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Field-names in reconstructing late Anglo-Saxon agricultural land-use in the Bourn Valley, West Cambridgeshire

Susan Oosthuizen

Introduction

This study complements work already published on the persistence of prehistoric field boundaries and huge, pre-open field greens and commons in the medieval open fields of the Bourn Valley, a tributary of the River Cam, west Cambridgeshire (Figure 1), as well as the discovery of a possible middle Anglo-Saxon proto-open field system in the valley (Oosthuizen 2002b, 2003 and forthcoming). It uses pre-enclosure field and furlong names to reconstruct late Anglo-Saxon agricultural practice at the time – probably in the tenth or eleventh centuries AD – that open fields were extended across the parishes of west Cambridgeshire.

Figure 1. Location map of study area. Source: A. Leaver.

By AD 1300, 'classic' open field farming was well-established in the parishes of the Bourn Valley (Postgate 1964; Fig. 2). Almost all of the available land of each parish lay under the plough. In some parishes like Kingston and Toft, the arable was divided into two fields; in others like Comberton and Bourn, it was divided into the classic three. Land hunger had become so intense that even land along watercourses which was constantly under threat of flooding was taken into cultivation, only to be abandoned in the climatic and population downturn of the following half-century. This land was so difficult to plough that it was never cultivated again, and modern farmers cannot believe that it was ever used for growing crops, despite the evidence of ridge and furrow (which has only survived into the present century because it is on marginal land).

This landscape of fully cultivated open fields was recorded in a range of mostly post-medieval documentary sources including charters, terriers, accounts, maps, enclosure awards and so on. The many field-names recorded in these documents are both rich and vivid. For example, the extract below from an eighteenth century terrier for Great Eversden describes the landscape of Brook Field, one of the two great open fields in the parish (CUL QC15/23):

> The upper and lower new close
> abutting Toft way on the west
> and on Toft brook east…
> One land on fowlmire leys on the
> north
> One land in red land abutting on Toft
> Brook in the north…
> One land abutting on fullbrook east
> and foulmore lay balk north
> One land of sward land called the
> marsh…
> One land called dead dowl piece
> abutting upon Comberton brook
> One land abutting on offils way west, a
> way walk on both sides…

The information given in this terrier describes two landscapes. Firstly, the eighteenth century landscape of open field strips, of small streams and access ways, of arable converted to pasture leys, of land which may always have been pasture, and of soil colour. The names themselves, however, seem to record an older landscape: 'sward land *called the marsh*' (my emphasis) had once presumably been marsh, and Dead Dole may have been the site where ancient burials had been found. Fowlmire recorded the muddy water that flooded this area from the Full (foul) Brook; and Offil is a contraction of 'old' and 'feld', perhaps indicating ancient common (Oosthuizen 2002a).

David Hall has suggested that the more ancient landscape revealed by these names may record the character of the landscape at the time that the furlongs of the open fields were first taken into cultivation. He has argued that field-names are likely to 'reflect ancient topography, such as the presence of heaths, moors, or woodland' because furlong names containing these elements must be
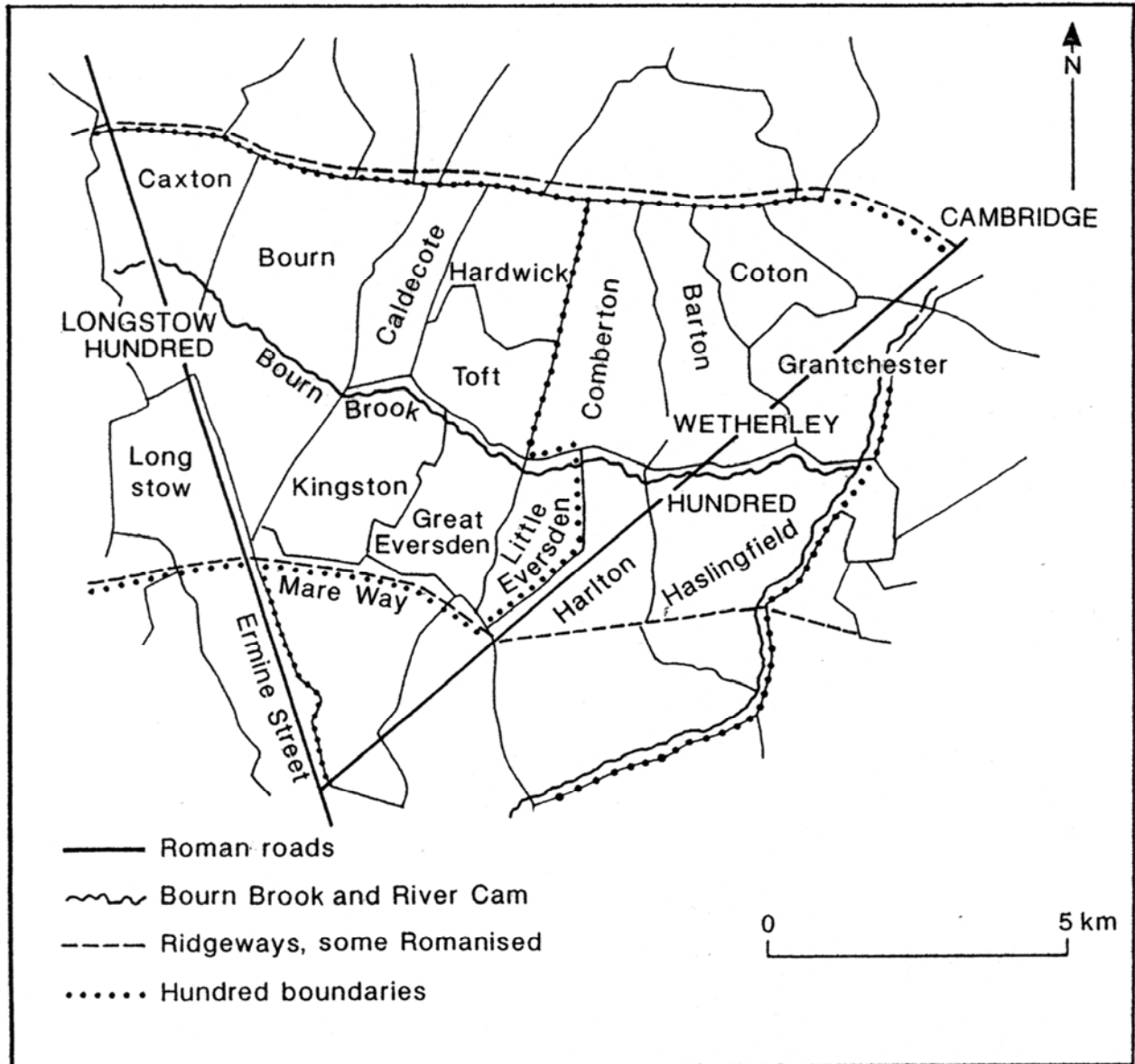
Figure 3. The Bourn Brook in flood at Toft, October 2000. Source: S. Oosthuizen.

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Source: S. Oosthuizen.

referring to a pre-arable landscape. Their names would be different if they referred to the landscape of the open fields themselves (Hall 1982, 1985). If this is the case, then an analysis of field-names 'would allow a fairly precise reconstruction of a county's landscape in the later Saxon period' (Hall 1985: 63). This is the premise underlying the work reported here.

Sources and methods

Field-names are numerous, local in use and derived from local conditions. They describe soil, drainage, vegetation, ownership and usage, location, productivity, archaeology or even an event. Their meanings may remain continuously fresh (referring to soil, drainage, location or crop), or may become archaic (describing archaeological finds, the original vegetation at the time of being taken into cultivation, or ownership).
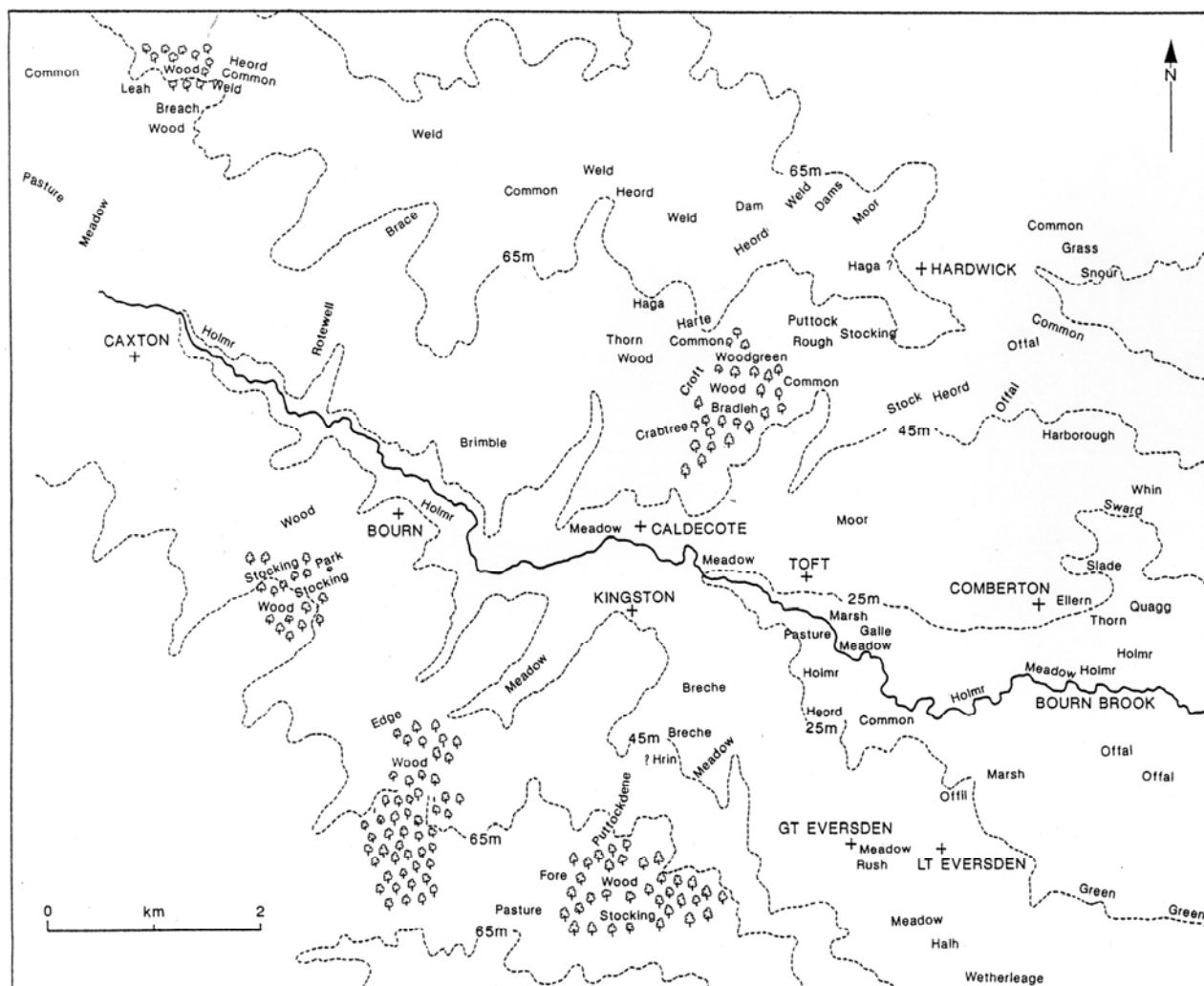
Figure 4. Locatable pre-Parliamentary enclosure names of furlongs, closes, fields, woods and watercourses in the Bourn Valley.
Source: P. Judge.

