CHANGING SETTLEMENT PATTERNS AND LAND USE IN MIDLAND AND SOUTHERN ENGLAND IN THE EARLY MEDIEVAL AND MEDIEVAL PERIOD

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## Estate and settlement change in the early medieval period

The Anglo-Saxon period was a formative one for the evolution of settlement patterns in England. Over the last few decades the work of field archaeologists such as Hall and Taylor (see, for instance, *Hall - Martin 1980; Taylor 1983*) has shown how, in parts of eastern England, a dispersed pattern of settlement predominated in the early part of the period, only gradually giving way to increasing nucleation as the period progressed. The evidence has been derived from pottery scatters and, to a lesser extent, air photography. Midland and south-central England was largely aceramic throughout this time but field-names and charter evidence again indicate the former presence of dispersed settlements beyond any later village core or even beside later-recorded boundaries (*Ford 1976; Hooke 1985a*); the latter were certainly present as late as the tenth and eleventh centuries, even in areas later characterized by complete nucleation, and fresh interpretations of Domesday Book evidence also suggest that nucleation was only achieved at a relatively late, post-Conquest date, in many regions (below and *Hooke 1989a*). While excavation has yet to confirm the nature of settlements on a sufficiently wide enough scale to understand either their function or interdependence, the employment of developing and varied archaeological techniques, combined with the excavation of carefully selected sites, suggests promising approaches to the problem., as in the project currently being carried out at Shapwick in Somerset (*Aston - Costen 1996*).

To understand settlement patterns, however, it is necessary to see these within a fuller socio-economic framework. While excavation is providing increasing information about status and function (suggested by building types, domestic and ancillary buildings, evidence of economic functions including trade, industry and storage, etc) essential components such as estate structure and farming systems are still only partially understood and proposed models have not yet been confirmed by any prevailing archaeological technique. Here, the spatial analysis techniques of historical geographers have indicated one method of exploring the situation as we understand it at present (*Roberts 1977; Dodgshon 1987*).

The study of settlement cannot be confined to dwellings and other buildings for these must be seen against the resources upon which they were dependent, however distant these may have been from the settlements themselves. The Anglo-Saxon coastal and riverine wicks, for instance, were located on international trading routes (*Tatton - Brown 1988; Hodges 1989*); many lowland settlements in upland Britain were linked to sheilings or summer dwellings on distant hill pastures, other lowland settlements to marshland intercommoned in summer (*Darby 1983*). Resource management, too, must be seen to operate within the constraints of the contemporary administrative framework. Even in relatively remote regions, at least in Britain, settlements were not located within a wilderness, for boundaries were well known if not necessarily physically demarcated on the ground and all exploitation was subject to control. So-called 'marginal' areas were not undeveloped - merely developed differently to the main agricultural regions and their resources formed an integral part of the rural economy.

Much debate has surrounded the antiquity of the multiple estate model and its relationship to resource management, one essential component being provision for the upkeep of the focal vill. Glanville Jones has presented the arguments for British antecedents for many such estates, and in the case of the Archbishop of Canterbury's estate at Malling in Sussex (*Jones 1976*) has noted its relationship to the Iron Age hillforts of Ranscombe Down and Caburn Camp near Southerham, an estate which owed herding duties to the lord's court at South Malling in the thirteenth century and near which arable cultivation had been carried on from Iron Age into Roman times in an area still used later for medieval outfield cultivation. In the place-names, the medieval land use pattern and the tenants' duties, he found many parallels with estates he had investigated in north Wales, estates which he postulates are recognizable in the earliest Welsh law codes. Critics note that the Welsh law books themselves date only from the thirteenth century, although it is acknowledged that they contain earlier material. More recently *Costen* (*1992*, esp. 86) has argued for British antecedents for many of the estate centres known in early medieval Somerset but some, like *Gregson* (*1985*), remain unconvinced of the antiquity of the multiple estate model.

