 1b*	No <u>respondit</u> given			
1302-3	384q 6b*	521.2*	130q 3b	5.9	3*
1304-5	138q 1b	183.3	45q 7b	6	3*
1311-2	118q 5b	203.3	50q 3b	4.7	2.4
1313-4	241q 5b*	274.9*	68q 6b	7	3.5
1314-5	356q 7b*	209	54q 5b	13.7*	6.5*
1330-1	73q 5b	131*	32q 6b	4.5	2.2
1333-4	127q 6b	164.9*	41q 1½b	6.2	3.1
Average				6.5	3.2

Table 4.25d Barley Yields					
Account -ing year	Issue	Sown acres in previous year	Sown seed in previous year	Yield per acre	Yield per seed
1257-8	43q 1b	No <u>respondit</u> given for these years			
1274-5	33q 4b				
1282-3	No barley grown in these years				
1300-1					
1302-3					
1304-5					
1311-2					
1313-4	29q 2b	28.79	57.5b	8.1	4.1*
1314-5	No barley grown in these years				
1330-1					
1333-4					

Table 4.26a Comparison of Wheat yield per seed												
Manors	1300		1302		1311		1313		1314		1330	
Taunton ⁸⁵	4.34		6.23		4.53		4.95		6.26		3.59	
Rimpton	3.89		5.32		7.86		5.91		8.72		5.04	
Brent	1.7		2.2		3.6		2.75		4.3		3.3	

Table 4.26b Comparison of Oats yield per seed												
Manors	1300		1302		1311		1313		1314		1330	
Taunton	2.92		3.47		4.11		3.02		3.26		2.49	
Rimpton	3.06		4.26		4.71		3.58		3.23		3.92	
Brent	1.7		2.1		2.1		2.00		2.3		3.2	

Table 4.26c Comparison of Wheat yield per acre (in quarters)												
Manors	1300		1302		1311		1313		1314		1330	
Taunton	0.98		1.06		1.06		1.24		1.43		0.78	
Rimpton	0.72		1.00		1.47		1.11		1.64		0.94	
Brent	0.43		0.54		0.89		0.69		1.05		0.83	

Table 4.26d Comparison of Oats yield per acre (in quarters)												
Manors	1300		1302		1311		1313		1314		1330	
Taunton	1.31		1.50		1.97		1.24		1.45		1.08	
Rimpton	1.16		1.58		1.77		1.34		1.21		1.47	
Brent	1.28		1.56		1.26		1.25		1.45		1.61	

Table 4.26e Comparison of sowing rates (bushels per acre)												
Manors	1300		1302		1311		1313		1314		1330	
	w	o	w	o	w	o	w	o	w	o	w	o
Taunton	2	4	2	4	2	4	2	4	2	4	1½	4
Rimpton	1½	3	1½	3	1½	3	1½	3	1½	3	1½	3
Brent	2	6	2	6	2	5	2	5	2	5	2	4

⁸⁵Data on Taunton and Rimpton taken from J.Z.Titow, Winchester Yields; a study in medieval productivity (1972).

during harvesting, thus contributing towards a superior yield per seed. The argument about volume may have some validity to it, but the relative yield per seed figures reflect the reality of what was harvested, based on uniform measures of volume. It appears therefore, that beans were the dominant crop on the Brent demesne, but before dealing with the validity and significance of that indication, it is important to consider the crop yields in a wider context.

Comparing Brent's performance with other contemporary demesnes is difficult, partly because we only have eight usable accounting years, seven of which fall within the first fifteen years of the fourteenth century, and also because published information about bean yields elsewhere is scarce. At least we can make a start by using the data on Winchester yields assembled by Titow to get an idea of how Brent demesne was performing with wheat and oats. In Tables 4.26a-e I have set out comparisons of yields per seed and acre plus sowing rates so that we can see how Brent's demesne compared with two of Winchester's Somerset manors. Even with the limited number of years that could be compared, it can be seen at a glance that Brent's yield per seed in both wheat and oats was dismal in comparison with Taunton and Rimpton. The performance in yield per acre does not seem quite so bad, partly because the figures are expressed in quarters per acre so the differences do not seem so large; but also because Brent's sowing rates tend to be higher. Higher rates of seeding generally produced higher yields per acre, so this was going to improve Brent

productivity in one sense, but the contemporary reality was that the auditors of the compoti must have been aware of the relatively poor yields per seed, and this would have been reinforced by the "Anonymous Husbandry" recommendations that the yield per seed for wheat should be 5.0 and for oats 4.0.⁸⁶ If Brent's productivity was as bad as the yield measures for wheat and oats indicate, and if the Abbey's managers were aware of how bad they were, then it is surprising that they bothered to keep any sort of direct interest in demesne agriculture at all. The fact that the demesne was kept on, albeit at a reduced level in the fourteenth century, and while the slightly improved yields per seed for wheat from 1311 and for oats from 1330 indicates some attempt at improving output, it does seem that a desire for high productivity was not the major raison d'etre for directly managing the demesne.

The yields per seed of wheat and oats may be interesting indicators but they are unsatisfactory in a number of respects. There could be all sorts of reasons why they are so much worse than comparable figures for Taunton and Rimpton. Differences in fertility could be due to soil type, there could be differences in weather and temperature due to Brent's exposure to the prevailing winds off the sea; perhaps there were different agricultural techniques followed.⁸⁷ However,

⁸⁶M.Mate, 'Medieval agrarian practices: the determining factors?', Aq.H.R. 33 1 (1985), p.25; C.Thornton, 'The determinants of land productivity on the Bishop of Winchester's demesne of Rimpton, 1208-1403', B.M.S.Campbell & M.Overton, eds., Land, labour and Livestock; historical studies in European agricultural productivity (1991), p.188.

⁸⁷D.L.Farmer, 'Grain yields on the Winchester manors in the later Middle Ages', Ec.H.R. 30 4 (1977), p.561.

it is the importance of beans on the Brent demesne that perhaps more than any other factor, diminishes the significance of the yield per seed of wheat and oats.

Vicia faba was the only commonly grown bean in Europe until the introduction of the Phaseolus beans from America. It is thought to have been domesticated during the Neolithic era and was a common food of the Egyptian, Greek and Roman civilizations.⁸⁸ They are grown as animal fodder, green manure and for human consumption. They also have the benefit of extracting nitrogen from the air. Although they are hardy, they require well-drained soil, respond well to manuring and only require a medium tilth.⁸⁹ It is doubtful if anything finer than a medium tilth would be possible on Brent's heavy alluvium, while the need for well drained soil does credit to the extensive attention to drainage in the four manors.

Medieval farmers may not have known about the nitrogen fixing properties of beans but it does seem likely that some were aware of their beneficial effects on the soil by improving the yield of the succeeding cereal crop. Shiel has noted that Crescentius published the observations of Virgil and other classical writers in his Ruralium Commodorum Libri Duodecim c.1240 and that by the end of the thirteenth century legumes were a common demesne crop, but except in parts of

⁸⁸D.A.Bond, D.A.Lewis, G.C.Hawtin, M.C.Saxena & J.H.Stephens, 'Faba bean (Vicia faba L.)', R.J.Summerfield & E.H.Roberts, eds, Grain Legume Crops (1985), pp.199-200.

⁸⁹Writtle Agriculture College information sheet, 'Peas and Beans' (1994).

East Anglia and the south-east they were not grown in sufficient quantities to raise productivity.⁹⁰ Mate deduced that on the East Kent manors of Canterbury Cathedral Priory, where as much as 25% of the arable was occupied by beans, that they were mainly grown to sustain the livestock.⁹¹ In the neighbouring Wealden, Searle observed beans to be a peasant cash crop for food and fodder, especially for pigs, but also as a major smuggling cargo to Flanders and Normandy.⁹² Only in Wistow have I come across a percentage occupied by legumes to match Brent. Peas occupied as much as 40% of Wistow, which Hogan put down to the need to feed increasing numbers of livestock and to overcome the poor oat harvest with its yield of 1.5.⁹³ There is no evidence for beans being fed to livestock in the fields in Brent, nor for it being used to replace oats. Neither do beans seemed to have been beneficial to oat and wheat yields, because they only slightly pick up from c.1311 from which time the acreage under beans is reduced.⁹⁴ It was certainly a cash crop as we shall see later, but perhaps the major reason for its popularity in Brent may simply have been to do with its suitability for the soil there and a baronial exploitation of manorial

⁹⁰R.S.Shiel, 'Improving soil productivity in the pre-fertilizer era', B.M.S.Campbell & M.Overton, eds, Land, Labour and Livestock; historical studies in European agricultural productivity (1991), p.54.

⁹¹M.Mate, 'Medieval Agrarian Practices; the determining factors?', Aq.H.R. 33 1 (1985), p.27.

⁹²E.Searle, Lordship and Community; Battle Abbey and its Banlieu, 1066-1538 (1974), pp.289-90.

⁹³M.Hogan, 'Clays, culturae, and the cultivator's wisdom; management efficiency at fourteenth century Wistow', Aq.H.R. 36 2 (1988), p.122.

⁹⁴See Table 4.25.

specialities as noted by Hallam on the Glastonbury estates.⁹⁵ Yet another possibility was the substitution of fallow by legumes, which, according to Brandon, took place in populous areas where there was little waste available and where water transport was available to facilitate marketing.⁹⁶ Now although we cannot be sure about a shortage of waste, the other two factors were present and it does seem that at least in one accounting year in the thirteenth century that there could not have been any fallow on the demesne because of the huge acreage of 800¼ under beans. This is now an appropriate point to consider other measures of productivity that might give a fairer picture of what was happening on the Brent demesne.

Campbell has argued that yield per seed on its own is an unsatisfactory indicator of productivity because variations in sowing rates can produce different crop volumes per acre; therefore consideration has to be given to seeding rates, the frequency of cropping and the relative difference of the different crops sown.⁹⁷ His method of taking the yield per acre minus the sowing rate and then multiplying this by the percentage of the total arable area, including fallow, resulting in a net output per 100 acres, was followed by

⁹⁵H.E.Hallam, 'Farming Techniques; Southern England', in H.E.Hallam, ed., The Agrarian History of England and Wales 1042-1350, Vol.2, (1988), p.368.

⁹⁶P.F.Brandon, 'Demesne arable farming in coastal Sussex during the later Middle Ages', Aq.H.R., 19 (1971), p.124.

⁹⁷B.M.S.Campbell, 'Arable productivity in medieval England: some evidence from Norfolk', Journal of Economic History 43 (1983), pp.379-404.

Thornton in his study of Rimpton.⁹⁸ By taking Campbell's calculations in which he compared Martham in Norfolk with Cuxham in Oxfordshire, plus Thornton's figures for Rimpton, we can get a broader view of how Brent performed that enables us to take into consideration Brent's beans as set against legumes in the other manors. There are a few caveats that have to be borne in mind in making this comparison: firstly, Brent does not possess the abundance of material to provide mean figures over a period of time and, secondly, the amount of fallow at any one time in Brent cannot be accurately calculated. It is the difficulty in reckoning the amount of fallow that has restricted this comparison to using figures

Table 4.27 Percentage of Total Arable Acreage (including fallow)						
Accou nting Years	Sown acres and percentages in previous year			Total acres sown	Total arable	fal- low %
	Wheat	Oats	Beans			
1282- 3	288.5	151.3	800.25	1240.05	1224.75	0
	23.3	12.2	64.5			
1304- 5	298	203.5	183.3	684.8	1049.75	35
	28.4	19.4	17.5			
1314- 5	296	131	209	636		35
	30.3	13.4	21.4			

⁹⁸C.Thornton, 'The Demesne of Rimpton, 938-1412; a study in economic development', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Leicester (1988), p.266 et seq.

for just three years for Brent. The Ford survey of 1260 indicated that the total demesne arable measured 1224.5 acres, but twelve years later must have increased a little to accommodate all those beans, thus for the sake of this calculation I have followed the idea of beans being sown to eliminate fallow in 1282. The 1304-5 figures are the closest we can get to the accuracy needed, because the Fromond survey with its total demesne arable acreage of 1049.75 was only two years later. Unfortunately, 1304 was a bad year for Brent yields so I have also included figures for the year with the best and most reliable figures, working on the assumption that the fallow remained at the 35% applicable to 1304-5. This is not a safe assumption, but the less than fifty acre difference in acreage under crops between 1304-5 and 1314-5 might suggest that 35% would not be far out. Using the information in Table 4.27 we can now calculate the output per 100 acres in Table 4.28 and then transfer the output per 100 acres figures to Table 4.29 where although we cannot compare Brent mean figures with the other manors, we are at least able to provide samples of the demesne's worst and best results from the evidence available.

Once again, Brent's output of wheat was dismal and even at its best it produced less than Rimpton's mean. Oats seemed to do better in those years in which wheat did particularly badly, even though a larger acreage had been sown with wheat. This could be indicative of climatic conditions that were less amenable to wheat in those years. Even at their worst, oat

Table 4.28a Output per 100 arable acres net of seed sown in 1282-3

Crop	Yield per acre	- Sowing rate	x % Arable Acreage	= Output per 100 acres
Wheat	4.0	2.0	23.3	46.66
Oats	11.1	5.0	12.2	74.42
Beans	4.3	2.0	64.5	148.35

Table 4.28b Output per 100 arable acres net of seed sown in 1304-5

Crop	Yield per acre	- sowing rate	x % arable acreage	= Output per 100 acres
Wheat	2.6	2.0	28.4	17.04
Oats	12.1	5.9	19.4	120.28
Beans	6.0	2.0	17.5	70

Table 4.28c Output per 100 arable acres net of seed sown in 1314-5

Crop	Yield per acre	- Sowing rate	x % Arable acreage	= Output per 100 acres
Wheat	8.4	2.0	30.3	193.92
Oats	11.6	5.0	13.4	88.44
Beans	13.7	2.0	21.4	250.38

Table 4.29 Comparison of Brent outputs per 100 acres net of seed sown with the mean figures of other manors.						
Crops	Brent 1282-3	Brent 1304-5	Brent 1314-5	Cuxham mean	Martham mean	Rimp- ton mean
Wheat	46.6	17.04	193.92	449.5	244.2	206.61
Oats	74.42	120.28	88.44	117.7	30.5	201.03
Beans	148.35	70	250.38	60.9	96.1	37.67
Winter corn	46.6	17.04	193.92	449.5	267.6	250.8
Spring corn	74.42	120.28	88.44	280.5	586	227
Cereal	121.04	137.32	282.36	730	853.6	477.8
All crops	304.04	207.32	532.74	790.9	949.7	558.2

output was superior to Martham, and at its best comparable to Cuxham but inferior to Rimpton, so Campbell's method does seem to show Brent oat production in a more favourable light than the impression based just on yield per seed in Table 4.26b. In comparing beans we have to remember that on the other manors they were growing peas and vetch as well as beans, but even allowing for that, it is clear that bean production was far superior in Brent except for that bad year in which it fell below the mean for Martham. As far as cereal production was concerned, Brent clearly was not in the same league as Cuxham, Martham or Rimpton. When we consider the overall crop performance, even in its best year it fell short of Rimpton's mean. If Brent's managers had been aware of their relative performance at the time, would they not have offloaded even more demesne onto the tenants, or perhaps altered the balance of their activities by increasing the pastoral at the expense

of the arable? However, there were other factors bearing upon the whole issue of the operation of the demesne that made that economic reasoning too simplistic.

In later papers, Campbell altered his approach to measuring productivity by using weighted aggregate net yields, which brought into the calculation the relative value of each crop and the proportion of sown area occupied, getting over the problem of the doubtful amount of fallow. He also restricted his investigation to cereals because of the habit of feeding legumes green to livestock in the fields.⁹⁹ Now to ignore legumes in Brent would clearly weaken any attempt to measure productivity, so I have applied Campbell's formula viz:

$$Y = \Sigma(y_i \cdot p_i / p_w \cdot a_i / \Sigma a_i) \text{ where:}$$

Y is weighted yield

y_i is the yield of crop i in bushels per acre,

p_i is the price of the crop per bushel,

p_w is the price of wheat per bushel,

a_i is the acreage under crop i

to see a wider view of productivity in Tables 4.30-32.¹⁰⁰

Table 4.30 shows the calculations that arrive at a weighted yield figure for each crop. The weighted yield is then transferred to Table 4.31 to arrive at the weighted aggregate yield which is then matched to indexes in Table 4.32. This

⁹⁹B.M.S.Campbell, 'Land, labour, livestock, and productivity trends in English seigniorial agriculture, 1208 - 1450,' in B.M.S.Campbell and M.Overton, eds., Land, labour and livestock: historical studies in European agricultural productivity (1991), pp.165-6.

¹⁰⁰B.M.S.Campbell and M.Overton, 'A new perspective on medieval and early modern agriculture: six centuries of Norfolk farming c.1250-c.1850', Past & Present 141, (1993), p.70.

indicates that whereas the three right hand columns show that compared with Norfolk's cereal production, Brent's output was much smaller although it did appear to be growing at a faster rate, while all the Brent columns indicate that arable productivity had virtually trebled between 1282 and 1333. Such a roseate view of arable output seems a little difficult to believe, especially when we have such a small and scattered sample. 1282-3 is of limited use as it is adrift of the other years. However, 1302-14 contains five samples that indicate, even allowing for fluctuation, that it was a period of growth for the production for wheat and beans; although this has to be tempered by the comparatively good results for 1314-5. By contrast, oat production was relatively sluggish over the same period. 1330-1333 represents another group in which demesne acreage has been markedly reduced, wheat production has declined but both oats and beans were doing much better than before.

Calculating weighted aggregate yields is useful as it shows that although Brent was not performing as well as some other parts of the country, its arable productivity was generally improving during the period for which we have accounts. It gives a different detailed impression from the yield per seed figures in Table 4.25 but it is debateable if the overall impression was significantly different. The 'mean output per 100 acre' comparison is more useful because it endorses the importance of beans for Brent as indicated by the sheer amount of acreage devoted to them. However, these two

Table 4.30a Weighted yields for Wheat		
Accounting years	$\Sigma(y_i \cdot p_i / p_w \cdot a_i / \Sigma a)$	= Y
1282-3	$2 \times 12 / 12 \times 288 \frac{1}{2} / 1240.05$	0.47
1302-3	$2.3 \times 5.5 / 5.5 \times 308.25 / 1057.45$	0.67
1304-5	$0.6 \times 7.75 / 7.75 \times 298 / 684.8$	0.26
1311-2	$5.1 \times 7.5 / 7.5 \times 260.6 / 642.8$	2.07
1313-4	$3.5 \times 8.25 / 8.25 \times 179 / 656.4$	0.95
1314-5	$6.4 \times 9 / 9 \times 296 / 636$	2.98
1330-1	$4.6 \times 9 / 9 \times 44.3 / 262$	0.78
1333-4	$5.3 \times 7.75 / 7.75 \times 43.5 / 303.65$	0.76

Table 4.30b Weighted yields for Oats		
Accounting years	$\Sigma(y_i \cdot p_i / p_w \cdot a_i / \Sigma a)$	= Y
1282-3	$5.1 \times 2.5 / 12 \times 151.3 / 1240.05$	0.13
1302-3	$6.6 \times 1.625 / 5.5 \times 228 / 1057.45$	0.42
1304-5	$6.1 \times 3.5 / 7.75 \times 203.5 / 684.8$	0.85
1311-2	$5.1 \times 3 / 7.5 \times 179.2 / 642.8$	0.57
1313-4	$5 \times 4 / 8.25 \times 170.5 / 656.4$	0.63
1314-5	$6.6 \times 4.5 / 9 \times 131 / 636$	0.68
1330-1	$8.9 \times 4.875 / 9 \times 86.7 / 262$	1.60
1333-4	$8.6 \times 4.125 / 7.75 \times 95.25 / 303.65$	1.44

Table 4.30c Weighted yields for Barley		
Accounting years	$\Sigma(y_i \cdot p_i / p_w \cdot a_i / \Sigma a)$	= Y
1313-4	$4.3 \times 6.1875 / 8.25 \times 32 / 656.4$	0.12

Table 4.30d Weighted yields for Beans		
Accounting years	$\Sigma(y_i \cdot p_i / p_w \cdot a_i / \Sigma a)$	= Y
1282-3	$2.3 \times 4.75 / 12 \times 800.25 / 1240.05$	0.59
1302-3	$3.9 \times 1.875 / 5.5 \times 521.2 / 1057.45$	0.66
1304-5	$4 \times 3.75 / 7.75 \times 183.3 / 684.8$	0.52
1311-2	$2.7 \times 4.5 / 7.5 \times 203.3 / 642.8$	0.51
1313-4	$5 \times 3.375 / 8.25 \times 274.9 / 656.4$	0.86
1314-5	$11.7 \times 5.75 / 9 \times 209 / 636$	2.46
1330-1	$2.5 \times 8.8125 / 9 \times 131 / 262$	1.22
1333-4	$4.2 \times 4.5 / 7.75 \times 164.9 / 303.65$	1.32

Table 4.31 Weighted Aggregate Yields					
Account Years	Weighted Yields				W.A.Y.
	Wheat	Oats	Beans	Barley	
1282-3	0.47	0.13	0.59		1.19
1302-3	0.67	0.42	0.66		1.75
1304-5	0.26	0.85	0.52		1.63
1311-2	2.07	0.57	0.51		3.15
1313-4	0.95	0.63	0.86	0.12	2.44
1314-5	2.98	0.68	2.46		6.12
1330-1	0.78	1.60	1.22		3.6
1333-4	0.76	1.44	1.32		3.52

Table 4.32 Index of weighted yields						
Account Years	W.A.Y.	Index (1282-3 = 100)	Group Index Mean	Index (9.3 = 100) ¹⁰¹	Group Index Mean	Norfolk Index
1282-3	1.19	100	100	12.7	13	111
1302-3	1.75	147	254	19	33	118
1304-5	1.63	137		18		
1311-2	3.15	265		34		
1313-4	2.44	205		26		
1314-5	6.12	514		66		
1330-1	3.6	303	300	39	39	127
1333-4	3.52	296		38		

exercises are of limited use because Brent lacks sufficient data for an adequate statistical comparison with other estates. A further drawback is that they are too removed from the minds of the time and they apply formulae that would not have been used in the fourteenth century. Any political or economic decisions to change the course of the management of the demesne would have been based on the figures they had at their disposal in response to the circumstances they found themselves in, or in an attempt to exploit a new opportunity. What is simply clear at this point in time is that whereas Brent demesne diminished over the period 1257-1333, the same three crops continued to be grown, in varying amounts depending on the requirements of whatever rotation system they followed, despite relatively poor but improving yields.

¹⁰¹This represents the Weighted Aggregate Cereal Yield for 1250-74 in Campbell's table of Norfolk yields and which he uses to = the index of 100.

Although beans were grown on a large scale, maybe initially to do away with fallow, there is no evidence that they were left in the field as fodder, neither can it be said that they improved the output of other crops. If arable productivity, that is the maximising of output with the minimum of input, was the be all and end all of the Brent demesne, the Abbey would have got rid of it. Arable farming was not pursued as some sort of model farm to show how well they could do, but the fact that it was managed with considerable interest indicates that there were other, more rational reasons for engaging directly in agriculture.

By moving away from analyzing crop yields, to considering what was done with the issue, perhaps we shall gain a better insight into the motives behind demesne agriculture. In Table 4.33a we can see that there were three main categories of dispersal: seed, Glastonbury Abbey and sales. The rest went in miscellaneous expenses to the steward, bailiff and various other officials from the Abbey, while some went in small customary payments, or payments to reeves of other manors. The gross issue differs from the net issue in Table 4.25 as it includes wheat from the mill and purchases of wheat, but excludes currall. What stands out is that substantial percentages of the gross issue were required for seed, over 50% being required in four out of the eleven years. Most of the issue went to Glastonbury, over 50% in five of the years, while relatively little was sold by the reeve. Clearly, wheat was being grown for storage at the Abbey. No set amount was

Table 4.33a Where did most of it go? WHEAT					
Date	Gross issue	Acres sown	Seed	Glaston-bury	Sold by Reeve
1257-8	245q 5b	124	31q 2b 13%	110q 4b 50%	73q 4b 30%
1274-5	229q	458	114q 5b 50%	28q 12%	33q 3b 15%
1282-3	166q 7b	352	88q 1b 53%	52q 4b 31%	
1300-1	195q 6b	254	63q 4b 32%	105q 4b 54%	1q2b ¹⁰² 1%
1302-3	178q 6b	298	74q 4b 42%	79q 44%	6q 4b 4%
1304-5	116q 7b	271.5	78q 67%	11q 4b 10%	15q 4b 13%
1311-2	189q	305	75q 4b 40%	104q 3½b 55%	
1313-4	122q 5b	296	72q 2b 59%	39q 6b 32%	
1314-5	278q 5½b	128.25	32q 4b 12%	201q 1½b 63%	1q 2b 3%
1330-1	51q	33	7q 6b 15%	32q 3b 63%	1q 3b 3%
1333-4	68q	54.5	12q 18%	27q 3b 40%	10q 1b 15%
Mean percentage			36%	42%	7%

¹⁰²This appears to have been mixed with oats.

Table 4.33b Where did it all go? Curall			
Date	Issue in quarters	Glaston-bury	Sold
1257-8	22.5	20.5 91%	
1274-5	12.375	4.0 32%	6.25 51%
1282-3	14.25	13.25 93%	
1300-1	30.25	29.5 98%	0.5 2%
1302-3	31.125	29.0 93%	0.75 2%
1304-5	21.875	5.5 25%	14.5 66%
1311-2	64.375	27.5 43%	1.25 2%
1313-4	16.5625	15.5 94%	1.0625 6%
1314-5	63.6875	53.0625 83%	
1330-1	4.5	4.5 100%	
1333-4	1.75		
Mean percentages		66	13

Table 4.33c Where did most of it go? Barley					
Date	Gross issue	Acres sown	Seed	Glaston- bury	Sold
1257-8	63q1b ¹⁰³	46	15q 24%	12q 2b 19%	
1274-5	39q 4b	63	20q 2b 51%	17q 43%	4b 1%
1282-3	2q6b ¹⁰⁴	7.5	2q 6b 100%		
1300-1					
1302-3					
1304-5					
1311-2					
1313-4	29q 2b			29q 2b 100%	
1314-5	4b ¹⁰⁵				4b 100%
1330-1					
1333-4	6q 5b			6q 91%	

¹⁰³Much of this was used as payments to the famuli and payment to reeves of other manors.

¹⁰⁴Bought in.

¹⁰⁵This came from the land of a fugitive.

Table 4.33d Where did it all go? OATS					
Date	Gross issue	Acres sown	Seed	Glaston- bury	Sold
1257-8	167q 7b	316	143q 4b 85%	15q 4b 9%	
1274-5	291q	212.5	159q 1b 55%	80q 4b 28%	
1282-3	237q 5b	163	101q 7b 43%	78q 33%	
1300-1	336q 7b	214	160q 4b 48%	148q 2b 44%	1q 3b
1302-3	419q 6b	249.5	187q 2½b 45%	204q 7b 49%	
1304-5	338q 7b	203.5	155q 2½b 46%	159q 47%	1½b
1311-2	227q 7b	149.5	91q 4b 40%	24q 11%	88q 5½b 39%
1313-4	252q 3b	131	82q 6½b 33%	141q 2b 56%	
1314-5	238q 6b	154.5	96q 7b 41%	69q ½b 29%	
1330-1	144q 3b	102.625	51q 6b 36%	75q 5b 52%	
1333-4	260q ½b	115	58q 7b 23%	185q 4b 71%	
Mean percentages			45%	39%	4%

Table 4.33e Where did most of it go? BEANS					
Date	Gross issue	Acres sown	Seed	Glaston -bury	Sold
1257-8	457q 4b	400	100q 22%	11q 2%	336q 73%
1274-5	228q 6b	302	75q 5b 33%	44q 19%	94q 2b 41%
1282-3	431q 1b	368.5	92q 1b 21%	21q ¹⁰⁶ 5%	248q 4b 58%
1300-1	321q 1b	234.25	60q 4b 19%	130q 4b 41%	63q 20%
1302-3	382q 6b	170.125	42q 4½b 11%	205q 54%	299q5b ¹⁰⁷ 78%
1304-5	156q 7½b	156	40q 26%	57q 36%	26q 4b 17%
1311-2	120q	190.5	60q 50%	52q 43%	
1313-4	241q 5b	219	54q 5b 23%	56q 23%	112q 4b 47%
1314-5	376q 3½b	278.625	72q 19%	59q 4b 16%	221q 4b 59%
1330-1	79q 5b	157.625	41q 51%	37q 4b 47%	
1333-4	132q 7b	138	38q 1b 29%	73q 6b 56%	7b 1%
Mean percentages			27%	29%	36%

¹⁰⁶The bean account is incomplete due to the ravages of time.

¹⁰⁷Possibly includes 211q 6b of new beans which have been omitted from the gross issue column.

required but there does seem to be a sort of pattern, perhaps geared to the proportion of wheat to other crops to be sown, that dictated that 50%+ was either sown or sent to Glastonbury in nine out of the eleven years. What is also apparent, by comparing with the net issue in Table 4.25, is that in some years demesne agriculture was unable to meet the seeding requirements and the demands of the Abbey, and that from 1282-3 up to 1304-5 it was usual for 20 - 30 quarters to be bought in. It may be that the purchased grain was required for seed, but that did not diminish Glastonbury's requirement and especially in 1300-1 when 100 quarters were purchased. Glastonbury also took most of the currall.

Barley was only an occasional crop and this either went to Glastonbury or was mixed with other grains as livery for the famuli.

In six out of the eleven years the oats issue failed to meet the demands of seeding and the Abbey. However, oats seemed to be bought in as a matter of course, in quantities ranging from four to sixty quarters. Sales on the estate were few, so oats was a crop for consumption, but the high seeding rates resulted, on average, in more grain going back into the land as seed than was sent on to the abbey. This was hardly an economic crop, but the mean figure for seed was less than 50%, so the crop was productive, but only just. Of the amount unaccounted for in Table 4.33d, most was used as provender for the horses of the visiting officials.

Beans provide a very different picture to wheat and oats. In Table 4.33e it can be seen that overall, more than a third of this crop was sold by the reeve, therefore this was predominantly a cash crop. A reasonable amount was kept for seed and about the same amount went to Glastonbury. From about 1304-5 Glastonbury required a regular amount of beans for the kitchen, so presumably beans were used as food in the monastery. One hundred quarters of the amount classified as going to Glastonbury in 1300-1 was actually sold direct to Gilbert Frannceys of Bristol instead of being sent to the kitchen. It is likely that the kitchen sold on most of the 205 quarters it received in the following year, while the huge amount sold by the reeve probably included 211q 6b of "new beans" not included in the gross issue. Unlike wheat and oats, very few beans were purchased, just eighteen quarters bought specifically for the kitchen in 1304-5 and another eighteen quarters from a few tenants in 1314-5. The only amounts unaccounted for in this table were small miscellaneous payments, of which the only regular item was fodder for pigs, ranging from 1q 1b in 1330-1 up to over 16q in 1300-1.

This short look at what happened to the arable issue indicates that the bean was the king of the crops, providing fodder for pigs, food for the Abbey and cash through sales for the estate. By comparison, wheat and oats were grown to form a food feorm and pay expenses to officials and their horses,

Table 4.34 Demesne Acreage devoted to different crops								
Year	Wheat acres %		Oats acres %		Beans acres %		Barley acs. %	Total acres
1257-8	124	14	316	36	400	45	46 5	886
1274-5	458	47	213	22	302	31	63 6	973
1281-2	289	23	151	12	800	65		1240
1282-3	352	40	163	18	369	42		884
1300-1	254	36	214	30	234	33		702
1301-2	309	29	228	22	521	49		1058
1302-3	298	42	250	35	170	24		718
1303-4	298	44	204	30	183	27		685
1304-5	271	43	204	32	156	25		631
1310-1	261	41	179	28	203	32		643
1311-2	305	47	149	23	191	30		646
1312-3	179	29	171	27	275	44	32 5	624
1313-4	296	47	131	21	209	33		636
1314-5	128	23	155	28	279	50		561
1329-30	44	17	87	33	131	50		262
1330-1	33	11	103	35	158	54		293
1332-3	44	14	95	31	165	54		304
1333-4	55	18	115	37	138	45		308
Average	220	31	173	28	271	41		

while the demesne was frequently unable to grow enough to provide that service and have enough left over to sow next years crop. Some time between 1314-5 and 1330-1 that reality may have been behind a marked reduction in the amount of crops grown on the demesne, especially noticeable with wheat. The percentage figures in Table 4.34 indicate that from about 1315 the amount of acreage devoted to wheat was virtually half what it had been before, the acreage under oats slightly increased while that devoted to beans began to occupy about fifty per cent of demesne arable. So here was a response to recognizing the relative value of beans, yet what was done was moderated by other factors. As the Abbey's consumption requirements dictated the crops they required, the relative yields were of

secondary importance, so certain quantities of wheat and oats were still wanted despite the reduced arable acreage on the demesne. Interestingly, whereas bean yields in the 1330's were much the same as they had been before, there was a slight improvement in both wheat and oats yields, perhaps because the demesne had retreated to the better fields, or perhaps the larger percentage of beans being grown aided the nutritional value of the fields. Thus a system of crop rotation was still needed in which wheat and oats played their part, even if their profitability was marginal.