They appear to be a relatively reliable source for exploring the character of the later Anglo-Saxon landscape since they can persist for centuries. Puttokeswell in Kingston for example, was mentioned in a charter of about 1189 and again in a terrier of 1786 (Hassall 1949: 81; CUL QC 17/16-22). Puttockesrou Field in Hardwick was noted in 1251 and had the same name in 1639 (CUL EDR G3/27 and EDR H1). This conclusion is supported by work elsewhere, such as at Sherington in Buckinghamshire, where 75% of names in use in the open fields in 1300 were still in use in 1580 (Baines 1996: 167-168). As a result, "…inferences [about the origins of field-names] from the ample documentation of the thirteenth century to the illiterate settlement period may not appear too hazardous. The medieval records [of Sherington] appear to reflect an agrarian situation which had stabilised before the Norman Conquest" (Baines 1996: 172, my additions in parentheses).

The method followed here was to identify and map as far as possible all the names of furlongs, closes, fields, woods and watercourses in the study area (Fig. 4), since they might record, however opaquely, land-use at or just

before the time that open field agriculture spread across each parish.

Woodland

The mapping of surviving woodland together with field-names denoting lost woodland and/or assarts may illuminate the extent of woodland regeneration in the valley before the late Anglo-Saxon period. It may also demonstrate the extent to which the landscape of the valley was cleared in the late Anglo-Saxon period when open fields were first created.

The ancient woods of the Bourn Valley – Bourn, Eversden, Hardwick, Kingston and Swansley (Caxton) Woods – mostly lie on the flat, poorly-drained boulder clay plateaux which bound the valley to north and south (Figs. 6-10). The only exception is Hardwick Wood, which lies half way up the valley slope on a flat spur between two tributaries of the Brook. Their locations confirm Rackham's statement that 'woods are not on land that was good for growing trees, but on land that was bad for anything else' (Rackham 1986: 98).

Figure 5. Toft, Cambridgeshire, looking south. There is medieval ridge and furrow in the foreground, in an area whose furlong names refer almost exclusively to arable cultivation. In the middle distance lie the meadows of the Bourn Brook. The medieval northern boundary of the meadow is now followed by a modern fence, below the ridge and furrow. The medieval fields of Great Eversden lie on the slopes in the distance. Source: S. Oosthuizen.
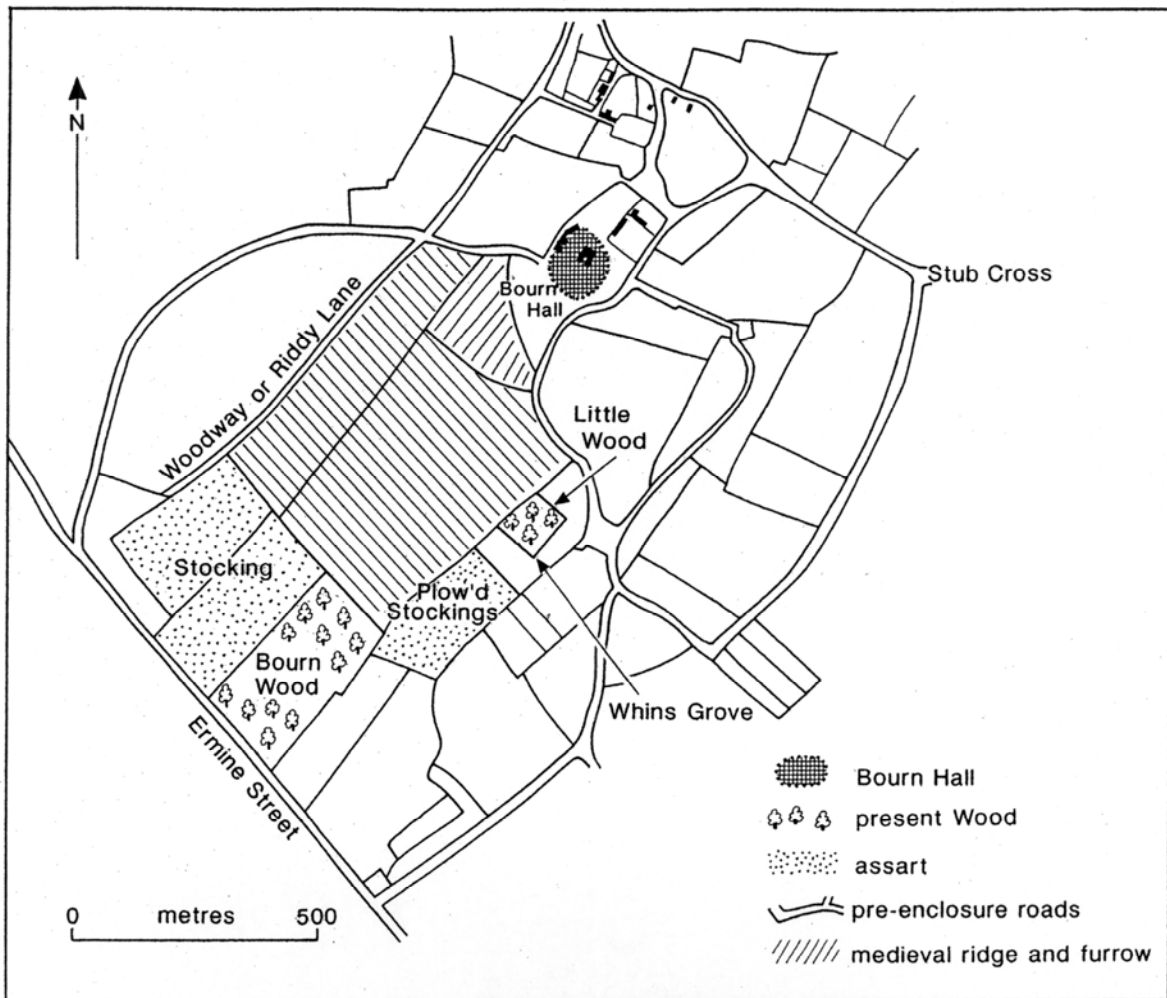

Figure 6. Bourn Wood before 1820. Drawing: P. Judge, after ChC parish map of the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. Source: C., CCRO Q/RDc35.

medieval ridge and furrow
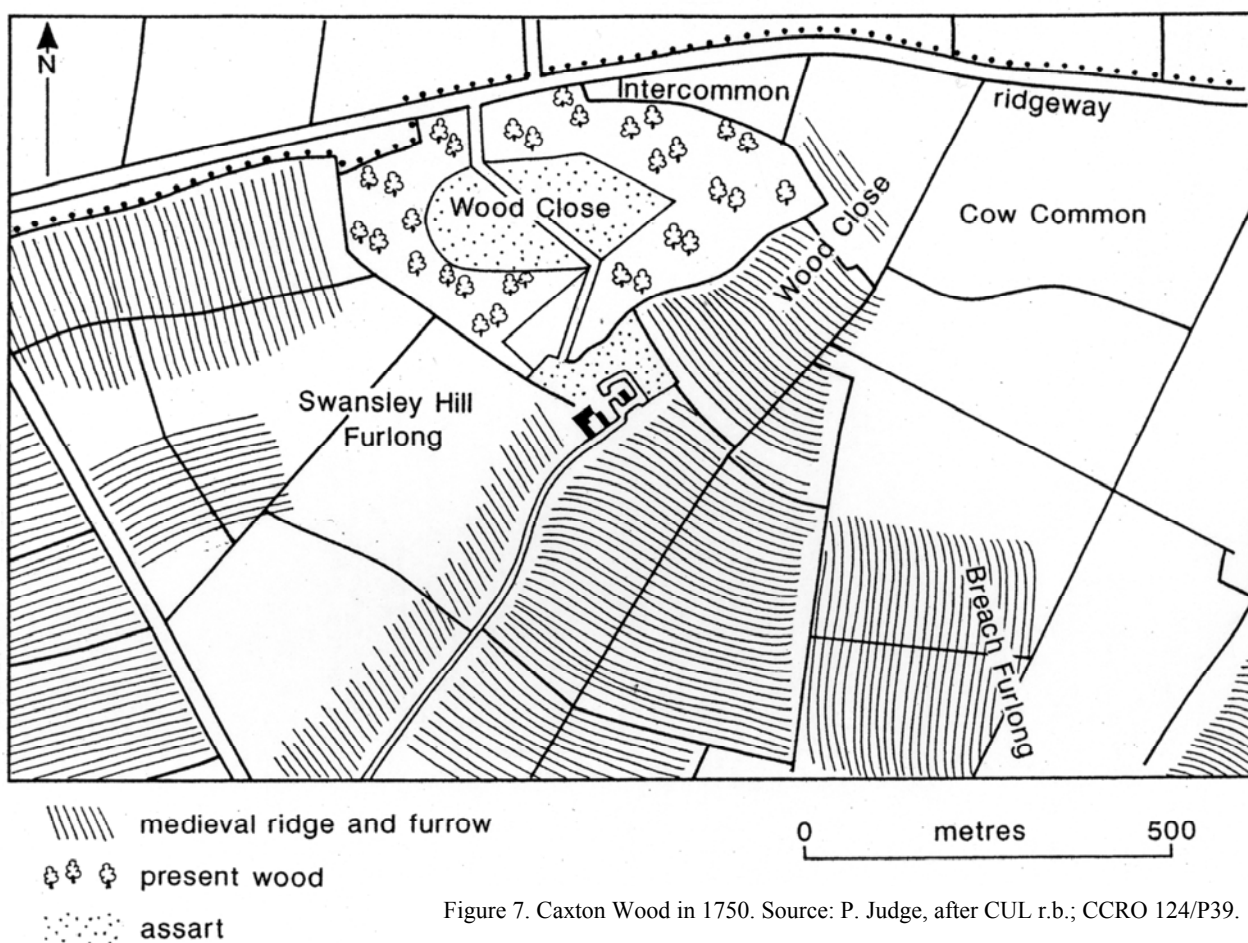
present wood

assart

0   metres   500

Figure 7. Caxton Wood in 1750. Source: P. Judge, after CUL r.b.; CCRO 124/P39.