My own research has frequently involved the recognition of early folk territories, of which the later multiple estates appear to have only represented a subdivision (see, for instance, *Hooke 1982; 1985b; 1992a*). These clearly formed recognizable units within the seventh-century kingdoms of early Anglo-Saxon England (*Davies - Vierck 1974*). One model comprises an area of land which encompasses both a fertile heartland largely given over to crop cultivation and an associated territory which might conceivably be seen as marginal land but which offered equally important resources for pasture, wood-pasture and timber extraction; in some regions this probably involved transhumant communities prior to permanent settlement. Such a pattern can be recognized from the early documentary evidence extending across England and Wales, as pronounced in regions which remained British or were subject to late Anglo-Saxon colonization as in areas of early Anglo-Saxon settlement. This lends substance to claims for an origin in antiquity (against this view, however, see *Dyer 1990*, 58) but it has to be recognized that this may be a common pattern of regional land use rather than a response to ethnic overlordship. Some of the earliest Kentish charters show that lowland estates enjoyed pasture rights in the dens of the Weald and seem to imply that these had been subdivided between specific administrative regions at an early date, belonging to folk communities pasturing in common before they were appropriated by individual estates (*Witney 1976; Hooke 1993a*). *Ford* (*1976*) has argued for the
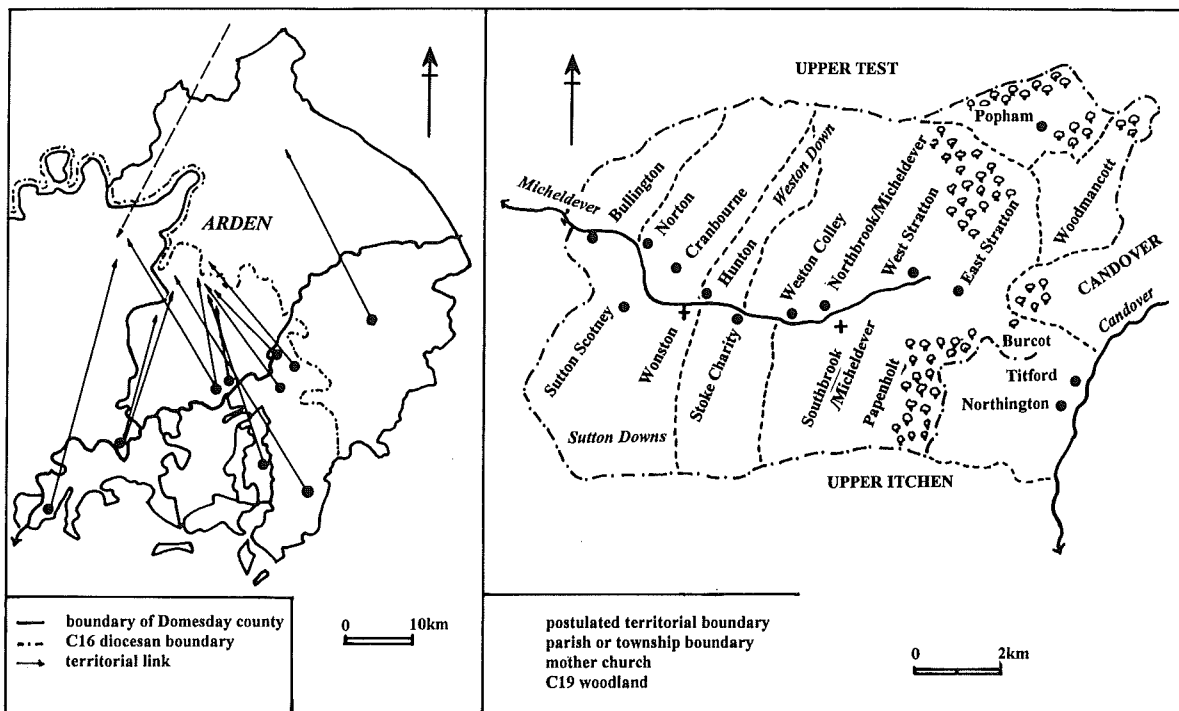
Fig. 1a. Pre-Conquest territorial links within the later county of Warwickshire. The map shows only those links recorded before 1086; many more can be reconstructed from later sources of evidence.