At this point it is necessary to return to the notion of ascertaining a cash value for the crops at the disposal of the demesne. This should give us a measure that would have been understood by those in whose hands the policy of the estate lay. In Table 4.35 I have set out prices elicited from the compoti for each of the crops. These can then be used to calculate the value of the net issue, less the amount consumed in seed, to arrive at the net disposable cash value of the arable crops as set out in Table 4.36. Here we get quite a different picture from that given by the net issue in Table 4.25, the 'mean output per 100 acres' in Table 4.29 and the deductions made about the uses to which the crops were put in Table 4.33; because the cash value of a quarter of wheat was substantially more than that of the other crops, resulting in the average 'disposable net value' of wheat being almost as much as that of beans. Interestingly, if we took the mean of the weighted yields in Table 4.31, this would support the

Table 4.35 Crop Prices per quarter ¹⁰⁸					
Date	Wheat	Curral	Oats	Beans	Barley
1257-8	5/2	2/11* ¹⁰⁹	3/11	3/7	5/-
1274-5	5/3 6/- 6/8	3/4	2/-	2/8 2/4	4/- 4/4
1282-3	8/-	2/11*	1/4 1/8 2/-	3/- 3/4	4/8
1300-1	7/4 7/- 6/10 6/8	2/8	2/-	1/4 1/8	
1302-3	3/4 4/-	2/-	1/- 1/2	1/4 1/2	
1304-5	5/2	2/8 4/- 3/4	3/- 1/8	2/8 2/4	
1311-2	5/- ^{EPR}	3/4	2/-	2/8 3/4	
1313-4	5/6 ^{EPR}	2/8	2/8	2/3	4/1½ ^{EPR}
1314-5	6/-	3/-	3/-	4/- 3/8	4/-
1330-1	6/-	2/11*	3/3 ^{EPR}	5/10½ ^{EPR}	
1333-4	4/8 5/8	2/11*	2/6 3/-	3/-	3/3¼

¹⁰⁸Prices are based on figures quoted in the Brent compti. Where no price was quoted, figures have been taken from the Exchequer Pipe Rolls as set out in Farmer, 'Prices and Wages', pp.787-95.

¹⁰⁹All prices marked with an asterisk are an estimate representing the mean of all the other curral prices.

Table 4.36 Value of Disposable Net Arable Issue (£.p) ¹¹⁰					
Date	Wheat & Currall	Beans	Oats	Barley	Total
1257-8	56.59	64.06	1.56	7.91	130.12
1274-5	35.33	19.01	12.99	2.76	70.09
1282-3	18.82	53.67	9.03	0.64	82.16
1300-1	12.17	19.54	11.98		43.69
1302-3	14.38	21.38	9.34		45.10
1304-5	2.97	12.26	17.77		33.00
1311-2	33.85	5.82	13.53		53.20
1313-4	11.73	21.03	17.47	6.03	56.26
1314-5	74.35	54.60	14.00	0.10	143.05
1330-1	7.97	9.59	14.36		31.92
1333-4	6.94	13.45	12.47	1.08	33.94
Ave.	25.01	26.76	12.23	1.68	65.68

concept of a relatively high value for wheat, because in that exercise relative prices of the crops were taken into consideration. However, although this value is negated by the fact that Brent's wheat issue was consumed by seed, expenses and the granary at Glastonbury, it does add weight to the case for continuing to grow it in Brent. It is possible that it was sold on at Glastonbury, in which case its cash value takes on extra significance.

We should not be surprised at the importance of the cash value of the crops. Biddick had noted the importance of cash

¹¹⁰DNAI = $\sum(mppq^i - s^i.nic^i)$, where DNAI is the disposable net arable issue, $mppq^i$ is the mean price per quarter of cropⁱ, s is the amount used for seed of cropⁱ and nic^i is the net issue of cropⁱ.

to landlords,¹¹¹ while the noting of a cash value to every customary service as well as the value per acre of the demesne in the Ford and Fromond surveys, supports the whole notion of cash as a measure of income and expenditure and of the whole well-being of the demesne economy. Demesnes may have originated as 'home farms', supplying the estate caput with food, but if the demesnes were supplying more than could be consumed then it was inevitable that the surplus would be sold. The market prices reflected demand for particular commodities, and it is understandable that wheat should fetch a higher price than other grains or legumes owing to its greater palatability for that basic staple, bread. In theory, great institutions such as Glastonbury Abbey could manipulate the market to their advantage by storing as much wheat as possible and only releasing it onto the market in times of shortage when the price would be higher. Whether they could afford to hold on to their surplus long enough to benefit from that activity is debatable, but certainly the high price of wheat would have made it a favourite crop and if even Brent with its poor yields was sending virtually all of its disposable crop to the Abbey, then it is not difficult to imagine all the other estates doing the same, consequently only a proportion would be consumed as food in the Abbey, the rest would be sold on, subsequently the cash value of crops would have been of recognizable importance to the cellarer and his staff.

¹¹¹See above, pages 224-5.

By matching the disposable net arable issue to the non-agricultural income of the estate we can get a good impression of the relative importance of the directly managed demesne. In Table 4.37 the stark reality of the diminishing importance of demesne agriculture is spelt out. The disposable net arable income is expressed as a percentage of non-agricultural revenue, that is, the total revenue in Table 4.19 less the

Table 4.37 Comparison of non agricultural revenue with Disposable Arable Income			
Year	Non-agricultural income	Disposable Arable Income	Arable as % of other income
1257-8	113.99	130.12	114
1274-5	99.50	70.09	70
1282-3	148.65	82.16	55
1300-1	155.37	43.69	28
1302-3	124.15	45.10	36
1304-5	164.53	33.00	20
1311-2	238.01	53.20	22
1313-4	202.99	56.26	28
1314-5	191.13	143.05	75
1330-1	219.10	31.92	15
1333-4	267.43	33.94	13

agriculturally generated sales figures. This shows that in 1257-8 the notional cash value of the crops exceeded income from all other sources in Brent and that from that high point the role of demesne agriculture in providing the Abbey with an income from Brent diminished inexorably. It was still

important in the thirteenth century, in so far as it provided over a half of the estate income; but by the beginning of the fourteenth century its importance was only half what it had been eighteen years previously and it was halved again over the next third of a century, although when a special effort was made, as in 1314-5, wonders could be performed. A deeper

Table 4.38 Dominant Demesne Sources of Income in £.p			
Year	Rents	Perquisites	Disposable Arable Income
1257-8	68.67	45.32	130.12* ¹¹²
1274-5	78.44*	20.74	70.09
1282-3	81.86	63.39	82.16*
1300-1	80.00*	71.94	43.69
1302-3	79.02*	40.42	45.10
1304-5	78.57*	61.55	33.00
1311-2	107.29*	96.71	53.20
1313-4	107.46*	66.85	56.26
1314-5	119.00	47.95	143.05*
1330-1	136.92*	57.05	31.92
1333-4	138.16*	96.94	33.94

insight into what was happening can be seen in Table 4.38 in which the notional arable income is set against the other two origins of estate income, rents and perquisites. Income from the court was susceptible to all sorts of influences but although there were fluctuations they were not significantly

¹¹²The asterisk in this table indicates the biggest contributor to lordly income in that year.

affected by what was happening to the demesne. It was the importance of rents relative to the disposable arable income that is clear, reinforcing the idea of demesne arable being more profitable if it was rented out to tenants. It is tempting at this point to discuss the reasons behind the boosting of income from rents at the expense of direct involvement in the management of the demesne, but to do so would ignore another source of income that has taken a back seat, livestock.

OUTPUT 3: LIVESTOCK

There are various reasons why livestock have been relatively neglected: scholarly articles have tended to concentrate on estates with a distinct arable emphasis, medieval surveys were concerned mainly with land and tenancies and compoti simply dealt with livestock towards the end. Even in the Brent documents, the distinct impression is given that this was a predominantly arable landscape, apart from the mysterious moors, and this is an intriguing contrast to the pastoral accent of later centuries.

The existence of demesne livestock, categorized like the crops without a cash value, means that here was another undervalued source. Whereas with crops it is possible to ascertain a value per bushel or quarter from sales or purchases and reasonably use that as a measure with which to evaluate the rest of the crop in a particular year, individual

livestock sale prices were not always recorded and even where they were, the variations in price were so wide, depending on sub-type, age and condition, that we have to treat them with caution. In the analysis which follows, I have used Brent prices where possible, but where these were obviously unusual or absent, I have used figures from Farmer's statistical appendix or estimated a value based on projections or means of known figures.¹¹³

In Table 4.39 I have set out the horse population. The numbers are 'remainder' figures, that is those that remained at the end of the accounting year as opposed to those that were 'received' into the account at the beginning of the year.¹¹⁴ A number were added during a year from heriots but these were normally sold or sent to reeves of other manors. The stability of the numbers of adult horses indicates that the demesne only kept those deemed to be necessary, while those that were surplus could be moved elsewhere in the barony or sold. The same applied to immature horses, although only on two occasions were more than one sold in a year. The low level of sales also indicates that the keeping of horses was not a commercial operation. The small number of horses suggests that there was only sufficient for carting, harrowing and the occasional summagium, while if Langdon's calculation that demesnes with horses making up less than 20% of the numbers of oxen holds true, then Brent did not have enough

¹¹³Farmer, 'Prices and Wages', p.799 et seq.

¹¹⁴This criteria applies to the table dealing with cattle and pigs as well.

Table 4.39a Horses						
Year	Horses	%age horses to oxen	3 year olds	2 year olds	1 year olds	Foals
1257-8	3	16				
1274-5	6	7	1	1	1	2
1282-3	5					
1300-1	6	13	2	2	1	1
1302-3	7	13	1			
1304-5	6	13				2
1311-2	7	20		2		2
1313-4	7	18	1	1	1	
1314-5	7	19	1	1		1
1330-1	4	20		1	3	1
1333-4	6	30		2	2	1

Table 4.39b Livery of Horses				
Year	Horses		2 year olds	
1257-8	2	£0.88 ¹¹⁵		
1274-5				
1282-3				
1300-1				
1302-3	2	£0.86		
1304-5				
1311-2				
1313-4			1	£0.41
1314-5	2	£1.68		
1330-1	1	£0.50	1	£0.25
1333-4	2	£1.00		

¹¹⁵Values are based on those in D.L.Farmer, 'Prices and Wages'. Younger animals I have valued on a pro rata basis.

Table 4.39c Sales of Horses				
Year	Horses	3 year olds	2 year olds	Yearlings
1257-8	1			2
1274-5	1	2		
1282-3	1			
1300-1	2	1	1	
1302-3				
1304-5	5	1		
1311-2				
1313-4	1			1
1314-5				
1330-1				
1333-4		1		

Table 4.39d Horse Prices		
Type	Price	Year
Affer	1/11 each for four debilitated	1304-5
Mare	3/3 3/- debilitated 4/- 9/- 10/-	1274-5 1300-1 1304-5 1313-4 1313-4
Pull	4/- male 9/10 female 3/1 female of 3 years 2/1 female of 2 years 4/- male 4/- 8d 20/- male of 3 years	1274-5 1274-5 1300-1 1300-1 1300-1 1304-5 1313-4 1333-4

horses to mix with the oxen for ploughing.¹¹⁶ Brent demesne does seem to have been slow in adopting horses for ploughing; a ratio of horse to oxen of 20% was commonplace on demesnes at the beginning of the fourteenth century. Those areas most resistant to change tended to have abundant forage and heavy soil, just like Brent, but then Somerset generally appears to have preferred oxen to horses.¹¹⁷

The cattle situation was similar in that the emphasis seemed to be on maintaining an approximate number relative to the needs of the demesne. The keeping of a bull or two meant that the herd was self-sustaining while the significant numbers of immature cattle indicated that there were plenty of replacements and the number of calves showed that most of the cows were productive. Instead of using the fecundity of the cows to increase the size of the herd, admissions and heriots were either sent to the larderer at Glastonbury or sold. The intermittent nature of the sales and the lack of a set number featuring in the livery table shows that cattle were not being produced for a market while the number going to Glastonbury seems to be supply led rather than meeting a set demand. Campbell and Overton reckon that a low ratio of immature cattle to adults signifies a herd geared towards dairying.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶J.Langdon, Horses, Oxen and Technological Innovation, the use of Draught Animals in English Farming from 10066 to 1500 (1986), p.106.

¹¹⁷B.M.S.Campbell, 'Towards an agricultural geography of medieval England', Aq.H.R. 36 1 (1988), pp.90-96.

¹¹⁸B.M.S.Campbell and M.Overton, 'A new perspective on medieval and early modern agriculture: six centuries of Norfolk farming c.1250-c.1850' Past & Present 141 (1993) , p.81.

Table 4.40a Cattle								
Year	Bulls	Oxen	Cows	3 yo	2 yo	1 yo	Calves rem. born	
1257 -8	0	16	26	3	12	7	18	23
1274 -5	2	76	29	13	7	9	15	27
1282 -3								
1300 -1	2	41	37	0	11	8	15	29
1302 -3	2	48	36	0	9	15	14	30
1304 -5	2	42	30	13	2	3	11	30
1311 -2	2	28	30	13	13	9	20	30
1313 -4	1	31	31	11	15	0	11	26
1314 -5	1	29	35	15	0	8	2	35
1330 -1	2	16	26	0	0	14	12	21
1333 -4	1	14	25	0	11	17	8	28
Ave.	1.5	34	31	7	8	9	13	28

Table 4.40b Livery of Cattle ¹¹⁹

Year	Bulls	Oxen	Cows	3yo	2yo	1yo	Cvs
1257-8 £		22 12.24	4 1.51				
1274-5 £		6 3.74	3 1.35 _r	1 0.23	4 0.90	1 0.23	
1300-1 £		8 5.60	6 2.67 _r				8 0.27
1302-3 £		6 3.30	3 0.75				4 0.13
1304-5 £		3 0.75	11 3.65 _r	9 2.23 _r	2 0.33 _r		15 0.50
1311-2 £	1 0.48	15 12.76 _r	9 5.58 _r				3 0.10
1313-4 £	1 0.48	10 8.51 _r	8 4.59 _r	8 3.44 _r			8 0.27
1314-5 £	1 0.48	10 7.63 _r	6 3.98 _r	5 2.48 _r			7 0.23
1330-1 £	1 0.48	6 3.87 _r	8 4.10 _r	20 ¹²⁰ 7.68 _r	8 ¹²¹ 2.05 _r		7 0.23
1333-4 £		15 11.55 _r	4 2.07 _r				12 1.05

¹¹⁹The suffix _r in this table indicates that the cash value has been based on figures in Farmer's 'Prices and Wages' statistical appendix. All other cash values have been based on Brent sales figures.

¹²⁰This 20 went to the Reeve of Shapwick.

¹²¹This 8 went to the Reeve of Shapwick.

Table 4.40c Sales of Cattle							
Year	Bulls	Oxen	Cows	3yo	2yo	1yo	C
1257 -8		5 £2.78	7 £2.73	3 £1.27	3		
1274 -5	1 £0.33	7 £4.37			1 £0.23		10 £0.43
1282 -3							
1300 -1		4 £2.80			2 £1.20	1 ?	1 £0.03
1302 -3		2 £1.10	2 £0.50	1 £0.17	1 ?		3 £0.08
1304 -5		1 £0.25					
1311 -2							
1313 -4							3 ?
1314 -5							
1330 -1							
1333 -4	2 £0.96	2 £1.54	10 £3.73		8 £2.27	1 £1.54	2 £0.18

The Brent ratio is not low and yet dairying is still significant. Clearly, if cows were required to produce calves for development as hauliers, it would be wasteful not to use the milk surplus evident from the difference between calves born and remaining, occasioned by tithes, sales, livery and a few deaths. There was a multiple role for the Brent herd: haulage on the demesne, dairy products, meat, leather and manure.

The concept of eight oxen constituting a medieval plough-team does not hold true for Brent. Eight ploughs ought to require sixty-four oxen but only in 1274-5 could the demesne herd fulfil that requirement. Even allowing for the variable size of the herd between the beginning and end of the accounting year, the variations were never of an order that would provide eight oxen to a plough. It does seem that four oxen per plough was the general level of demesne provision, which at least matches with Langdon's observation that medieval iconography never shows a team of eight oxen and that possibly the team consisted of four oxen pulling the plough followed by two harrows drawn by two horses each, an arrangement that would have been possible in Brent.¹²² Another possibility expressed by Richardson and Langdon was that half the team was used in the morning and the other half in the afternoon, but this would have required the full complement of eight oxen per plough which Brent patently did not have. Perhaps the ploughs were not all in use at any one time, to allow for repairs and breakages. Whatever the explanation, without evidence to indicate that the demesne could not be ploughed, it would seem that these numbers of oxen were deemed adequate for the famuli's needs.

Comparisons of the size of Brent's herd with other areas is limited in value because we do not know how efficiently various manors were exploiting their pastoral potential, but

¹²²Langdon, Horses, Oxen and Technological Innovation, pp.66-7. He quotes from H.G.Richardson, 'The medieval plough-team', History 26 (1942), pp.288-9, citing evidence from *Piers Plowman*.

at least by comparing numbers we may get a hint of the relative importance of Brent's herd. As far as mature cows are concerned, the general level of the Brent herd is superior in numbers to those on the Ramsey manors, and to the mean numbers on the Peterborough Abbey manors.¹²³ That does not mean that Brent was predominantly a dairy estate, far from it, in fact it might be fairer to divide the Brent figures by four to represent the component manors, in which case the comparison with Ramsey and Peterborough would give a completely different impression. A more significant comparison can be made with figures for Glastonbury Abbey's other Somerset manors quoted in Keil's thesis which shows that only Brent, Zoy, Withy and Baltonsborough had herds of any significance.¹²⁴ This emphasises the element of specialization operating within the Glastonbury barony and suggests that those four wetland-edge estates lent themselves to cattle rearing. Keil's figures only apply to 1333-4 by which time the Brent demesne had shrunk considerably so its superior number of cattle, viz:

Brent	25
Withy	23
Zoy	21
Baltonsborough	20

illustrates a strength in its economy, which we had noticed in Domesday, and contains a hint about the direction in which the

¹²³J.A.Raftis, *The Estates of Ramsey Abbey* (1957), pp.138-40; K.Biddick, *The Other Economy, pastoral husbandry on a medieval estate* (1989), p.82.

¹²⁴I.J.E.Keil, 'The Estates of Glastonbury Abbey in the Later Middle Ages', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Bristol (1964), table 19, p.112.

economy of the estate was moving.

Cheese and butter production seems impressive because of the hundreds of cheeses and pounds of butter produced. Both of these contributed to the expenses of the Abbey officials and both brought in income from sales. Cheese was accounted by the number of cheeses produced, but as cheeses could vary in size and weight it is necessary to express their value by weight, using sales prices and the weight convention of 14lbs = 1 stone, 14 stones = 1 pisum. The weight of cheese produced per cow compares well with the 48lbs expected on the estates of Bolton Abbey, whereas the butter issue was nothing like Bolton's requirement of 24lbs, while Walter of Henley expected a combined weight of 90lbs.¹²⁵ The Peterborough Abbey estates produced far more butter per cow and between 59 - 66lbs of cheese per cow in each year of the first decade of the fourteenth century.¹²⁶ Brent could not match that cheese output until the next decade. The lack of any milk production figures for Brent suggests that all milk was either used for the sustenance of the calves or for the production of cheese and butter. It is difficult to believe that some milk was not consumed by the famuli, but its absence from the compoti means that we cannot calculate its value as a resource. If there really was no milk surplus, then the productivity of the Brent cattle seems as disappointing as the output of wheat and oats. However, we have to remember that the comparative productive

¹²⁵I.Kershaw, Bolton Priory, the economy of a northern monastery, 1286-1325 (1973) p.102.

¹²⁶K.Biddick, The Other Economy; pastoral husbandry on a medieval estate (1989), p.95.

Table 4.41a Cheese					
Year	Issue	Tithe	Expenses	<u>Lardar</u>	Sold
1257-8	268	35	57 ¹²⁷	140	33
1274-5	396	39	43	124	190
1282-3	397	39	34	310	
1300-1	244	24	22	164	29
1302-3	256	25	29	180	22
1304-5	224	22	27	143	26
1311-2	284	28	9	214	14
1313-4	338	31	19	288	
1314-5	266	26	26	214	
1330-1	No cheese recorded				
1333-4	11 stone bought in for expenses involved in new theta				
Average ¹²⁸	297	30	30	197	35

¹²⁷This included 29 paid to the Almoner at Shapwick.

¹²⁸Based on nine years for which we have figures.

Table 4.41b Cheese Production							
Year	Cow Nos	Ch'se Nos.	cheese in lbs less tithe	lbs per cow less tithe	Price per lb in £	Value less tithe (£.p)	Disp. Value
1257-8	26	268	1463e ¹²⁹		0.0025e ¹³⁰	3.66e	2.40e
1274-5	29	396	2163	74.6	0.0025	5.41	4.29
1282-3		397	3228		0.0025e	8.07e	6.79e
1300-1	37	244	1886	51	0.0021 0.0031	4.91 ¹³¹	4.91
1302-3	36	256	1682	46.7	0.0022	3.70	2.92
1304-5	30	224	1325	44.2	0.0018	2.39	1.86
1311-2	30	284	1944 ¹³²	64.8	0.0031	6.03	5.24
1313-4	31	338	2042	65.9	0.0031e	6.33e	5.39e
1314-5	35	266	2169	62	0.0031e	6.72e	5.41e
1330-1	26						
1333-4	25						

¹²⁹As no weight is recorded, this figure is an estimate based on the 1274-5 figures and using the formula 268 x 2163/100.

¹³⁰The estimated figures in this column are based on projecting known figures backwards or forwards.

¹³¹This is a mean figure based on the two price per pound figures.

¹³²This figure ignores a further 70lbs added venditio super compotum.

Table 4.42a Butter (lbs)			
Years	Issue	Expenses	Sold
1274-5	196	35	154
1282-3	245	7	224
1300-1	151	18	132
1302-3	175	29	146
1304-5	95	13	77
1311-2	133		133
1313-4	143	3	140
1314-5	116	20	96
1330-1			
1333-4			
Average	157	16	138

Table 4.42b Butter values						
Years	Cows	Butter lbs	Butter lbs per cow	Value per lb of butter sold in £.p	Value of butter issue in £.p	Value of disposable butter in £.p
1274-5	29	196	6.78	0.002	0.45	0.31
1282-3		245		0.003	0.74	0.67
1300-1	37	151	4.08	0.003	0.45	0.40
1302-3	36	175	4.86	0.003	0.53	0.44
1304-5	30	95	3.17	0.003	0.29	0.23
1311-2	30	133	4.43	0.003	0.40	0.40
1313-4	31	143	4.61	No cash figs.	0.43e ¹³³	0.42e
1314-5	35	116	3.31	0.003	0.35	0.29
1330-1	26					
1333-4	25					
Ave.	31	157	4.46	0.003	0.46	0.34

¹³³Based on the remarkably stable price of butter, 0.003 pence per pound.

capacity of Brent's cows would not have been the only consideration in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries because it was one of only four major suppliers of cheese and butter to the Abbey and an earner of cash from sales by the reeve. Nevertheless, the Cellarer must have been aware that a better financial deal could be struck, as Table 4.21c shows, from 1314-5 the cows were rented out for a sum considerably in excess of the nominal value of cheese and butter combined. Dairy products were needed for consumption by the Abbey, but if sufficient for their needs could be provided by estates nearer at hand or in local markets more cheaply than Brent could produce and transport, then it would make commercial sense to maximise income from Brent cattle by renting them out to tenants.

In the light of the modest amount of sales, it is clear that the main reason for breeding pigs was to provide meat for the Abbey. Although they were not consistently recorded, two sows appears to have been the normal complement. Their productivity seems to have matched the seven plus for each farrowing stipulated by the author of the 'Anonymous Husbandry'.¹³⁴ A few went towards the steward and bailiff's expenses and occasionally one or two were sent to the reeve of Wrington, but apart from those kept on the demesne, the bulk went in livery to the Larderer at Glastonbury. Pigs must have enjoyed fallow and a certain amount of waste such as droves as well as the moors, not just because the 'Seneschauncy' stated

¹³⁴D.Oschinsky, Walter of Henley, and other treatises on estate management (1971), p.425.

Table 4.43a Pigs				
Year	Pigs	Hogs	Hoggettis	Piglets
1257-8	17	12	8	13
1274-5	10		17	7
1282-3	11			36
1300-1	32		9	15
1302-3	74	65	14	17
1304-5	11	13		12
1311-2	2	3	11	14
1313-4	35	5	4	13
1314-5	8	11	8	6
1330-1	22			10
1333-4	20			15
Average	22	10	6	14

Table 4.43b Sales of Pigs (in numbers and £.p)			
Year	Pigs	Hogs	Piglets
1257-8	15 1.79		
1274-5	1 0.15		5 0.19
1300-1	6 0.75		
1302-3		1 0.09	

Table 4.43c Livery of Pigs (in numbers and £.p) ¹³⁵			
Year	Pigs	Hogs	Piglets
1257-8	38 £4.56		
1274-5	9 £1.35		
1282-3	22 £3.10 _r		
1300-1	16 £2		
12-303	19 £2.32 _r		
1304-5	51 £6.09 _r	2 £0.18 _r	
1311-2	1 £0.17 _r	9 £1.17 _r	
1313-4	4 £0.62 _r		
1314-5	33 £4.24 _r		
1330-1	23 £3.61 _r		26 £1.04 _r
1333-4	7 £1.01 _r		6 £0.21 _r

that only if such features were missing ought a swineherd not be employed; but because they clearly roamed as there were numerous cases of pig trespass; a garcio was employed in 1311 to look after the pigs during harvest and the Fromond survey makes provision for swineherds in South Brent, Lympsham and Berrow.¹³⁶ However, it seems that only one swineherd was in

¹³⁵The suffix _r indicates these values have been based on Farmer's 'Prices and Wages' statistical appendix.

¹³⁶Oschinsky, Walter of Henley, p.285; L.11216 mm.12-15; BL Eg.3321.

Table 4.44a Capons				
Years	Numbers	To Glaston.	Expenses	To other Reeves
1257-7	8	8		
1300-1	25	14	11	
1302-3	34	29	5	
1304-5	35		9	26
1333-4	69		48	

Table 4.44b Chickens					
Years	Numbers	Sales	Sent to Glaston-bury	Expenses of officers	To other Reeves
1274-5	20	20			
1282-3	20		20		
1300-1	30			12	12
1302-3	21		21		
1304-5	20			20	
1311-2	27			27	
1313-4	20		13	7	
1314-5	20		20		
1333-4	20				

Table 4.44c Geese				
Years	Numbers	Sales	Sent to Glaston-bury	Expenses
1257-7	33		33	
1274-5	16	6		2
1282-3	20		8	2
1300-1	20			13
1302-3	37		12	18
1304-5	10			10
1313-4	8			3
1314-5	9	8		4
1333-4	19			11

office at any one time, as in 1348 Nicholas Rodberd was referred to as the demesne swineherd when he was amerced for misappropriating $9\frac{1}{2}$ bushels of beans, peas and vetch and 4 bushels of oats.¹³⁷ The use of beans as fodder was the only significant use of that crop on the demesne, but even then the quantities were modest, the peak usage being between 1300-5 when between ten and sixteen quarters were fed to the pigs.

There was also poultry on the demesne, but the numbers were small and sometimes extra had to be bought in. Twenty of the chickens were regular payments from the land of la Pulle as church-scot. Livery to the larderer was intermittent and frequently more were consumed in expenses. Sales were rare but give the impression of a general price of 2d for a goose and 1d for a chicken. The few sales figures available do not make valuations based on them particularly reliable, but as the total value in any one year did not amount to one pound, any variation on those sales figures would be unlikely to make a significant difference to any overall value. As the total poultry were in effect 'disposable' I have calculated a total value from the figures in Table 4.44 and inserted it in Table 4.45.

¹³⁷L.11179 m.45r-v.

Table 4.45 Disposable Pastoral Value (£.p)							
Years	Livery of horses, cattle and pigs			Sales	D'ry	P'try	Total
	H	C	P				
1257-8	0.88	13.75	4.56	9.23	2.40	0.31	31.13
1274-5		6.45	1.35	6.87	4.60	0.23 ¹³⁸	19.50
1282-3			3.10	0.38	7.46	0.25	11.19
1300-1		8.54	2.00	5.86	4.38	0.40	21.18
1302-3	0.86	4.18	2.32	3.69	3.36	0.54	14.95
1304-5		7.46	6.27	1.80	2.09	0.31	17.93
1311-2		18.92	1.34	1.33	5.64	0.11	27.34
1313-4	0.82	17.29	0.62	0.75	5.81	0.15	25.44
1314-5	1.68	14.80	4.24	0.28	5.70	0.16	26.86
1330-1	1.00	18.41	3.61				23.02
1333-4	1.00	14.68	1.01	8.68		0.53	25.90

We can now give some attention to the relationship between pastoral and arable. Postan argued that as arable was expanded at the expense of pasture, so the number of animals that could be kept was reduced, thus reducing the amount of manure, leading to soil exhaustion and reduced yields.

¹³⁸Excluding pigeons.

Campbell devised a means of measuring the link between animals and arable by calculating the number of livestock units per 100 cereal crop acres.¹³⁹ By ascertaining the mean number of cereal acres on his group of Norfolk manors over periods of fifty years and relating them to the mean number of livestock units for the same times, he arrived at livestock units per 100 cereal acres of 41.9 for 1250-99, 44.1 for 1275-1325 and 47.9 for 1300-49. Compared with the same calculation for Taunton, Fareham and Rimpton, the Norfolk figures show a relatively high LUpper100ca and go some way towards explaining Norfolk's high cereal yields. By applying the principle of the calculation to Brent with much of its acreage under beans, we can see if any pattern emerges.

In Table 4.46 I have calculated livestock units per 100 crop acres. It was not possible to do this for the years prior to 1302 because of incomplete evidence. We know that the Brent yields per seed were poor, so what is interesting about these LUpper100 crop acre calculations is that the low figures for 1302-3 to 1313-4 would indicate a poor manuring rate leading to low yields, but the continuation of the poor figures into 1314-5 does not tally with the remarkably good output for that year. Between 1315 and 1330 the LUpper100 crop acre figures doubled, and although there was an improvement in the Brent yields over that period, they were

¹³⁹B.M.S.Campbell, 'Land, labour, livestock, and productivity trends in English seigniorial agriculture, 1208 - 1450,' in B.M.S.Campbell and M.Overton, eds., Land, labour and livestock: historical studies in European agricultural productivity (1991), p.153.

Table 4.46 Livestock Units per crop acre							
Year	Crop acres	Livestock units: H = horses x 1 C = cattle x 1.2 YC = young cattle x 0.8 P = pigs x 0.1				Total L.U.	L.U. per 100 crop acres
		H	C	YC	P		
1302-3	1035.75	8	103.2	30.4	17	158.6	15.3
1304-5	737.9	8	88.8	23.2	3.6	123.6	16.8
1311-2	687.5	11	72	44	3	130	18.9
1313-4	678.3	10	75.6	29.6	5.7	120.9	17.8
1314-5	646	10	78	20	3.3	111.3	17.2
1330-1	224.65	9	52.8	20.8	3.2	85.8	38.2
1333-4	292.35	11	48	28.8	3.5	91.3	31.2

certainly not so good as to double the trend for the earlier years. The improvement here would appear to be due to a drastic reduction in the amount of arable, whereas livestock numbers declined relatively less, so in theory there was more manure available per acre coupled with the possibility that the demesne retained relatively better quality land.

There are other weaknesses in using the LU per 100 acre method. We do not have any sheep figures for Brent because the baronial herd was accounted centrally and moved around from manor to manor. Neither can the method allow for tenant

Table 4.47 Comparison of non agricultural revenue with Disposable Agricultural Income (£)

Year	Non-agric. income	Disp. Arable Income	Disp. Past. Income	Ratio Past: Arable income	Total Disp. Agric. Income	%age DAgI of NAgI
1257-8	113.99	130.12	31.13	4.18	161.25	141.46
1274-5	99.50	70.09	19.50	3.59	89.59	90.00
1282-3	148.65	82.16	11.19	7.34	93.35	62.78
1300-1	155.37	43.69	21.18	2.06	64.87	41.75
1302-3	124.15	45.10	14.95	3.02	60.05	48.36
1304-5	164.53	33.00	17.93	1.84	50.93	30.95
1311-2	238.01	53.20	27.34	1.95	80.54	33.84
1313-4	202.99	56.26	25.44	2.21	81.70	40.25
1314-5	191.13	143.05	26.86	5.33	169.91	88.90
1330-1	219.10	31.92	23.02	1.39	54.94	25.08
1333-4	267.43	33.94	25.90	1.31	59.84	22.38

livestock that would have been required to manure the fallow. So perhaps our cash equivalents calculations for livestock and arable might reveal a more realistic impression of what was happening on the Brent demesne.