There is a little evidence for the existence of other small (now lost) groves or woodland scrub in other parts of the valley during the medieval period. It is possible, for example, that a wood called Brockholt (*broc* 'badger' plus *holt* 'wood') lay towards the north-west of Caxton, where an ancient freehold estate with the same name had been created by 1154 (Palmer 1927: 63, 65; *Victoria County History* 5: 29). Lost woods in Caldecote are indicated by the name of William ate Wode, who lived somewhere in the parish in 1327, and by Mitchell's Wood in the same parish (location unknown), which may be related to a Robert Michel who was living there in 1341 (Evelyn-White n.d.: 52; Reaney 1943: 327-328). But these appear to have been small, managed groves rather than part of an extensive belt of woodland.

Although there is no definitive evidence about the forms of woodland in the valley in 1086, something can be inferred from the *Domesday Book* and its contemporaries, *ICC* and *IE* (*Inquisition Comitatus Cantabrigiensis* and *Inquisitio Eliensis*). All three sources made a distinction between *silva* or 'wood', and *nemus* or 'grove'. *Silva*, particularly where it was enumerated in terms of pigs, appears to have indicated woodland that was so extensive that it included both dense unmanaged woodland and areas of wood pasture for grazing, that is grassland scattered with pollard trees; whereas *nemus* seems to have been used for 'specific areas of [managed]

woodland of limited extent' – typical of areas where woodland was a relatively scarce resource (Hooke 1989: 121; Wager 1998: 10-11, my addition in parentheses).[1]

Of fourteen estates in the Bourn Valley where woodland was recorded in *DB*, all but one contained woods classed as *nemus*. Only part of Eversden Wood was called *silva*. It is possible that there may have been one more – although *DB* and *IE* both referred to Picot's woodland in Bourn as *nemus*, *ICC* referred to it as *silva* (*DB* 32:23; *IE* 88-89; *VCH* 1: 425).

This impression of limited areas of managed woodland rather than extensive acres of wildwood and wood pasture in the valley is supported by their use, recorded in *DB*, for fencing, houses or fuel rather than for pannage. These rights sometimes persisted: as late as the mid-nineteenth century. The inhabitants of Hardwick for example, still had the right to cut 'ringe' (one bundle of fencing or the amount collected from ⅛ acre), and to collect underwood in Hardwick Wood (CCRO Q/RDc 51; PC H.I.11; Rackham 1967: 83 n.3). By contrast, not one wood in the Bourn Valley in 1086 was estimated in terms of the number of pigs who might pannage within it.

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[1] Managed woodland usually includes standard trees, generally oak, among coppice trees cropped every eight to thirteen years (Rackham 2000). Animals are incompatible with managed woodland since they graze on the new shoots of coppiced stools.
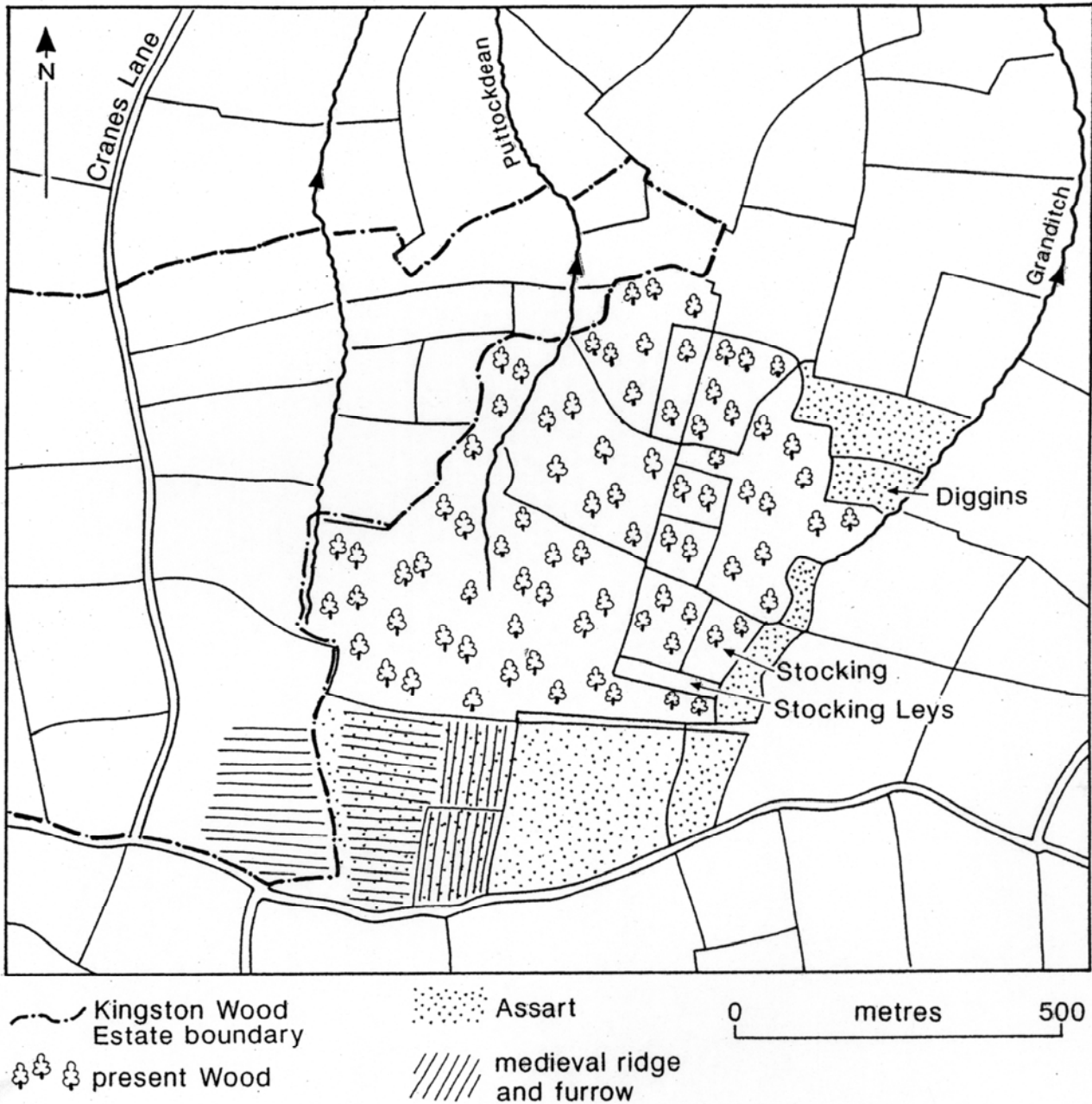
Figure 8. Eversden Wood in 1811. Source: P. Judge, after CCRO Q/RDc 19.

The evidence of Domesday Book therefore suggests that by the late eleventh century, such woodland as survived was a small and carefully managed and limited resource; it seems likely that almost all the land of the valley was arable or pasture.

An analysis of field-names leads to a similar conclusion. A continuous band of pasture seems to have lain along the higher ground in the valley when the open fields were introduced (Fig. 4). The We(a)ld, an area of managed, often intensively grazed, pasture, was preserved in a number of field-names running westwards along the clay-topped plateau of the northern ridge from Hardwick (*The Weald* 1615), across Caldecote (*weld* 1597) and Bourn (*Burneweld* 1464) to Caxton (*Chakestunesweald circa.* 1150) (CUL EDR/H1; Reaney 1943: 54; *VCH* 5: 29). The

name suggests that it was probably more like 'sheep pasture characterised by isolated stands of wood' than the 'relatively lightly-spread woodland' generally implied by 'wold' (Fox 2000: 51; Hooke 1978: 333-334).