Fig. 1b. Pre-Conquest estates in the Micheldever valley of Hampshire (after *Klingelhöfer*).
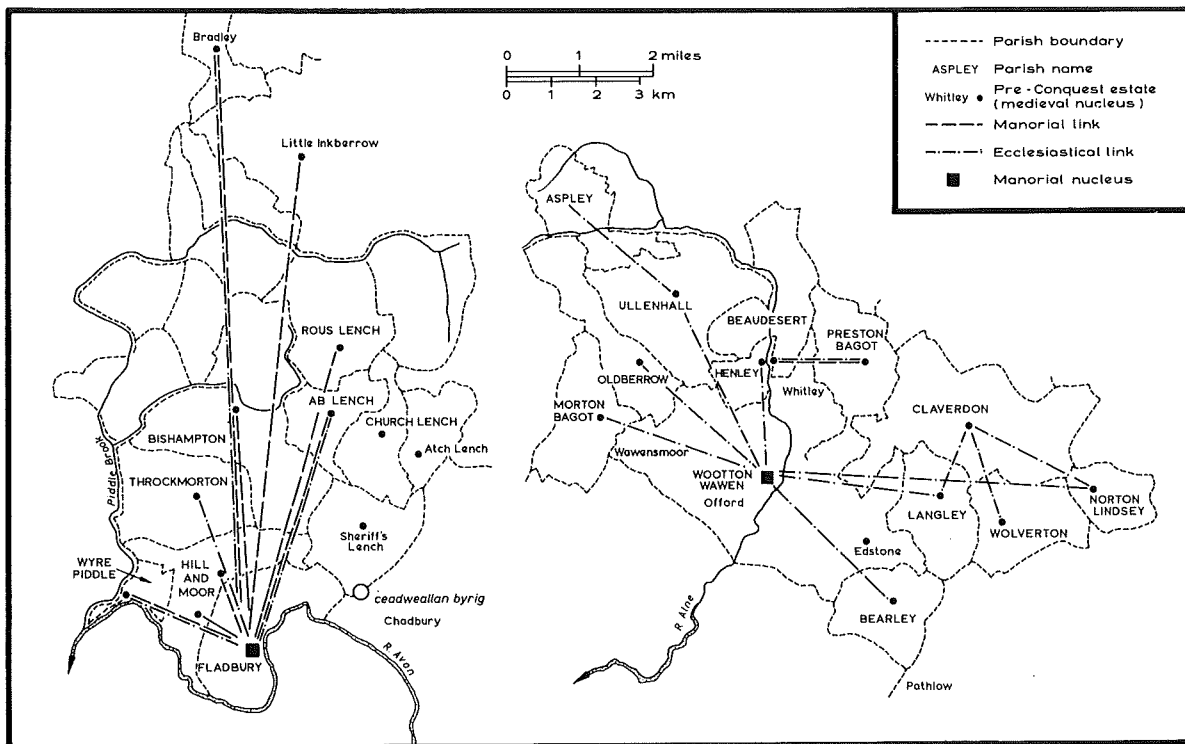
Fig. 2. Multiple estates and *parochiae*: In the Vale of Evesham, Worcestershire, Fladbury was the site of an early Anglo-Saxon minster and its estates can be reconstructed from Domesday Book evidence and medieval ecclesiastical links. The medieval *parochia* of the minster at Wootton Wawen, Warwickshire, probably indicates the territory of an early Anglo-Saxon folk group known as the Stoppingas.

antiquity of similar links between the cultivated lands of the Warwickshire Feldon and wooded region of Arden (*Fig. 1a*) and vestigial administrative arrangements of estate linkages have been observed by the present writer using charter evidence in north-west Worcestershire, the Welsh Borderland and southern England (*Hooke 1982; 1992b; 1992a*). Such a system appears to have developed as a way of maximizing the resources available within a given territory but a second model proposed by *Klingelhöfer (1992)* fails to find any evidence of such an arrangement in early medieval Hampshire. Here he postulates the existence of what he terms 'archaic hundreds' in valley regions such as the Micheldever valley (*Fig. 1b*). This has much in common with the 'heartland' regions of folk territories but lacks evidence of transhumance links outside the region.