By matching the non-agricultural income with the disposable income from arable and pasture in Table 4.47 we are

able to get two measures of performance: the ratio of pasture income to arable income, and the disposable agricultural income expressed as a percentage of non-agricultural income. The ratio of pasture income to arable income indicates that when pasture produced a lower proportion of agrarian income, then agriculture tended to form a higher percentage of demesne income, and vice versa; a high ratio of livestock to arable co-incided with agriculture forming a lower percentage of Brent income. Pastoral farming therefore had little effect on the overall performance of demesne agriculture in Brent; it was the acreage of crops that determined how well demesne agriculture contributed to the overall revenue. Of course livestock had its place. It provided the haulage power to plough and harrow the land, to transport crops from the fields to the granges and from there to the market or to Glastonbury. A useful by-product of the haulage function was the produce of the dairy. While there was waste and legumes, pigs were always a useful animal to breed to provide meat and fat. These animals all had their part to play, but it was a supportive role in the production of crops and the provision of supplementary products. Whereas the nominal cash value of the livestock did not vary a great deal, reflecting the general maintenance of herd sizes, we are left in no doubt about the diminishing importance of agriculture from the final column of Table 4.47. So great was the fall, that the notional value of demesne agriculture as a percentage of non-agricultural income in 1333-4 was only 16% of what it had been in 1257-8.

THE OVERALL SITUATION

Before discussing the significance of that decline we need to take into consideration the effects of inflation over the period and look at the overall situation regarding the inputs and outputs of the demesne economy. In Table 4.48 we can see the sum of the net income, which is the non-agricultural income added to the notional disposable agricultural income minus the expenses. I have not included notional costs for land and labour owing to the difficulties in accurately assessing them over the years, besides as they diminished there would have been a corresponding increase in rents and commutation, which perhaps helps to balance their absence. The price index has been divided into the net income to produce an index of the performance of the whole demesne, corrected for price inflation. This shows that as the landlord moved away from 'High Farming', the value of the estate fell by almost a quarter between 1257 - 1302. It had picked up remarkably well by 1311-12, increasing its value by almost two-thirds over 1302-3 and increased output by another fifteen per cent by 1333-4.

The basic facts that stand out from all this analysis is that during the period 1257-1334, the abbey's involvement in, and income from demesne cultivation declined while the income from rents increased. This development was not peculiar to Brent; it seems to have been a general phenomena of the retreat from 'high farming'.¹⁴⁰ The question that is posed

¹⁴⁰J.Z.Titow, English Rural Society, 1200-1350 (second impression, 1972), p.51.

Table 4.48 Performance of net income against prices						
Years	Non-Ag Income (£)	Disp. Ag. Income (£)	Ex- pense (£)	Net income (NAI+DAI -Exp.) (£)	Farmer Price Index	Net Income /Price Index
1257- 8	113.9	161.25	25.80	249.44	121	2.1
1274- 5	99.50	89.59	28.78	160.31	123	1.3
1282- 3	148.65	93.35	28.05	213.95	110	1.9
1300- 1	155.37	64.87	64.55	155.69	92	1.7
1302- 3	124.15	60.05	36.56	147.64	92	1.6
1304- 5	164.53	50.93	38.28	177.18	108	1.6
1311- 2	238.01	80.54	31.22	287.33	110	2.6
1313- 4	202.99	81.70	37.55	247.14	115	2.1
1314- 5	191.13	169.91	39.83	321.21	125	2.6
1330- 1	219.10	54.94	Incomplete expenses prevent further calculation for this year			
1333- 4	267.43	59.84	42.31	284.96	94	3.0

however, is why did landlords get out of direct management and develop their rents? Miller placed emphasis on the attitudes and policies of reforming landlords as a reason for getting into direct management in the first place, to overcome the real diminishing returns from fixed customary rents during a period of inflation. Did this initiate an example of plus ça

change, c'est plus la même chose, in other words, was the period of high farming a mere interruption to the normal reliance upon rents as the major source of income, an experiment that could only succeed for as long as dynamic leadership made it work, and once that drive had gone there would be a regression to a line of least resistance? Alternatively, if Biddick's emphasis on direct management being a response to a move from consumption to commercialization to meet the cash demands being placed upon lords was true, was the consequence of managing demesne an abject failure leading to a re-appraisal of how best to maximise income? Brent demesne's ability to meet the demands for wheat and oats was sorely stretched, yet there was no sudden retreat from direct cultivation, indeed by the 1330's the much reduced demesne was actually producing better yields.

Dyer saw low yields as being a key factor behind the move away from direct cultivation, suggesting that these were a consequence of low investment, insufficient manuring and poorly motivated management and labour.¹⁴¹ It is difficult to think of low investment being a factor in Brent considering the effort that went into drainage, sea-defence and the maintenance of buildings as well as the benefit it received from developments elsewhere in the baronial network. There does seem to have been a lack of manure, but as we only have details for the demesne livestock we are blind when it comes to assessing the impact of tenant livestock and the movements

¹⁴¹C.Dyer, The Standards of Living in the Middle Ages (1989), p.40.

of the baronial sheep flock. As for poor management, the court rolls reveal an image of conscientious management by the cellarers and bailiffs, each of which benefited very nicely from considerable expenses extracted from the estate. There were examples of reeves being amerced: Richard Gille and Richard Creese, messor of East Brent, were deficient in bushels of provender for the steward in 1349; John Buryman concealed an entry fine in 1345; John Senere for neglecting buildings in 1348.¹⁴² Similarly there were amercements of tenants for lack of, or unsatisfactory, works; such as Robert Wagecute who was alleged to be a bad sower in 1262 and Michael Wilecok who did not scour ditches in 1348.¹⁴³ The fact that such cases appeared before the manor court indicates the strength of management and the presence of human nature, but presentments for fraud or inadequate services were few in number bearing in mind the numbers living in Brent.

In his study of the Canterbury Cathedral Priory estates, Smith considered the causes of the decline of demesne cultivation to be obscure, suggesting that the death of Prior Eastry may have been contributory, as might have been abnormal weather and movements of population and prices.¹⁴⁴ Smith traced the Canterbury decline as beginning in the third decade of the fourteenth century which is much later than in Brent. His identification of the importance of leadership does have

¹⁴²L.11222 m.9r-v; L.10774 m.36-7v.; L.11179 m.44r-v.

¹⁴³L.10682 m.3r-v; L.11179 m.45r-v.

¹⁴⁴R.A.L.Smith, Canterbury Cathedral Priory; a study in estate administration (1943), p.144.

parallels in Brent; it is no co-incidence that the surveys were associated with abbots who were looking to improve Glastonbury's fortunes. In the Sully survey, land at farm was earmarked for direct management. In the Amesbury survey, very little was at farm. In the Ford survey values are put on services, but it is in the Fromond survey that big changes can be ascertained. Geoffrey of Fromond became abbot in 1303 and it is noticeable in Table 4.48 how the ratio of price index to net income had markedly improved by 1311-12. However, Fromond's administration did not mark the beginning of the move away from direct management, but merely the ascending of a plateau in a development that had been evident since the time of Ford.

The fact that the preference for rents was commonplace among landlords, even though the pace of change varied from estate to estate, makes one look for exogenous explanations, and when Smith proffers the probability of movements of population and prices, he dangles the key to an exogenous feature that connects with an endogenous phenomenon in Brent. There is insufficient data to calculate the effect of prices within Brent, but in the case of population growth and land availability, there is some very clear cut evidence.

In Table 4.49 we can see how in all four manors the number of landholders increased in almost half a century. From what has been discussed up to now might lead us to believe that the increase in population represented by these

Table 4.49 Landholders and their increased acreage compared with loss of demesne acreage, 1260-1307.						
Manors	Inc. of Tenants	Inc. of Tenant Acres	Inc. in total <u>redd.</u>	Inc. total value of cust. works	Loss of demesne acreage	Change in dem. land values ¹⁴⁵
East Brent	29 (33) ¹⁴⁶	465 (442)			172	+£2.89
Lympsham	21 (25)	314 (338)			23½	+£4.12
Berrow	9 (9)	76 (148)			92½	+£1.11
South Brent	21 (22)	478 (249)			3½	-£2.15
Totals	80 (89)	1333 (1179)	£34.14 92%	£4.48 8%	291	+£5.97

numbers would be provided for out of land no longer needed in demesne. To a certain extent that did happen, but we only need to glance at the increase in land held by tenants between 1260 and 1307 to see that the increase was far greater than the redundant demesne could provide. The words 'waste' and 'assart' are virtually absent from the Brent documents, yet the total estate acreage in the Fromond survey is still far short of the nineteenth century parish acreages, so there was land available and presumably within the bounds of Brent as delineated on the 1st edition of the Ordnance Survey. What had happened was that numerous new landholdings of

¹⁴⁵Figures taken from Table 4.15.

¹⁴⁶Figures in brackets omit the Free Tenants.

miscellaneous sizes with only nominal services had been created for rent, while many of the half-virgate and ferdell holdings had been allocated extra land for rent but with no increase in their services. This is supported by the fact that whereas the £34.14 increased value of redditus represents an increase of 92% between 1260 and 1307, the monetary value of customary services over the same period of time only increased by £4.48, or just 8%. Meanwhile, increased values per acre meant that despite shedding 291 acres, the nominal value of demesne actually increased.

It was the availability of spare land while the population was growing that enabled the Abbey to gradually move out of demesne cultivation in Brent. It may be wondered why all that spare land was not worked as demesne. The real answer to that we do not know; perhaps at its largest known extent in the 1250's the demesne was stretching the available customary services to work it. Anyway, the yields were poor and getting poorer in the thirteenth century, so why not cut their losses, and as it was difficult to increase customary rents, create new holdings with economical rents and offer extra land to the existing tenants with nominal or no services, but at a higher level of rent per acre.

So why keep on a working demesne at all? We have to remember that the decline in demesne acreage was a gradual one. By maintaining a physical presence in Brent, it meant that the demesne was still able to contribute to the abbey's

consumption requirements. It also gave the Abbey a stronger hold over, and interest in, the tenants of an estate that provided more cash revenue than all the other Somerset estates excepting the other large composite manor of Zoy. By not subjecting Brent to sudden and drastic changes, the abbey maintained stability in the estate. By allocating extra land and creating new holdings it enabled its tenants to sustain their livelihood and increased the productivity that the abbey was really interested in, its cash revenue. By spreading that extra land among so many of its tenants it was being equitable. So Brent fitted Jules Pretty's definition of an agroecosystem, thanks to an abundance of land and its role in the larger barony of Glastonbury. Of course the auditors had been interested in the yields for the details they were investigating on the compoti, but agriculture was not the abbey's prime interest, except in so far as it was the major source of revenue that it needed to pursue its spiritual, pastoral, educational and political ambitions and demands. The manner in which it exploited its resources depended not just on economic factors but also on fashion, leadership, topography and a sense of history; in that these estates were ancient possessions and that there was a duty to sustain them for the benefit of the abbey in the future, and perhaps also for the benefit of their tenants.

Chapter 5

The People of Brent 1257-1350

INITIAL IMPRESSIONS

Richard de St.Barbara was one of the more prosperous of the Abbot of Glastonbury's free tenants in Brent in 1307. He held 100 acres in the Moor, 7 acres in la Pulecroft with la Mulehurst, 14 acres Byestebrent, the pasture of Uppebrentecnoll and a ferdel in South Brent.¹ The St.Barbara interest in Brent was of some antiquity by 1307, Robert being the tenant in 1235 and 1260, while in 1189 Radulf held the mill, 100 acres in the Moor, a virgate in South Brent and half a hide in Berrow.² It was Ralph whose Brent Marsh holding was supposedly rent-free because it was useless, but was discovered by Bishop Henry to be growing golden corn.³ Ralph claimed that Abbot Herluin had granted him the land, so that takes the St.Barbara stake in Brent back to 1100-18. A two-century presence by one family in Brent is remarkable, made possible by two strokes of fortune; continuity of male heirs and sufficient profit from the sizeable holding for them to want to hold on to it.

There were, at the most, fifty free tenants in Brent's

¹Geoffrey de Fromond's survey, BL Eg.3321.

²J.E.Jackson, ed., Liber Henrici de Soliaco (1882); Rentalia et Custumaria de Michael de Amesbury et Roger de Ford, BL Add.17450.

³See Chapter 2, pp.94-5 above.

social structure, but at the other extreme there were hundreds of landless garciones. At the Hocktide court each year, the clerk enroled these landless males with their assessed chevaqium, which Fox suggests could vary according to age and strength.⁴ In Brent the chevaqium generally ranged from a 1d to 1/- per person, the bulk of them being liable for 4d, 6d or 8d, but there were some, like Stephen le Ster in 1307 and 1308, who instead of a sum of pence simply had the word 'pauper' next to their name. We know nothing more about Stephen le Ster, although the Ster family can be found occupying positions throughout the strata of customary tenancy between 1189 and 1345. Between the extremes represented by the poverty of Stephen le Ster and the status of Richard de St.Barbara there were hundreds, possibly as many as two thousand people by 1307, enjoying or suffering varying fortunes in Brent.

In attempting to analyze the fortunes of the people of Brent, it is important to understand that the surviving documentary evidence was prepared by agents of the Abbot, and on a few occasions, of the king. Although such evidence is extremely useful, we have to bear in mind the caveat that the surviving documents present an indirect view of the lord's subjects, in that they represent the perspective of his agents who exercised their judgements in the way that the people were recorded. Such recording was part and parcel of the

⁴H.S.A.Fox, 'Exploitation of the landless by lords and Tenants in early medieval England', in Z.Razi and R.Smith, eds, Medieval Society and the Manor Court (1996), p.531.

administration of the estate and the exercise of lordship. The keeping of accounts is evidence in itself of concern for the value of the estate. It was demonstrated in the previous chapter how important cash revenue was to the abbot in the light of the retreat from direct management of the demesne, while it was found to be more profitable to increase income from rents. This concern with cash revenue extended into the court rolls and surveys as the overwhelming majority of entries recorded in those documents include a cash sum as a fine of some sort. The broader spectrum of the Abbey's interests dictated that if it was to benefit from its resources in Brent and utilize them in the wider world, then it had to convert those resources into cash as a means of exchange. Useful though cash figures are for the historian to analyze what was happening, it has to be remembered that they represent lordship values, while the burdens represented by a 3d fine for trespass or an entry fine of 5/- per acre to a tenant are not so easy to ascertain.

The previous chapter provides us with a reasonable starting place in the search for clues about the fortunes of the inhabitants of Brent. Table 4.19 shows the importance of rents and perquisites of the courts as sources of revenue to the Abbot. Table 4.21a shows that the major growth area in rents was in redditus, the basic cash rent for a landholding, while Table 4.21c indicated that lactage could bring in a significant amount from tenants, hinting that perhaps dairy agriculture was important among the tenantry. However, it is

the marked increase in redditus that is the most significant; 115% between 1304-5 and 1311-2 and a further 38% between 1314-5 and 1330-1. This marked increase in revenue originates from the profits of tenant agriculture, either from new tenants taking on new holdings or from existing tenants acquiring additional acreage. If a tenant takes on a holding for an agreed rent there is an implied understanding that he will be able to afford that rent from produce raised on that holding. Indeed there are relatively few cases of tenants defaulting on rent. In 1274-5 Robert de Berlond was recorded as owing his moorgabel, Radulf Mercatoris owed 1/8 for la Mersse, Agatha de Ponte and John Simeon owed 4/-, Alice Capye owed 5d on a ferdel, Radulf de Cunteuille owed 6d, 6d was owed for La Pulle and another ferdel had 8d outstanding.⁵ If the number of landholders in Brent had not greatly increased since 1260, the seven cases in one year out of 371 landholders represents a default percentage of about 2%; furthermore, on the two ferdels it is apparent that it is only a portion of the annual redditus that was outstanding. Thirty years later three of the same debtors still appeared as an accounting procedure to explain a deficit in rent as their land was in the hands of the lord. This leaves us with only two clear cases of default of rent in 1304-5, John Pynecke owing 3/- for pasture in Berrow and Roger Combe 6/1 for 5½ acres in Henacre; but even these are defaults on land held in addition to their basic

⁵Longleat Ms.11244 mm.20, 21. There were another four tenants who were technically in default, but their holdings had their rent reduced by 1/8 in alternate years, so this was not a case of being unable to pay.

holdings.⁶ John Pynecke was a half-virgater in South Brent in 1307, so the pasture in Berrow was of secondary importance to him. There is no record of Roger Comb in the Fromond survey but we do know that he held a further 5½ acres in Netelwortheshulle which was in the lord's hands by 1302.⁷ By 1307 there were 390 landholders in Brent, so Pynecke and Combe represent less than 0.5% of the tenantry. In 1311-2 there were no cases of defaults recorded, thus the impression is that the tenants were able to pay their redditus during the time of its greatest increase and in the cases of recorded defaults it was on land held in addition to the basic holding that they chose to default on, or failing that, on one instalment of their basic redditus.

The lack of defaults during a time of increasing levels of rent might suggest that earlier levels of redditus had been so low that the lord's attempt to increase redditus and improve the opportunity for tenants to increase the overall size of their landholdings was still priced well within the tenants' ability to cope. If a tenant took on an extra five acres he would still have to pay the new rent straight away and find the necessary resources such as seed corn or extra livestock, and it might have been necessary to put some work into the land to render it useable before he could gain some profit from the land. Thus there could be a time lag between tenants acquiring the extra land and getting anything out of

⁶L.11215 mm.35 - 37.

⁷L.11271 mm.1-4. There are Radulf, Robert and Richard Combe, all ferdellers in Berrow.

it, during which time the stretching of resources might be expected to lead to a proportion defaulting on their rents. The absence of defaults does indicate that rents were well within the ability of tenants to pay and is suggestive of a tenantry that was solvent.

The impression of tenants who were doing well was also suggested by the study of Brent at the time of the Domesday survey.⁸ Brent's position as the most valuable of the abbot's estates appeared to be largely due to a significant area of tenant arable coupled with strong indications of grazing resources available to tenants for whom perhaps cattle were proportionately more important than elsewhere in the barony. Brent also had enough tenants able to assemble a considerable number of ploughteams, which must have been a contributory factor in the manor's high value and growth between 1077-86.

The image of a tenantry prospering is further reinforced by the 1327 Lay Subsidy which levied a tax of one twentieth on all mens' moveable possessions as at Michaelmas 1327.⁹ It seems that this particular lay subsidy was an under-estimate of taxable wealth, although it was not unique in this respect.¹⁰ As this was a tax on a person's goods that he had for sale as opposed to those items intended for domestic use;

⁸See chapter 2 above, pp.91-106.

⁹F.H.Dickinson, ed., Kirby's Quest for Somerset, Somerset Record Society, (1889).

¹⁰W.M.Ormrod, 'The Crown and the English economy, 1290-1348', in B.M.S.Campbell, ed., Before the Black Death (1991), p.155.

as there was a minimum value, probably 10/-, below which people were exempt from taxation; and as sub-assessors were local men with little experience of this work, it is thought they might be inclined to under-estimate the market-price of produce and even set the exemption level higher than the government's minimum; then the image of a relatively prosperous peasantry in Brent is further magnified.¹¹

At first sight, it seems that Brent was the most prosperous estate in Somerset, as it contained 174 taxpayers assessed at £17.19, far more than anywhere else in the county. Glaston XII Hides was second to Brent in numbers with 57 fewer taxpayers, while Bridgwater had the second largest assessment at £6.62. The physical size of Brent must have been one factor in it having far more taxpayers and a level of assessment far greater than anywhere else in the county in 1327, although size was no guarantee of relative prosperity as evidenced by Portbury near Bristol with its 104 taxpayers assessed at only £5.96. By equalizing demographic and geographic differences a fairer impression can be gained of how well the people of Brent were doing. Tables 5.01 and 5.02 omit towns and rural places with less than 48 taxpayers, setting Brent with places whose performance was better than Brent when measured against average assessments for each

¹¹J.F.Willard, Parliamentary Taxes on Personal Property, 1290 to 1334; a study in English Financial Administration (1934), pp.56, 79, 85 & 88; J.R.Maddicott, 'The English peasantry and the demands of the Crown, 1294-1341', in T.H.Aston, Landlords, Peasants and Politics in Medieval England (1987), pp.291-2.

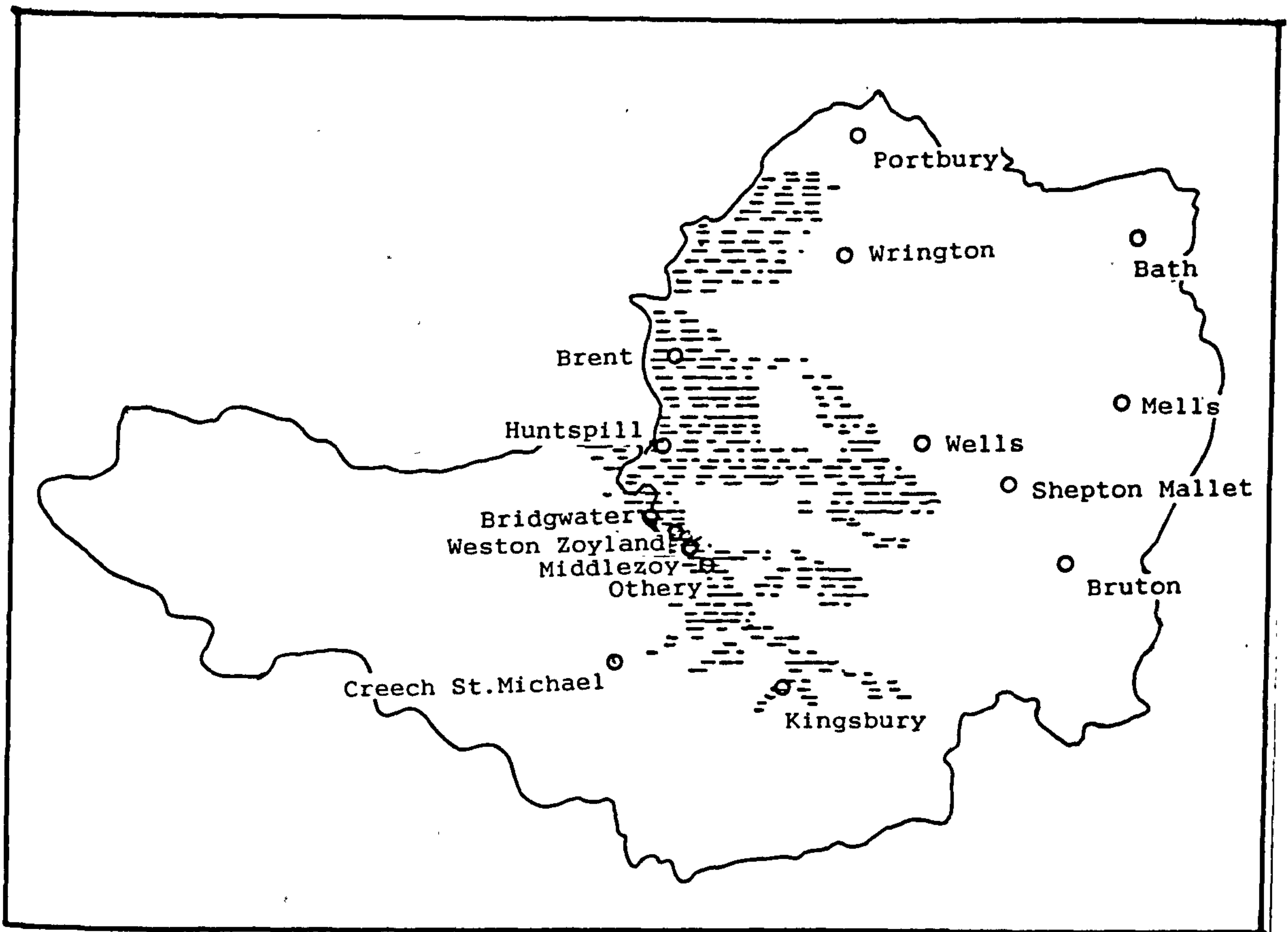
Table 5.01 Somerset Lay Subsidy (1327). Rural places arranged by average value per taxpayer		
Place	Type	Average value per taxpayer (£)
Huntspill	Coastal Belt	0.13
Wrington	Highland/ edge of Coastal Belt	0.13
Mells	Mendip	0.12
Kingsbury	Wetland	0.12
Middlezoy	Wetland	0.11
Weston Zoyland	Wetland	0.11
Creech	Taunton Deane	0.10
Brent	Coastal Belt	0.10

Table 5.02 Somerset Lay Subsidy (1327). Rural places arranged by average tax per acre.		
Place	Type	Average tax per acre in pence (d)
Middlezoy	Wetland	0.64
Weston Zoyland	Wetland	0.61
Huntspill	Coastal Belt	0.49
Mells	Mendip	0.45
Portbury	Coastal Belt	0.43
Wrington	Highland/ Coastal Belt edge	0.43
Othery	Wetland	0.39
Kingsbury	Wetland	0.39
Brent	Coastal Belt	0.39

Figure 5.01

Places containing high number of taxpayers and yielding 'tax per taxpayer' or 'tax per acre rates' in excess of Brent.

Hachured area represents the Somerset Levels.



taxpayer and amounts of tax per acre.¹² By adding an indication of the terrain in which those places are situated it becomes evident that location on, or proximity to the coastal alluvial belt and wetland is a common feature. This is reinforced by Figure 5.01 in which the alluvial belt and the wetlands are combined in the shaded area of the Levels. So although Brent does not occupy top position in Tables 5.01 and 5.02, the difference between Huntspill and Brent in the former is only £0.03 per taxpayer, while the difference in tax per acre between Middlezoy and Brent is a farthing per acre.

A further check on the relative value of Brent in the first half of the fourteenth century can be ascertained from the published Lay Subsidy returns for 1334.¹³ Unfortunately, the 1334 Lay Subsidy is not so detailed as its 1327 counterpart, just giving a total sum collected from each place. On this occasion Brent was broken down into its component manors, from which quite different amounts were collected. East Brent raised the most, £10.40, then came Berrow with £9.11, Lympsham with £5.95 and then South Brent with £4.89. In Table 5.03 I have set out all those places in Somerset that paid more than South Brent. The amounts collected in 1334 are not really comparable with the 1327 figures because the later subsidy was based on a levy of a fifteenth in rural areas and a tenth in boroughs, and instead

¹²Acreage figures based on 1841 census as set out in F.H.Dickinson, ed., Kirby's Quest for Somerset, Somerset Record Society, Vol.3, (1889).

¹³R.E.Glasscock, ed., The Lay Subsidy of 1334 (1975), pp.258-275.

Table 5.03 Somerset Lay Subsidy of
1334.

Place	Quota
Bridgwater	26.00
Wells	19.00
Bath	13.33
Glastonbury	12.33
Huntspill	11.33
Kingsbury Episcopi	11.24
Creech St.Michael	11.00
Shepton Mallet	10.57
EAST BRENT	10.40
Taunton	10.17
Wrington	10.00
Congresbury	9.81
Crewkerne	9.19
BERROW	9.11
Weston Zoyland	9.01
Castle Cary	9.00
Othery	8.71
Frome	8.66
Middlezoy	8.12
Wraxhall	7.89
Bedminster	7.46
Bruton	6.33
Chewton Mendip	6.00
Wedmore	6.00
North Cadbury	6.00
Norton sub Hamden	6.00
Wiveliscombe	6.00
Wincanton	6.00
West Harptree	6.00
Somerton	5.99
Portbury	5.96
LYMPHAM	5.95
Perry Elm	5.97
Wellow	5.50
East Pennard	5.49
Merriott	5.33
Doulting	5.29
Claverton	5.25
Brewham	5.15
Winscombe	5.08
Backwell	5.03
Chedzoy	5.00
Charlton Horethorne	5.00
Kingston Seymour	5.00
SOUTH BRENT	4.89

of applying a direct assessment on individuals there was some negotiation about how much each place should pay, the individual apportionment being left to local men.¹⁴ A variety of questions could be asked of the data in Table 5.03, but it is sufficient just to indicate the overall image of Brent's relative prosperity in support of the impression given in the 1327 figures. If we take the worst impression, that South Brent lies forty-fifth in Table 5.03, this may hint that this particular manor was not outstanding or even prosperous; however there were another 566 places in Somerset with a lower tax quota in 1334, in other words, even South Brent was in the top 8% of tax-paying places in Somerset, while Lympsham was in the top 5% and Berrow and East Brent in the top 2%. Such a simple measure indicates that Brent was a significant yielder of revenue in the first half of the fourteenth century and that its relative importance must have been evident at the time.

RECEIVED IMPRESSIONS OF MEDIEVAL PEASANT ECONOMY

The ability of the tenantry to pay increasing amounts of redditus, the apparent high value of Brent to the Abbot at the time of Domesday, and the high yield of tax in the 1327 and 1334 Lay Subsidies; all these point to the economic well-being of the people of Brent during a period of time which for most people in England was, according to some of our most eminent economic historians, marked by a struggle for subsistence.

¹⁴Glasscock, The Lay Subsidy of 1334, p.xvi; Willard, Parliamentary Taxes, p.56. Ormrod, 'The Crown and the English Economy', p.156.

Postan equated a half-virgate holding with subsistence level, while smallholders with quarter-virgates found it necessary to supplement their income with industrial earnings or labouring for the lord or more substantial tenants. Such work was seasonal so the supplementary income it provided could not compensate smallholders for the acres they lacked. They were further ground down by money rents and rent-like charges such as church-scot, 'farms' for additional pieces of land, pannage for pigs, agistment of animals; capital payments such as heriots and entry fines; personal payments such as chevage, marriage fines, amercements and tallage. Labour service could involve money if there was a need to find a man to deputise on the demesne or at home. Then there were tithes and royal taxes. The various money exactions from customary tenants meant that money dues represented something like 50% of a tenant's gross output.¹⁵

Dyer considered that Postan's arguments were based on assumptions and logical deductions rather than empirical research.¹⁶ Although that allegation could reasonably be levied against the gloomy impression in the previous paragraph, it cannot really be sustained against Postan's work on heriots and prices on the Winchester estates, from which he concluded that where harvest failures resulted in large increases in deaths that either the land could sustain its cultivators only in years of favourable harvests, or that

¹⁵M.M.Postan, The Medieval Economy and Society (1972), pp.139, 146-7.

¹⁶C.Dyer, Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages (1989), p.6.

holdings were so small that they could only support their holders in years of good yields. In other words, the number of peasants was greater than their produce could support.¹⁷ From evidence of 104 manors he concluded that 50% of the peasantry was insufficiently supplied with land, that is for those who held 10 acres or less.¹⁸ There is a hint in Postan's work that Brent may not have been suffering to the same extent that he noticed generally, because he envisaged Brent and Sowy as being cattle-grazing economies, although he recognized that this interpretation was based on demesne herds. If arable had expanded at the expense of pasture, then there must have been a decline in the number of animals that could be supported followed by a diminution in the amount of manure available to fertilize the arable, which in turn led to declining yields and a consequent reduction in the amount of food available for a growing population. The shortage of animals on the Winchester estates was reflected in there being 40% of heriots without animal payments in 1348-9, while on the densely populated Taunton estate the proportion was 60%.¹⁹

The image of a land in which the population had outstripped its ability to support itself adequately has been supported by Titow. He related how the population growth of the thirteenth century was accompanied by land reclamation,

¹⁷M.Postan, 'Heriots and prices on Winchester manors', in M.Postan, Essays on Medieval Agriculture and General Problems of the Medieval Economy (1973), p.172.

¹⁸M.Postan, Cambridge Economic History of Europe, vol.1, (1966), p.622.