This conclusion is supported by the fact that there seems to be very little evidence of assart in field boundaries and furlong names. Except in the immediate proximity of the existing woods, there are few names indicating assarting on these plateaux, and most furlongs near ancient woods tend to be large and regular, rather than small and irregular. Those field boundaries and names that do indicate assart suggest that, at their largest, these woods were probably not much more than about two or three times their present area (Figs. 6-10). Generally, the woods of the Bourn Valley seem to have achieved their
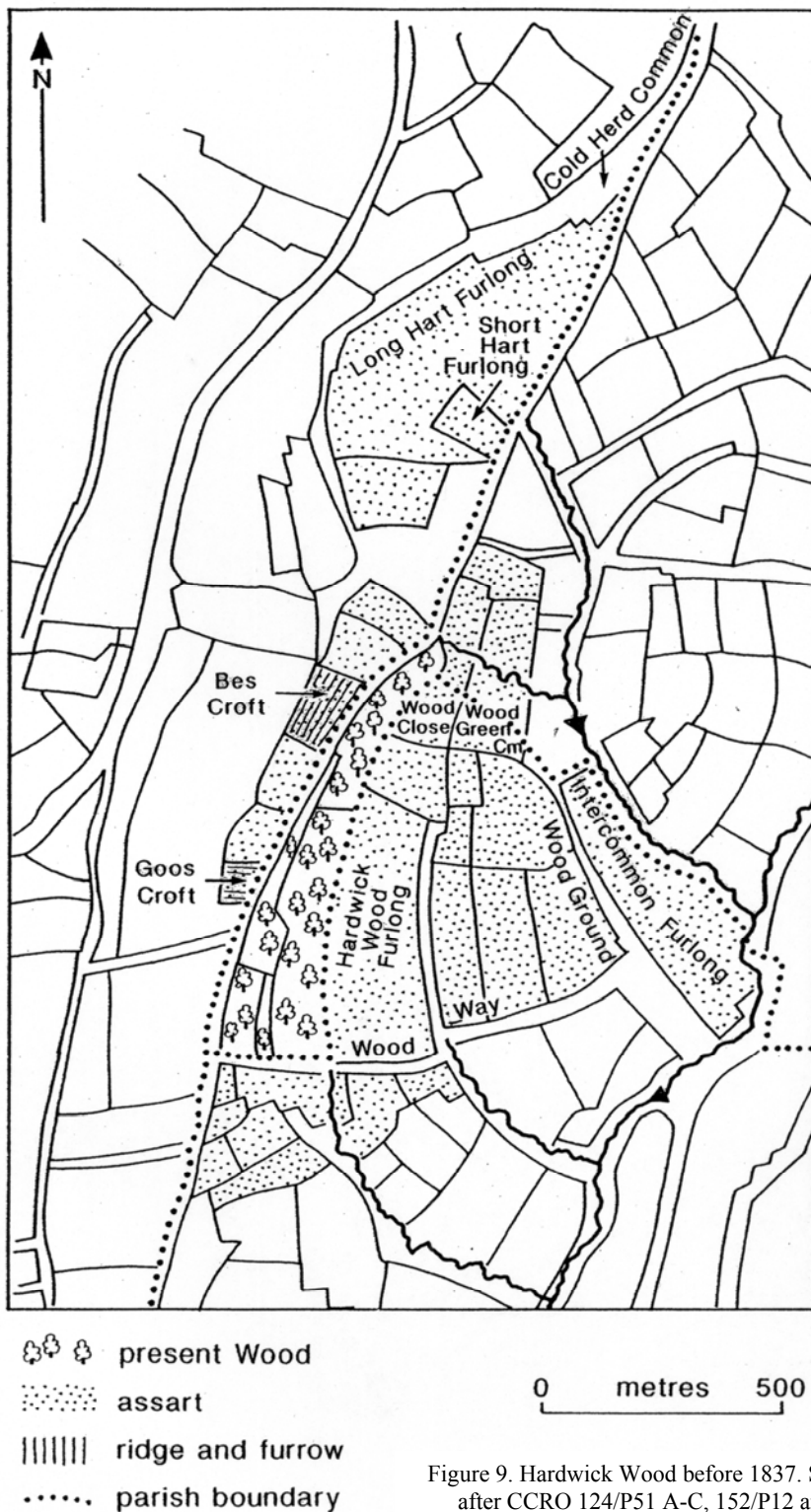
Figure 9. Hardwick Wood before 1837. Source: P. Judge,
after CCRO 124/P51 A-C, 152/P12 and Q/RDc 51.

present size, more or less, by the eleventh or twelfth centuries (Postgate 1964; Rackham 2000).[2]

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[2] The extent of these woods varied significantly over the medieval and post-medieval periods. For example, there is medieval ridge and furrow under parts of both Eversden and Kingston Woods, and Hardwick Wood can be shown to have been a fraction of its present size at enclosure in 1856 (.; CCRO Q/RDc 51; PC H.II; Rackham 1980: 138-139; P. Reynolds pers. comm.). Bourn Wood, which measured 19½ acres by the early nineteenth century, may have covered only 10 acres in 1279 (ChC Survey 1820; *Rot. Hund. ii.*: 524, 523).

For example, the sinuous character of footpaths east of Kingston Wood and the way in which they appear to perpetuate former boundaries of the wood boundary seem to reveal an earlier, maximum extent of the wood not very far east of the present boundary of the wood (Fig. 10). The regular pattern of field boundaries further east between Kingston Wood and Eversden Woods suggest that this area had been open country for millennia.
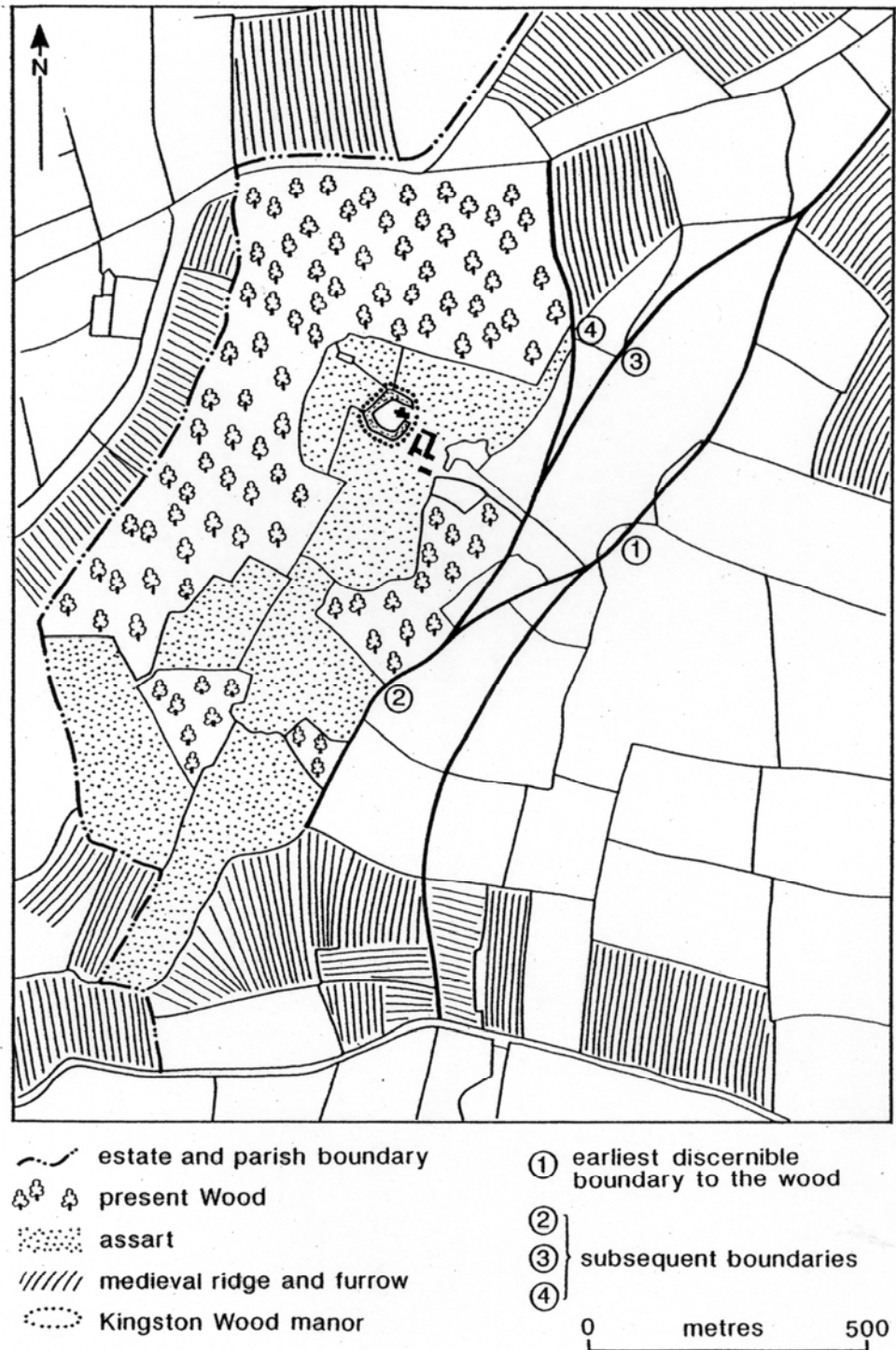
Figure 10. Kingston Wood in 1720. Source: P. Judge, after CCRO R52/12/5/1.

Figure 11(a) shows the field boundaries of the Kingston Wood estate as they were in 1720. Fig. 11(b) is a map regression that shows the effect of removing those boundaries which are assumed to be the latest to be created, in the later medieval or early modern periods when arable was converted to pasture, and open field furlongs were subdivided into closes. They have been identified by the way in which they abut against longer, more continuous boundaries, at a T-junction (Oosthuizen 2003). Their removal reveals the characteristic aratral (or 'reversed-S') curved boundaries of open field furlongs,