Many of the heartland regions then became the foci of royal or ecclesiastical estates which were to retain the multiple-estate territory essential for their individual upkeep (*Fig. 2*). Not only did the royal estates have their demesnes in the form of such multiple estates but, after the widespread adoption of the English church, the minsters served recognizable *parochiae* which were often of a similar nature. Frequently these can be reconstructed from charter evidence, Domesday Book and later ecclesiastical records, but almost always they incorporate a substantial number of early medieval township communities, the estates which were to form the basis of the emerging pattern of ecclesiastical parishes. The date of origin of these internal boundaries is not known and, again, they may have been demarcated over a considerable period of time.

Within multiple estates, settlements could be located almost at random and were interdependent in obtaining produce providing they made some contribution to the focal vill. Hence we find the 'cheese-wicks', the 'barley-wicks', the 'herd-wicks', etc, able to provide what their immediate surroundings favoured, while more remote estates might perhaps contribute wood, seasonal pasture or hunting terrain. It is worth setting out this administrative framework as it is closely related to the settlement patterns which emerge in the early medieval period. For such an arrangement was to be disrupted: although some estates were being built up, especially in the later part of the period, as *Jones (1976*, 38) in his paper commented, 'In general... fission appears to have prevailed over fusion'.

I have argued elsewhere (*Hooke 1988a*) that such estate patterns of the later Anglo-Saxon period appear to be related to Anglo-Saxon land use rather than that prevailing in an earlier period and I am not convinced that in England we are able to relate such minor estates to Roman settlement and land use (as suggested in

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Fowler 1976, developing the arguments of Finberg, Bonney and Hoskins). In many chalk regions of Wessex, for instance, the estates were clearly drawn up to include meadowland in the valley bottoms, arable on the hill slopes above and pasture on the higher downlands (*Fig. 3*), pasture that only became available as Roman fields and associated settlements on the higher land were abandoned; similar patterns are also visible in other parts of the country. With the appropriation of such minor estates by manorial lords changes in attitudes to ownership meant that the regions once available for common grazing were lost and inter-dependency between townships for produce was no longer available: self-sufficiency had to be sought on the individual manor. Sometimes detached portions of land were deliberately granted to overcome particular deficiencies if they happened to be available on lands held by those granting land rights (*Hooke 1988b*). But not only were areas once available for common grazing lost as boundary division spread to marginal zones; woodland was increasingly being reserved for the hunting purposes of powerful lords (*Hooke 1989b*).