¹⁹M.Postan, 'Village livestock in the thirteenth century', in M.M.Postan, Essays on Medieval Agriculture and General Problems of the Medieval Economy (1973), pp.220, 225, 232-3.

the evidence for which can be spotted by references to assarts in surveys and rapidly rising rents due to the creation of new holdings. This reclamation soon petered out by the end of the thirteenth century in some places, a little later in others. Much of this reclaimed land may well have been of a marginal nature and Titow's calculations that in 28 counties there were 7.2 million acres under the plough in 1086 and 7.7 million by 1914, clearly suggests that assarting could only have added a nominal amount of arable to the total. Titow logically deduced that the amount of land per capita must have been declining and thus the quality of food per head of population must also have been decreasing. The shortage of land was best reckoned by looking at the steep and progressive rise in entry fines. Indeed his most dramatic examples of high entry fines before the Black Death came from Brent for which he quoted a land value as high as £80 per virgate. Such a high rate of entry fines was not witnessed on the Glastonbury estates after the Black Death according to Titow. While postulating that high levels of entry fines may be no more than an indication of the worsening situation regarding the availability of land, he placed great weight on the presence of a large number of smallholders in almost every thirteenth-century survey as conclusive evidence of widespread hardship. In support of the concept of hardship, Titow devised a formula to calculate the minimum acreage a peasant would need for a subsistence holding for a household. This worked out at $13\frac{1}{2}$ acres under a two-field system, or 10 acres in a three-field system. Those with such small, or smaller, holdings might survive by

supplementing their income from wage-earning, but he thought that this was only possible if there were sufficient men in need of wage labour. This Titow considered unlikely at a time when demesnes relied mainly on customary labour and substantial tenants were not numerous enough to employ all those needing work.²⁰

Rodney Hilton also saw the burden of real rents diminishing the opportunity for capital formation. He showed that a rent of 1/- per acre on a half-yardland of twelve to fifteen acres was a burden that could only be sustained if prices and yields were reasonable, and if some of the labour services were performed rather than paid for, his cash reserves would be very small, if they existed at all. He also noted a fragmentation of peasant holdings so that in many villages, especially those without room for expansion, there was a proportion of peasants living on holdings that could barely produce a living. Impoverished smallholders in some villages constituted between a third and a half of the tenant population. However, not everybody was a smallholder, and Hilton recognized that there were those who prospered, probably the larger freeholders, lower gentry and perhaps villeins holding thirty to forty acres.²¹

The major challenge to the interpretation of Postan et al

²⁰J.Z.Titow, English Rural Society 1200-1350 (1969, 2nd impr. 1972), pp.33, 64-5, 72-5, 78, 80, 89, 92.

²¹R.H.Hilton, The English Peasantry in the Later Middle Ages; the Ford Lectures for 1973 and related studies (1975), pp.179-200.

has come from Barbara Harvey. She considered that Postan's case largely rested on land values and topography, asking if these issues suggested that England was overpopulated by 1300, if marginal land was becoming exhausted by then and if the population was declining well before 1348? The case for overpopulation rested on three pieces of evidence: the levels which rents had reached by 1300, the size of peasant holdings and the inferior quality of much of the soil under cultivation. In taking entry fines as indicators of land values, she reckoned that although the levels in Taunton were high, elsewhere fines were much smaller. She observed that fines did not necessarily reflect the demand for land so much as the variable quality of the land or the ability of an heir to pay. On the size of peasant holdings she accepted that many peasants had holdings too small to support a family, but only if the potential yield of its arable was considered. However, she points to the shortage of evidence of distress in areas in which small holdings proliferated. She quotes the Fenland as an example where there were a large number of people with small holdings and no marked fall in population until well into the fourteenth century. Smallholdings, she argued, were not just a result of high population, but they were also a feature of an economy where abundant woodland or waste freed the peasant from dependence upon his arable.²²

The Postan thesis has also been challenged by Dewindt in

²²B.F.Harvey, 'The population trend in England between 1300 and 1348', Transactions of the Royal Historical Society 16 (1966), pp.24-9. Her case is put more succinctly in B.F.Harvey, 'Introduction: the "crisis" of the early fourteenth century', in B.M.S.Campbell, ed., Before the Black Death (1991), pp.1-8.

his study of Holywell, especially the idea that the only group able to maintain themselves at a relatively comfortable level were those with holdings of thirty acres or more, while subsistence farming required ten to fifteen acres. Dewindt argued that the majority of Holywell peasants were living at or around the subsistence level, thus their chances of survival should have been slim. Despite limited land availability, large numbers of peasants were surviving in Holywell and for long periods of time. Such subsistence tenants were also holding positions in the village hierarchy and appeared in the lay subsidy paying at least twice the minimum level.²³

Despite the initial impressions outlined at the beginning of this chapter and the challenges of Barbara Harvey and E.B.Dewindt, it is the situation in England prior to the Black Death as postulated by Postan, Titow and others that provides the yardstick against which the economy of the people of Brent must be measured. If the image of the tenant economy of Brent is suggestive of a group of people doing relatively well in contrast with a generally dire situation recognized by so many historians, then we have to ask if the impression gained of Brent so far is a true one, and if so, why was it different? It is necessary to consider if there were more people than the land could support. Is there evidence of fragmentation of holdings? Did the number of smallholdings constitute as much

²³E.B.Dewindt, Land and People in Holywell-cum-Needingworth; structures of tenure and patterns of social organization in an East Midlands village, 1252-1457 (197, 2)pp.193, 195, 203.

as a third to a half of the total tenancies? Was the level of entry fines indicative of a land shortage? Was there a decline in the number of holdings of five acres or less, and if so, did this really indicate impoverishment? What percentage of heriots were without animals? Were tenants ground down by rents and other cash demands and how much of a burden were labour services? It may be that such questions will reveal a different image of Brent from that ascertained so far, but if they do not, can we find any other evidence of distress in Brent prior to 1350?

TENURIAL STRUCTURE

In an agrarian society the land and its resources represent the foundation upon which the people build their prosperity. How successful the people were in exploiting those resources is difficult to judge; the evidence for tenant arable production is extremely limited, we do not know the size of herds or flocks, or the actual prices they realised, and neither do we have any evidence of proto-industrial activity in Brent. We do know that there were 174 people in Brent in 1327 who were perceived by the assessors at the time to be doing well enough to afford to pay the twentieth required by the exchequer, but the Lay Subsidy did not reveal how many people's movables were assessed below ten shillings. Thus we need to investigate the surviving evidence to establish a credible estimate of population and the amount of land at their disposal to help us understand at least the potential for prosperity among the people of Brent.

The investigation of land and people begins with extracting data from the medieval surveys and examining the figures for the four manors set out in Tables 5.04a-d. Also included in the shaded columns of Table 5.04 are comparative data from the Beere survey, partly to give an indication of change and continuity after 1307 and also because its greater detail can pose questions and possibly shed some light upon earlier enigmas.

It is immediately noticeable that the four manors shared a conspicuous hierarchical social structure based upon the allocation of land. This structure was not unique to Brent; half-virgates and ferdels were commonplace designations of landholdings, although how many acres constituted these portions varied from place to place. Neither was the structure new as we have already noted a similar one, albeit with different names, in the Domesday survey.

At the top of Brent's social structure were the free tenants, some of whom had a long association with Brent. Many free tenants held half-virgates, ferdels or even more modest holdings for a cash render, but there was a core of men whose holdings formed a fraction of a knight's fee, that is, they held their land in return for military service. Although many free tenants were literally free of the sort of work services expected of the customary tenants, there were a number from

Table 5.04a: Landholdings, tenants and associated acreages in East Brent					
Category	1189	1235	1260	1307	1515
Free Tenancies Tenants acres	12 12 789	17 15 425	20 19 862	17 15 712	7 7 178
Half-virgates Tenants acres	25 37 500	7 7 140	6 7 120	7 7 198	9 9 470
Ferdels Tenants acres	- - -	28 27 280	30 31 300	32 33 418	31 31 1102
5-acre holdings Tenants acres	26 31 130	22 21 105	22 22 105	22 22 139	37 39 926
3-acre holdings Tenants acres	9 9 30	22 21 61	18 18 48	66 53 332	- - -
Misc. holdings Tenants acres	6 6 13	35 6 167	24 17 217	18 15 145	5 5 153
Total holdings Tenants acres	78 95 1462	129 95 1178	120 114 1652	162 145 1944	89 91 2676
Total less: Free Tenancies & Tenants acres	66 83 673	114 82 753	100 95 790	145 130 1232	82 84 2498

Table 5.04b: Landholdings, tenants and associated acreages in Lympham					
Category	1189	1235	1260	1307	1515
Free Tenancies Tenants acres	5 4 145	9 9 157	10 10 144	7 6 127	7 2 107
Half-virgates Tenants acres	14 13 285	15 15 300	14 14 280	14 14 302	15 12 560
Ferdels Tenants acres	11 11 110	10 10 100	12 12 120	13 13 154	13 12 444
5-acre holdings Tenants acres	18 15 80	18 18 90	21 21 105	-	-
3-acre holdings Tenants acres	9 9 27	7 7 21	5 5 15	4 4 28	-
12a/5a holdings Tenants acres	-	-	-	20 18 207	-
Misc. holdings Tenants acres	6 4 18	4 1 34	-	30 12 167	18 18 825
Total holdings Tenants acres	63 56 665	63 60 702	62 62 664	88 67 985	53 44 1936
Total less: Free tenancies & tenants acres	58 52 520	54 51 545	52 52 520	81 61 858	46 42 1829

Table 5.04c: Landholdings, tenants and associated acreages in Berrow					
Category	1189	1235	1260	1307	1515
Free Tenancies Tenants acres	12 9 459	4 4 90	10 10 227	11 10 115	3 2 281
Half-virgates Tenants acres	21 36 420	7 7 140	6 6 120	6 6 123	6 6 267
Ferdels Tenants acres	1 1 10	32 33 325	38 39 380	38 39 395	32 32 1099
5-acre holdings Tenants acres	8 8 47	10 10 50	11 11 55	-	-
3-acre holdings Tenants acres	6 5 18	6 6 18	5 5 15	6 6 18	-
12-acre holdings Tenants acres	-	-	-	3 3 36	-
10½-acre holdings Tenants acres	-	-	-	8 7 85	-
Misc. Holdings Tenants acres	-	2 2 10	3 2 14	12 10 75	12 12 313
Total holdings Tenants Acres	48 49 954	61 62 633	73 73 813	84 81 847	53 53 1960
Total less: Free Tenancies & tenants acres	36 50 495	57 58 543	63 63 584	73 71 732	50 51 1679

Table 5.04d: Landholdings, tenants and associated acreages in South Brent					
Category	1189	1235	1260	1307	1515
Free Tenancies	7	17	11	12	11
Free Tenants	7	15	11	10	5
acres	540	641	321	355	208
Virgate	1	-	-	-	-
Tenant	1				
acres	40				
Half-virgates	19	18	18	18	19
Tenants	17	18	18	18	19
acres	380	360	360	397	748
Ferdels	21	17	19	24	19
Tenants	22	17	19	24	19
acres	207	170	190	287	593
5-acre holdings	12	11	12	8	-
Tenants	12	11	12	8	
acres	60	55	60	50	
3-acre holdings	7	7	7	-	-
Tenants	7	7	7		
acres	21	19	19		
12-acre holdings	1	-	-	9	-
Tenants	1			9	
acres	12			111	
Moorland holdings	13	18	19	19	-
Tenants	12	18	19	15	
acres	185	257	268	271	
Misc. holdings	21	5	5	24	34
Tenants	8	4	4	13	34
acres	75	19	8	93	916
Total holdings	102	98	91	114	83
Tenants	87	95	90	97	77
Acres	1433	1521	1226	1564	2465
Total less:					
Free tenancies	95	76	80	102	72
& tenants	80	75	79	87	72
acres	980	880	905	1209	2257

whom a token service was expected, such as Galfrid Gros who was expected to perform three harvest works for his ferdel in East Brent and Simon de Marisco for his half-virgate in Lympsham was required to plough and harrow half an acre in winter and a further half an acre in spring as well as carry nine cartloads of hay and corn.²⁴ Some of the grander free tenants were required to perform policing duties on behalf of the Abbot and the King; Robert de St.Barbara held a virgate in Berrow for being bailiff of the Hundred, Nicholas de Langelonde and Thomas de Bergh owed suit of Hundred twice a year, to deliver persons before the court, enforce its findings and enforce the King's writ. Thomas also was expected to carry out sea-defence by maintaining seven perches of Bitwenewyk and, with his men, Schyprekewall.

Interesting and colourful some of the free tenants may have been, they have to be peripheral to the central theme of this chapter. There was considerable inequality in the amount of land they held, some holding just a messuage while others held a hide or more. Some were clearly absentees, or held land in several manors beyond Brent, like Henry de Sowy who held half a hide in South Brent, three virgates in Sowy and five messuages in Glastonbury for his half of a knight's fee.²⁵ In some instances, the clerk in recording the details of some of these men, omitted to mention the amount of land they held, so this, coupled with the suspect nature of the

²⁴BL Add.17450.

²⁵Rentalia et Custumaria de Michael de Amesbury, Somerset Record Society (1891).

exact acreage associated with a knight's fee, places a question mark over the reliability of the free tenants' acres in Table 5.04.²⁶

It is the customary tenants and their holdings who are at the centre of this study because there are so many more of them, they are the subjects that mainly appear in the court rolls, while serving as jurors and manorial officials they have a major role in the operation of the estate, and their social structure makes it much easier to compare like with like. The reservations expressed in the previous paragraph over exact acreage are lessened in the case of customary tenants because their holdings are so much smaller, and although the much larger acreage figures evident for 1515 will lead to a discussion later in this chapter as to the actual size of customary units, for current purposes the acreage figures expressed in Table 5.04 are based on the nominal subdivisions of the Glastonbury Hide of 160 acres:

Virgate	= 40 acres
Half-virgate	= 20 acres
Ferdel	= 10 acres

The notion of a half-virgate representing 20-acres and a ferdel measuring 10 acres in Brent is supported by a reference in 1189 to Walter Trepel who held five acres and had an additional five acres to make a complete ferdel, while in 1235 there was a reference to Roger Prute having a ferdel and two

²⁶E.H.Lane Poole, Damerham & Martin, p.189-192 has demonstrated that a fee was equated to 640 acres, but he also states that a virgate was primarily linked to services rather than an exact area, thus calculations to equate acreages with larger units such as fees are rendered less reliable.

five acre holdings for a half-virgate.²⁷

One of the most striking aspects of the study of customary landholdings in Brent is the remarkable stability in the number of holdings in each category over time. Thus by noting the figures at variance with the general trend, changes can be noted and explanations sought. One of the earliest anomalies is the large number of half-virgate holdings in East Brent and Berrow in 1189, and yet the number of tenants markedly exceeded the number of landholdings. This was because many of these half-virgates were shared by two tenants. By 1235 the shared half-virgates were split into ferdels as evidenced by the substantial increase in the number of ferdels in both manors. This may be evidence of the pressure of population requiring a redistribution of landholdings, as perhaps was the disappearance of the sole customary virgate in South Brent between 1189 and 1235, but from 1235 the general stability of the number of ancient holdings indicates that sub-division was no longer an acceptable answer to the problem of providing land for an increasing population. There was barely any increase in the tenant population between 1189 and 1235, but that might just be a reflection of the limited availability of landholdings while perhaps there was an increase in the landless population for whom we have insufficient evidence at that time.

The major growth in tenant numbers occurs between 1260

²⁷Jackson, Soliaco, p.66; Rentalia, p.36.

and 1307, but as can be seen in Table 5.05 there was an even bigger growth in the number of tenancies and the acreage available for use by the customary tenants. Table 5.05 helps us to zoom in onto the basic facts of the increase in tenantry and land supply, especially between 1260 and 1307, but we need to refer back to Table 5.04 to pinpoint some of the details of the changes that occurred.

Table 5.05: Increase in customary landholdings, tenants and acreage between 1260 and 1307						
Manors	Landholdings nos. %		Tenants nos. %		Acreage nos. %	
East Brent	45	45%	35	37%	442	56%
Lympsham	29	56%	9	17%	338	65%
Berrow	10	16%	8	13%	148	25%
South Brent	22	28%	8	10%	304	34%
Totals	106	36%	60	19%	1232	45%

In all four manors there was an increase in the acreage held by half-virgaters and ferdellers between 1260 and 1307 while the half-virgates only increased by one and ferdels by four. The explanation is that many of them were recorded as holding anything between one and six acres of arable, meadow or pasture, or occasionally a mixture of all three, in addition to their basic holdings. In East Brent the extra holdings were in Moorland, Burmede, Saltelonde, Langelond, Droseneworth, La Throte, Brodhamme, Burhinbal and Wermelond. The Lympsham additions were in Honeymede, Berham and Bikiemere.

There were only a few additions in Berrow, in Roughworthe and Nywelonde. The South Brent additions were in Sandrigg, Cabbelmede, Henacre, Killingworth and Otturewidehamme.

Eight of the five-acre holdings in East Brent also had additional lands, Robert atte Marc holding an extra eight acres of Moorland. In Lympsham and Berrow however, five-acre holdings disappeared while in South Brent they were reduced in number but mostly increased in size so that they comprised six acres. South Brent's three acre holdings were abolished. In East Brent there was a massive increase in the number of three-acre holdings, but the name 'three-acre' was a misnomer because although there were about twenty of these holdings containing three acres, the other forty-six varied from just one acre to as many as twenty-two acres in size, while thirteen of these holdings had been taken on by tenants of larger holdings in the manor.

The diminution of the five- and three-acre holdings in Lympsham, Berrow and South Brent was partly compensated by the creation of new larger holdings. In Lympsham twenty 12-acre holdings were established but valued at five acres. It does appear that these were upgradings of the old tenures of five acres, although to describe them as 12-acre holdings was a slight exaggeration as most of them contained between nine and eleven acres. In Berrow three new 12-acre holdings were created along with some 10½-acre holdings which actually varied between seven and twelve acres in size and one of these

was held by Robert Syward, a Berrow ferdeller. Twelve acres was an accurate description of most of the South Brent holdings of that name, but there were others that varied between nine and seventeen acres.

Although many of the additional holdings in East Brent in 1307 were described as being in Moorland, hinting perhaps that this was assarted land; in South Brent, Moorland had long been established as a distinct category of landholdings. Many Moorland holdings were substantial, only five of them measuring less than ten acres, while five of them were in excess of twenty acres.²⁸ If the South Brent Moorland had once been assarted, such reclamation had occurred before 1189.

It is in what I have called 'miscellaneous' holdings that numerous new opportunities for landholding appeared. In East Brent in 1189 'miscellaneous' included two cotsettles, a croft and three pieces of ex-demesne. However, in the 1189 survey the Abbey officials were looking to recover former demesne as part of the drive to improve their income by managing the demesne directly. By 1235 there were thirty-five 'Wick, Marsh and Westmore' holdings, most of which were held by half-virgaters and ferdellers. Twenty-five years later these had merged into the conventional customary holdings, by which time demesne was being shed again to set up eight new holdings while there were a further fourteen holdings, mostly of three

²⁸The Sully and Amesbury surveys did not give any indication of the area of these Moorland holdings, so the acreage figures for those years are a pro-rata calculation based on the 1307 figures.

or four acres, although a couple measured only two acres each and one sixteen and a half acres. By 1307 a further eighteen holdings designated 'La Pulle' appear, possibly having formerly been part of the hide and six acres held by Robert de la Pulla for military service as recorded in 1260.

In Lympsham the six miscellaneous holdings of 1189 were ex-demesne, as were the thirty holdings of 1307, most of this latter group being held by tenants of larger holdings. The four miscellaneous holdings of 1235 were Wick tenancies. The Wick holdings were additional to ferdel or five-acre holdings and included a number of rented cattle and sheep. The wickmen could opt out of holding the wick, whereupon the rent they paid for the Wick was added to the rent of their arable. After 1235, Wick ceases to appear as a separate category but there are numerous references in the account rolls to tenants paying for wick commutation.

Growth in Berrow was modest in comparison with the other three manors. The miscellaneous holdings of 1307 were held by cotars and although some of these holdings were as small as $1\frac{1}{2}$ -acres there were also some substantial holdings such as Peter Stephens' eighteen acres in Mulleham and Mabile atte Wyke's twenty-one acres in Mullehill and Chalnecroft.

In South Brent the miscellaneous holdings included four crofts and seventeen ex-demesne holdings in 1189, most of which were in the hands of half-virgaters and ferdellers.

Five Wick holdings were mentioned in 1235, but as with the Wicks on the other manors they were not designated separately in 1260 when the five miscellaneous holdings were smallholdings of less than three acres. By 1307 the number of smallholdings has increased considerably, varying in size between one and 10½ acres.

The noticeable increase between 1260 and 1307 of acreage held by the customary tenants must either have been held previously by major free tenants, such as La Pulle; or had been uncultivated or un-assigned, or was no longer needed as demesne. The fragmentary nature of the surviving documentary evidence and inconsistencies of recording make it difficult to identify the provenance of tenants' increase acreage. In a sense, all land that was unallotted, formed part of the demesne. However, a proportion of the additional acreage acquired by customary tenants must, at one time, have formed part of demesne arable, meadow or pasture. Clues to tracing the chronology of leasing pieces of demesne to tenants can be seen in Table 4.34 in which the fluctuating total acreage under crops peaked in 1281-2. There was another high point in 1301-2, but from then on there was a marked decline. In Table 4.38 there is revealed a marked increase in rents in 1300-1, again in 1311-12 and also in 1330-31. The combination of the reduction of the size of cultivated demesne together with the marked increase in rents by 1330-31 is indicative of why Brent tenants could contribute so much to the exchequer in 1327 and reflects a fruition of a policy formulated, either by design

or necessity, many years earlier. As early as 1260, eight pieces of Overlond were shed to form new holdings. Evidence for shedding small amounts of demesne followed: in 1265 John le Knyst paid half a mark for two acres of demesne at le Flotlande; in 1283 Stephen le Niewrenrue paid two marks for two acres of demesne in Esterewelonde; in 1284 both John Dollych and John Sparke paid $4\frac{1}{2}$ marks for 11 acres of demesne each. A flurry of further leasing is noticeable in 1306. The indications are therefore, that although shedding of demesne was occurring during the second half of the thirteenth century, it was at the beginning of the fourteenth century that leasing activity had a noticeable effect upon the size of cultivated demesne and consequently tenant acreage.²⁹

The general picture revealed by this brief analysis of landholdings, tenants and their associated acreages between 1189 and 1307 in Brent as indicated in Tables 5.04 and 5.05 and as expressed by size of tenancy in Table 5.06, is that after an initial dividing of half-virgates into ferdels in East Brent and Berrow, the number of half-virgate holdings remained at about the same level. The numbers of ferdels increased a little, five acre holdings were halved between 1260 and 1307, while three acre holdings were diminishing in Lympsham and disappeared in South Brent. The only reason the number of three acre holdings appeared to double between 1260 and 1307 is because of the large increase of holdings of various sizes that were nominally listed as three acre

²⁹BL.Add.Ms.17450; L.10683 m.16; L.11250 m.4; L.11250 m.15r-v; L.10779m.14.

Table 5.06: Total Brent holdings, tenants and associated acreage by tenancies					
	1189	1235	1260	1307	1515
Free Tenancies	36	47	51	47	28
Tenants	32	43	50	41	16
acres	1933	1313	1554	1309	774
Half-virgates	79	47	44	45	49
Tenants	103	47	45	45	45
acres	1585	940	880	1020	2045
Ferdels	33	87	99	107	95
Tenants	34	87	101	109	94
acres	327	875	990	1254	3238
5-acre	64	61	66	30	37
Tenants	66	60	66	30	39
acres	317	300	325	189	926
3-acre	31	42	35	76	-
Tenants	30	41	35	63	-
acres	96	119	97	378	-
Misc.	48	64	51	143	69
Tenants	32	31	42	102	69
acres	343	487	507	1190	2207

holdings in East Brent. The biggest growth took place between 1260 and 1307, especially in Lymsham and East Brent and although some of this was associated with the ancient holdings, by far the most significant area of growth was in the creation of new holdings of various sizes that did not fit neatly in to the existing structure. Postan's point that peasants with ten acres or less were insufficiently supplied with land and that this led to an adjustment in the size of landholdings, does seem to be supported in Brent, but whether the creation of new smallholdings was a sign of hardship, as suggested by Titow, is not so clear. Titow reckoned that many of the smallholdings were reclamations of marginal land as evidenced by references to assarts and rapidly increasing

levels of income from rent. Certainly the Abbot was benefiting from increased levels of rent in Brent as demonstrated in the previous chapter, but to what extent these new holdings represented reclamation from waste and how many were formerly cultivated as demesne or part of a free tenancy is difficult to ascertain. What can be ascertained, however, is that Titow's prognosis that the amount of land per capita was declining, was not apparently the case in Brent where the

Table 5.07 Brent acreage increase 1260-1307 and average acreage per tenant					
Landholders	Acreage			Acres per tenant	
	1260	1307	+/-	1260	1307
Free tenants	1554	1309	-245	31	32
Half-virgaters	880	1020	+140	20	23
Ferdellers	990	1254	+264	10	12
5 acremen	325	189	-136	5	6
3 acremen	97	378	+281	3	6
Miscellaneous	507	1190	+683	12	12
Totals	4353	5340	+987		

amount of land per tenant marginally increased between 1260 and 1307, as is demonstrated in Table 5.07 by the modest increases of acreage per tenant for the holders of ancient tenements.³⁰ Interestingly, the miscellaneous landholdings, despite their marked increase in acreage compared with the

³⁰The amount of 'land per capita' is not the same as 'land per tenant', nevertheless the calculation 'land per tenant' is still a valid exercise.

older holdings, did not enjoy an increase in the acreage per tenant, so although there was a wide variety in the actual acreage of these holdings, perhaps there is an indication here of an understanding of the basic acreage considered necessary to sustain a household bearing in mind the possible productivity of these newer landholdings. Meanwhile, the adjustment evident among the five-acre and three-acre holdings resulted in the average size of both working out at six acres, so either these landholdings were considered to be more valuable than the newer holdings or it was still considered possible to make a living from holdings averaging six acres.

A SENSE OF WORTH

Concepts of value have for long exercised the minds of historians in undertaking rigorous work on the prices of crops and livestock, crop yields and acreage necessary to sustain a household. Problems beset all of these approaches. Prices were subject to supply and demand; varying according to location, time, quality and age. Evidence of yields is limited to demesne figures, so it is debateable whether we can apply measures of demesne productivity to tenant holdings when there are so many nebulous and variable influences such as the basic fertility of the soil, levels of manuring and availability of labour. The balance between acreage and the number of people that can be supported depends very much on the productivity of that land and its associated resources, it would be too simplistic to think of the sustainability of a household just in terms of size. Size is important in so far

as a tenant with ten acres ought to be able to produce more food than a tenant holding five acres of similar potential per acre, providing that he has the resources to exploit that larger tenure. If that scenario was of over-riding importance then the data presented in Table 5.07 would indicate that the creation of new holdings would have the potential for social discontent in upsetting the customary structure and status of the tenants if the mean size of the newer holdings was as large as the average ferdel.

Social status was significant. It might only be obviously evident from the perception of the lord's clerks in drawing up the surveys, but it was based on the nominal size of a landholding and its associated obligations. In being a tenant there was at least a quiescent acceptance of a certain status within the overall structure. If new holdings were created, with lighter obligations but with higher rents, did this challenge the status of holders of ancient tenures, especially the ferdellers? If the social structure was to survive, there had to be a sense of worth. It had to be more important to be a ferdeller than a tenant of one of the newer holdings and concomitantly the ferdel had to be more valuable than a newer landholding, not just in the mind of the ferdeller but of the society in which he lived.

There is a little evidence of preference for the ancient landholdings in 1350 when availability led to some tenants exchanging their holdings for others that they must have

perceived to be more desirable. John atte Grove exchanged his ferdel and 11 acres for a half-virgate plus two acres and Nicholas Edward exchanged his twelve acres in Warpol of Bordland for a ferdel.³¹ This evidence, although a useful indicator of a sense of value, is insufficient in itself to establish the status of the ancient landholdings above the newer ones during the changing order of the first half of the fourteenth century. It is necessary to investigate respective values of each of the respective holdings.

As a preliminary it is advantageous to have an understanding of the place of customary services in 1307. The Fromond survey set these out in considerable detail for each tenant and added a monetary value for each work. This enables a value to be calculated for each tenant's work for the Abbot which also forms a discrete deduction from the nominal value of the tenant's holding. To gain an impression of the works provided by tenants I shall outline some examples from South Brent.³²

Christina Stephen was a half-virgater who was expected to plough and harrow five acres in winter and two and a third acres in Lent. She provided a daywork each week except for the four feast-weeks. Any daywork she did outside the manor was limited to half a day. Before the feast of St. Peter she had to mow, spread, turn and lift 1½-acres of meadow, for

³¹L.11222 m.30

³²The works expected from all four manors were very similar.

which she was allowed a forkload of hay and to be quit of three dayworks. If she had to mow after the feast of St. Peter, one acre of meadow constituted three dayworks. She had to carry hay in her cart on alternate days for which she was allowed a sheaf of corn. There were four harvest works to be performed, reaping two acres of corn for which she received four sheaves. When reaping for daywork, half an acre represented one daywork. She had to scour the watercourse from Brockesdore as far as the house of Simon Bulion for half a day, do walling at Thurlemere for half a day, carry rushes once, dig one perch around Pilton Park once every four years, do similar work around the vineyards of Panborough and Mere for half a day each year, help build the walls of a house for the lord for one day, perform packhorsing service with her own animals and sacks, and find two bushels of corn or three bushels of oats from elsewhere in the barony once a year.

Half-virgaters had the biggest burden of customary work, but ferdellers had almost as much. William Slug ploughed and harrowed 1 acre 1 perch in winter and one and a sixth of an acre in Lent, his carrying service was less than Christina Stephens' and he only had to find one bushel of corn and one bushel of oats from elsewhere; otherwise his services were very similar to the half-virgaters.

Five-acremen like Robert Alewyne were not required to plough or harrow or provide carrying services. Instead he had to thresh a quarter of wheat for which he was allowed a

measure of seed. He had to reap two acres, his allowance being four sheaves. He had to spread grass in the meadow, hoe for four days, dig in the vineyard at Panborough, dig at Mordych and Thurlemere for two days, haul the lord's wine, stack hay and corn, drive animals for which he received an allowance of drosmete, enclose Pilton Park once every four years and scour the watercourse from Brockesdore to the house of Simon Bulion.

Robert le Forister, a twelve-acreman, had to perform more dayworks than half-virgaters; his mowing requirement was similar to Christina Stephens', as was his harvestworks, but he also had to stack hay and corn, dig at Panborough, Thurlemere and Mordych, build walls, scour the watercourse, reap reeds and haul wine. However, most of the twelve-acremen performed no services at all, but paid a higher rent instead. Thus to assess the real value of the different landholdings, it is necessary to calculate rent and services.

In Table 5.08, the value to the Abbot of Glastonbury of redditus, lardar and services from each category of tenant has been set out for each of the four manors in 1307. The Abbot's income from redditus exceeded that from services largely because of the significant amount of redditus brought in from the newer holdings on which there was little or no burden of services. This was especially true of the inappropriately named three-acre holdings in East Brent, the ex-demesne holdings in Lympsham, the cotarii in Berrow and the

Smallholders in South Brent. We know that the lord's income from Brent's redditus doubled between 1304-5 and 1311-2 and it is evident from Table 5.08 that the bulk of that doubling was a result of the creation of these new holdings. Meanwhile, the reduction in demesne acreage by almost three hundred acres between 1260 and 1307 indicates that there would have been a lower requirement for labour services.³³ The labour requirements on the demesne would have been finite, so there was little point in imposing services on new holdings, partly because it would have been a disincentive for existing tenants with labour services to have to increase that obligation when faced with more work on their expanded acreage. As there was a decreasing need for labour services it made more sense to increase the potential for the tenant to maximise his income with a view to his ability to pay a bigger rent.

Nevertheless, labour services still formed a substantial part of the outgoings of the Brent tenants. Table 5.08 reveals that it was the ferdellers who especially contributed most in the form of services, although this could be explained by the fact that there were more ferdellers than half-virgaters. Taken together, the holdings of the half-virgaters and ferdellers yielded more income for the lord than the demesne, yet, with the single exception of the East Brent half-virgaters, the value of their services outstripped their redditus. The size of their combined input into the demesne and the value of their rent and services shows that the half-

³³See Tables 4.21a and 4.49 in the previous chapter.

Table 5.08a: Value of Redditus, lardar and services for East Brent (£.p)				
East Brent	Redditus	Lardar	Services	Total
Free Tenants	1.71	0.31	1.13	3.15
Half-virgaters	3.82	0.53	2.66	7.01
Ferdellers	5.96	1.19	8.66	15.81
Five-acremen	2.34	0.53	1.89	4.76
Three-acremen	13.16	0.24	0.86	14.26
La Pulle	3.72	-	0.63	4.35
Totals	35.82	7.91	20.94	54.45

Table 5.08b: Value of Redditus, lardar and services for Lympsham (£.p)				
Lympsham	Redditus	Lardar	Services	Total
Free Tenants	1.09	0.30	0.84	2.23
Half-virgaters	1.73	1.05	3.63	6.41
Ferdellers	1.38	0.50	3.78	5.66
Twelve-acremen	1.53	0.50	3.10	5.10
Three-acremen	0.20	0.05	0.49	0.74
Ex-demesne	5.73	0.10	-	5.83
Totals	16.77	7.61	16.95	31.11

Table 5.08c: Value of Redditus, lardar and services for Berrow (£.p)

Berrow	Redditus	Lardar	Services	Total
Free Tenants	1.95	0.08	0.28	2.31
Half-virgaters	0.78	0.49	1.96	3.23
Ferdellers	3.46	1.53	10.73	15.72
Twelve-acre-men	0.23	0.08	0.10	0.41
10½-acre-men	0.52	0.03	0.82	1.37
Three-acre-men	0.18	0.07	0.14	0.39
Cotarii	2.60	-	-	2.60
Totals	14.83	7.39	19.14	31.14

Table 5.08d: Value of Redditus, lardar and services for South Brent (£.p)

South Brent	Redditus	Lardar	Services	Total
Free Tenants	1.20	0.23	0.44	1.87
Half-virgaters	3.87	0.98	7.08	11.93
Ferdellers	4.65	0.56	5.03	10.24
Twelve-acre-men	1.02	0.15	0.97	2.14
5/6-acre-men	1.44	0.08	0.30	1.82
Smallholders	4.76	-	-	4.76
La Pulle	1.00	-	-	1.00
Moorland	1.49	0.62	0.77	2.88
Totals	24.54	7.73	19.70	41.75

virgaters and the ferdellers were at the core of the manorial economy. By contrast, the free tenants with their much larger holdings seem to have contributed relatively little to the Abbey. This raises the question as to whether the potential returns the tenants could have obtained from their land could be measured and if, for servile tenants at least, such returns were proportional to their input.