reuniting Great and Little Needhams (1720) into one furlong, and the portions of Bendoles (*ben* 'bean' plus *dāl* 'portion or share of land' 1720) (CCRO R52/12/5/1; Reaney 1943: 318-319). The boundaries which had subdivided these furlongs may have been created in the climatic downturn of the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries – in 1326, some of these poorly-drained clay fields 'lay *frisca et inculta*' (overgrown and uncultivated), at the same time that demesne meadow and pasture increased on the estate (*VCH* 5: 115-6).
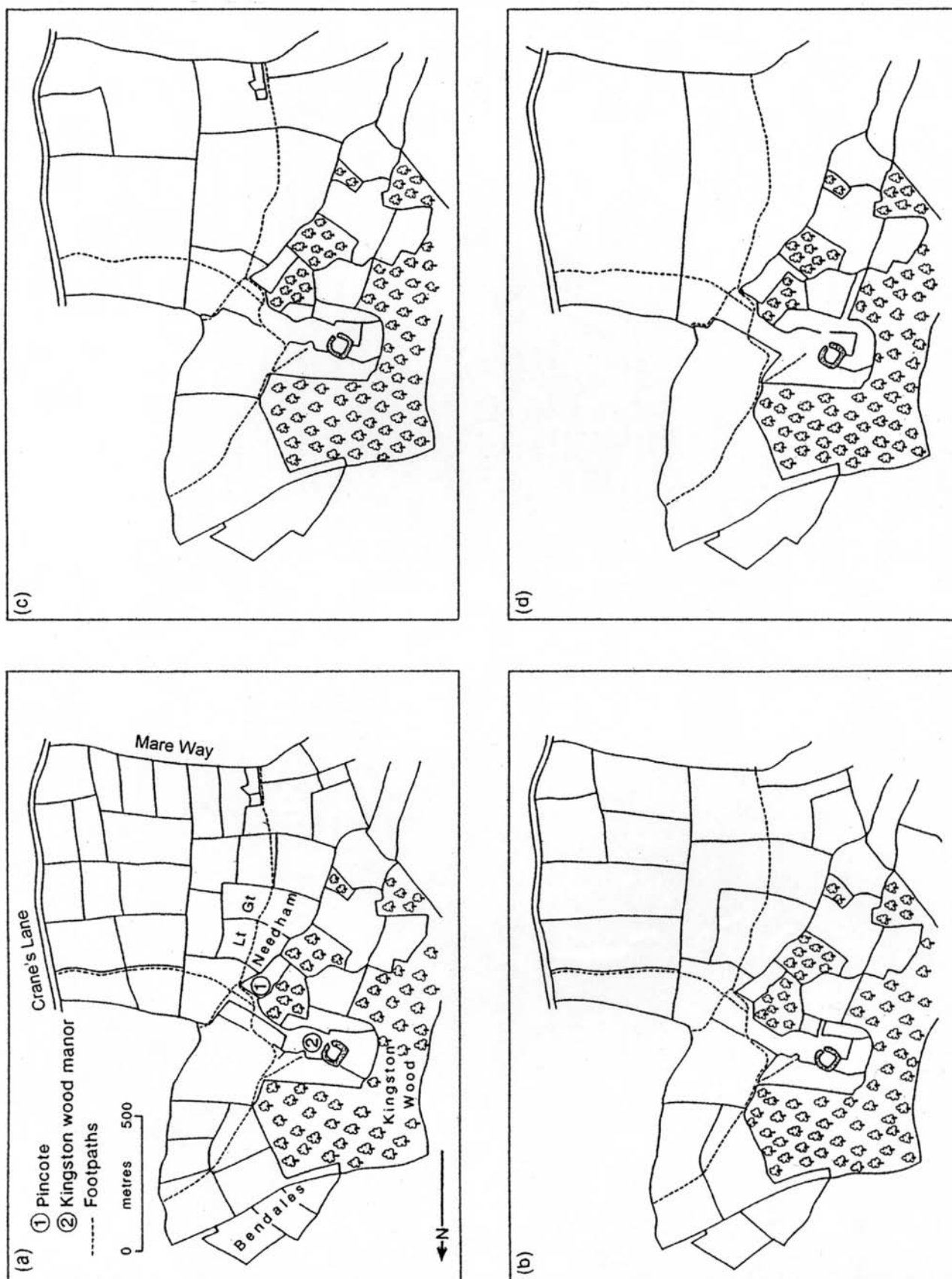
Figure 11a-d. Deconstruction of the pattern of pre-Parliamentary field enclosure boundaries within the Kingston Wood estate as it was in 1720. Source: P. Judge, after CCRO R52/12/5/1.

Figs. 11(c) and 11(d) are further map regressions which show the effect of taking out a second and third stage of abutting boundaries. What emerges is a regular pattern of continuous boundaries either aligned on or parallel to Mare Way (a possible prehistoric ridgeway), or to Crane's Lane (a long distance route of unknown date). These continuous boundaries are part of a valley-wide arrangement of similar alignments and are almost certainly prehistoric in origin. The fact that they survived into the later Anglo-Saxon period to be re-used in open field furlong boundaries probably means that the area in which they lie was most unlikely to have been wooded for some millennia. This suggests that there was little or no regenerated woodland in the valley, since it seems more difficult for such boundaries to survive under regenerated and then cleared woodland, than in country that was continuously grazed and/or ploughed (Oosthuizen 2003).

Nor does there appear to have been very much reversion of arable land to scrub, as there are just three field-names in the valley that might refer to this kind of cover: Brace [Dean] (*brash* 'small branches, twigs' 16th C.) and Brimble [Barrow Hill] (*brēmel* 'brambles' 16th C.) might be indicative of neglected arable or overgrown ground in the central parts of Bourn (ChC Bourn M; Gelling and Cole 2000: 69; Reaney 1943: 313, 342). Snour Hill (*sno(w)e* 'brushwood' 1504), a furlong in on the eastern side of Comberton adjoining Wood Field in the neighbouring parish, suggests overgrown grazing or arable land rather than managed woodland or wood pasture (QC 13/3; Reaney 1943: 333). This evidence supports that from other parts of southern England which suggests little or limited woodland regeneration except in marginal areas (Bell 1989; Hooke 1988: 136, 2001: 166).

The character of these eleventh century pockets of woodland in the valley is sometimes illuminated by field-names. For example, Puttockdean, a stream which runs northward from the western side of Eversden Wood, derives its name from the buzzard or red kite. This species had a preference for nesting in mixed deciduous woodland sited near grasslands (*puttockes* 'buzzard or red kite' *c.* 1189) (C. Bibby pers. comm.; Hassall 1949: 81; Reaney 1943: 331).

Traditions of woodland exploitation may be revealed by the presence of particular tree species (Rackham 1986: 212). For example, Crabbyshe [Hill Furlong] (*crab* 'crab-apple' 1695) lay in Wood Field, Caldecote, not far from Hardwick Wood – crab-apples may be the exception to a general rule that thorn trees occur 'well away from woodland' (ChC Caldecot L; Field 1993: 66; Rackham 1986: 147, 212). Lime trees, 'the commonest tree of [some] ancient woods', presumably once stood in Linwood Close (*lind* 'lime-tree' n.d.) also in Caldecote (Rackham 1986: 102; Reaney 1943: 366).

There is some evidence to suggest that hunting may have been a part of late Anglo-Saxon woodland exploitation in the valley. The names of [Hedding] Hayes [Furlong] (1615) in Caldecote and Hay [Common] (1251) in

Hardwick might be derived from *haga* 'an enclosure [within woodland] fenced off' for 'hunting [especially deer] as a reserve or as the boundary of a heath or wooded area' (CUL EDR H/1 and G3/27; Hooke 1989: 123-125, my additions in paranetheses). The element is most commonly found on heavy clayland, a description that fits Hardwick and Caldecote well (Hooke 1997: 40).

Hunting was, of course, a well-accepted aspect of high status land-holding in the Anglo-Saxon period and at least two 'parks for woodland beasts' are known to have existed in east Cambridgeshire in the late eleventh century (*DB* 14:78; 41:1). Aelfric's late tenth century hunter described how:

> I weave myself nets and set them in a suitable place, and urge on my dogs so that they chase the wild animals until they come into the nets unawares…I catch stags and wild boars and roe-buck and does, and sometimes hares (Swanton 1993: 170).

The existence of Short Hartes Furlong in Caldecote (*hart* 'deer' 1597) against Hardwick Wood and close to the two Hayes is certainly suggestive (CC Safe B 38/5 and 39/8; Reaney 1943: 323).

In the valley itself, there may have been hunting parks at Kingston and Bourn. The Kingston place-name is often derived from the presence of Anglo-Saxon royal hunting lodges, and the ancient wood there may provide a more precise location for the park (G. Foard pers. comm.). It is possible that there may have been another early park at Bourn. The Hall, park and Bourn and Stocking Woods are contained within two sinuous roads, and the Hall lies within the earthworks of a Norman motte and bailey castle, perhaps overlying a late Anglo-Saxon manorial centre (Fig. 5; 16th C., ChC Bourn M). The date of the park is unknown, although it was there by the mid-sixteenth century when it appears in two field-names – *pales [hoke]* and *palys [hyl]* (*pale* 'a park fence or paling' 16th C.). The suggestion that it has an eleventh-century origin is more contentious however (ibid.; Field 1993: 28).[3]

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[3] There is no direct evidence for a late Anglo-Saxon park at Bourn, although the site appears to conform to at least some of the criteria from which a park might be inferred (Fig. 3). A motte-and-bailey castle was built immediately after the Norman Conquest, perhaps on the same site as a late Anglo-Saxon manorial hall since the pre-Conquest holder was a royal thegn whose estate included a minster church (*DB* 32:23). It has been suggested that 'the building of a [Norman] castle over an existing [Anglo-Saxon] manor house was a deeply symbolic act that affirmed the legitimacy of the new lord' (Liddiard 2000: 44, my parentheses). Both the castle and the Anglo-Saxon hall are likely to have lain within a landscape which reflected their status. Since the castle lies at the interface between woodland and cleared land, an early park seems likely. Many Norman castles lay within such landscapes, and the current view is that parks for hunting "…seem, to have been widespread…in Britain by the twelfth century, perhaps even by the eleventh" (Taylor 2000: 46-48). The morphology of the area under discussion around Bourn Hall is certainly similar to that of demesne blocks which might have included some parkland (M. Satchell pers. comm.).

The evidence for Anglo-Saxon woodland in the Bourn Valley therefore suggests that the boundaries of the ancient medieval woods may have enclosed areas a little larger in the eighth or ninth centuries than they were by the high middle ages, but not very much. It seems unlikely that there were any continuous belts of woodland along the plateaux which bounded the valley at any time in the historic period. Instead, woodland appears by the eleventh century to have been discrete and managed, with occasional enclosures for hunting, and as a result assarting appears to have been generally small-scale and fairly limited. These conclusions echo those of Rackham that this was a period of 'relatively stable woodland' (Rackham 1994: 8).