Estate subdivision of this nature was dependent upon an evolving political framework, reflecting the breakdown of larger territories into manorial units, a procedure which also reflected changing attitudes to land (*Dodgshon 1987*). The concept of the ownership of a restricted territory evolved, and as energy was expended upon that particular patch of territory, especially where arable farming was concerned, so proprietorial notions of ownership were enhanced. It is within such estate subdivision that we must set the trend towards settlement nucleation which occurred from the middle of the Anglo-Saxon period onwards. This was not, however, a universal occurrence and there is now abundant evidence to show that extreme nucleation remained a feature only of arable regions where it appears to have been associated with the development of open field farming. This is not the time or place to discuss at length the factors which led to such change. The open field system, ensuring maximum yields of both crops and livestock in a period of limited marketing arrangements (*Dahlman 1980*), was so successful that it was adopted across a wide area of the country: even in regions of ample waste, although a system of infield-outfield was often characteristic of regions in which arable was limited and pastoralism predominated (*Dodgshon 1980*). Owners of large
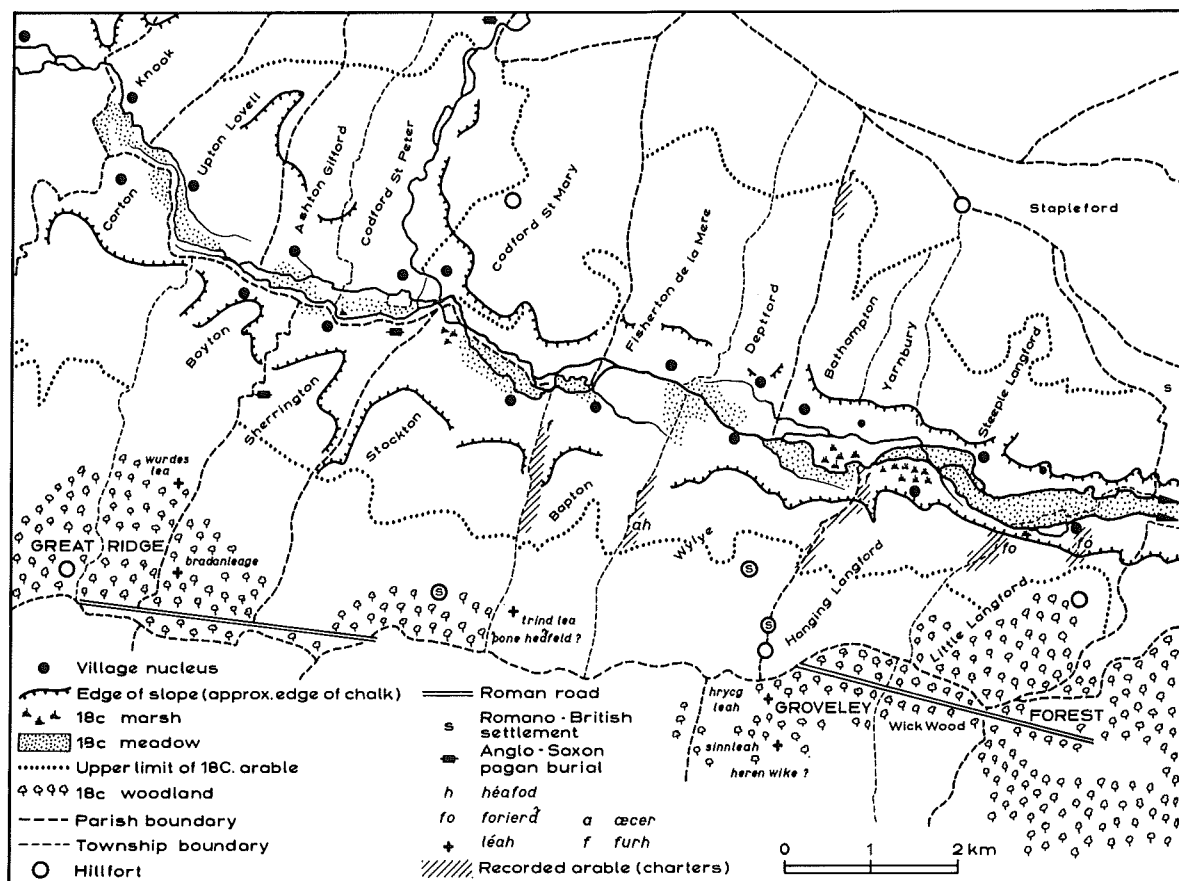

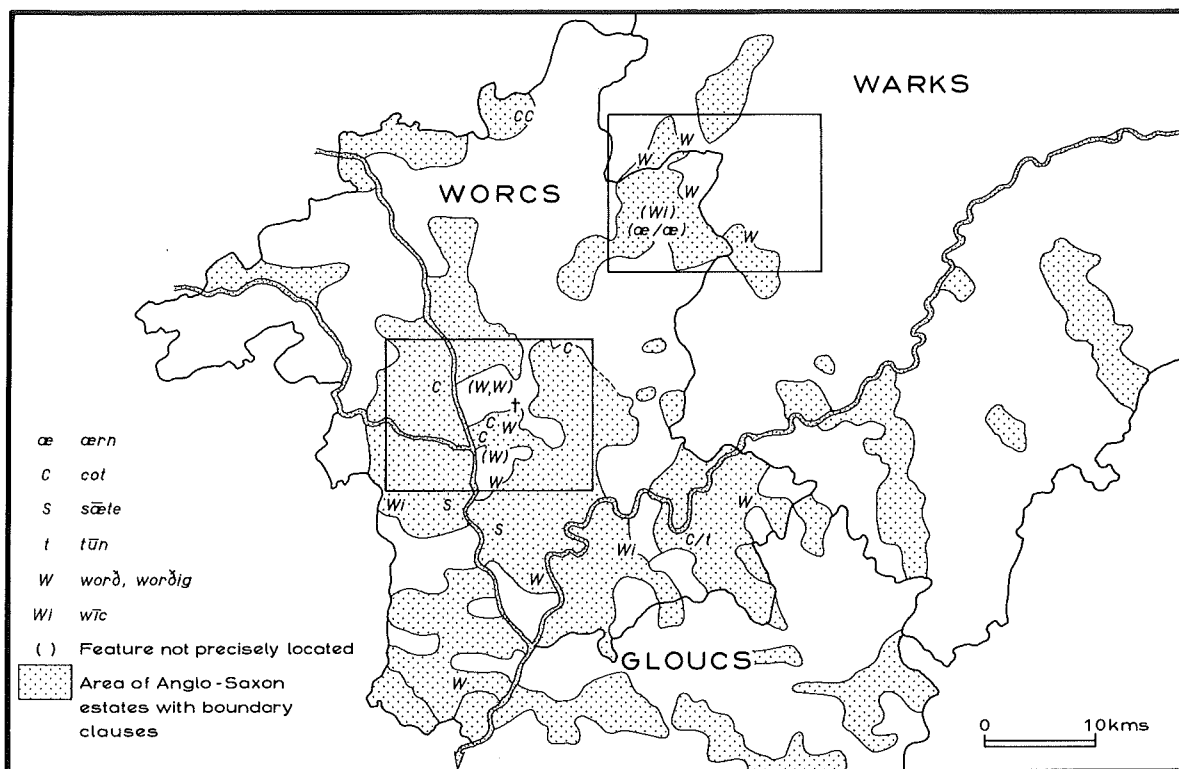*Fig. 3.* Estates in the Wylye valley of Wiltshire.