Titow considered that productivity of peasant holdings was probably lower than demesne land.³⁴ He did not support that idea with evidence. We can speculate that he considered that the demesne comprised the best land on the manor, that the lord could command the manuring of the demesne by the peasants' livestock and that there was probably greater capital investment on the demesne. Conversely one could argue that much demesne land was interspersed with the tenants' land and did not necessarily corner the best soil. Investment, which Postan considered to be sluggish, did not necessarily produce increased output as much depended on how efficiently it was applied.³⁵ The demesne was largely dependent on labour service so it is easy to understand that a tenant might labour longer and put more interest and effort into his own holding rather than someone else's. Thus productivity per acre could well have been higher on tenants' holdings than on the demesne. However, in trying to ascertain the relative value of arable and meadow to the various groups of tenants in Table

³⁴Titow, Rural Society, p.80.

³⁵M.M.Postan, The Medieval Economy and Society, (1972), p.48.

5.09, I have worked on the assumption that demesne and tenant values per acre were identical.³⁶

In Table 5.09 the lord's value per acre is calculated by dividing the acreage of each group of tenants (see Table 5.04) into their total of redditus, lardar and services from Table 5.08. Using the assumption that demesne and tenant values per acre were identical, by subtracting the lord's value per acre from the average demesne value per acre, we arrive at the average margin a tenant could expect per acre after deducting redditus, lardar and the value of his services. This indicates that the potential return on tenants' holdings was not proportional to the input indicated in Table 5.08. As one would expect, free tenants had a higher return than half-virgaters, who in turn could expect a bigger margin than ferdellers. Most of the remaining categories of landholders could expect to do better than the ferdellers even where the nominal size of the landholding was smaller than a ferdell. The most significant explanation is probably to do with the scale of services expected from the ferdellers, for apart from the twelve-acremen in Lympsam, the services demanded of landholders below the ferdellers were relatively negligible. Ferdellers contribution of redditus was also substantial; thus the combination of high levels of redditus and services increased their value as a group to the lord, but at the same time diminished the returns on their own holdings. It is

³⁶Pasture has been omitted from the exercise because, apart from East Brent, acreage figures for pasture are not quoted in the Fromond survey.

Table 5.09a: Value in pence of arable and meadow to tenants, after deduction of redditus, lardar and services in 1307.

East Brent	No. of holdings	Lord's value per acre	Tenants' margin per acre	Group acreage x margin	Average margin per holding
FT	17	0.4	4.9	3489	205
½V	7	3.5	1.8	356	51
F	32	3.8	1.5	627	20
5a	22	3.4	1.9	264	12
3a	66	4.3	1.0	332	5
La Pulle	18	3.0	2.5	363	20
Demesne		5.3			

Table 5.09b: Value in pence of arable and meadow to tenants, after deduction of redditus, lardar and services in 1307.

Lympsham	No. of holdings	Lord's value per acre	Tenants' margin per acre	Group acreage x margin	Average margin per holding
FT	7	1.8	3.4	432	62
½V	14	2.1	3.1	936	67
F	13	3.7	1.5	231	18
12a	20	2.5	2.7	559	28
3a	4	2.6	2.6	73	18
Ex-D	30	3.5	1.7	284	9
Demesne		5.2			

Table 5.09c: Value in pence of arable and meadow to tenants, after deduction of redditus, lardar and services in 1307.

Berrow	No. of holdings	Lord's value per acre	Tenants' margin per acre	Group acreage x margin	Average margin per holding
FT	11	2.0	2.8	322	29
$\frac{1}{2}$ V	6	2.6	2.2	271	45
F	38	4.0	0.8	316	8
12a	3	1.1	3.7	133	44
10 $\frac{1}{2}$ a	8	1.6	3.2	272	34
3a	6	2.2	2.6	47	8
C	12	3.5	1.3	98	8
Demesne		4.8			

Table 5.09d: Value in pence of arable and meadow to tenants, after deduction of redditus, lardar and services in 1307.

South Brent	No. of holdings	Lord's value per acre	Tenants' margin per acre	Group acreage x margin	Average margin per holding
FT	12	0.5	4.5	1598	133
$\frac{1}{2}$ V	18	3.0	2.0	794	44
F	24	4.1	0.9	258	12
12a	9	1.9	3.1	344	38
5/6a	8	3.6	1.4	70	9
Moorland	19	1.1	3.9	1057	56
La Pulle	2	8.3	9.2 ³⁷	110	55
Small-holders	22	5.9	6.5	527	24
Demesne		5.0			

³⁷As the value of La Pulle and Smallholders was greater than demesne value per acre, and as these plots must have been of greater value than their outgoings if the tenants were to take them on, I have calculated their value per acre to the tenants as being equal to the mean ratio between the lord's value per acre and the tenants value per acre, i.e. 1:1.11.

hardly surprising that ferdellers were to the fore in taking on extra holdings, for they had a greater need.

The average values per tenant holdings indicate that generally the larger the size of the holding, the higher its value. The high values of the new holdings is especially noticeable: La Pulle in East and South Brent, ex-demesne in Lympsham, Moorland in South Brent and the 10½-acre and 12-acre tenures in Lympsham, Berrow and South Brent. By contrast, ferdell values, except in East Brent are markedly depressed.

It is difficult to believe that the ferdellers would have allowed their status to be eroded when one considers how active they were, not just as jurors and pledgers, but in holding positions of responsibility such as messor and reeve. There are numerous examples of ferdellers filling these posts, but two examples will suffice to indicate their status. The Ford survey of 1260 actually specified the allowances the reeve of East Brent should receive on the understanding that he would be a ferdeller. It stated that the holder of the post did not have to be a ferdeller, but the presumption was in the wording that a ferdeller would normally fill that post. John Buryman was one such ferdeller who was hayward in 1331 and 1334 and reeve in 1346.³⁸

If ferdellers were expected to fill positions of responsibility one wonders how many of them could be so

³⁸L.10761 m.22; L.10632 m.12; L.11251 m.38-9v.

publicly spirited when their economic lot seemed to be less propitious than some of their fellows as indicated in Table 5.09. The question has to be posed at this stage that despite a ferdel being a nominal ten acres as a subdivision of the Glastonbury hide, was the actual size of the holding significantly different? It was clear in the Fromond survey that many ferdellers had taken on some extra land; for example Robert le Hole of East Brent had taken on $4\frac{1}{4}$ acres of arable and two acres of meadow in Moorland, and Walter Clement of Lympsham had five extra acres of land in Honeymede; resulting in the average size of a ferdeller's holding by 1307 being 12 acres.

Assessing the actual size of a landholding seems straightforward when we are told that it contains so many acres. John Dwole had failed to record in the court roll his succession to his mother, Edith's, sixteen acre holding in La Pullenlonde; so in 1314, the reeve was ordered to seize the issue of four acres of barley, eight acres of beans and four acres of pasture.³⁹ Comparable seizures concerning ferdels are not so helpful. In 1313, the crops of Alice Dygun, who held a ferdel as a free tenant, were seized because she had no animals for her heriot. Her crops occupied three acres of wheat, three acres of beans and one acre of oats. There was no mention of meadow, pasture or fallow. If the indication of the size of demesne fallow at this time was about 39%, then

³⁹L.10654 m.32-4. John Dwole had not endeared himself to the lord the previous year as he had deprived the lord of his just heriot by selling the two best animals.

perhaps Alice had four or five acres lying fallow, indicating an arable holding of eleven or twelve acres.⁴⁰ Although this example lends support to the figures elucidated in Table 5.07, the lack of firm figures for meadow, pasture and fallow weakens its reliability. Cases of food provision for widows do not help either. It may seem natural to care for a parent when a son and his wife took over a holding, but it seems that some widows did not trust their offspring to provide sufficiently, so they had their expectations recorded and thereby approved in the manorial court. Unfortunately for us the range of provision varied considerably, even on ferdels at the same time. In 1309, Agnes Golye expected to be provided annually 6 bushels of wheat, 2 bushels of barley, 4 bushels of rye and 12 bushels of beans; while Alice Buryman was content with half as much: 2 bushels of wheat, 6 bushels of beans and 4 bushels of oats.⁴¹ Although we could use likely demesne crop yield figures to work out the acreage necessary to provide the sustenance for Agnes and Alice, with one wanting 24 bushels and the other 12 bushels, it would not help us ascertain the size of their former ferdels.

At this stage, it may be helpful to consider some models of likely ferdel production based on the notion of such a landholding comprising ten arable acres. It is from this level down in the social scale that Postan reckoned that such tenants would not be able to 'maintain entire families in the

⁴⁰See Fig.3.15 in Chapter 3.

⁴¹L.11253 m.13.

bare minimum of subsistence', that is, an income large enough to make it unnecessary for the family to depend on regular employment for wages, yet not so large as to permit the family to live wholly on the proceeds of rents or to enable it to work its holding entirely or mainly by hired labour'.⁴² As many as 45% of landholders held 10 acres or less in Postan's sample. Titow had calculated that in a two-field system 13½ acres were needed to provide subsistence for a household, while 10 acres would suffice using a three-field system.⁴³ This notion of a ten acre holding being on the margin between being able to provide for the household from its own resources and having to supplement income from wage labour, adds importance to looking at ferdels in Brent, where basic ferdels and smaller holdings made up 62% of the total number of holdings in 1307.

A model for calculating a landholder's ability to grow sufficient crops for his household was provided by Dyer, who reckoned that an adult male performing a moderate amount of work required 2900 calories each day, his wife would need 2150 and his three children would require 6000. Six quarters and five bushels of grain would be sufficient to provide those calorific values, while a further 2000 calories would be provided by two flitches of bacon, together with milk, cheese

⁴²Postan, Medieval Economy and Society, pp.144-7.

⁴³Titow, Rural Society, pp.78-81.

Table 5.10a: Model of Ferdel crop production, based on a ferdel containing 10 arable acres.					
	Wheat	Oats	Beans	Barley	Fallow
Acreage	2	2	2	1	3
Sowing rate	2b	5b	2b	2b	
Total seed	4b	10b	4b	2b	
Yield per seed ⁴⁴	3.6	2.1	4.1	4.1	
Harvested	1q 6½b	3q	2q 0½b	1q 0½b	
Saved for seed	4b	10b	4b	2b	
Remaining	1q 2½b	1q 6b	1q 6½b	6½b	
Total remaining produce measures 5q 5½b.					

and garden produce.⁴⁵ Following Dyer's example, Table 5.10a sets out a model for a ferdel of ten acres in which just three acres have lain fallow.⁴⁶ The spread of acreage among the four crops is arbitrary, but these were the commonly grown crops among the tenantry in Brent. What is clear from this model is that in Brent it would not produce the six quarters five bushels that Dyer reckoned necessary to sustain a family of two adults and three children. By cutting out oats and sowing an extra acre each of wheat and beans, production would have come close to Dyer's 6q 5b but without any allowance for mulcture and there would not have been any spare for sale to raise the cash needed for rents, fines or miscellaneous

⁴⁴These figures are an average of the Brent demesne yields between 1311-15.

⁴⁵C.Dyer, Standards of Living in the Late Middle Ages, Social change in England, c.1200-1520 (1989), pp.113-4, 134-5.

⁴⁶If demesne fallow was about 40% c.1313, then perhaps the fallow in this model should measure 4 acres. However, I have followed the example of Alice Dygun's holding with seven acres under crop.

expenditure. By increasing the capacity of the model to twelve acres and reducing the fallow to just two acres, as in

Table 5.10b: Model of Ferdel crop production, based on assumption that a ferdel contains 12 arable acres.					
	Wheat	Oats	Beans	Barley	Fallow
Acreage	3	2	3	2	2
Sowing rate	2b	5b	2b	2b	
Total seed	6b	10b	6b	4b	
Yield per seed	3.6	2.1	4.1	4.1	
Harvested	2q 5½b	3q	3q 0½b	2q 0½b	
Saved for seed	6b	10b	6b	4b	
Remaining	1q 7½b	1q 6b	2q 2½b	1q 4½b	
Food corn	1q 1¼b	1q 5½b	2q 1¼b	1q 4b	
Mill toll	½b	½b	¼b	½b	
Price per quarter	5/6				
Cash from sale	3/7¼				
Reditus & Lardar	2/-				
Cash to spend on other outgoings	1/7¼				

Table 5.10b, the theoretical subsistence level is reached, leaving one shilling and sevenpence farthing to cover or contribute towards the various cash outgoings after payment of the rent and lardar. The differences illustrated in Table 5.10 indicates just how precarious the situation of a ferdeller could be if his sole land resource was limited to

ten or twelve acres. However, to rely on the indications of the above models would be unwise as they only suggest possible scenarios based on the issue of arable. There are so many additions and subtractions that could be made to those figures if we had more concrete evidence. We do not know how much a ferdeller was likely to pay for amercements, what his cash tithes on hay and cheese may have been, how much he had to pay in dues to the church, to replace tools or purchase salt and the occasional meat. We cannot assess accurately how much produce he could obtain from his garden, his beehives or poultry.⁴⁷

Even if we could accurately assess the value of those enigmatic extras, that still takes no account of tenant livestock. We know from the manorial accounts the livestock kept on the demesne and it would not be unreasonable to assume that the same species were kept by many of the tenants. The half-virgaters and ferdellers were clearly expected to keep oxen or horses in order to perform their ploughing and harrowing services. It is highly likely that pigs were kept primarily as providers of meat and it is possible that they may have been one of the main recipients of all those beans that were sold from the demesne. One indicator of the livestock kept by tenants were the heriots paid to the lord on the termination of a tenancy. In Table 5.11 the total heriots collected from the surviving evidence up to 1350 has been set out, together with the percentage each group formed of the

⁴⁷These additions and subtractions are acknowledged in Dyer, Standards of Living, pp.115-6.

whole. The non-animal heriots, which represented 18% of the total heriots as opposed to the general non-animal heriot percentage noted by Dyer as varying between 26-45%, indicating again the impression that Brent had a higher proportion of well-to-do tenants than was generally the case.⁴⁸ As many as 49% were able to produce a horse or ox for the heriot, which is what one would expect bearing in mind that free tenants, half-virgaters and ferdellers had formed the same percentage of the tenantry in 1307. As several of the free tenants held no more than a messuage in 1307, then the implication is that traction animals were owned by several of the tenants of

Table 5.11: Heriot numbers and percentages, 1257-1350						
Horses	Oxen	Cattle	Pigs	Sheep	Money	Other ⁴⁹
49	87	81	5	6	42	9
18%	31%	29%	2%	2%	15%	3%

miscellaneous holdings. Conversely, half of the tenants did not own the means to haul a plough, so either they had to borrow or hire a plough-team for their smaller holdings, which in turn implies that they needed wage labour or some other source of income to pay for their land to be ploughed. Alternatively, their holdings were not utilized for arable

⁴⁸C.Dyer, "English Diet in the Later Middle Ages," in T.H.Aston, P.R.Coss, C.Dyer and J.Thirsk, eds, Social Relations and Ideas; essays in honour of R.H.Hilton (1983), p.208.

⁴⁹This includes seven instances of there being no heriot paid at all, one for which chattels were confiscated and one indistinct heriot.

beyond what they could cultivate with hand tools and that their chief domestic agrarian pursuit was pastoral.

A problem with looking at heriots to ascertain the relative importance of livestock to the tenantry is that heriots only represent what the lord's agents determined was the best beast. Heriots do not reveal whether the tenant had lots of animals or if that heriot represented the only one on a small, or poverty stricken, holding. A better indication of the proportions of different types of livestock kept by the tenants can be revealed by extracting data from the surviving documentary evidence relevant to cases of animal trespass on the demesne. Occasionally there were cases of trespass brought by one tenant against another, but the greater power of the lord and the meticulous record keeping that was associated with the direct management of the demesne, made sure that the tenants were fined each time their animals wandered into fields under crop, or into meadow at the wrong time of the year. So diligent were the accountants in pursuing trespass that it was not unusual for a hayward to be amerced for being remiss in the number of trespass cases he presented: Robert Stourdy, messor of Lympsham, was amerced 2/- in 1346 because he was short of a true render and for poor assessment;⁵⁰ William Gille, ferdeller and hayward of East Brent in 1304, was in trouble because the four oxen and two affers that had been feeding on the lord's beans had been removed from the pound by their owner, William Page, without

⁵⁰L.11251 m.11.

Table 5.12: Animal trespass, 1262-1314 ⁵¹					
Year	Horses	Oxen	Cattle	Sheep	Pigs
1262 %	2 2%	28 32%	14 16%	41 47%	2 2%
1265 %	7 6%	18 15%	12 10%	83 67%	4 3%
1283 %	23 17%	81 60%	18 13%	13 10%	0
1284 %	37 49%	3 4%	8 11%	26 35%	1 1%
1305 %	35 16%	42 19%	40 18%	90 41%	10 5%
1306 %	75 21%	106 30%	46 13%	107 31%	15 4%
1307 %	40 9%	13 3%	19 4%	343 80%	15 3%
1308 %	46 4%	124 11%	60 5%	917 78%	26 2%
1313 %	48 15%	143 46%	17 5%	97 31%	8 3%
1314 %	17 3%	54 8%	27 4%	529 82%	16 2%
Totals	403	549	266	2251	102
%	11	15	7	63	3

payment.⁵² Table 5.12 gives us the advantage of being able to understand the range of animals that trespassed on the demesne. Care needs to be exercised at looking at the figures for individual years as their reliability is severely affected by the chance survival of court rolls. The figures in Table

⁵¹After 1314 trespass reporting was simplified in the court rolls by just giving a total sum collected for each manor. This saved the clerk some tedious work and perhaps put more responsibility on the hayward to get his sums right, but denies us the information needed to extend this table beyond 1314.

⁵²L.10778 m.5r-v.

5.12 are based on evidence within single rolls for most years, two rolls for 1265 and 1307 and three for 1308; so the figures cannot be relied upon to provide us with total annual figures. However, the percentage figures for each type of animal trespassing in the surviving rolls is a good indicator of the varying proportions of animals roaming free at that time. Apart from 1283, 1284 and 1313, it was sheep that were the main trespassers and the general trend was for sheep trespass to increase. The main impact of the data is to be found in the total figures where the ratio of sheep to all other trespassing animals is 1.7:1. The numbers of sheep trespassing clearly outnumbered all other categories of animals. The ratio of sheep to pigs trespassing was 22:1, which can partially be explained by the keeping of pigs in sties. Cattle can also be less likely to wander due to them being sheltered in sheds or yards during severe weather. There are a number of references relevant to the repair of oxsheds in the demesne account rolls and it is likely that horses could be stabled. We do not know the extent that the greater care of horses, cattle and pigs makes to the trespass figures, but even if it was enough to halve their opportunity to roam free and result in the doubling of their incidence of trespass, their numbers would still be outnumbered by sheep.

It seems to be beyond reasonable doubt that sheep played a major role in the economy of the Brent tenants. We do not know the size of individual flocks; instances of trespass were frequently for two or three sheep but there are numerous

examples of people being amerced for ten or twelve. The heriot figures indicate that by adding sheep to the horses and cattle, then these animal heriots would increase to 80%, suggesting that although sheep flocks were commonplace, the ownership of these animals was still likely to be restricted to the middling and better-off tenants. Although sheep rearing is less labour intensive than arable, the holders of the more substantial Brent holdings clearly pursued arable activities, thus to possess a sheep flock as well increased their total labour requirements and opportunities for employment, either regularly as shepherds, or seasonally as shearers. Neither should we close our minds to the possibility of mercantilist activity; wool masters paying for the pasture of their sheep. The renting of La Mersse by Radulf Mercatoris during the thirteenth century, as evidenced by the financial mechanics of recording his default of rent in numerous accounts well into the fourteenth century, hints at the idea of a merchant renting pasture for livestock.⁵³ There are numerous references to families with the surname 'de Melles', in which the 'de' soon disappears. They became customary tenants in Brent, but their locative surname shows a link with the Mendip manor with its strong associations with sheep.⁵⁴ In 1348, Nicholas Crey, as tithingman of Lympsam, was amerced 6d for unjustly distraining John Melles 1/2 for the King's wool.⁵⁵ The imposition of this tax, the appeal by

⁵³L.11244 mm.20, 21; L.11273 mm.22, 23; L.11272 mm.41-44; L.11271 mm.1-4; L.11215 mm.35-37.

⁵⁴The earliest reference is to Robert de Melles as a 5-acreman in 1260.

⁵⁵L.11179 m.45r-v.

some tenants that they had been taxed too much, and the support given to them by the hallmoot, lend even further weight to the importance of sheep in the tenant economy.

There are two significant issues raised by the discovery of the presence of sheep in larger numbers than any other form of livestock in Brent. The first point is that sheep represented a form of cash crop. They were not kept primarily for their meat, or even their milk, although these were useful by-products. It was their wool that was the most valuable thing that they produced. The sale of the fleece brought in cash that could be used to pay redditus, lardar, entry fines, amercements, merchet; purchase food, utensils, cloth and whatever the tenant was unable to produce in his own household. The potential income from fleeces we cannot measure; all we know from the trespass data is that sheep were present in greater numbers than other domestic animals and that the cash raised from the sale of their fleeces would have found its way into the economy of Brent. It may be that the significant number of cash heriots may represent income partly derived from shepherding. The other significant point about sheep is a question that their existence poses. If half-virgaters and ferdellers held nominally 20- and 10-acres of arable, where did they keep all those sheep, let alone their cattle and horses? That question brings us back to considering the actual as opposed to the nominal size of tenements in Brent.

By referring back to Table 5.06 and looking at the shaded columns dated 1515 and comparing the figures in them with figures from the previous years, some significant differences can be noted as well as some interesting similarities. It can be seen that there was very little movement in the number of half-virgate, ferdel and five acre holdings between 1235 and 1515, compared with the rest. Apart from the free tenants and three-acremen, the amount of acreage held by each group appeared to increase dramatically between 1307 and 1515.

Table 5.13 Increase and decrease in Total Brent holdings, tenants and associated acreage by tenancies				
	1307	1515	+/-	% +/-
Free Tenancies	47	28	-19	-40
Tenants	41	16	-25	-61
acres	1309	774	-535	-41
Half-virgates	45	49	+4	+9
Tenants	45	45	0	0
acres	1020	2045	+1025	+100
Ferdels	107	95	-12	-11
Tenants	109	94	-15	-14
acres	1254	3238	+1984	+158
5-acre	30	37	+7	+23
Tenants	30	39	+9	+30
acres	189	926	+737	+390
3-acre	76	-	-76	-100
Tenants	63	-	-63	-100
acres	378	-	-378	-100
Others	143	69	-74	-52
Tenants	102	69	-33	-32
acres	1190	2207	+1017	+85

Table 5.13 zooms in on the scale of differences between 1307 and 1515. The three-acremen had disappeared and there had

been a marked drop in the 'others' category, indicating that the marked growth in these categories prior to 1307 had now been reversed. The five-acremen enjoyed a 390% increase in their acreage, but the nomenclature for this group was no longer appropriate, because whereas we know that this group averaged six acres of arable per holding in 1307, the amount of acreage they held per tenancy by 1515 had increased so astronomically that the term 'five-acreman' was a misnomer. The free tenant acreage figures are difficult to compare, partly because of the problems with knights' fees, but also because the brevity of references in the Beere survey raises problems of reliability. What is beyond doubt in comparing the figures in Tables 5.06 and 5.13 is that the acreage held by the reduced number of tenants in 1515 has apparently increased.

The fall in the number of tenancies implies a fall in population, which is what one would expect bearing in mind the generally accepted impact of the plague. It is understandable that if holdings became vacant because the demand for land had diminished, and because the marginal nature of some of those holdings made them less attractive, then perhaps such holdings would cease as separate entities and the acreage be absorbed into other holdings. We might expect some increase in overall acreage between 1307 and 1515, bearing in mind that the great catastrophe did not occur until 1348, but the scale of the increase evident in Tables 5.06 and 5.13, a net increase of 3850 acres, does pose the question that if the population had

decreased and if labour was consequently scarcer and more expensive, then why expand the acreage by 72%?

Over two-hundred years numerous changes are to be expected and we have to take great care in using the Beere survey to unravel mysteries of the fourteenth century. Nevertheless there are continuities; it is a survey of the same four manors using the same Glastonbury hide and its subdivisions as the basis of its measurements and it contains much more detail than the previous surveys. It shows us the changes that have occurred regarding the free tenancies, five-acre, three-acre and other tenancies, but more importantly it demonstrates a remarkable continuity in the number of larger customary holdings. It is the comparable number of half-virgate and ferdel holdings between 1307 and 1515 and the greater detail regarding acreage given in the Beere survey that enables us to examine more closely the real size of these holdings in the fourteenth century.

Unlike the earlier surveys in which the terms half-virgate and ferdel had sufficient cognisance for their compilers, the Beere survey actually described the area and location of each part of every holding. Thus it is quite evident in 1515 that the average size of a half-virgate or ferdel was considerably larger than the nominal twenty and ten acres respectively. In Table 5.14 the average sizes of these holdings for each manor have been set out. By then taking the total acreage for each class of customary tenants in 1515

Table 5.14: Average size of holdings in 1515					
Class	East Brent	Lympsham	Berrow	South Brent	Average
Half-virgate	49a 1p	48a	43a 1½p	38a 3½p	44a 3½p
Ferdel	33a 3p	36a 3p	32a 3p	30a 3½p	33a 1½p
Misc. ⁵⁶	28a 1½p	47a ½p	27a 3p	26a 1½p	32a 1½p

Table 5.15: Customary tenants total acreage in 1515				
Class	East Brent	Lympsham	Berrow	South Brent
Half-virgate	470	560	262	748
Ferdel	1102	444	1099	593
Misc.	1079	825	313	916
Totals	2651	1829	1674	2257

Table 5.16: Hypothetical average size of holdings in 1307, (determined by dividing customary tenants' acreage in 1515 among the number of holdings in 1307).					
Class	East Brent	Lympsham	Berrow	South Brent	Average
Half-virgate	67a ½p	40a	43a 2p	41a 2p	48a
Ferdel	34a 2p	34a ½p	29a	24a 3p	30a 2p
Misc.	10a	15a 1p	10a 2p	14a 2½p	12a 2p

⁵⁶'Miscellaneous', in this and the following tables involved in this particular analysis, includes the five-acre, three-acre and 'other' customary holdings. Free tenant holdings have been excluded owing to problems of reliability.

(Table 5.15) and dividing those figures by the number of holdings within each class in 1307, we can see in Table 5.16 the likely average size of holding in 1307 if they held the same amount of land as was held by their counterparts in 1515. One interesting point about this hypothetical exercise is the eighteen acre differential between the three classes, indicating that if over time they had accrued more land than they had originally been allocated, then the accretions had been proportional to the size and status of the holding. Another issue raised in Table 5.16 is that if customary tenants held the same amount of land in 1307 as they did in 1515, then half-virgates were, on average, about twice as large as their nominal size while ferdels were three times as large.

If the same acreage apparent in the Beere survey was cultivated in 1307 and the average real holding sizes indicated above broadly held true, then how can the nominal size of ferdels and half-virgates be reconciled with their real size? Close examination of the Beere survey reveals a structure in which each tenant's holding was recorded. The following example of an East Brent ferdeller's entry indicates clearly the structure used:

'Walter Gynon of Sistenhampston holds one messuage with curtilage, garden and orchard containing 3 perches and one croft annexed containing 1½ acres.

Also holds 18 acres 1 perch of land, meadow and pasture enclosed viz:

Eastern part of the knoll	7a 1½p
In the same place	1½a
1a Morelonde (ex-demesne)	4a ½p
Next to Blyndpull	2a 1p
Langmede (ex-demesne)	3a

Also holds 7 acres of land viz:

Hardlond	4a in 3 parcels of which 2 acres are enclosed
Estfield next to Flotedych	1a
Westefeld	2a'

The first section contained an outline of the messuage and curtilage. The second section described so many acres of land meadow and pasture, although in Lympsham and South Brent it appears to have included just meadow and pasture, but either way it was usually enclosed. The third section was clearly arable.

If the hide and its subdivisions referred to an area of arable, then by applying the same hypothetical assumption used in Table 5.16 we can ascertain the average size of half-virgates and ferdels for arable in Table 5.17 and for 'land, meadow and pasture' in Table 5.18. In Table 5.17a the indications are that the average size of a half-virgate in 1307 was about four acres short of the twenty acres that we should expect for a half-virgate based on the Glastonbury Hide. In Lympsham the average half-virgate would have contained as little as 9½ acres, but thanks to the more generously endowed East Brent half-virgate, the overall

Table 5.17a: Hypothetical arable for half-virgaters in 1307			
Manor	'land'	1515 average	1307 average
East Brent	168a 2p	18a 3p	24a
Lympsham	132a	11a	9a 2p
Berrow	101a 2½p	17a	17a
South Brent	229a 1p	12a	12a 3p
total average		14a 2½p	15a 3½p
Table 5.17b: Hypothetical arable for ferdellers in 1307			
Manor	'land'	1515 average	1307 average
East Brent	270a 3p	8a 3p	8a 2p
Lympsham	146a 1p	12a ½p	11a 1p
Berrow	383a ½p	12a	9a 3½p
South Brent	229a 1p	9a 1½p	9a 2p
Total average		10a 2½p	9a 3p

average was nearer sixteen acres. The average ferdel acreage works out just one perch short of the expected ten acres, but without the half-virgate figures supporting the concept of a twenty acre holding, we need to look at the category of 'land, meadow and pasture' in the same manner. Table 5.18 shows a much closer correlation with the nominal sizes of the two types of landholding than did the arable in Table 5.17, showing that the average half-virgater's mainly meadow and pasture measured just over 21½ acres while the average ferdel size was about 10 acres. Such figures are remarkably close to the nominal sizes of these holdings but a problem in accepting the correlation indicated in Table 5.18 is that the concept of

Table 5.18a: Hypothetical L.M.P. for half-virgaters in 1307			
Manor	LMP	1515 average	1307 average
East Brent	204a 1½p	22a 3p	29a ½p
Lympsham	307a 2p	25a 2½p	22a
Berrow	104a 1p	17a 1½p	17a 1½p
South Brent	323a ½p	17a	18a
Total average		20a 2½p	21a 2½p

Table 5.18b: Hypothetical L.M.P. for ferdellers in 1307			
Manor	LMP	1515 Average	1307 Average
East Brent	357a ½p	11a 2p	10a 3½p
Lympsham	145a 3p	12a	11a 1p
Berrow	328a	10a 1p	8a 2p
South Brent	233a 1½p	12a 2p	9a 3p
Total average		11a 2p	10a ½p

the hide and its subdivisions is generally thought to be linked to arable rather than meadow and pasture.

Support for the idea that the category of 'land, meadow and pasture' may have been the determinant of the nomenclature of the holding, may be gained from the primacy the category has in the Beere survey, in so far as it is always listed before the arable. 'Land, meadow and pasture' was usually enclosed which may have been a common sense action to protect the meadow and to prevent the animals from straying onto the arable. However, the enclosure would have given the tenant improved control and a degree of independence in how he used

that part of his holding. There is further intriguing support to be found in the total area of 'land, meadow and pasture' in the four manors, viz:

Half-virgaters	939a 1p
Ferdellers	1064a 1p
Miscellaneous	890a 1p

total	2893a 3p

which is just over eighteen hides. If we add to that the free tenancies simply described as virgates, half-virgates and ferdels we get another 535 acres, i.e. a further $3\frac{1}{2}$ hides, so the total hideage represented by 'land, meadow and pasture' in 1515 is just over 21 hides, which is remarkably close to the 20 hide valuation for Brentmarsh in Domesday plus Edingworth's 2 hides. As the total acreage held in Brent in 1515 was 9037 acres, i.e. $56\frac{1}{2}$ hides, the implication is that there is a real link between the concept of the hide as a unit of assessment and an area of land, and that part of the estate liable for tax and obligations to the lord, actually represented just one third of the actual acreage available to the tenants.