Pasture, commons and meadow

Despite the silence of *Domesday Book*, which omits almost all mention of pasture in the Bourn Valley, there are many field and furlong names referring to grazing of one kind or another in these parishes (Fig. 4). Wood pasture was grassland scattered with pollard trees, on the edge of more dense woodland. An area called 'wetherley' (*wedra* 'wether or castrated ram' plus *lēah* 'wood pasture' 1086) appears to have lain along the top of the ridge which formed the southern boundary of the Bourn Valley (*DB* 1: 6; Gelling 1984: 198; Hooke 1988: 145; Rackham 2000: 41; Reaney 1943: 69). Its local importance is signified by its use as a hundred name in the valley (Reaney 1943: 69). Wetherley seems to have lain at or near the Wetherley hundred moot, just north-west of the junction between the Mare Way and the Roman road (the modern A603), where the parishes of Orwell, Harlton, Little Eversden and Wimpole meet (Meaney 1993: 90; Reaney 1943: 69).

Figure 12. Coton, Cambs., looking south-east. The photograph is taken from the heavy clays along the plateau bounding the Bourn Valley to the north, and looks north-east towards the confluence of the Bin Brook (a minor stream running along the north-eastern part of the Bourn Valley, in the middle ground) and the River Carn (to the left in the distance). The names of the furlongs on these heavy soils are derived predominantly from words relating to pasture. They lie on heavy clays which can remain waterlogged for months in the colder parts of the year. Source: S. Oosthuizen.

There were more wood pastures in Hardwick, particularly in the area around the Wood, whose earlier name was

Bradleh (*brad* 'broad' plus *lēah* 1251 (CUL EDR G3/27). Hardwick's own place-name suggests substantial areas of grazing. *Heord* 'herd' plus *wic* 'stock farm' (1086) is usually taken to indicate a specialist farm for grazing sheep. However, Fox has remarked that modern collective nouns usually refer to 'herds of cattle' but '*flocks* of sheep', although herds of sheep are also possible (*DB* 5: 36-37; H. Fox, pers. comm.; Reaney 1943: 162 and 308). Whether for sheep or cattle, it seems that Hardwicks are 'commonly found in wooded or grass pasture regions' – just the sort of environment that might be inferred from the field-names (Hooke 1998: 134).

The suggestion that Hardwick was part of a huge area of pasture is supported by the multiplicity of names relating to grasslands both in the parish and on the other northern slopes of the valley (Fig. 13). Wood Field (*c*. 1837) lay north of Hardwick wood, but its earlier name – Puttockesrou [Field] (*puttockes* 'buzzard or red kite' plus *rou* 'rough ground' 1251) – may be more revealing (CCRO 152/P12; CUL EDR/G3/27; Reaney 1943: 331, 316). These wooded commons probably extended right up to the settlement, where Stocking Close lay next to the village street (*stocc* 'tree stump' 1837) (CCRO Q/RDc51; Reaney 1943: 345). Hay Common, the site of the possible *haga*, lay immediately north of Puttockesrou Field. They were augmented by Wood Green [Common] (*c*. 1837) on the northern edge of Hardwick Wood, and Intercommon [Furlong] just east of the wood (PC H.I.1; Fig. 9).[4] Further east, Stockwell [Dean Field] (*stocc* 'stump' plus *wielle* 'spring possibly forming a small pool' 1639) suggests a spring in an area of pasture cleared from woodland – the possibility that it was used for grazing animals is supported by the name of Hardle [Dean] (*heord* 'herd' plus *wielle* 1602) in the same field (CUL EDR/H1; CCRO R53/13/41-3; Hooke 1998: 134; OED Reaney 1934: 345, 350).

The *heord* element in Hardwick is recurs in a plethora of field-names running from the northern parts of Caxton and Bourn, across the central parts of Caldecote, Hardwick and Comberton. They include Heard Common (Caxton 1661), Herd Common and Hardman's Dean (Bourn 1635 and 1820), the Cold Hard Common (Caldecote 1854), Hardle Dean (Hardwick 1602) and Harborough Field (Comberton 1518) (GCC XXXII.29; ChC Parsonage and *Ac; CCRO R60/24/2/11 and R53/13/41-3; Reaney 1943: 360).[5]

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[4]   The latter is unlikely to have been arable land at the time that Hardwick was separated from Toft in the mid to late eleventh century. This is because it was common to both of the two parishes thereafter, and because it is the only place in Toft where the parish boundary remained undefined until 1836. Its boundaries are aligned with Woodway. The furlong was intercommonable wood or wood pasture assarted by both the men of both Toft and Hardwick, since both had rights over it. The right before enclosure of the lords of the Manor of Hardwick to 'Soil of the Common in the Intercommon' even though it lay in Toft, is specifically mentioned, and supports the case that it originated as common grazing land (PC H.I.1).

[5]   Reaney suggested that this field-name derived from *here* 'army quarters', but this seems unlikely, particularly since more recent scholarship has indicated that other similar names originate in *heord* Gelling 1984: 285; Mills 1991: 157; Reaney 1943: 160). Reaney also suggested that *here* plus *beorg* 'barrow or barrow-shaped outline of
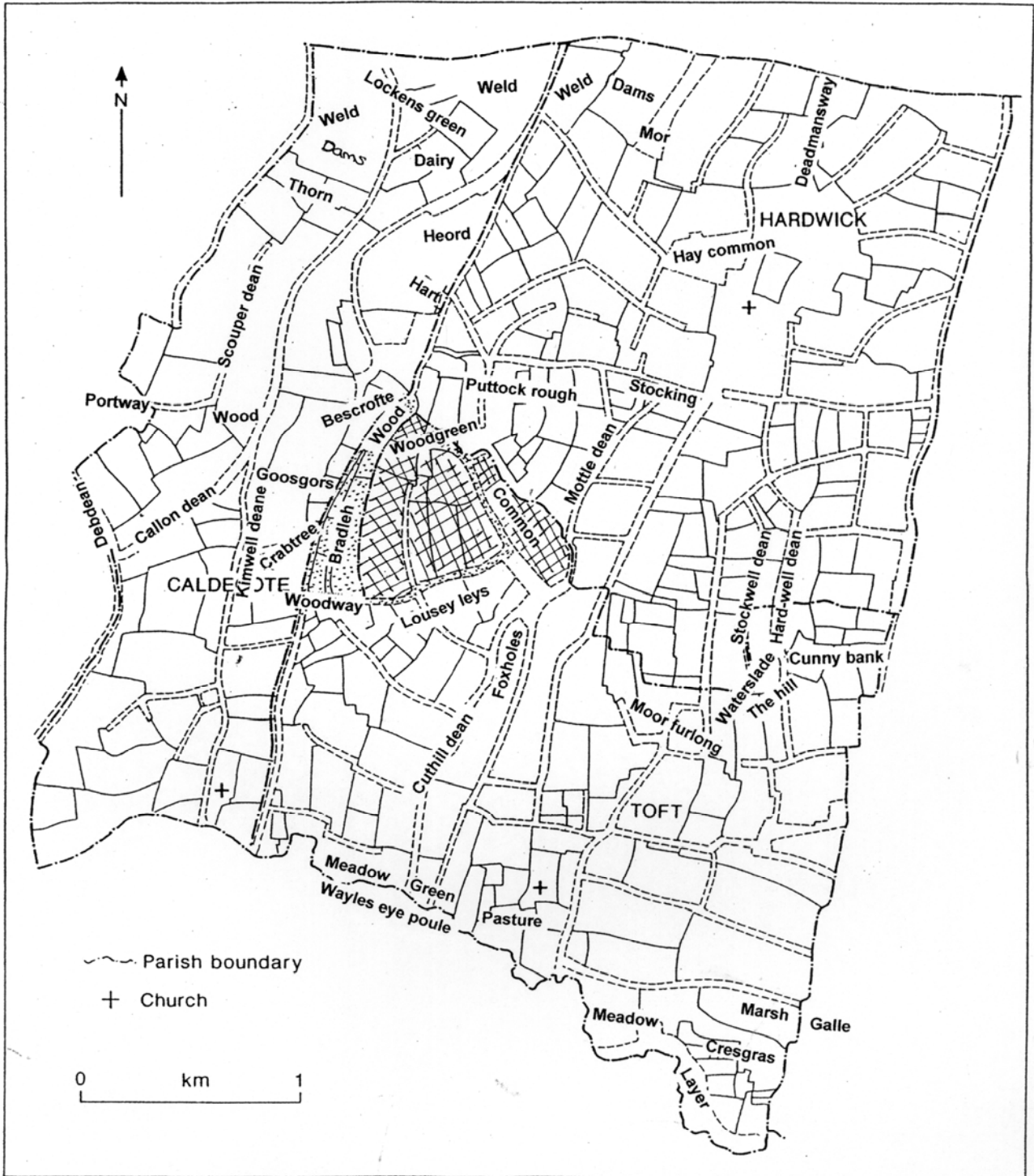
Figure 13. Pre-Parliamentary enclosure field and furlong names in Toft, Hardwick and Caldecote. Source: P. Judge.

These extensive mid- and upper-slope pastures were added to by Cow and Sheep Pastures (1750) in Caxton,

Parsonage; CCRO Q/RDc49; ChC Wa, *Ac and 1820). Several greens lay among the furlongs of Damms Field in Caldecote (*dammr* 'a pond or pool' 1695) including the Dairy (1854) and Locken Green (*lock* 'magpie'1854) (CC Safe B 39/8; CCRO R60/24/2/11; Cameron 1996: 6; Field 1993: 58).[6]

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hills' might be related to the known barrow just west of Comberton parish church in the South Field of the parish. However, since Harborough Field is a field in its own right in the centre of the parish and at some distance from the barrow, this also seems unlikely. The *beorg* was either an unknown barrow, or the prominent hill with a barrow-shaped silhouette near the parish boundary with Barton, and visible to the north of the present road to Barton.

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[6] It should, however, be noted that these areas were colonised by medieval ridge and furrow (RAF 106G/UK/1490 and CPE/UK/2024).