Fig. 4. Pre-Conquest boundary settlements recorded in Worcestershire charters.

composite estates in prime arable country generally appear to have found it worthwhile to subdivide their estates into smaller divisions in which the system could be practised. Once established, settlement nucleation appears to have been an obvious consequence.

Estate demarcation is one thing, settlement shift within an estate quite another. One needs no recourse to ethnic explanations as the patterns which ensued appear clearly to reflect patterns of land use rather than patterns of racial dominance. This is not to say, however, that neither high population levels nor the attainment of a suitable political framework, one in which manorial organization was fast developing, were not essential prerequisites for such resource management. Nevertheless, in regions in which pastoral farming and woodland exploitation dominated, settlements remained largely dispersed, with their patches of arable scattered, like the hamlets, throughout the townships. In herding communities it seems that there was little to be achieved by settlement nucleation. It was generally in the areas in which arable cultivation dominated that village nucleation became most marked. It may be possible to recognize some elements of planned nucleation on major royal or ecclesiastical estates as early as the seventh century (*Hooke 1995*; see *Wade-Martins 1980a*; *Wade 1980*) but nucleation did not necessarily occur rapidly and only gradually in some regions were the open fields to take over a township area, leading to the loss of any outlying farms and their enclosed fields. This leads me to consider how accurately we can recognize regional differences from the modern map and how such studies may be limited without a recognition of some of the outstanding problems concerning settlement change.

The recognition of settlement regions from the modern map

The map is largely an assemblage of place-names and given the research carried out by the English Place-Name Society early documented names can be isolated with relative ease. Although place-name scholars

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have lost faith in much of the chronological interpretation of place-names their use to describe different kinds of country, and perhaps different kinds of settlement, has been subjected in recent years to thorough investigation. Terms referring to particular kinds of land use in both place-names and minor names have been isolated and mapped. One of the most obvious examples remains the distribution of *leah* names indicating the presence of woodland or wood-pasture. This term is generally thought to be derived from an Indo-European root meaning 'light', but one which was to attained the meaning of 'grove', appearing in OHG as *loh*, (*Johansson 1975*, 8-9), a derivation which has led many place-name scholars to see 'woodland glade' as its obvious main interpretation but the sense should perhaps be more readily applied to the open wood pasture which was of considerably greater benefit to the Anglo-Saxons than any dense woodland thicket. Indeed, by late Anglo-Saxon times such woods were frequently small and isolated. Another woodland term (in one of its usages) was *haga*, a type of enclosure which seems to have been strongly related to land set aside for hunting (and which occurs along early forest boundaries in Germany) (*Hooke 1989b*). In many parts of England wooded regions lay in sharp contrast to the more heavily settled zones in which habitative names abounded. This is too full a study to develop here but, in general, the Old English *tun* term shows a concentration in areas of intensive cultivation and seems to indicate a village cluster (*Gelling 1974*, 65-9; *Hooke 1985c*; *Hooke forthcoming b*).