The significance of this for the individual customary tenant is considerable. If a typical ferdeller of 1307 held as much land as his counterpart in 1515, his resources would not just have been limited to his assessed ferdel of ten acres. He could also have enjoyed a messuage with curtilage and croft of about 3a 3p, arable of about $9\frac{1}{2}$ acres plus a few extra acres picked up in addition to his basic holding, while

in future years his descendants could look forward to adding a further five acres of overlond from demesne.

Intriguing though the hypothesis is, we cannot be sure that customary tenants held as much land in 1307 as they did in 1515. We cannot prove the real size of a ferdel in 1307, despite the analysis of the Beere survey, but enough evidence has been collected to show that at least customary holdings did grow in medieval times and that the Beere survey shows that there was an abundance of land that could be used by the tenants of 1307. If the amount of land held by customary tenants was not held by them in 1307, then it must have been available, unofficially perhaps, as waste that could be used in common for rough grazing. The sheep in the customary economy of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries could make good use of rough grazing, and if that extra land evident in 1515 was parcelled out among the tenants in 1307, or at least becoming available perhaps in the first half of the fourteenth century, then it seems quite likely that corn and sheep husbandry was being practised in Brent as indicated by the frequency of trespass cases. The sheepfold was crucial, according to Kerridge, in the creation, extension and maintenance of permanent tillage.⁵⁷

The extension of acreage evident in the Ford, Fromond and Beere surveys, and by implication, the extension of tillage, increased the real size of half-virgates and ferdels by the

⁵⁷E. Kerridge, The Common Fields of England (1992), pp.127-8.

first half of the fourteenth century as well as the creation of new holdings of larger size than the five-acre and three-acre holdings that were clearly decreasing in number. Evidence from the account rolls helps to pinpoint when there was significant extension of land made officially available to customary tenants. The doubling of redditus between 1304-5 and 1311-2 and a further increase of £30 between 1314-5 and 1330-1 is indicative of the enlargement of existing holdings and the establishment of new holdings.⁵⁸ The decline in pasture evident in 1330-1 indicates a further reduction in demesne activity. The upsurge in commutation and sale of works between 1305 and 1311 indicated a freeing of tenant obligations, enabling them to devote more time to their own holdings while greater employment opportunities for the landless and the holders of smaller tenancies were probably created.⁵⁹ The substantial increase in the percentage of sheep trespassing from 1307 is yet another indicator of increased land resources available to tenants, which may be a consequence of alteration to the balance between arable and pasture concomitant with bringing new land into use, or, if land supply was diminishing, an increasing proximity between arable and pasture. The massive increase in income from entry fines evident from 1311-2 indicates an increase in tenant activity in acquiring holdings, or was this evidence of a land shortage pushing up the price of land, or was it simply a case of the increase in the number of tenant holdings enlarging the

⁵⁸See Table 4.21a in the previous chapter.

⁵⁹See Table 4.22.

market and leading to a natural increase in transactions?⁶⁰

THE DEMAND FOR LAND

The expansion of the land supply and the marked increase in lordly income from redditus requires some consideration of the notion that these factors were rooted in a shortage of land. It is apparent that the increase in landholding, both by the creation of new holdings and the expansion of existing tenements, was evolutionary rather than revolutionary in nature, and marked by periodic surges in activity. The most intense period of activity seems to have been between 1305-11, during the early part of the abbacy of Geoffrey Fromond, indicating that the physical upheaval involved in the expansion of tenancy was partly due to policy either approved or initiated by the abbot. The creation of new holdings is particularly noticeable in the detailed survey of 1307. Such surveys represented a momentous administrative task that was not initiated or carried out lightly, or frequently. Thus the question arises as to why this particular survey was carried out. Was it simply a consequence of the new abbot wanting to know about his feofdom, or did he want to increase his income and needed to examine his resources before considering how their profitability could be increased, or was it a reactive response to a worsening economic situation? To some extent it reflects changes already taking place, or contemplated; but the changes evident from accounts and manorial courts in the

⁶⁰See Table 4.23. Entry fines are likely to have been included in the total hallmoot figures in the earlier compoti so it has not been possible to extract them.

years following would seem to be a consequence of the interest being taken in Brent by the Abbot and his advisors and indeed some credit must be given to Geoffrey Fromond in particular for exhibiting such pro-active leadership. Carley mentions that Geoffrey was 'sharply attuned to contemporary economic trends', preferring rents rather than produce, keen to define property rights and regaining control over lands that had fallen into the hands of hereditary servants. By increasing the Abbey's income he was able to spend £1000 on buildings and by keeping out of the political turmoil of Edward II's reign probably reduced liability to expenditure involved in political activity.⁶¹ As abbot, he was no stranger to Brent, as he had been involved in the earlier administration of the estate, possibly as cellarer, or at least as an assistant to the cellarer, because in 1283 as Brother G.Fromond he is recorded as having paid over to him and Brother J.de Combe, the sum of £10.12.8.⁶² However, it would be wrong to credit Geoffrey Fromond solely with the initiative behind the marked expansion of tenant holdings in Brent in the early fourteenth century because this particular surge seems to have begun at the very beginning of the century, if not before, as evidenced by the increase in 'New Rents' in 1300-1, which represented off-loading of demesne for the term of the life of a tenant.⁶³ These pieces of demesne, known as 'Overlond', varied in size from William Wylecock's two acres of meadow for which he paid

⁶¹J.P.Carley, Glastonbury Abbey; the holy house at the head of the Moors Adventurous (1988), pp.38-9.

⁶²L.11273 mm.22, 23.

⁶³See Table 4.21a.

1/3, up to Thomas Sparke's 5½ acres in Warmede which cost him 3/- and 30 acres in Otterfordham for £1.⁶⁴ It seems that a desire to increase profitability tempered by a knowledge of the economic realities was the most apparent factor behind the expansion of tenant landholding during Fromond's time as Abbot, in which he was endorsing a policy that had already begun. However, Fromond's drive for enhanced profitability was largely dependant upon the tenantry's ability to furnish the increased levels of redditus, which reflected an acceptance of land values largely determined by need.

Titow used increasing levels of entry fines as an indicator of the shortage of land.⁶⁵ Such fines involved a substantial sum of money for the tenant, but he could not enter the holding of his desire without that payment. The level of the entry fine was partially effected by market forces, in so far as there was a limit to the amount of land available. Availability of ancient holdings was dependent upon relinquishment by the existing tenant, either because of hardship, illness, incapacity, impending or actual death, and sometimes to take on a better holding. The availability of a tranche of new land might effectively have reduced the average cost per acre for entry fines, but as the supply of available land diminished, so the price per acre ought to have increased. Thus the cost of entry fines over time might be useful as an indicator of land supply in Brent.

⁶⁴L.11272 mm.41-44.

⁶⁵Titow, Rural Society (1969), pp.73-8.

Table 5.19 shows the number of entry fines recorded in the surviving manorial court rolls and account rolls that provide the data necessary for the calculations in this table.⁶⁶ Care needs to be taken in studying the number of fines recorded as this is largely determined by the number of rolls that survived for each year. Acreage figures assume, unless specified otherwise, that ferdels and half-virgates measured ten and twenty acres respectively. The cost column represents the monetary value of the entry fines in the surviving roll for that year. The 'cost per acre' column is an attempt to equalise the influences on the price of entry fines, to produce a fairer measure of movement in land costs between 1262 and 1350. While compiling the figures in Table 5.19 it soon became clear that the variable factors influencing 'acres', 'cost' and therefore 'cost per acre' were such that no great significance can necessarily be placed on one year's figures. It could take only one or two abnormal transactions to alter the tenor of the 'cost' and 'cost per acre' figures. In 1311-2, for example, the high figures are due to Nicholas Peris paying £2 just for his mother's two acres with buildings in la Hamme, which represents a very high cost per acre. The reference to buildings, although the documents do not reveal their function, may be the reason for the high valuation.⁶⁷ The other entry fine that effected the 1311-2 figures was William Batecok's £17.6.8 for his half

⁶⁶Earlier compti either do not mention individual entry fines or simply name a tenant as having paid so many shillings and pence for his land.

⁶⁷L.11216 mm.12-15; L.10654 mm.11r-v.

Table 5.19: Entry Fines					
Year and no. of rolls		Number of entry fines	Acres	Cost (£.s.d)	Cost per acre (s.d)
1262	1	6	68+	£5.19.4	1/9
1265	2	5	12+	£4.16.0	7/- ⁶⁸
1283	1	11	59	£26.2.8	8/10
1284	1	14	146½	£36	4/11
1305	1	5	53	£11	4/2
1306	1	14	153½	£23.4.6	3/4
1307	3	48	311½	£37.16.11	2/5
1308	3	25	168¾	£40.9.10	4/9½
1309	1	8	113½	£18.5.8	3/2½
1311-12 C		10	90	£63.17.4	14/2
1313	1	2	33	£13	7/10
1313-14 C		10	112	£32.3.4	5/9
1314	3	9	82½	£34.3.4	8/3
1314-15 C		4	41½	£16.3.4	8/7
1315	2	4	24	£7.13.4	6/4
1330-31 C		10	107¾	£35.7.10 ⁶⁹	6/11
1333-34 C		13	97	£44.18.4	9/3
1339	1	1	1½	3/4	2/3
1340	3	29	316	£92	5/10
1344	1	4	60	£31.6.8	10/5
1345	3	11	101+	£50.4.6	9/11
1346	1	10	67	£31.3.4	9/4
1347	1	7	63	£33.16.8	10/9
1348	2	6	53½	£35.2.0	12/1
1349	1	4	22	£1.6.8	1/2½
1350	2	8	86	£5.8.4	1/3

⁶⁸Based on four out of the five.

⁶⁹One entry fine did not quote a sum.

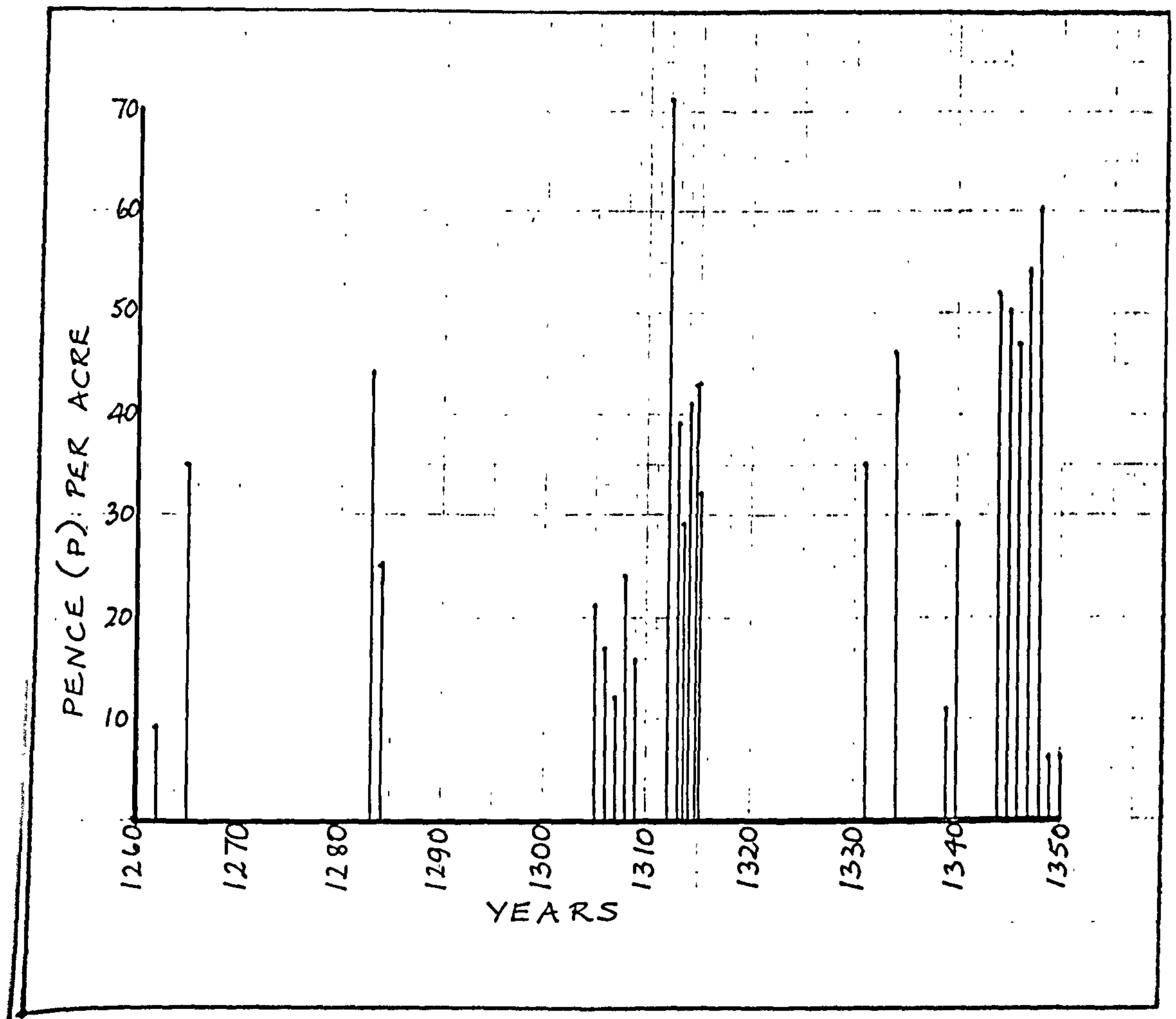


Figure 5.02 Graph showing average cost per acre of entry fines between 1260-1350.

-virgate and 13 acres. The Batecoks were a prominent family in Brent and William was one of its leading men. As early as 1284 he was renting 11 acres in Wedingcrofte and 7 acres in Chalnecrofte for 12/- per annum. On taking over his half-virgate he also paid 9/8 each year to commute his works. He was reeve in 1313-15, and after he died, his widow, Juliana, married John Sparke, who was prosecuted by the court in 1340 for not providing for the annual celebration of the soul of William in the Church of East Brent. Clearly, William Batecok was a man of substance in Brent, so his landholding was likely to be one of the better ones.⁷⁰

Small landholdings tended to have higher values per acre, either because they comprised meadow, which was worth more than arable per acre, or because there was a hint of specialised use. Margary Alwyne's £1 for 2½ acres of meadow in 1333-4 and Henry Bythemore's 13/4 for one acre with buildings provide such examples.⁷¹ Specialized use was much more evident in the case of William le Ferr, as he paid a shilling in 1345 for a parcel measuring 25ft by 16ft at Rooksbridge opposite the holding of Christine Martyn. He was allowed to erect a building of stone or wood and it was to be roofed at the expense of the reeve and it was to be known that iron could be bought there.⁷² The cost per acre of the parcel for the blacksmith's shop worked out in excess of £5. Such a

⁷⁰L.11250 m.15r-v; L.11216 mm.12-15; L.10656 mm.19-24; L.10766 mm.29-32; L.10773 mm.33-34v.

⁷¹L.10632 m.12.

⁷²L.10774 m.10r-v.

valuation in the context of agrarian holdings is distorting and although such instances are to a certain degree nullified by the greater incidence of substantial holdings, it is important to be aware of some of the influences on the price of a holding.

The means of acquiring a holding do not appear to have influenced the price. Investigation of entry fines for ferdels between 1340 and 1350 as in Table 5.20 indicates that there was no apparent difference between inheriting, acquisition through marriage or buying. However, the variation in price for holdings of apparently equal status, is suggestive of a qualitative difference, that must have influenced the cellarer and the homage in deciding an acceptable entry fine.

Having discussed some of the factors that could influence the level of entry fines we can now reconsider, in a more guarded fashion, the 'cost per acre' figures in Table 5.19. Despite the caveats, the 'cost per acre' figures, taken in broad terms, are perhaps the most objective measure we can use to assess trends in the price of land over time. The impact of the data in Table 5.19 can be seen more easily in the graph Fig.5b in which the 'cost per acre' figures have been converted from shillings and pence to decimal pence for ease of plotting, while the perspective of time is more evident. The value of graph lines for individual years are not as important as the impression given by the clusters of lines

Table 5.20a: Inherited Ferdels 1340-50			
Year	Extras	Price	C.P.A.
1340		£2 10 marks £4	8/5
1344		£5	10/-
1345		10 marks	8/6
1346	12a	£5	4/6
1350		6/8	8d

Table 5.20b: Ferdels acquired by marriage			
Year	Extras	Price	C.P.A.
1340		10 marks Free 10 Marks Free	6/8
1345		£5	10/-
1346	3½a	£6 12 marks £5	10/10
1347	6a	12 marks	9/-
1350		6/8	8d

Table 5.20c: Ferdels acquired without marriage or inheritance			
Year	Extras	Price	C.P.A.
1344		12 marks	14/5
1345	½a	7 marks	8/-
1350		6/8	8d

Table 5.21 Mean value of entry fine clusters in £.p		
Years	Cost per acre	Cluster mean
1305	0.21	0.18
1306	0.17	
1307	0.12	
1308	0.24	
1309	0.16	
1313	0.39	0.37 ⁷⁴
1313-4 ⁷³	0.29	
1314	0.41	
1314-5	0.43	
1315	0.32	
1344	0.52	0.53
1345	0.50	
1346	0.47	
1347	0.54	
1348	0.60	

representing 1305-9, 1313-5 and 1344-8. As clusters, these figures would be less effected by extreme examples in particular years, while the clear increase in value evident in each cluster shows a trend towards the increasing cost of taking on a landholding. Table 5.21 shows how the mean cost per cluster increased from £0.18, to £0.37 to £0.53 per acre. The greatest incidence of entry fines occurred in the first cluster, largely due to the free tenancy of la Pulle being divided up among customary tenants. The incidence of entry fines per annum declines in the two later clusters, indicating

⁷³Account roll figures must duplicate to some extent the contemporary hallmoot evidence, but this is nullified by the averaging.

⁷⁴If we included the extreme figure from 1311-2, the mean would be 0.43.

that price could have been geared to supply and demand. Despite episodic expansion of the land supply, perhaps there were increasing numbers of people seeking landholdings.

The cost of acquiring a landholding was not limited to finding the cash for the entry fine. There could be an emotional cost as well in that it was commonplace for a man to gain a holding by agreeing to marry the widow of the previous tenant. In some cases there must have been an element of mutual attraction between the prospective partners, but the common frequency of the marrying of widows is more suggestive of a marriage of convenience. Sometimes there is evidence of some coercion, as in the Hock court for 1340 when four men were elected by the homage to holdings on the understanding that they had to marry the relevant widows. Martin le Smythonly had to pay 6/8 for his 11 acres, while Richard Creese, John Creese senior and John Stephen were allowed to enter without a fine until Michaelmas, but they were expected to put the land in good order and marry the widow. A little extra persuasion was needed for Richard and John because they were expected to follow the court's decision, sub pena of £4.⁷⁵

It appears in the case of Creese, Creese and Stephen that there was a concern that when a tenant died there was a danger that the widow would be unable to look after a holding, that its neglect could have a deleterious effect on neighbouring

⁷⁵L.10773 m.33-4v.

holdings and that she may soon run out of the resources to perform services, pay rents and other dues. If there were men looking to take on a holding, there was pressure on the widow to marry; not just to keep the soil in good health, to make the holding profitable and capable of paying the lord his rent, but also for the widow to keep body and soul together. This was a matter of interest not only to the lord, widow and prospective tenant, but to the whole community. Failure to pay rent could have a knock-on effect with the lord looking to boost his income in other ways. The lord expected a certain income from his manors and any shortfalls were the responsibility of the reeve. Demesne services unfulfilled by one tenant meant that more services were indirectly expected of others who possibly felt that they could have been using the time more usefully on their own holdings. Failing to fulfil obligations led to fines at the Hallmoot, so pledgers were needed to make sure the failing tenant paid. Neglected ditches, hedges, fields and livestock could all have a negative effect on the neighbouring community. Thus there were social pressures on a widow to remarry; from the community wary of the consequences of a neglected holding upon them, from a large body of landless garçiones eager to become landholders, and from the Cellarer eager to maximise income.

By 1348 there were so many women tenants in Brent that there was an enquiry into the situation. A jury was formed, which, with the Cellarer, listed the women who were considered to be marriageable and reckoned on a reasonable level of entry

fine for each holding. This particular event has already captured the attention of Titow who used it to illustrate how high entry fines had become prior to the Black Death, quoting one as high as £80 per virgate as evidence of 'an acute land shortage'.⁷⁶

It can be appreciated that the Brent valuations as presented by Titow seem astronomically high, and the statement that 'no widow ever fetched anything like these high fines on the Glastonbury manors after 1349' is supported by the figures for 1349 and 1350 in Table 5.19 and the graph in Figure 5.02. However, the style of Titow's presentation is misleading; partly because of his need in dealing with England at large to be concise with particular examples; partly because of what he chose to include, and therefore exclude from his list; and partly because he used the virgate as his standard of measurement, an inappropriate unit for Brent and one that exaggerated the assessment given by the hallmoot in 1348. A closer look is needed to gain a more satisfactory view of what was happening.

In Table 5.22 the women who were the subject of the enquiry have been set out with the status of their holding, any extra land they held, the assessment given of the value of the ancient tenure, its value per virgate and the cost per acre. The value per virgate has been put in to show how expressing the value in this way exaggerates the idea of land

⁷⁶Titow, Rural Society, pp.74-6.

Table 5.22: Valuation of holdings held by women 1348

Name	Ancient tenure	Ov.	Valuation	VPV	CPA
EAST BRENT					
Christina Aleyn	F.16a	9a	£10	£40	8/-
Alice le Bole	10a	6a	£5	£20	6/3
Christine Sewy	F.13a	4a	10m	£26.13.4	8/10
Agnes Wylde	5a	23a	£10	£80	7/1
Isabel Danyeles	5a	-	4m	£21.6.8	11/6
Alice Osmond	6a	6a	£5	£33.6.8	8/4
Alice Trot	5a	2½a	4m (£1)	£21.6.8 (£4)	7/1 2/8
LYMPSHAM					
Margaret Buryman	½-V	8a	20m	£26.13.4	9/6
Alice Sharp	½-V	-	20m	£26.13.4	13/4
Margaret Sparke	½-V	9¼a	20m	£26.13.4	9/2
Marg.Phelyppesone	9a	-	6m	£17.15.3	8/11
Edith atte Grove	10a	-	6m	£16	8/-
BERROW					
Agnes Badecok	½-F	18a	8m	£42.13.4	4/8
Chris.Stephenes	½-V 48a	-	20m	£26.13.4	5/7
SOUTH BRENT					
Beatrix Dwole	½-V 32a	1a	25m	£33.6.8	10/1
Alice de Bergh	F.15a	-	10m	£26.13.4	8/11
Margaret Danyel	F.	-	5m	£13.6.8	6/8
Christina Axtel	F.	-	£10 (10m)	£40 £26.13.4	£1 13/41
Margaret Don	22a	-	26m (20m)	£31.10.0 £24.4.10	5/9 12/1

There are a further eighteen widows who are not able or care to marry.

KEY:

F. = Ferdeller

½-V = half virgate

½-V 32a = half virgate containing 32 acres

Ov. = Overlond,

m = mark

Valuation = Cellarer's valuation of the ancient tenure.

(Brackets indicate where the jury differed from the Cellarer in its valuation.)

VPV = value per virgate

CPA = cost per acre (including Overlond)

costs on an estate in which the largest customary holding would have been a half-virgate. Furthermore, when the hallmoot assessed a holding's value, they did not express it as so much per virgate, but as a total sum for the ancient tenure. Overlond was normally granted for a life term only, theoretically reverting to the lord at the end of the tenancy, but in practice it was usually taken on by the next tenant, in which case an actual entry fine would cover the ancient tenure plus overlond. Thus in the cost per acre column, shaded because it is hypothetical, the figures have been calculated on the assumption that an actual fine would include overlond.

It is evident from Table 5.22 that half-virgates and ferdels were of varying sizes by 1348. The tendency was for ferdels and half-virgates to be valued at a mark per acre, so 10 marks and 20 marks respectively were common valuations. Table 5.20 shows that 10 marks was a common valuation for a ferdel during the 1340's, so the image given in 1348 is not significantly different from the general level earlier in the decade. Of course there were variations, reflecting perceptions of quality and of actual size. Agnes Wylde's five acre holding was valued at £10, which Titow chose to describe as '1 at the rate of £80'. It is stretching credulity to believe that Agnes Wylde's holding was worth so much more than much larger ancient tenures in this list, so despite the common-form wording valuing the ancient tenure, I think it highly likely that the value took into consideration the associated overlond. In total, Agnes held 28 acres which is

comparable to Christina Aleyn's 25 acres, also valued at £10. If that is the case, then the cost per acre figures in Table 5.22 bear comparison with similar figures in Table 5.19 from which we can see that the 1348 enquiry was setting values that were mostly below the actual fines being realised between 1344-8, while Alice Sharp's, Christina Axtel's and Margaret Don's holdings were valued above the general trend.

It is interesting that the jury did not necessarily accept the Cellarer's evaluation and that there were another eighteen widows who clearly were not going to be pressurised into marriage, either because they were beyond child-bearing or because they had expressed their desire not to re-marry. Despite the economic pressures, there is a sense of respect for local knowledge in recording the jury's different valuations and also a moral aspect concerning the reasonable expectations of a widow to re-marry. Nevertheless, the examples of Richard and John Creese, and the nature of the enquiry at the hallmoot of February 1348, suggest that there was a hazy division between persuasion and coercion. The pressure was certainly there for widows to remarry, and that reality, together with the trend of rising entry fines during the first half of the fourteenth century, does suggest that the demand for land was greater than its supply.

THE LANDLESS AND POPULATION GROWTH

In his seminal work on the exploitation of the landless, Fox showed that on the Glastonbury estates in each Hock court roll there was a garcio list and against each name a cash sum indicating the chevagium due from that person, or some reason why he should be excused. Contrary to a previously held view that such lists represented men living away from the manor, Fox demonstrated that in fact most of the garciones listed were both resident in the manor and without agricultural land. These men were first listed when they reached the age of twelve and were from then on liable to tax paid in cash that normally varied from 2d to 12d, which indicated 'the power of the arm and its ability to earn wages'."

The evidence from Brent supports Fox's thesis. Garciones appeared in such large numbers, in excess of three hundred during the early fourteenth century, that they represent a significant proportion of the population and thus help us to see the social structure in a wider perspective, if for no other reason than to understand that the most modest tenant of three acres was clearly not at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Some garciones did hold land outside Brent; Richard, son of Nicholas le Hayward, took a wife and land in Burnham without the Abbot's permission, consequently he was amerced 2/- in 1345 and the whole hallmoot 1/- because his departure from South Brent had been concealed for seven

"Fox, 'Exploitation of the Landless', pp.518-68.

years.⁷⁸ Eight garciones have been noted leasing land from tenants during the 1340's out of a total of thirty-eight lessees, most of these coming to light as a result of the leases being arranged without permission. Such leasing was uncommon before 1340 and did not involve garciones.

Some garciones were living and working away from Brent. When this was discovered, the cellarer was looking for a fine and their official withdrawal. John Whyteside was distrained in 1345 because he was staying in Cannington. At the same court it was ordered that Robert, son of Pagan, and John Bryz who stayed at Huntspill with Gilbert Deneys, appear before the next court to pay their fine for withdrawal.⁷⁹ Occasionally, there was a death outside the manor, as in the case of Jordan, son of Brice, who was reported in 1265 to have died in Bristol.⁸⁰ The most interesting absentee case lingered for seven years. William and Nicholas Clement were reported to be in Bristol in 1339. The following year, William's chevage was rated at 1/- so he was perceived to be doing well. The brothers' continued absence in Bristol began to irritate the Cellarer so by 1345 they were amerced 6d for their absence, the hallmoot was amerced 2/- for failing to bring them before the court and their parents were to be distrained. This brought matters to a head because it turned out that their mother, Alice, had married Richard Muryel of Blackford and

⁷⁸L.10774 m.36-7v.

⁷⁹L.10774 m.10r-v.

⁸⁰L.10683 m.9.

that their brother Walter now held the 13 acre holding. William and Nicholas quitclaimed their interest in the holding, having paid £2 for an enquiry into the situation.⁸¹ William and Nicholas could not have been too concerned about maintaining an interest in their mother's holding, otherwise they would have ensured that their annual chevage was paid. The fact that they paid £2 for the enquiry may indicate that they were trying to stake their claim but it is more likely that they had been doing well enough in Bristol not to wish to return to Brent and to establish their brother Walter in the holding.

Interesting though such cases are, their recording in the rolls occurred because the customs of the manor were transgressed. The reality is that such instances were the exceptions to the general rule, as most garciones were resident, landless and liable to chevage as shown in Table 5.23. Exemption from chevage was allowed for those still living in the parental home or serving the lord, the poverty stricken, those who had died during the year and those who had the fortune to gain entry to a landholding.

The first remarkable thing to notice from Table 5.23 is the growth of 257% in numbers listed between 1265 and 1307 compared with the growth of tenant numbers between 1260 and 1307 of 19%. Between 1265 and 1284 there was a growth of 85% in garcio numbers. Such a growth in the numbers of the

⁸¹L.10773 m.12, 33-4v; L.10774 m.9r-v, 10r-v, 36-7v; L.11251 m.38-9v.

landless must have had some effect on the demand for land. If we look back at the entry fines in Table 5.19 there appears to

Table 5.23: <u>Garciones</u>							
Year	Total Listed	exempt from Chevage					MR per 1000
		wp	wl	hl	P	D	
1265	137	31	2	8	6	4	29
1284	254	60	7	9	1	8	31
1307	353	50	3	7	5	8	23
1308	345	31	1	26	4	7	20
1314	335	30	12	6	7	17	51
1315	311	26	6	4	6	10	32
1340	228	37	9	7	3	3	13
1345	266	39	0	9	6	4	15
1346	268	50	0	5	6	5	19
1348	263	48	0	8	4	4	15
1350	108	3	1	40	3	7	65
Key: wp = with parent wl = with the lord hl = has entered a landholding this year P = pauper D = dead MR = mortality rate							

have been a surge in 1283-4. Of the twenty-five entry fines in those years, thirteen of them seem to have been new grants from demesne, of which garciones took on nine, examples being John, son of John atte Wyke's 18 acres in Meliham and John

Dollych's 11 acres of demesne in Nywenhamme.⁸² A further seven holdings were inherited. Garcio population figures decline after 1307, initially because of the division of La Pulle which accounted for most of the twenty-six listed in 1308 as having taken land. The twelve recorded as being with the lord in 1314 may have been part of a concerted effort to improve demesne output evident in 1314-5.⁸³ The substantial drop in the numbers listed between 1315 and 1340 may have been partly due to the European famine of 1315-18, but another factor has to be a further increase in landholdings in Brent indicated by the increase in redditus between 1315 and 1330: in other words, an increase in the availability of landholdings would depress the numbers of the landless.⁸⁴ The numbers listed begin to increase after 1340 while the mortality rate was remarkably low and increasing numbers were living with parents. The demand for landholdings was clearly there in the 1340's and we can perhaps begin to understand the concern over widows' holdings in the enquiry of 1348 as being less to do with anxiety over neglect and more to do with converting garciones into tenants. Examination of the fifty entry fines in 1340 and 1345-6 shows that thirty of them were inherited or subject to a garcio gaining entrance by marriage, but in contrast to the 1280's there was no new or demesne land being granted, the entry fines were simply recognizing the

⁸²L.11250 m.15r-v. A clue to a new holding, apart from the court roll specifying that the land is from demesne, is when no mention is made of a previous or existing tenant.

⁸³See Table 4.25.

⁸⁴See Table 4.21a. Dyer, Standards of Living, p.265.

redistribution of existing landholdings; the days of expansion of customary tenancies appeared to be over.⁸⁵ Thus, despite the percentage of female holdings in 1348 being only 11% compared with 15% in 1260 and 13% in 1307, it was the shortage of available landholdings in the 1340's, in contrast to the availability of land in earlier decades, that was central to the enquiry of 1348 and the pressure on some garciones to marry. The alarming drop in garciones numbers by 1350, the small number left with parents and the forty recorded as having taken land in that year, plus the steep rise in the mortality rate, all indicate the solution provided by the Black Death.

The chevage lists can be used to help us calculate the customary population of Brent for 1265 and 1307, years for which we can be reasonably sure of the number of customary tenants. It is difficult to estimate population after 1307 because although indicators such as the surge in garciones acquiring land in 1308 and later increases in levels of redditus recorded in the accounts suggest an increase in the number of landholdings, they also camouflage actual numbers. Furthermore, the significant number of free tenants decreased from 50 to 41 between 1260 and 1307, but we have no means of telling whether this number remained stable or not after 1307. Many of these holdings were large and held by men of substance who probably had large households and holdings in other manors as well. However, we can learn much about population growth

⁸⁵Virtually all the entry fines name an existing or previous tenant.

from our figures for 1265 and 1307, while the garcio figures in Table 5.23 indicate trends thereafter.