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There was also a large moor (*mor*) which lay across the whole of the northern part of Hardwick and was later ploughed up to become Hatchmore [Dean Field] (1639) (CUL EDR/H1). The usual interpretation of *mor* refers to marsh or the 'barren uplands' of the Pennines – landscapes far removed from the lowland hills of the Bourn Valley (Gelling 1984: 54). However, the combination of the tendency of rain to pool on the heavy soils on the top of the flat clay ridge in Hardwick may explain the name – Dam[brook Furlong] (*dammr* 1615) is one of the subdivisions of Hatchmore Dean Field and, of course, the name of the northern field of Caldecote (CUL EDR/H1). Whatever its precise local meaning, the use of *mor* in the context of the upper plateaux of the valley is still more likely to indicate that an area of pasture rather than wood or arable.

The many field and furlong names derived from pasture or grazing on the upper and middle slopes of the valley are supplemented by many other names relating to drainage and pasture on the lower slopes of the valley. This is particularly where the land was relatively flat and difficult to drain below the spring line. These areas of 'hummocky ground' were waterlogged to within 0.12 metres of the surface until very recently (P. Clelow, pers. comm.; Oosthuizen 2002c). For example, Red Meadow (1811) (perhaps *hrēod* 'reed') in Little Eversden lies just below the spring line and just west of Bullall (early 16th C.) (*bull* plus *halh* perhaps 'an enclosure for cattle' on 'slightly raised ground isolated by marsh') (CUL QC15/35 and 13/3) (Gelling 1984: 100; Mills 1991: 270). Further west, He(a)rd Common (16th C.) in Great Eversden lay near Foulmire (1681), Waterbalk (1681) and Betwixt the Holmes (early 16th C.) (*holmr* 'marshy meadow') Furlongs (CUL QC 15/2, 15/13 and QC 13/3; Reaney 1943: 332).

Some of the oldest of these pastures may have been the Offals/Offils (1250) (*ald* 'old' and *feld* 'an open space within sight of woodland') at Comberton, Little Eversden, Harlton and Haslingfield (CUL QC 15/12, 15/36, 15/52; T. Legge, pers. comm.; Oosthuizen 2002a; Rackham 1994: 8; Reaney 1943: 74, 78). It seems that *feld* was 'a prolific name-forming term in the early Anglo-Saxon period', and the significance of this cluster of names in close proximity to Haslingfield itself may indicate how much of the valley bottom was used for communally-managed grazing (Gelling 1984: 237-239).

Finally, there were further opportunities for grazing in the many natural water-meadows along the meanderings of the Bourn Brook and the streams that drained into it. These meadows provided hay and grazing for the community's cattle and sheep, and also the watery grasslands on which wild birds like crane, swans and teal depended. Bones of these birds have been found for example, at the middle Anglo-Saxon settlement at West Stow, Suffolk, where they might have been killed for food and for their feathers and/or down (Crabtree 1994: 42).

Their diversity of meadows may be illustrated by the extensive list of those located just in Great Eversden, but there were just as many in the other parishes in the valley. These include Rounsells (perhaps *ronsi* 'riding horse' 1681), Chicken Pasture (1764), Paintells Meadow (1681), Bell Pit (early 16th C.) and the Holmes (early 16th C.) (CUL QC 15/3, 15/23, 15/13, 13/3). Bourn, Comberton, Toft and Eversden each contained a Holme [Meadow] (*holmr* 'marshy meadow') (ChC P&M; *Liber Memorandum Ecclesie de Bernewelle*, 294; *OED*). Ffenmedowe and Grenemede in Caldecote lay along the Bourn Brook in 1597 (CC Safe B 38/5). The area called Le Marsh (14th C.) in Little Eversden was probably near the present Marsh Close (Reaney 1943: 160). Other meadows lay along the tributary streams that ran down from the watersheds, like Lord's, Great and Little Meadows (all 1815) along Kingston Brook (CCRO Q/RDc 25; J. Wilkinson pers. comm.). Stockwell [Meadow] (1815) lay along Stockwell Dean just north of the church in Toft, and just south of the Moor (1602) (CCRO Q/RDc 23 and R53/13/41-3).

Aerial photographs show that the high tide of medieval ridge and furrow had lapped into these meadows (as onto the commons along the tops of the ridges) (RAF CPE 2024/3005). These arable lands seem to have been abandoned, perhaps due to a deteriorating climate, sometime in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries (e.g. Simmons 2001: 90-91). The precarious nature of arable cultivation of these areas was vividly illustrated by the many floodings of these meadows along the Brook in the heavy winter rains of 2000 and 2002.

This emphasis on herding and pasture in the field and furlong names of the valley may be reflected in the dedications of its churches. It has been suggested that communities chosen patron saints for their churches whose protection could be invoked for the dominant aspects of the community's income (G. Jones pers. comm.). The day of the saint's feast would be the most potent. So parishes which depended heavily on their flocks and herds would be more likely to choose a saint for the parish church whose feast fell in the spring or autumn when flocks left for or returned from their summer pastures. Parishes that depended on arable cultivation would be more likely to adopt a saint whose feast fell during the harvest months.

If the dedications of the churches of the Bourn Valley are correctly interpreted, they suggest that herding was still an important part of the local economy in the tenth or eleventh century when these dedications were first agreed (Table 1). They are noticeably skewed to autumn dates, often quite late in the year, when thanks would have been given for the return of the flocks from their summer pastures. For example, St Helen and St Michael are believed to mark home and summer pastures respectively, so the dedication to St Helen of the mother church at Bourn, and the dedication to St Michael of its daughter chapel at Caldecote are particularly interesting, especially since the Caldecote place-name (1086) indicates "…the

Table 1. Earliest known medieval church dedications in the Bourn Valley (VCH Volume 5, parish essays; RCHME 1968, parish essays; www.catholic.org/saints/saints/helen.html)

Date of festival	Parish	Dedication	First documentary reference to church	First known recorded date of dedication
May 22nd	Bourn	St Helen	1086	Before 1348
May 22nd	Little Eversden	St Helen	1229	1341
June 24th	Barton	St Peter	By 1086	Not known
June 24th	Coton	St Peter	By 1198	Not known
August 15th	Comberton	The Assumption	1092	Not known
August 15th	Harlton	The Assumption	1092	Not known
September 8th	Great Eversden	St Mary	1092	13th century
September 8th	Hardwick	St Mary	1217	Not known
September 21st and November 1st	Caldecote	St Michael and All Angels	1092	Not known
November 1st	Haslingfield	All Saints	1086	Not known
November 1st And 30th	Kingston	All Saints and St Andrew	1092	Not known
November 30th	Caxton	St Andrew	By *c*. 1145	Not known
November 30th	Grantchester	St Andrew	12th century	13th century
November 30th	Toft	St Andrew	By 1086	1267

parcelling up of regions of marginal pastureland…[these] estates often remained dependent manors or chapelries of more major units located in more favourable areas" (*DB* 14:50; Hooke 1998: 189). This is an accurate description of the relationship between Bourn and Caldecote during the eleventh century, and seems to be confirmed by the apparently low percentage of arable land in Caldecote in 1086 (below, Table 3). The siting of the churches dedicated to St Helen at Bourn and Little Eversden near a spring and, in the case of Little Eversden, not far from the Offil, underlines the importance of access to water for communities with large herds. By contrast, dedications to St Mary and St Peter, whose festivals occur in the summer months around the time of the grain harvest, bear some correlation in the Bourn Valley with parishes where other evidence suggests an emphasis on arable agriculture. This is especially true of Comberton and Barton, whose place-name indicates a specialised grain render (Hooke 1988: 125; Oosthuizen forthcoming).

On the other hand, the 'summer' dedications of Hardwick and Coton are anomalous and contradict the likelihood, suggested both by their position on the poorly-drained upper boulder clays and by their secondary place-names, that their economies were originally predominantly pastoral. The dedication to St Andrew at Toft is also anomalous since Toft appears to have had more arable in 1086 than anywhere else in the valley. Perhaps though, the dedication was made before Hardwick became independent of Toft.

What of the flocks and herds which grazed these pastures? The long-term trend identified for the Anglo-

Saxon period of increasing numbers of sheep and pigs and fewer cattle and horses in East Anglia is reflected in the high proportion of sheep kept on the valley demesnes in 1086 (Crabtree 1994: 42; fig. 2). Nevertheless, Wetherley in Little Eversden and Sco(u)per [Dean] (16th C.) (possibly *sceap* 'sheep') in Caldecote appear to be the only place-names in the valley referring specifically to sheep, and the *VCH* has concluded that 'the heavy clay soil makes the land unsuitable for extensive sheep farming' (*DB* 1: 6; CC Caldecote E; Reaney 1943: 69, 343). The possibility that there was sufficient shepherding in Caldecote to affect field-naming is particularly interesting since only about 24% of the available land of that parish appears to have been under arable cultivation in 1086 (Table 3).

The great variety of field-names for different kinds of grazing across the valley suggests that grassland was extensive, differentiated and specialist. It depended both on physical factors like underlying geology, drainage and relationship with watercourses, and on cultural factors like communal management and seasonal access. This determined its place in the wider agricultural economy of both the individual parish and its wider region. Many of these names occur precisely in those areas in which archaeological investigation has concluded that Romano-British farmers had been 'pursuing a stock raising economy' within a system of 'quite complex land management' (Wessex Archaeology 1998: 15; 1999: 3). This may just indicate that the late Anglo-Saxon pastoral traditions of the Bourn Valley had their roots in much older farming practices.

Table 2: The relative proportions of sheep, pigs and plough-cattle on the demesnes of the Bourn Valley in 1086 (ICC 400-427).

Animals on the demesnes of the Bourn Valley in 1086

28%   2%

70%

cattle
sheep
pigs
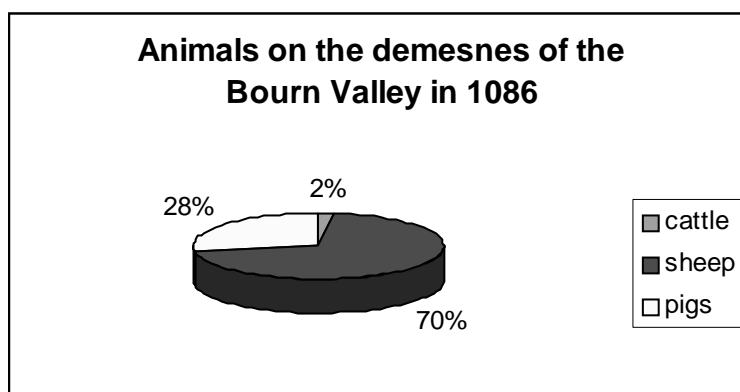
Note: Data from Bourn, Caldecote and Caxton are missing from the *ICC*. This figure therefore includes evidence drawn from Barton, Comberton, Eversdens, Hardwick, Grantchester, Harlton, Haslingfield and Kingston. There is no information about flocks and herds outside the demesnes.