In calculating the customary population for 1265 and 1307 the base evidence is the number of customary male tenants elicited from the surveys of 1260 and 1307 and the garciones alive and without land as listed in the hock court rolls.⁸⁶ The earliest hock court roll is from 1265 so this has to form the first year of our calculation, assuming that the number of tenants had not changed since 1260. Fortunately we have both a chevage list and the Fromond survey for 1307, so it is possible to calculate the compound annual growth rate of males over 12 between 1265 and 1307, which works out at 1.31.⁸⁷ Remembering that the garciones lists show only those of twelve years and above, the next step is to use the Princeton Model West life tables to work out the total male population.⁸⁸ In Table 5.24 estimates are set out for the customary population of Brent based on the most pessimistic expectation of life at birth of 18.033, (P.M.W. male 1), and a life expectancy of 34.892, (P.M.W. male 8), which was roughly the national life expectancy level in the late sixteenth century. The sex ratios in Table 5.24 present a range within which customary

⁸⁶I am grateful to Michael Thompson for sharing with me the mechanics of calculating population that he used in his study of the Polden manors.

⁸⁷Compound annual growth is calculated by the formula $[(x+y)^{1/n}-1] \times 100$, where x=largest population figure, y=smallest population figure, $^{1/n}$ = $x^{1/y}$ button on a scientific calculator, n=the number of years between the largest and smallest population samples.

⁸⁸A.J.Coale and P.Demeny, Regional Model Life Tables and Stable Populations, (1966). Given a compound annual growth rate of 1.31, the percentage of males aged up to 12 can be found in the PMW life tables, viz. 38.02%. The known number of males over age 12 represents the difference between the percentage of under 12's and 100%, thus the total male population can be easily calculated.

population figures ought to fall, allowing for a marginal difference between the numbers of males and females. Whichever sex ratio or mortality level we consider, it is readily apparent from Table 5.24 that this growth in population required a similar growth in the food supply if its standard of living was to be sustained.

The compound annual growth rate for Brent between 1265 and 1307 of 1.31% is on a par with that for the whole of England between 1801 and 1871 at the height of the Industrial

Table 5.24: Customary population estimates for Brent for 1265 (base population 367 males 12+) and 1307 (base population 635 males 12+)						
Model	1265 total population based on sex ratios 1.0, 0.9, and 1.1			1307 total population based on sex ratios 1.0, 0.9, and 1.1		
	1.0	0.9	1.1	1.0	0.9	1.1
PMW male 1	1184	1250	1130	2052	2166	1959
PMW male 8	1068	1127	1019	1848	1951	1764

Revolution, and in contrast to compound annual growth rates that were generally less than half of that figure between 1541 and 1801.⁸⁹ It is hardly surprising that the decline of the numbers of landless in Table 5.23 after 1307 shows that such

⁸⁹E.A.Wrigley & R.S.Schofield, The Population History of England, 1541-1871, a reconstruction (1989 ed.), pp.528-9.

a phenomenal growth rate could not be sustained.⁹⁰ Brent was not unique in experiencing such a high growth rate in medieval times. Smith noted an annual growth rate of 1.3% on the Taunton estate between 1209 and 1268, but this too could not be sustained as it fell to 0.5% between 1269 and 1311. Brent's period of growth was later, indeed it may have continued longer than Taunton's, but in common with a number of estates in other parts of the country decline set in during the second decade of the fourteenth century.⁹¹

WORK FOR THE LANDLESS

One of Fox's tenets was that 'the number of landless males must to a large degree have been determined by the amount of work available in farming'.⁹² As Brent had more garciones than any other Glastonbury manor then, at first sight, that would indicate that there was more work available on the land in Brent than in other Glastonbury manors. However, we must take care, for the large numbers in Brent may be due simply to the size of the composite manor. Fox used a more reliable indicator by working out the tenant:garccio ratio for two manors that he used for a comparative study. Pilton, enjoying a growing economy up to 1315 had a ratio of 1:1.2 whereas in Ditchet, a stagnant economy, the ratio was 1:0.9. Brent's growth between 1260 and 1307 has already been shown to

⁹⁰The number of landless acquiring landholdings post-1307 indicates that the plateau reached by the overall population continued until 1314.

⁹¹R.Smith, 'Human Resources', G.Astill & A.Grant, (eds), The Countryside of Medieval England, (reprinted 1994), pp.193-4.

⁹²Fox, 'The Exploitation of the Landless', p.541.

Table 5.25: Numbers of customary and <u>famuli</u> works needed for demesne agriculture, 1307.					
Task	East Brent	Lympsham	Berrow	South Brent	Totals
Ploughing & harrowing	450	525	495	525	1995
Dayworks	2544	2400	2160	2076	9180
Harvesting	336	200	258	271	1065
Threshing & stacking	-	-	17	-	17
Carrying Corn	88	-	-	-	88
Carrying forensica	37	-	40	-	77
Walling & Ditching	221	-	-	168	389
Mowing	34	10	-	-	44
Weeding	42	-	-	-	42
Reaping reeds	32	24	-	-	56
Total	3784	3159	2970	3040	12953
Demesne arable acreage	228	288	283	257	1056
Demesne acreage ploughed by <u>famuli</u> + auxiliaries Demesne works					580 1248
Total Customary & Demesne works (12953+1248)					14201
Day works: per arable acre (14201÷1056)					13.5

be phenomenal and this is reflected in the movement of tenant:garcio ratios from 1:0.47 in 1265 to 1:1.01 in 1307. Thus it is necessary to examine the labour requirements of the Brent landholdings to get some indication of the amount of work available for the landless in Brent.

The Fromond survey provides data such as the total size of the demesne in 1307, summaries of works required and detailed descriptions of customary work expected from individual tenants, from which I have calculated in Table 5.25 that the total works required were 14201 on the demesne of 1056 acres, that is 13.5 works per acre.⁹³

It is probable that tenant holdings needed about as much work, acre for acre, as did the demesne, so the number of dayworks needed per acre on the demesne in 1307 can be multiplied by the average acreage of customary holdings to give a general indication of how much labour was required for arable cultivation in Table 5.26.⁹⁴ A key figure in Table 5.26 is the annual number of days available for work, which I have estimated at 240.⁹⁵ This meant that it was just the half-virgate holdings, the ferdels in East Brent and Lympsham and the twelve-acre holdings in South Brent that required the

⁹³Excluded are those works beyond Brent that made no direct contribution to cultivating the demesne.

⁹⁴The arguments for and against this issue are succinctly put in Fox, 'Exploitation of the Landless', pp.545-6. Customary acreage figures in Table 5.04 have been used as the basis for calculating workdays in Table 5.26.

⁹⁵This is based on the works account of 1311-12 which indicates 236½ days were available, as opposed to Fox's reckoning of 260.

Table 5.26a: <u>Garciones</u> needed on customary holdings in East Brent					
	$\frac{1}{2}$ -V	F	5a	3a	La P
Works: on holding	382	176	85	68	109
Works: on Demesne	91	73	64	14	59
Total	473	249	149	82	168
Men needed @ 240 work days per man	2	2	1	1	1
<u>Garciones</u> needed per holding	1	1	-	-	-
Holdings in 1307,	7	32	22	66	18
Total <u>Garciones</u> needed	7	32	-	-	-

Table 5.26b: <u>Garciones</u> needed on customary holdings in Lymsham					
	$\frac{1}{2}$ -V	F	3a	12a	M
Works: on holding	291	160	95	140	75
Works: on Demesne	104	96	65	73	-
Total	395	256	160	213	75
Men needed @ 240 work days per man	2	2	1	1	1
<u>Garciones</u> needed per holding	1	1	-	-	-
Holdings in 1307,	14	13	4	20	30
Total <u>Garciones</u> needed	14	13	-	-	-

Table 5.26c: Garciones needed on customary holdings in Berrow

	$\frac{1}{2}$ -V	F	3a	12a	10 $\frac{1}{2}$	M
Works: on holding	277	140	41	162	143	84
Works: on Demesne	125	94	17	17	74	-
Total	402	234	58	179	217	84
Men needed @ 240 work days per man	2	1	1	1	1	1
<u>Garciones</u> needed per holding	1	-	-	-	-	-
Holdings in 1307,	6	38	4	3	8	11
Total <u>Garciones</u> needed	6	-	-	-	-	-

Table 5.26d: Garciones needed on customary holdings in South Brent

	$\frac{1}{2}$ -V	F	5/6a	12a	Mora	M
Works: on holding	298	161	84	166	193	52
Works: on Demesne	90	73	30	82	13	-
Total	388	234	114	248	206	52
Men needed @ 240 work days per man	2	1	1	2	1	-
<u>Garciones</u> needed per holding	1	-	-	1	-	-
Holdings in 1307,	18	24	8	9	19	24
Total <u>Garciones</u> needed	18	-	-	9	-	-

work of more than one man, resulting in employment opportunities for only 99 garciones out of 338 available for work in 1307.

There are a number of problems in using the figures from the Fromond survey to assess the amount of work available for garciones. One problem is the inconsistent manner in which the demesne work summaries were set out, for example, ploughing and harrowing were required by the acre while winter-works were enumerated as dayworks. The survival of a works account for 1311-12 shows that the number of works per acre for ploughing varied depending on the crop and the time of year, but that the overall average was about two works per acre.⁹⁶ This is supported by the 1248 works on 580 acres due to be performed by the famuli and auxiliaries, yet this category of work highlights a further problem. 'Demesne ploughing' was a separate category from customary ploughing and was performed mainly by the famuli, their work being augmented by seven ploughmen and an oxherd from the tenants on Saturdays in return for acquittances on their rent. In 1304-5 there were eight famuli involved in ploughing; two inhorum, one ploughman and five oxherds. The expected demesne works of 1248 from the four demesne plough teams was somewhat fictitious; it excluded Sundays but included 196 works for holidays and 110 for bad weather, indicating that each team could only work on about 236½ days each year. The teams were not restricted to ploughing but could be used for carrying

⁹⁶L.11216 mm.12-15.

services during harvest and haymaking as well as hauling timber and underwood. Of the expected 1248 works, only 899 were performed and that included 104 contributed by customary tenants for acquittances.

The biggest problem in using the Fromond works figures is that they represent expectations rather than reality and this is demonstrated in the one surviving works account for 1311-12 by the fact that only 4122 winter-works were performed instead of the 7728 that could have been demanded, despite the fact that the acreage actually cultivated remained about the same level as it had been in 1304-5.⁹⁷ This in turn highlights another problem; the difference between cultivated and uncultivated demesne. Whereas we know the total demesne for 1307, we cannot be sure of its extent just four years later. A reduction is certainly indicated by the fall in potential works shown in Table 5.27 and the marked increase in income from rents and commutation between 1304-5 and 1311-12 as shown in Table 4.19. This in turn implies an increase in the number or extent of customary tenancies, but these numbers are

Table 5.27: Comparison of potential and actual works		
Potential 1307	Potential 1311-12	Actual 1311-12
14201	12278	7564

⁹⁷See Table 4.34.

unknown for 1311-12. If the total demesne acreage was the same in 1311 as it had been in 1307, then the actual works performed that year would have been at the rate of 7.2 works per acre, which would have resulted in only the half-virgaters requiring the need of extra labour. The comprehensive nature of the Fromond figures do enable us to calculate the potential labour requirement on the demesne, assuming one person could perform all necessary agricultural tasks, but the reality is that there were a number of tasks that needed another pair of hands. Ploughing needed one man to lead the oxen and another to control the plough, while those tenants with more than one holding probably needed at least one assistant. In Table 5.28 it is suggested that there could have been 218 opportunities for work by garciones in 1307.

Ploughing work has been restricted to half-virgates and ferdells in Table 5.28 as these were the only ones that owed that service on the demesne. The tenants of holdings smaller than ferdels may not have owed ploughing service but most of them needed to plough their own arable. It is difficult to quantify their extra labour requirements and furthermore the likely insufficiency of oxen among such tenants would have been overcome by the development of informal networks to pool resources to tackle major agricultural tasks. Such mutual aid may counter the idea of there being opportunities for garcio employment, but such aid would have been necessary to overcome a shortage of motive power and plant rather than labour. Table 5.28 probably underestimates the arable labour

Table 5.28: Estimate of <u>garcio</u> labour opportunities					
	EB	L	B	SB	T
Ploughing with half-virgaters and ferdellers	39	27	44	42	152
Cultivate minor holdings of tenants holding more than one holding	16	20	3	15	54
Potential daywork on 12 acre holdings in South Brent	-	-	-	9	9
Working directly for the lord	-	-	-	-	3
Total					218

requirement as it makes no allowance for the seasonal nature of agrarian work. Extra manpower was more likely to be needed for those times of intense activity in the agrarian calender such as ploughing, haymaking and harvest when all tenants were busy and probably needing assistance: this would give at least seasonal employment for the 'surplus' garciones.

We need to look beyond the production of cereal crops and beans for further employment opportunities. By 1307 the tenant:garcio ratio was 1:1.01, in other words for every tenant there was a garcio available for work. The overwhelming majority of garciones in 1307 had the surnames of Brent families.⁹⁸ It is not difficult to imagine a tenant finding profitable work for a son on his holding, either to make his own life easier, or using that extra pair of hands to

⁹⁸Only nineteen did not appear to share Brent surnames.

increase productivity through increased attention to weeding, drainage and maintenance throughout the year. It also meant that when service was required on the demesne, there was still someone at home to work on the holding, so that the 'optimum' days for activities, such as ploughing and harvesting, could be used. It is possible, in the light of the persuasive case put by Fox, that sons were put into the service of other tenants, on the grounds that this was a cheaper course of action. It would make the son earn his keep and remove the temptation to be dilatory at home. Also, in a society in which second and third marriages were commonplace, the emotional ties could be weaker and it might be less fractious for a stepson to be in the employ of another tenant. The attractions of such an arrangement could lead to it becoming an informal custom.

It is not clear whether such a custom prevailed in Brent. One of the motives behind the system that Fox perceived was the precarious nature of making a living out of the land and the need to seek economies. The situation could be made worse by a contraction of demesne and commutation of services leading to a reduction in employment opportunities on the demesne and greater reliance upon tenants for work. In Brent, demesne had been contracting while the garcio numbers had been growing, yet evidence of poverty had been sparse and the general trend of the garciones mortality rate was to decline from the 1250's down to the Black Death. It seems therefore that there must have been sufficient resources to provide

garciones with sustenance and employment, but as to how and where, we need to delve a little deeper.

PASTORAL POTENCY

As the fourteenth century progressed, the less likely it became that there would be extreme demesne requirements. The area of demesne cultivated was reduced and there was a tendency, especially among half-virgaters such as Richard Wryde, John Batecok and Michael le Ryche to commute their works. Michael le Ryche had paid £2.10 to commute his works and be quit of the offices of reeve, grainger, hayward and wickman, and then paid 9/8½ each year for the privilege. As his redditus was 3/- and the entry fine on his half-virgate and 22 acres of Overlond when he died was £3.6.8, we get a sense of perspective on the relative cost of commutation.” Michael le Ryche must have felt confident of making sufficient profit to be able to afford extra outgoings that were more than three times his annual redditus and reckon that it was preferable to working on the demesne or performing those official roles expected of a man in his position. The less time spent working for someone else meant that people like Michael le Ryche had more time to spend on maximising the profitability of their own interests.

If Michael le Ryche and other half-virgaters and some ferdellers commuted their works for an annual sum three times

⁹⁹L.11216 mm.12-5; L.10656 mm.19-24; L.10778 m.5r-v.

the amount of their redditus, were people lower down the social structure capable of a similar scale of profit? It was demonstrated above in Tables 5.10a-b just how precarious a ferdeller's lot could be and the difference just a few acres could mean in grain production. Michael le Ryche would have fared much better in a similar exercise with about three to four shillings profit on the basic half-virgate after paying extra rent for some meadow plus his commutation, and if he used his overlond for arable his profit margin would have been bigger still. Three or four shillings profit may not seem very much, but we have to remember that would just have been the profit from his arable activity. We cannot calculate his profits from pastoral farming, but they should have been significant.

Table 5.29: Differences between acreage recorded for 1307, 1515 and 19th cent O.S. maps.					
Manors	1307	1515	O.S. Map	Diff. 1307-1515	Diff. 1515-19th c.
East Brent	1944	2676	3630	732	954
Lympsham	985	1936	2071	951	135
Berrow	847	1960	2221	1113	261
South Brent	1564	2465	3332	901	867
Totals	5340	9037	11254	3697	2217

Tenants of holdings containing less than ten acres would have struggled to make ends meet if the Dyer model used in Table 5.10 is valid, if the demesne yields were identical to tenant yields and if arable agriculture was their only source of income. Half-virgaters and ferdellers could probably make a living out of arable agriculture, but it was clearly supplemented by pastoral farming. Below the level of ferdels, then pastoral farming must have assumed a more prominent role. In Table 5.29 we can see not only the big difference between the acreage recorded in the Fromond survey and the Beere survey, but also the greater acreage evident on the Ordnance Survey maps of the nineteenth century. The analysis of the Beere survey in Table 5.17 indicated that each tenant ought, on average, to have held about as much 'land, meadow and pasture' as 'land'. If that was not the case, and if the difference in acreage recorded between 1307 and 1515 was due to the unlikely scenario of land reclamation post-1350, despite there being a smaller population; then those 3697 acres unaccounted for were still physically present, and although wet in winter, between the spring and autumn equinoxes would have provided lush rough grazing. Either those discrete acres were already part of the ancient tenements, camouflaged by the assumptions of medieval scribes; or they were 'waste' and open to all.

The balance of trespass incidence as revealed in Table 5.12 suggests that sheep grazing was probably the major use to which those discrete acres were put. The evidence for the

keeping of sheep is not restricted to trespass cases. In 1349 John Isgar senior, was accused of letting his sheep do one shillings worth of damage to Reginald Sparke's pasture. Isgar admitted that his sheep had strayed onto Sparke's pasture but maintained that the damage was only worth 4d.¹⁰⁰ One possible implication of this case is that garciones could own sheep because John Isgar had been a garcio as late as 1348, yet by 1350 he is recorded as having land. It seems likely that it was as a tenant that he was being sued at Michaelmas 1349, but we should not close our minds to the possibility that some garciones may have owned sheep which could have given them a substantial income from the sale of fleeces.

In 1307, Thomas and Agnes Faber leased to John Aleyn and John Stephen a ferdel for ten years, at the end of which they were to render the crop of the eleventh year plus an ox, a cow and twelve sheep.¹⁰¹ This is just one indication we have of the balance of livestock associated with an ancient tenure. It does not constitute an inventory, but probably indicates the animals of value on the holding that they expect to still be there at the end of the lease. John Stephen possessed more animals because he had six affers and two avers trespassing in 1313 and on another occasion eight animals and five pigs.¹⁰² If his ferdel only contained ten acres and there was no waste, the eight animals and twelve sheep could not have been

¹⁰⁰L.11222 m.9r-v.

¹⁰¹L.11252 m.16-17v.

¹⁰²L.10654 m.11r-v.

sustained by whatever was the proportion of fallow. John Stephen's livestock needed about fourteen acres of grass, but as his ferdel was sometimes referred to as being twelve acres and on other occasions thirteen, and providing he held about as much meadow and pasture as arable as the above analysis of the Beere survey might imply, then he was grazing to just beyond its capacity. However much we speculate about the amount of grazing available, the important point is that he was able to sustain those animals. Incidences of trespass in the court rolls were geared to trespass on the demesne. There were cases of one tenant complaining about another tenant's animals trespassing on his land, but such incidences were few and far between. Pasture rights could be robustly defended, as in the case of the Snyghampton and Burton tithings being prevented in 1345 from grazing on Brent Knoll to which they claimed that they had rights of common.¹⁰³ Had there been significant pressure on the amount of land available for grazing, it would have been evident in the incidence of disputes before the Hallmoot.

The most significant feature of John Stephen's lease that is relevant to our understanding of profitability is the number of sheep. Incidences of sheep trespass have already indicated the relative importance of these animals to the tenantry. The ewes could provide milk and cheese and occasionally a sheep could be slaughtered for its meat. The value of a sheep in the market was modest, perhaps 5d or 6d,

¹⁰³L.11251 m.10r-v.

Table 5.30: Value of fleeces for ferdeller with twelve sheep

Years	Mean price index 100=3.05d per 1lb	price per lb. in d.	x 18 (mean fleece weight = 1½lb)	Value in s.d.
1251-60	78	2.379	42.8	3/6¼
1261-70	104	3.172	57.1	4/9
1271-80	125	3.8125	68.6	5/8½
1281-90	116	3.538	63.7	5/3¼
1291-1300	115	3.5075	63.1	5/3
1301-10	136	4.148	74.7	6/2¼
1311-20	135	4.1175	74.1	6/2
1321-30	148	4.514	81.3	6/9¼
1331-40	100	3.05	54.9	4/7
1341-50	94	2.867	51.6	4/3½

but its major raison d'être in medieval agriculture was as a producer of wool, and as such has repercussions for our understanding of the tenant economy.

In Table 5.30 I have calculated the decadal mean annual value of fleeces for a flock of twelve sheep, based on Farmer's wool sales prices and the concept of a fleece weighing about 1½lbs, thus twelve sheep should have produced 18lbs. of wool.¹⁰⁴ The indications are that a flock as modest

¹⁰⁴D.L.Farmer, 'Prices and wages', in H.E.Hallam, ed., The Agrarian History of England and Wales, vol.II, 1042-1359 (1988), pp.808-10. A sack of wool contained 240 fleeces and weighed 364lbs, viz: Titow, Rural Society, p.45; B.Wilkinson, The Later Middle Ages in England, 1216-1485 (1969), p.106. Fleece weights obviously varied, but the majority ranged from 1½lbs to 1½lbs, viz: M.J.Stephenson, 'Wool yields

in numbers as John Stephen's could produce a cash return each year that was more than sufficient to remove anxieties associated with a *ferdel* if he was entirely dependent upon its arable produce. An income from wool sales in the region of five or six shillings between 1270 and 1330 would have left a comfortable margin after paying redditus of 1/3 and lardar of 9d. He would be able to face with some equanimity a modest court fine or two, tax demands, some expenditure on cloth, shoes and tools.

We must not take this roseate image too far, because if we add the sort of income from sales of fleeces in Table 5.30 to the income from the model of arable in Table 5.10b there would still not be sufficient income to provide for Fox's estimate of the 10/- or 11/- cost of a full time servant. Perhaps many of the Brent garciones lived in the parental messuage and pulled their weight, or not, to contribute towards the productivity of a holding in which they had an interest.

We cannot quantify income from other sources, although a general impression can be gained from the surviving evidence. Cows seemed to have been relatively few in number, but even from one cow a certain number of cheeses could be made. The diet could be supplemented by hunting game on the moors and trapping rabbits. Bees provided honey, some of which was required as a render by the Abbot from East Brent. Fish and

eels could be trapped in the water-courses, while the men of Berrow could trap sea-fish on the beach and evaporate salt.¹⁰⁵ A sow bearing piglets was capable of providing the family with meat throughout the year. Geese and chickens provided eggs and the occasional roast dinner. Horticultural produce was potentially bountiful given the size of messuages, curtilages and associated crofts mentioned in the Beere survey. It is likely that these parts of the holdings, because they contained the homestead and its immediate appurtenances were of the same size that they had been in 1307. Gardens and orchards are frequently included in the descriptions and the average acreage for half-virgate and ferdel curtilages and crofts was in excess of four acres, while the miscellaneous landholders had crofts averaging twelve acres, a significant real addition to the nominal size of their landholdings.

In all probability, given the mixed farming nature of Brent, it seems likely that there were sufficient opportunities for employment for garçiones, while the low number of paupers indicates that the majority were able to pay their chevaquium. Returning to the analysis of the 1327 Lay Subsidy lists it is interesting to note that as many as eighteen men who had been garçiones in 1315, the nearest chevage list to 1327, appear among the taxpayers with saleable possessions worth 10/- or more. It seems likely that those

¹⁰⁵Eel fishing brought in a valuable income to the lord by the renting out of 'Elfares', for example to Richard de Santa Barbara and Stephen de Langelond in 1313 to 1315: L.10656; L.10766. This resource was still important in 1515; BL Eg.3034; S.Godbold and R.C.Turner, 'Medieval Fishtraps in the Severn Estuary', Medieval Archaeology, vol.XXVIII, (1994), pp.19-57.

Table 5.31: Tenantry values in 1327 Lay Subsidy			
Categories of Tenants	Numbers in Lay Subsidy	Values	Average value
Free Tenants	4	£0.98	£0.24
½-virgaters	17	£2.36	£0.14
Ferdellers	27	£3.00	£0.11
Five acremen	2	£0.08	£0.04
Three acremen	8	£0.51	£0.06
Non-standard ¹⁰⁶	16	£1.67	£0.10
Size unknown ¹⁰⁷	33	£3.39	£0.10
Garciones ¹⁰⁸	18	£1.57	£0.09
La Pulle	5	£0.48	£0.10
Not recorded ¹⁰⁹	44	£3.09	£0.07
Totals	174	£17.13	£0.10

eighteen men were tenants by 1327, but it has to remain a possibility that some of them were still landless but able to make a comfortable living, perhaps from wool or some industrial activity.¹¹⁰ We must not forget that some

¹⁰⁶These are holders of various sizes of holdings e.g. 7-acres, 10-acres, 12-acres, 15-acres, 16-acres etc.

¹⁰⁷These tenants can be traced in account rolls or court rolls, but no indication is given as to their status.

¹⁰⁸Although these tenants are recorded as having been garciones up to 1315, it does not necessarily mean that they were still garciones in 1327.

¹⁰⁹No reference to these tenants can be found in the Brent rolls up to 1350.

¹¹⁰None of them were still garciones by 1340, the date of the next surviving chevage list.

garciones, like John, son of Robert in 1315, paid as much as 12d chevagium, which is quite close to the amount of redditus expected from many ferdellers.¹¹¹ In Table 5.31, a correlation of names appearing in the Lay Subsidy returns with all people mentioned in the Brent surveys, accounts and court rolls; it is interesting that the average tax values are very much in line with the size of landholdings. The non-standard average values were almost as high as the Ferdellers, which is hardly surprising when one considers that many non-standard holdings were larger than the nominal 10-acre size of a ferdel. The three-acremen appeared to be doing better than the five-acremen, but that is because many three acre tenancies contained very much more than three acres. Something else that needs to be born in mind is the possibility that these smaller tenants may have acquired larger landholdings during those gaps for which we have no evidence. The 'Not Recorded' category is puzzling. Bearing in mind that 1327 fell in a twenty-four year gap for which we have no manorial documentary evidence for Brent, then some of them must have been customary tenants who led such quiet and exemplary lives that they did not appear in later court records. There is a possibility that some of them were sub-tenants of the Free tenants. Overall the average amount of tax collected was very much in line with the national average, which might lead one to think that there was nothing unusual about Brent. However, it has already been established that in numbers, in tax collected, in tax per taxpayer and tax per

¹¹¹L.10771 m.43-4.

acre, Brent was one of Somerset's leading contributors to the revenue of the crown in 1327.

MARKETING OPPORTUNITIES

Implicit in making a living from agriculture, whether arable or pastoral, was the necessity to convert some produce and livestock into coinage to pay cash demands and to ease the acquisition of goods that were not readily available on the landholding. The people of Brent would have engaged in a certain amount of private trading between themselves and with people in neighbouring manors, but urban markets provided a greater number of potential customers as well as being a source of desired commodities. Opportunities to buy and sell could arise when tenants were engaged on carrying services to Glastonbury, which became a parliamentary borough in 1319; to Wells, whose borough status was confirmed between 1174 and 1180; to Axbridge, a pre-conquest burh; and to Bridgwater, which had been granted a charter by King John in 1200.¹¹² Although these towns were specified in the surveys as destinations for carrying services, the occasional nature of carrying forensica would not have been sufficient to satisfy individual needs.

Geographical proximity would have been one factor in determining where to buy and sell. It would have been convenient had there been a market in Brent, perhaps at the transshipment point of Rockesmulle, or at Rooksbridge. Urban

¹¹²M.W.Beresford & H.P.R.Finberg, English Medieval Boroughs, a handlist, (1973), p.154.

activity would have given the Abbot an opportunity to increase his income by means of levying tolls, but there is no evidence of this having occurred. The wet nature of the local landscape would have been a deterrent to travellers; in later centuries Leland, Fiennes and Defoe all avoided Brent. Axbridge, at just over five miles away was easily accessible and well established, with good communication with Wells along the base of the Mendips, with Winscombe and Wrington to the north, and westwards with Loxton, Bleadon and Uphill. A smaller market lay at Weare, only about 4½ miles from the East Brent cross-roads. Weare was described as a borough in 1265.¹¹³ Carrying service to and from Weare had been the subject of an enquiry for which the men of the four Brent villis paid £1 in 1262, claiming that they should not have been required to carry the lord's wine to Weare as they had been ordered for the previous three years.¹¹⁴ The sacristan conceded the case, although it is interesting to note that carrying of the lord's wine to and from Weare had been specified in the Amesbury survey of 1235. Bridgwater, the lowest crossing point over the River Parrett, is ten miles to the south of Brent. It was linked by river to Taunton, Langport, Ilchester and Somerton and attracted both coastal and overseas trade. Its yield of tax in the lay subsidies indicate that it was the county's most prosperous market.¹¹⁵ Beans and barley, formed the major exports from Bridgwater to

¹¹³Beresford & Finberg, Medieval Boroughs, p.154.

¹¹⁴L.10682 m.3r-v.

¹¹⁵See Table 5.03.

Wales, Ireland, Bordeaux and Bayonne in the late fourteenth century.¹¹⁶ The importance of beans in the economy of Brent should have ensured the popularity of Bridgwater as a market. It seems likely also that beans must have been a popular and profitable crop along the coastal alluvial belt and elsewhere in Bridgwater's hinterland. Huntspill's high value in the Lay Subsidies and its situation between Brent and Bridgwater on the alluvial belt, strongly suggests that it too would have been growing beans as a cash crop.

References to Bridgwater in the surviving documentary evidence specific to Brent however, are limited to it being mentioned only as a destination for carrying services. Beyond the surveys, references to Axbridge, Wells, Weare and Somerton are so few as to be almost negligible; thus if frequency of appearance in court rolls and accounts is an unreliable guide to prioritising markets for the people of Brent, then consideration has to be given to the context of urban references and the clues they contain. References to Glastonbury outnumber all other towns, but very few of these are to do with trade, while many concern the failure to perform agricultural work at Glastonbury. Nevertheless, for the people of Brent, the abbey and town of Glastonbury would act as a magnet for trade, especially because of their tenurial relationship and the function of Brent in the Abbey's supply network.

¹¹⁶R.W.Dunning, A History of Somerset, (1978), p.21.