Arable

The survey of the distribution of field-names relating to wood and pasture might suggest that arable cultivation in the Bourn Valley just before the introduction of open field farming was very limited. It is clear, however, from field-names and other evidence that arable farming was an early introduction, especially into those parts of the valley that lay near the Bourn Brook where field and furlong names are almost exclusively related to arable cultivation (Oosthuizen forthcoming). Arable cultivation or at very least, intensive grazing of the lower slopes of the valley may be inferred from Ellon Furlong (*ellern* 'elder' 1723) and Thornpitt Leys (1638, both Comberton), and Thorns Furlong (1597, Caldecote) (MRO H1/ST/E/107/1 and 2; CUL EDR/H1; CC Safe B 38/5; Reaney 1943: 333). In Rackham's view 'thorn...and elder are especially associated with lack of woodland', and with arable cultivation (Rackham 1986: 212). Furthermore, the parish boundaries on the northern side of the valley are only indented along the furrows of open field selions on these lower slopes, by contrast with the upper slopes where these boundaries are smooth and only slightly sinuous.

Even so, it is evident that arable cultivation had some problems. There are many field-names which show that drainage was a persistent difficulty, particularly as numerous streams ran through the arable lands. Waterlond [Furlong] (mid 16th C.) and Slade Close (1820) (both Bourn) lay on the arable lands (ChC Bourn M and *AC). A Sowerditch [Hill] ('waterlogged, badly drained' 1615) lay in Brook Field, Caldecote, and another in Kingston (1663) (CUL EDR/H/1). Polmorway (*pōl* 'pool' plus *mor* 'marsh' 16thC) crossed Caldecote, and Scumpitt [Furlong] lay in Hardwick (CC; CUL/EDR/H1; Field 1993: 42; Gelling 1984: 54; Reaney 1943: 343, 360).

The quality of the land was also often poor. Bellam Piece (1795, Bourn) may have been land that only a madman

would cultivate, and every parish has field-names referring to beans, which were commonly grown on poor soil for their nitrogenous qualities (ChC Survey of Parsonage Farm 1795; Field 1993: 157). Starvegoose Closes in Great Eversden (1738), Comberton (1806) and Hardwick (1854) vividly characterise the soils near the tops of the ridges – the land in these areas apparently did not produce enough to feed a goose (CUL QC 15/36, 15/40; CCRO R53/16/30 and Q/RDc 51). Pudding Lane at Caxton End (1820, Bourn) referred to the heavy stickiness of the clay (CCRO Q/RDc 35). Hardwick was known as 'Hungry Hardwick' in the nineteenth century, and the VCH notes the 'unyielding qualities of the heavy soil' and 'the infertility of the land' there (Field 1993: 41; *VCH* 5: 99).

The extent of arable cultivation in the valley in 1086 might be quantified on the basis that in Cambridgeshire the record of plough teams provides a reasonable index of the arable land of the Cambridgeshire villages in the eleventh century. This is because the *Domesday Book* formula was quite precise: '*terra est* x *carucis*', 'there is (arable) land for *x* ploughs' (Darby 1952: 287). If 60 acres is assigned to each plough-team (following Darby's calculations for Norfolk in 1086), this can then be multiplied by the number of plough-teams in each vill (Darby 1977: 115).[7] The result, as a percentage of the modern acreage of each parish, may reveal the approximate amount of arable land in 1086. (Small adjustments to parish boundaries, generally at enclosure,

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[7] The figure of about 60 acres per ploughland (2 ploughs per 120 acre carucate) in 1086 suggested by Darby for Norfolk and Suffolk is not very different from that suggested by Campbell, who concluded that 'there were on average 78.5 sown acres per demesne plough in the period 1250-1349 [when arable cultivation was at its most intense], which declined by 15.5% to 66.6% sown acres per plough in the period 1350-1449' [when population pressure was less severe] (Darby 1977: 115; Campbell 2000: 121, my additions in parantheses). It also suggests that the 120 acre ploughland common in *Domesday Book* for other parts of England may have included the approximate third of arable that lay fallow each year.

will mean that these figures may be slightly inaccurate, but not by a significant order of magnitude).

The results are shown in Tables 3 and 4.[8] These show that between 30% and 40% of each parish may have lain under the plough by the late eleventh century. This varied in the Bourn Valley from about 24% in Hardwick and Caldecote (already identified as parishes with a preponderance of pasture), to 45% in Toft. The mean of 34.9% for the valley is consistent with the figure of between 32% and 37% for Suffolk in the same period (Hesse 2000: 25). There were 62.9 sheep per 1000 acres in the valley in 1086, just slightly above the average for the county of 60 sheep per 1000 acres. It thus seems that the balance between pasture and arable here was not very different from that elsewhere in the county (M. Hesse pers. comm.).

Table 3. Ploughlands as a percentage of the total acreage of each parish, averaged by hundreds in west Cambridgeshire and in the Bourn Valley in 1086 (DB; VCH parish essays).

Hundred or other unit	Ploughlands as % of parish area
Longstow Hundred (all parishes)	31.8
Wetherley Hundred (all parishes)	35.8
Thriplow Hundred (all parishes)	38.8
Armingford Hundred (all parishes)	41.4
Bourn Valley parishes	34.9
Longstow Hundred without Bourn Valley parishes	30.7
Wetherley Hundred without Bourn Valley parishes	34.4
Mean of hundreds only	36.9

Table 4. Ploughlands, parish acreages, and ploughlands as a percentage of parish acreages in the Bourn Valley in 1086 (DB; ICC; VCH 5, parish essays)

parish	Ploughlands	parish acreage	% ploughlands of total acres, if ploughland = 60a
Barton	12	1834	39.2
Bourn	23.5	3995	35.2
Caldecote	4	1007	23.8
Caxton	12	2169	33.1
Comberton	12	1954	36.8
Eversden	13.375	2190	36.6
Grantchester	12.875	2527	30.5
Hardwick	6.125	1438	24.6
Harlton	7	1261	33.3
Haslingfield	20	2573	46.6
Kingston	10.56	1907	33.2
Toft	10	1285	46.6
Mean			34.9

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[8] The ploughland in Dorset might have been 120 acres (Rackham 1986: 333). However, a 120 acre ploughland would result in an arable acreage of 90.6% for Toft in 1086, which would be worryingly high. This suggests that ploughlands in the Bourn Valley were more likely to be about 60 acres in extent, like those of Norfolk and Suffolk.

It is important to bear in mind that this portrait of arable cultivation in the Bourn Valley depicts the situation at or near the beginning of open field farming. The severe pressures of population of the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries had yet to come. The extent to which arable cultivation increased between 1086 and the mid-fourteenth century may be implied by the 325.25 acres of commons and meadows in Comberton in 1830 (excluding at least 34 acres of Offal). This was just 16.6% of the total acreage of the parish, suggesting that perhaps between 60 and 70% of the parish was arable by that date (CCRO R53/13/8; CUL MS Plans r.a.2). The same growth can be demonstrated in Hardwick, where land under arable cultivation increased from 24.6% in 1086 to 54% in 1251 (CUL EDR/G3/27; *VCH* 5: 101). Furthermore, once land now lying underneath modern roads and settlement is taken into consideration, these proportions may be more substantial than they first appear).

Conclusion

This survey of field and furlong-names in the Bourn Valley demonstrates the large extent of intensive grazing and rough pasture in the valley in the later Anglo-Saxon period, just before or at the time that open field farming was introduced. Woodland was limited in extent, although it continued to be assarted into the high middle ages. The most extensive areas of arable appear to have been limited to the lower slopes. Perhaps more importantly, the combination of field- and furlong-name analysis with archaeological and documentary evidence has enabled a reconstruction of patterns of farming in the tenth and eleventh centuries which is illuminating, accessible and inexpensive to undertake. This technique should assist the analysis of research questions requiring archaeological investigation and/or developer-funded excavations, and may provide instructive support for the results, particularly since the opportunities for excavation for research purposes alone are often limited and expensive.

Abbreviations used in the text

CC   Clare College, Cambridge.
CCRO   Cambridge County Record Office.

ChC   Christ's College, Cambridge.
CUCAP   Cambridge University Committee for Aerial Photography.
CUL   Cambridge University Library.
DB   *Domesday Book: Cambridgeshire*. Rumble, A. (ed.) 1981. Chichester: Phillimore.
EDR   Ely Diocesan Records.
GCC   Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge.
ICC   *Inquisition Comitatus Cantabrigiensis* in *Victoria County History of Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely, Volume 1*. Salzman, L.F. (ed.) 1938. London: Institute for Historical Research.
IE   *Inquisitio Eliensis*. Blake, E.O. (ed.) 1962. Camden Third Series Volume 92. London: Royal Historical Society.
LE   *Liber Eliensis in Inquisitio Comitatus Cantabrigiensis*. Hamilton, N.E.S.A. (ed.) 1876. London: Murray.
LMEB   *Liber Memorandum Ecclesie de Bernewelle.* Clark, J.W. (ed.) 1907. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
OED   *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary On Historical Principles*. Onions, C.T. (ed.) 1978 (3rd rev. ed.). Oxford: Clarendon Press.
OS   Ordnance Survey.
PC   Pembroke College, Cambridge.
QC   Queens' College, Cambridge.
RAF   Royal Air Force Aerial photographs 9th May 1946 (in collection of C.C. Taylor): 106G/UK/1490 nos. 4020-31 and 4228-4236; CPE/UK/2024 nos. 3045-3049 and 4045-4055.
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VCH   *Victoria County History of Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely, Volume 5*. Elringham, C.R. (ed.) 1973. London: Institute for Historical Research.

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