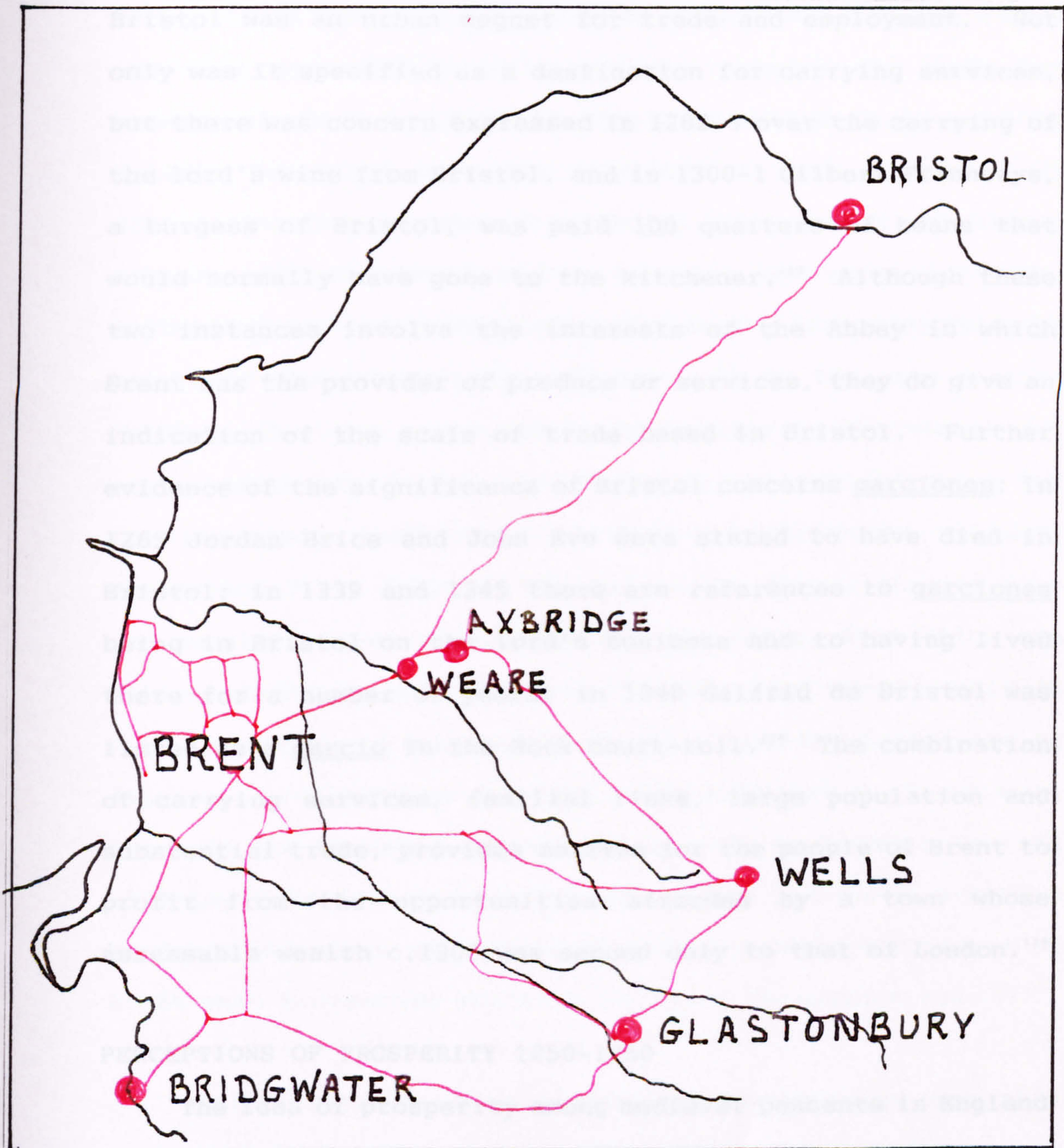


Figure 5.03 Markets for Brent

Despite being over twenty miles distant from Brent, Bristol was an urban magnet for trade and employment. Not only was it specified as a destination for carrying services, but there was concern expressed in 1282-3 over the carrying of the lord's wine from Bristol, and in 1300-1 Gilbert Franncceys, a burgess of Bristol, was paid 100 quarters of beans that would normally have gone to the kitchen.¹¹⁷ Although these two instances involve the interests of the Abbey in which Brent was the provider of produce or services, they do give an indication of the scale of trade based in Bristol. Further evidence of the significance of Bristol concerns garciones: in 1265 Jordan Brice and John Eve were stated to have died in Bristol; in 1339 and 1345 there are references to garciones being in Bristol on the lord's business and to having lived there for a number of years; in 1340 Galfrid de Bristol was listed as a garcio in the Hock court-roll.¹¹⁸ The combination of carrying services, familial links, large population and substantial trade, provides motives for the people of Brent to profit from the opportunities afforded by a town whose assessable wealth c.1300 was second only to that of London.¹¹⁹

PERCEPTIONS OF PROSPERITY 1250-1350

The idea of prosperity among medieval peasants in England during the century prior to the Black Death is perhaps a contentious issue. Prosperity is a relative concept that has

¹¹⁷L.11273 m.22, 23; L.11272 m.41-44.

¹¹⁸L.10683 m.9; L.10773 m.12; L.10773 m.33-34v; L.10774 m.36-37v.

¹¹⁹T.Rowley, The High Middle-Ages, 1200-1550, (1988), p.235.

to be ascertained from the perspective of the people of the time; yet we have to be aware that situations were not static and that economies have a cyclical nature, the peaks and troughs of which could be particularly marked in an agrarian society dependant upon the quality of each harvest. In considering Brent over a century, the impact of annual extremes are minimised and we can see the general trends, although these can be nebulous owing to the irregular episodic nature of the documentary evidence. It is the same sort of evidence that has been used by historians in the search for explanations other than, or allied to, pandemic disease for the momentous death toll of the mid-fourteenth century. Postan and Titow followed the Malthusian thesis showing that the population was outgrowing its resources, from which the natural deduction was that insufficient land would result in food shortages and malnutrition, thus lowering resistance to disease. In contrast to this, the high value placed upon Brent in the Domesday survey and the tax assessment for the 1327 Lay Subsidy, clearly challenges the notion of economic hardship and poses the possibility that perhaps the people of Brent were prosperous relative to their contemporaries.

Up to 1307 it is clear that the people of Brent were able to expand their acreage at a rate greater than the population growth. Shortly afterwards the population peaked and went into decline, yet increases in redditus indicate further expansion of tenant acreage by the 1330's, due to a reduction in demesne, although we should not ignore the possibility of

land becoming available from the ending of a free tenancy or even some assarting. Nevertheless there had been some pressure on the land supply and as early as 1189 to 1235 this had partly been met by splitting some half-virgates into ferdels. This had occurred at the same time as the move into direct management of the demesne and the recovery of former demesne lands. Demesne arable activity peaked in the early 1280's and again in 1301, but over the next fifteen years it was reduced by about 50% and by 1330 by just over 70%. Overlord could only account for about six hundred acres of extra land available for tenants, so much of the 967 acre net increase evident between 1260 and 1307 must have resulted from reclamation.

If Postan's reckoning that 10 acres or less represented insufficient land for subsistence farming and Titow's idea that a large number of smallholders was evidence of hardship, then the people of Brent should have been in a desperate situation, although much depends on the interpretation of the word 'smallholder'. The reality was that the mean size of a ferdel was 12 acres of arable, while the mean size of both 5 acre and 3 acre tenancies was actually six acres of arable by 1307 while the introduction of 10½ and 12 acre holdings gave some indication of the size of holding necessary to support a household. If tenants were wholly dependent upon their arable, then Dyer's model to calculate the produce necessary to sustain a household of five, indicated that given the same sort of yields as evident on the demesne, a ferdeller with ten

Table 5.32: Indicators of Hardship			
Year	Paupers (excluding those in <u>garcio</u> lists)	Debt	
		incidence	average cash debt (d.)
1262	8		
1265	1	1	36
1283	7		
1284	5		
1304	2		
1306	2		
1307		4	52
1308		2	36
1309	2		
1311		6	84
1313		2	29
1315		2	produce & ox
1339		1	240
1340		1	ox
1344	1		
1345	2	3	27
1346		7	233
1347		4	99
1348	1	6	102
1349		7	69

acres would fail, while twelve acres would give him a small profit. As ferdellers and those below them in the social hierarchy represented 89% of the customary tenantry in 1307, then the inadequate produce of their holdings ought to have resulted in evident widespread hardship in the first half of the fourteenth century.

Evidence of hardship is sparse. In Table 5.32, incidence of two indicators of hardship has been tabulated; pauperism and debt. The numbers of paupers reflect those who were amerced for transgressions such as trespass, illegal cultivation, neglect or inadequate performance of services. They were excused their fine because they were clearly unable to pay. Similarly there were three cases of merchet being excused or reduced. Pauperism was more evident during the thirteenth century, but we should beware of believing the indication of a decline in the fourteenth century as individual trespass cases ceased to appear after 1314 and the reduction in demesne arable acreage would have resulted in the need for fewer services, so the opportunities for such small numbers to appear in our evidence would be reduced. Even at its greatest level of incidence, the number of paupers revealed represents less than 2% of the male population over the age of twelve.

Incidence of debt shows a different pattern, but it is an indicator of current difficulties rather than poverty. Nearly all of these incidences are of inter-tenant debt and although

some of them involve arable produce or livestock, most of them concern cash debt varying from 2d up to six marks. If the debtors had been poverty stricken then there would have been little point in pursuing the debt at the manor court where the plaintiffs clearly wanted their money back. The debtors were tenants with cash flow problems, or were not particularly conscientious about repaying loans. It is particularly noticeable that there was an increase in the numbers of debt cases between 1345 and 1349, during which time entry fines were at their highest level, pressure was being put on widows and garçiones to marry, population was increasing, demesne arable had already been reduced to less than 300 acres and no new landholdings were being created.

The concern over a lack of availability of landholdings for the increasing number of dependent males at a time when a number of tenants were having financial difficulties is quite apparent. It would be easy to think of this situation as a crisis, and to some extent it was, but we have to put it into perspective. Previously, fragmentation, offloading of demesne and reclamation had helped to solve the problem. However, fragmentation had occurred at a time when the lord was determined to directly manage the demesne and it had only affected half-virgates. By the 1340's lordly interest in demesne had diminished and as it would have been unrealistic to fragment holdings of 10 acres or less, it would have taken a lord with some dynamism and persuasive power to get half-virgaters and the better-off ferdellers to split up their

holdings as those tenants were major players in the manor court. Reclamation, to dry out more land for the creation of arable, would have required investment by the lord and there would have been a time lag before any benefits could have been accrued. The reality was that in Brent in the latter half of the 1340's they were tinkering with an economic problem just before the great pestilence saved them the action needed for another bout of reclamation.

The population growth of the 1340's was very gentle compared to that of 1260-1307. Pauperism appears to have been negligible and the mortality rate among garciones was low. The garcio population in the 1340's was about ninety below its peak around 1307 and more landholdings had been created since then. The incidence of debt in any year between 1345 and 1349 involved less than 2% of the customary tenantry.¹²⁰ Incidences of default on rent were even less. Heriots without animals represented just 18% of total heriot numbers as against the normal range of 26%-45% noted elsewhere. As with Dewindt's subsistence tenants at Holywell, there were holders of similar size holdings appearing in the 1327 Lay Subsidy, except that the mean level of assessment for Brent ferdellers was over four times the minimum level.

The 174 taxpayers listed in the 1327 Lay Subsidy represented about 40% of the estimated number of tenants in the early 1330's, or 45% of known tenants in 1307. This is

¹²⁰Based on known tenantry in 1307.

comparable today with the 40% that Hutton reckons to be privileged; those full-time employees and self employed who have held their jobs for over two years.¹²¹ Despite the appearance of some tenants who had been five acremen and three acremen, the majority of them must have been tenants of larger landholdings. Even Rodney Hilton acknowledged that larger tenants could prosper, but he drew attention to impoverished smallholders making up a third to a half of the population as a sign of hardship. Table 5.06 shows that the tenants of five acre, three acre and miscellaneous holdings made up 50% of the tenantry, yet we could not call them impoverished, not just because many of these holdings were not so small as their categorization might indicate, but because impoverishment would have made itself evident through substantial defaulting on rent, pauperization, inability to pay heriots and entry fines being sought for land in the hands of the lord. There were a small number of cases of land being put into the lord's hands in the immediate aftermath of the Black Death, but before 1349 land could be handed back to the lord for a variety of reasons, usually for the use of a nominated person. Such cases were not numerous and even then poverty was rarely, if ever, evident.

After a remarkable period of growth up to 1307, the people of Brent still appeared to be doing better than most people in Somerset during the first half of the fourteenth

¹²¹W.Hutton, The State We're In, (Vintage edition, 1996), pp.105-110. The rest of the population capable of working are divided into 30% unemployed and 30% insecure and marginalized.

century. It is difficult to find the despondent image presented by so many historians of English society in the years leading up to the Black Death. We can see anxiety about the shortage of arable between 1345-8, but this was not as serious as the situation that must have followed 1315 when there was a noticeable drop in the population. The anxiety of the 1340's was really about a shortage of arable necessary for sufficient supplies of cereals and beans for bread, ale, fodder and raising cash. Brent was spared the worst excesses of the first half of the fourteenth century by its abundance of pasture, which was probably part and parcel of each landholding, or at least existing as rough grazing open to all. Although Postan recognized that Brent probably benefited from the grazing of cattle, the incidences of trespass indicate that it was probably sheep that were the commonest grazing animal and that these provided the tenants with a much needed supplement to their cash income. As Barbara Harvey had noticed in the Fens, access to waste freed smallholders from dependence on arable. The Fens have much in common with the Somerset Levels and it is interesting that the most prosperous parts of Somerset revealed by the analysis of the Lay Subsidy, were those on or adjacent to wetland where there was an abundance of land too wet to be used for arable but which could provide lush grazing. It is perhaps the centrality of arable resources in the documentary sources and the relative ease with which these could be measured that has obscured the value of grassland, especially when it was liable to flood. When the scribes of 1086 called this estate Brentemerse, and

when John Saxton depicted on his map of 1575 the extensive Brentmarshe immediately to the south of Brent Knoll, they were revealing a feature that is obscure in the manorial documents, but very significant in the economy of Brent.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

This study of Brent is centred upon the ancient issue of who controlled the land and the relationship between lord and tenant. Any block of land has limits to its extent. These can be clearly defined boundaries following distinct natural features, or man-made ditches or fences. The concept of boundaries is old, perhaps inevitable when mankind's procreation led to a need to divide resources. Further increase in population would exacerbate the situation, leading to disputes over territorial rights culminating in the acceptance by the weaker party of who was in control, then assuming a subservient role or migrating elsewhere. The victor was generally the one with the greater resources: physical size and strength, the ability and willingness to inflict death and suffering, the proximity of overwhelming numerical superiority. It was the exercise of power. There was also the exercise of spiritual power, the ability to influence mankind's imagination. When military and spiritual power were combined, the potential for the misuse of that power was awesome.

The exercise of power centred around the balance between land and people. Whoever controlled the land naturally exercised power over the people who wanted access. The land contains the resources to sustain the people, but whoever

exercises power requires the acquiescence and the co-operation of the people to exploit the economic potential of the land to support his political power.

The landscape of Brent contains a myriad of boundaries: ditches, hedgerows, paths, roads, streams and rivers. They all represent a sub-division of power and yet at the same time a strengthening of power in that the holders of the fields are granted access to a resource with which to grow crops or graze livestock to provide for their lord, feed their dependents, set aside seed for the following year and exchange the surplus for commodities beyond the direct power of the landholder to produce. Without food or other means of exchange, the landlord's power could not be sustained, thus the field boundaries of Brent represent a sharing in which the landholders recognize that ownership lies elsewhere while the landlord recognizes the landholders' rights of usage that are almost tantamount to ownership, provided the tenant supplies the agreed rents and services.

A symbol of lordly power is the hill-fort on top of Brent Knoll. Whoever commanded this fort dominated the land towards Brean Down and the Mendips to the north, the Poldens to the south and towards Glastonbury in the east. He could also control the major coastal routes from the lowest crossing of the Parrett to the gaps in the Mendips. Tracks radiated strategically from the Knoll, facilitating military deployment, but also acting as supply routes to the fort. The

fort symbolized military might and the power to attack, but more importantly it had a defensive function and as such could also be a refuge for the community. In a defensive role, the lord was not only defending himself, but his community upon whom his power was based.

The indications of the existence of a villa on the alluvium imply the exercise of considerable power to drain that landscape and divide it by ditches and roads in order to exploit the agricultural potential of the land. Shortage of credible evidence hinders examination of how extensive the exploitation may have been. If the Roman artifacts found on the summit of the knoll had formed part of a temple, this has implications for the exercise of religious power over the minds of people living while it flourished, but as to which deity or deities were associated with it, and as to the physical extent of its dominance, we can only speculate.

While archaeological evidence may not be abundant, documentary evidence for Brent does not occur before the seventh century. All our documentary evidence concerning Brent up to the fourteenth century is lordly in origin; it was drawn up by clerks on behalf and for the benefit of lords and thus is concerned with the exercise of power. Yet the documents directly associated with the exercise of the centralized power of the state are relatively few: two copies of Anglo-Saxon charters, Domesday Book and the Lay Subsidies of 1327 and 1334. This relative unimportance of the

individual estate to central government is born out by the virtual absence of any mention of wars, magnates or items of national importance impinging on the affairs of the estate as reflected in the bulk of manorial documents. The reason for this is that lordship of Brent had been delegated to the Abbot of Glastonbury, and it is through him or rather his agents that we see the exercise of power, especially from the late twelfth century.

The sense of primacy given to Brent by the Glastonbury scribes in their copy of a grant by Ine is quite evident. It forms one of the earliest grants, it is clearly named and there is a certain ambivalence in the bounds that suggest that even then they were not sure how far they stretched. By referring to it as Brent Marsh they hint at the possibility that the estate had decayed since the Roman era. It was important to the Abbot because it was a large estate, the knoll could be seen standing proud on the western horizon from Glastonbury and it controlled Glastonbury's access to the sea.

Prior to the Norman Conquest it is difficult to ascertain the power of the Abbot in affairs of state. Some Abbots must have been able to exercise some influence over royalty, Dunstan being an outstanding example. After the conquest there can be little doubt that Abbots of Glastonbury were magnates of the realm. The king's interest in the choice of Abbot was enhanced by the fact that the Glastonbury barony constituted one of the wealthiest monastic landholdings in the

country, a bulwark of support for the king and a source of tax and military manpower. The upheaval in lordship brought about by the Conquest gave opportunities for energetic, determined and ambitious men to exercise their power and increase their fortunes. The marked increase in the cash value of Brent during the time of Abbot Thurstan as revealed in the Domesday Book reflects an interest in the economic resources of Brent and considerable success in realising its latent potential. Some of the credit for the improved cash value must be due to Thurstan's interest and administration, but the Domesday Book reveals certain clues to the economic well-being of Brent. The physical size of Brent as an estate is one factor, but the scale of demesne arable and its larger numbers of cattle and pigs is suggestive of more of a mixed farming economy than might be found on other large Glastonbury estates. The relatively large tenant population with its low number of servi and significant number of plough-teams indicates a tenantry that was enjoying good fortune, and if the demesne figures indicate a pattern of tenant economy it would seem that the function of pastoral agriculture was of considerable significance.

Thurstan's abuse of power, his removal from office and his payment of £500 to resume the Abbacy, indicate an insensitivity to those subject to him and his awareness of the barony's value. It also poses the question that if he was able to exploit the potency of the land of Brent, was he in fact exploiting the tenants? This seems unlikely because

Thurstan would probably be looking to improve the income from the barony, but Domesday reveals numerous estates, including substantial manors such as Wrington and Shapwick, in which there was no change in value since Thurstan became Abbot. Of all those whose values did increase, Middlezoy and Batcomb enjoyed percentage increases of over 100%, but they started from a lower base and despite a combined hideage of thirty-two their aggregate value was still less than Brent's. Compared with all the other Glastonbury estates, Brent's value in 1086 was not just the highest, but its economic growth during the time of Thurstan's abbacy was astonishing. Bearing in mind the potential in the cash value to influence levels of taxation, there must have been a temptation to undervalue, while the £50 quoted for the estate minus the sub-tenants and Edingworth is suggestive of a rounded estimate that they were confident it could easily yield.

Another energetic Abbot, Henry of Blois (1126-71), exercised his power to restore the fortunes of the Abbey. Downturns in the economy of the barony appear to have coincided with gaps in the Abbacy when Glastonbury would have been in the hands of crown administrators who had the power to divert issues of the estates away from the Abbey. Henry of Blois' strong control was used as a yardstick in Henry of Sully's survey when he became Abbot in 1189 after another period of crown administration. The compilers of the Sully survey were often considering whether a piece of ex-demesne would be more useful under direct management. There is a

sense in the Sully survey that farming out of demesne had reduced the Abbey's control of its resources, resulting in the move to the direct management of demesne which was evidently in place by the time of the Amesbury survey of 1235.

This active participation in the management of its demesnes must have brought the abbey into a more intimate relationship with its tenants, which served to strengthen lordly power, not just by being a partner in agriculture with tenants, but also by improving and increasing its administrative operations in devising and recording accounts of its estates as well as recording the business of the manor courts. The keeping of such documentation reflected a desire on the part of the Abbey to tighten control over its estates. It was partly following fashion in that other estates were being subjected to a similar degree of control, although it was more akin to adopting a new form of technology, the benefits of which were apparent to the landlords.

The recording of accounts and manorial court business was certainly valuable as an aide memoire to the lord's agents. Customary practice determined the outcome of disputation before the court. Prior to the keeping of written records, the custom of the manors was dependent upon memory, in which the steward and his clerks were at a disadvantage as the term of their tenure of office was limited, whereas the collective memory of any jury of tenants whose families had a strong interest in the preserving of their rights, probably outgunned

the officials in the mastery of custom. The emphasis in early customals is on the services expected of individual tenants, but even in later customals where the expectations and perquisites of manorial officials and the community are set out, they are not comprehensive. The monastic officials would have had the advantage of education, some legal training and the access to legal expertise. They would also have benefited from a sense of authority in that they were the representatives of the landlord. They could act as prosecutor, judge and impose fines.

The maintenance of written records reflects a concern to increase control over the lord's resources and must, to some degree, be a response to the difficulty of meeting their outgoings from their income. The freedom to pursue their monastic ideals was dependent upon managing resources in the real world. They knew their estates were not a bottomless pit, but there was a sense towards the end of the twelfth century that they were more akin to a leaking sieve. There was an awareness that they had been run well during Bishop Henry's time, therefore it had to be possible to improve management and income. It is likely that initially the adoption of direct management of demesne improved the income, but its success depended on the exercise of increased levels of lordly power via customary officials supervising labour services on the lord's behalf. Since the 1250's we know from the accounts that yields of wheat were poor and oats only moderate. This had probably been the case before the 1250's,

but we know that over the next century direct arable income from the demesne declined while income from rents grew, representing an adjustment in the exercise of power in the light of economic and social realities. The relative prosperity of lord and tenant depended on their mutual resources.

The lord's power in Brent was limited by the interests of the tenants, so his potency to over-ride their wishes was restricted by the fact that manorial legislature was constrained by custom and that he depended largely for his executive upon customary officials such as reeves and haywards appointed from the customary tenants. These men had to be trusted and respected by both lord and tenants if services were to be performed and dues collected. A weakening of trust and respect would result in a qualitative and quantitative reduction of services and diminution of cash income. The landlord's ultimate sanction, the deprivation of a tenant's right to a holding, would have required physical coercion by an external force if it was contrary to the interests of the community, which would only have served to damage the relationship between lord and tenants further and taken years to remedy. The lord's basic interest had to be to maintain the integrity of the estate and to foster its prosperity for the benefit the monastery.

Strong lordship was also in the interests of the tenants. It gave them security of tenure and they knew that when they

died that the integrity of the holding would be maintained and pass on to their heirs as supervised by the court free from the fear of some grasping neighbour muscling his way in. The custom of the manor had set out priorities for problems of inheritance arising out of consecutive marriages. Where there were disputes, juries of the community were brought into play, but they appreciated the role of the steward as a referee. The system of pledges, whereby all men over the age of twelve needed tenants to guarantee suit of court, performance of services and payment of dues on pain of a fine, enhanced the sense of community and through an element of self-interest, gave an added sense of social responsibility.

The manor court was of use to both lord and tenant. Most inter-tenant disputes involving property could be settled within the court and their rights of entry recorded. The lord used it to endorse and bolster the work of the executive, to collect dues and levy fines, but more importantly for his steward to be seen to be carrying out the functions of the lord by administering the machinery of local government. The exercise of lordship did not go unchallenged however, for enquiries were possible for tenants to seek protection from unjust demands, as in 1262 when the four villages paid £1 for an enquiry in which they appealed successfully against Abbot Michael's unjust compulsion of them performing carrying duties at Were for three years.¹ Most of the enquiries concerned inter-tenurial matters, but even these required the permission

¹Longleat Ms.10682 m.9.

of the steward to proceed, as he would fine the hallmoot for enquiries initiated without his permission. Jury and steward did not necessarily agree, as in the case of setting values for entry fines on the widows in 1348, but the important issue concerning the power of lordship is that the manor court gave the tenants an opportunity to air their grievances, to seek justice and to share in the management of the community's landholdings and associated resources.

The move into direct management was perhaps seen as a mixed blessing. It may well have helped to increase the Abbot's control over Brent, but the yield of wheat and oats was disappointing and the demesne was hard pressed to satisfy the demands of the Abbey. Administration was costly, although it is doubtful if this would have been significantly reduced by farming out the demesne. It probably helped the Abbey overcome the problem of inflation as far as its income from demesne was concerned, but as for rents on ancient tenures, custom had pegged redditus at long established levels. However, there were factors at work which enabled the Abbey to overcome the problem of customary rents and reduce its commitment to demesne agriculture: a rising population and the availability of land for reclamation. The growth in population enabled the lord to unload parcels of Overlond without associated labour services but with a higher rent per acre than the ancient tenures. The difference between the acreage of offloaded demesne and the acreage taken on by tenants was such that there must have been reclamation from

the moors. The emphasis on drainage services, as well as sea defences, indicates the wetland nature of much of Brent's landscape. The setting out of hitherto unknown categories of landholdings in the Fromond survey is the strongest evidence we have of the expansion of tenant agriculture, yet as the rising level of rents indicates, the expansion of tenant holdings carried on possibly for another generation.

Between 1257 and 1333, the increasing income, mainly from rents, while agrarian income declined, meant that it was increasingly in the lord's interest to develop tenant opportunities to improve their income, as it was in their potential to succeed on which the Abbey depended for its major source of income. This did not mean that the cellarer and his clerks were any less diligent in pursuing the lord's business and levying fines on those tenants who failed to perform their labour services satisfactorily, especially in mowing meadows and scouring ditches.

We are left in no doubt by the medieval surveys about the importance of scouring the various water-courses, and the accounts pay particular attention to the maintenance of thetas and bridges. The value of the fisheries and the services owed in carrying the lord's wine by boat add to our understanding of the place of water in the economy of Brent. This watery aspect expands the interests of the community beyond the parochial bounds as we learn of the requirement for walling and ditching in Thurlemere where the men of Brent share access

to grazing with the lords of other manors and especially the tenants of the Dean of Wells. Historical maps clearly show the strategic importance of the Mark Yeo, both as a drain and a transport artery. If men, underwood, timber, stone and wine could be transported by boat via Rockesmulle, then so could a plethora of other commodities. More importantly, the major water courses received water from the smaller rhines and ditches that drained the fields of Brent, without which the alluvium would have been too wet to support arable agriculture. This is just one aspect that illustrates the advantages to the customary tenants of Brent in being subject to the Abbot of Glastonbury, because the amount of drainage provided by a ditch around a field would be very limited unless it formed part of a network connected to large watercourses emptying into the sea. There are lower lying and wetter lands between Brent and Glastonbury, and the Abbot and the Dean would have been just as interested in draining estates in those areas as in Brent and Mark. The Mark Yeo, in connecting the rivers Axe and Brue, was a sophisticated civil engineering achievement reflecting breadth of vision as to how to improve the economy of the landscape. Even if the Mark Yeo and other significant water-courses such as Pitland Rhyne have earlier origins, great credit must still be given to the medieval lords for recognizing the importance of these features by taking a strong interest in their maintenance, not just as drains and canals, but also as irrigation channels by providing for the building and maintenance of thetas. From all this great work, the tenants of Brent benefited, yet they

themselves could not have carried out such an integrated scheme by themselves; it required lordly power over a bigger area with the ability to envisualize what could be done to benefit the pays, the willingness to invest and the persuasive power to co-ordinate the work of construction and maintenance.

While attention to drainage and irrigation made possible an increase in the number of landholdings and an expansion of tenant arable, the initial impact of drainage in wetland has to be to improve it sufficiently for use as grazing. We are left in little doubt about the importance of the pastoral economy of Brent from the scale of trespass, especially by sheep, disputes over the amount collected for wool tax and the high percentage of animal heriots. Yet it would be wrong to think of Brent as a predominantly pastoral economy. Even the smallest category of ancient holdings had a primary interest in arable, as evidenced by the fugitive William Sewy. Listed as a three-acreman in 1307, William had been cultivating eight acres when his holding was seized in 1314; including half an acre under wheat, two acres under oats and four acres under beans and probably a further half-acre under barley.²

The nature of the landscape, along with a strong administration, enabled the customary tenants to benefit from access to resources in other parts of the barony and the large scale drainage that served the agricultural interests of the central Somerset levels. The facility to graze livestock both

²Longleat Mss.10766 mm.29-32 & 10771 m.10r-v.

within and beyond the parochial boundaries of Brent, provided the tenants with an agrarian economy in which it would seem that there was a larger pastoral component than was usual. This mixed agriculture was able to sustain a population during a period of rapid growth. The relative prosperity of the estate in Domesday was revealed again in the 1327 Lay Subsidy, in which a high proportion of places with similar landscape resources to Brent were also doing well.

Brent was not immune to environmental, economic and social pressures. The management of the water included defending the land against flood and it was clear that when a bank was breached, the cry would be raised and tenants were expected to combat the great peril. The growth of population increased the pressure on tenants to provide for their dependants, which with the help of the lord was made possible by the diminution of the demesne, the increase in the size of landholdings and the creation of new ones. Nevertheless, there were finite limits to what could be done to improve the quantity of land suitable for agriculture. The renewed growth in population evident in the 1340's increased the pressure on the land supply and was reflected by the increasing price per acre in entry fines, but it is debateable as to how serious this situation was in the minds of the people of Brent at the time bearing in mind that the population had peaked over thirty years previously.

The poor downtrodden serf, subject to the exactions of an

oppressive lord while struggling to eke out a living from inadequate acreage, is an image contrary to that yielded by the surviving evidence for Brent. The society was hierarchical and largely unfree, but this seemed to work to the advantage of the community working within the tightly organized structure of the manor in which there was a strong awareness of rights and obligations. The community underwent a period of economic growth, certainly from the eleventh century through to the first half of the fourteenth century and although this brought with it the concomitant pressures of population growth on the land supply, working in tandem, lord and tenant were able to respond to those pressures with a pragmatic field system, adding to the acreage under cultivation, while having access to grazing within and beyond Brent. The regular monitoring of the estate revealed that the operation of custom within the manorial system contained checks and balances that may have been frustrating at times but provided a means by which lord and tenant worked for the benefit of the community. The tenants gained from being part of the barony with substantial capital schemes and having a system of management that enhanced the sense of community. The Abbot gained, despite the pin-pricks of unpaid fines or concealed heriots, by possessing a large estate from which he enjoyed increasing returns, most of which originated from tenant rents which had been facilitated by an expansion of their landholdings together with a significant pastoral activity that provided them with the ability to pay their rents and dues and remain largely free from distress.

Appendix

How yield figures are calculated from marginal respondit notes.

It is not possible to calculate yields prior to 1282/3 as respondit figures are not given before then.

Let us take the wheat yield for 1282/3 as an example. The grain issue was:

From East Brent and La Pulle	16q 0b
From New Grange	114q 0b
Curral	14q 2b
Total	<u>144q 2b</u>

This is a net figure, i.e. it does not include wheat from the Mill or outside manors or New Grain.

The marginal respondit note states that the issue was se altero, i.e. they got twice as much out as they put in.

∴ they must have sown $144q\ 2b \div 2 = 72q\ 1b$

At a sowing rate of 2b per acre they must have sown $288\frac{1}{2}$ acres.

∴ the yield per acre was $144q\ 2b \div 288\frac{1}{2} = 4b$ per acre.

∴ the sowing rate was 2b per acre, the yield per seed was 2b.

The case above was fairly straightforward, but if we take 1302-3 as a more complex example, we have to deal with a respondit of se altero + 13q.

∴ We have to take the net issue	= 167q 1b
convert it to bushels	= 1337b
subtract 13q (104 bushels) because the net yield was 13q more than <u>se altero</u>	= 1233
Divide by 2 to arrive at the seed sown	= 616 $\frac{1}{2}$ b

To find the acreage sown, the compotus reveals that the sowing rate was 2b per acre,

∴ divide $616\frac{1}{2}$ by 2 = 308 $\frac{1}{2}$ acres

∴ Yield per acre was the Net Issue divided by acres sown, i.e. $1337 \div 308\frac{1}{2} = 4.3$

∴ Yield per seed was the Net Issue divided by the amount of seed sown in bushels, i.e. $1337 \div 616\frac{1}{2} = 2.2$

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Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to many people:

Dr. Harold Fox, my supervisor, for the interest he has shown in this research and his forbearance with wit and humour of my mistakes and wayward ideas;

Staff and fellow students in the Department of English Local History, for their encouragement, kindness and friendship;

My employers, Torells School and Essex County Council, who by granting me a sabbatical in 1986-7, enabled me to study for an M.A. that paved the way for this later research;

Dr. Alan Macfarlane and Dr. Sarah Green of the Department of Social Anthropology, University of Cambridge, for kindly providing me with database software and seeing it through its teething problems;

Librarians, curators and archivists at Leicester University Library, Basildon Public Library, Essex Record Office, Somerset County Record Office, Thurrock Local History Museum, the British Library and the Public Record Office. Thanks especially to David Bromwich of the Somerset Local Studies unit in Taunton for his rapid and courteous service;

Somerset County Council Planning department, for their sites and monuments record;

Kay McGuire of Torells School and Prontaprint in Wickford for reprographic services;

Dr. Margaret Camsell, for teaching medieval palaeography and encouraging me to 'think medieval';

Prof. Mick Aston and Nick Corcos for sharing ideas on landscape;

Mike Thompson for sharing techniques on compoti and demography;

Tony Purkiss for guiding me through mathematical calculations;

Dr. Lesley Abrams for thoughts on charters;

Randall Bingley, Vernon Toms, John Williams, Dorothy Humphries, Scott Allan, Peter Calaminus, Oswald Swan and Miss Brice all made a valuable contribution, of which they are probably oblivious, but to them I shall always be grateful;

The people of Brent, today, for their hospitality, and in the past for the tantalising clues that they left behind;

Above all, thanks are due to my family for their patience, tolerance, support and encouragement; without which this research could not have been accomplished.