The most obvious differences on the present-day map lie between regions of strongly nucleated settlement and regions in which settlement remains largely dispersed. But there is ample evidence that numerous early settlements have disappeared without trace and have still not been identified archaeologically. Such evidence is found in references to minor settlements in pre-Conquest boundary clauses. Many early charters in England are accompanied by such boundary clauses and although they usually only describe the land actually lying along the boundaries of estates this is sufficient to show the incidence of boundary settlements in many areas where they are later not known to occur. A paper in 1985 (*Hooke 1985a*) mapped the incidence of such references in Worcestershire and showed clearly that a number of small settlements lay close to estate and parish boundaries in the Vale of Evesham in the south-east of the county (*Fig. 4*). In medieval times this was a region of strongly nucleated villages with very little in the way of outlying settlements and it is highly likely that such centres had already evolved by the later medieval period; churches were already being established at manorial centres and these in turn may have encouraged further nucleation to occur. In the charters the boundary settlements are usually described as *cot* or *worth* settlements, although one on the boundary of Bengeworth was alternatively described as a *tun*, a suffix normally attached to a village centre. Of the documented sites, none have been identified on the ground but there can be little doubt about their existence as early medieval hamlets or farms. Such boundary settlements are not unfamiliar features in regions in which settlement remained largely dispersed, like the north-east of the county, but this early documentary evidence shows clearly that an on-going process of nucleation had not been completed by the time of the Norman Conquest. A reinterpretation of the 1086 Domesday Book evidence also suggests that a dispersed pattern of settlement may have persisted in some regions later characterized by almost total nucleation for a much longer period than has been realized. In particular, the recording of a substantial number of separate manors within a township in which settlement clusters were later more limited in number may, on occasions, suggest the later desertion of outlying farmsteads or hamlets. In one Warwickshire example, Wormleighton in the south of the county, five separately held units had become three by 1086 but were represented by only two village clusters in medieval times (one of these to become completely deserted) (*Hooke 1989a*). There is absolutely no evidence of this earlier pattern of scattered settlement on the modern map nor even on earlier historical estate and parish maps.

A second way in which modern maps may mislead is in the location of villages. It is recognized that villages may have developed independently to earlier choices of settlement site, sometimes drastically altering the established pattern (see, for instance, the East Anglian evidence discussed by *Wade-Martins 1980b* and *Warner 1987*). Settlement shift is now well documented and Christopher Taylor, in particular, has expressed strong reservations about accepting the site of a present-day village as that of its predecessor. He notes the situation at Faxton, a village bearing an Old English *tun* name, where excavation failed to find any sign of settlement pre-dating the twelfth century (*Taylor 1983*, 126-7). Having said this, many settlements display a degree of continuity, if only because they have grown at preferred locations. Certainly name terms cannot be used as reliable indicators of antiquity and the careful and thorough excavation of several *worth* settlements at Roadford in Devon has failed to find any trace of early medieval settlements despite the common occurrence of this term in the county in the earlier period. Indeed, a number of lost settlements bearing this suffix appear upon the boundaries of certain pre-Conquest estates, such as those of Sandford, Culmstock and Littleham (*Hooke 1994*, 117-22, 137-41, 117-22, 200-3; *1995*). The problem of later village desertion is one that has been addressed by medieval archaeologists and where these consisted of substantial villages their sites

are generally known. This is far from the case in regions of dispersed settlement where insubstantial outlying cottages could appear and disappear within a few generations, often leaving little trace upon the ground. Occasionally, late settlements of this type can be located from a study of parish and county maps but how many more must have disappeared largely without documentation or trace?

Documentation for Devon brings me to my third point. Some regions have long been viewed as ones characterized by 'Ancient Countryside' (*Rackham 1986*). Such a description may evoke the image of south-western England conjured by *Hoskins* (*1955*) and others as a region of ancient settlement sites dotted around a long established landscape of enclosed fields and deeply sunken lanes. But what changes such an image may conceal. There were open field systems here, as elsewhere, and some of the most massive Devon and Somerset hedges were only planted in the eighteenth century (*Billingsley 1761*). Settlement, too, has not been as static as this description would imply. The Domesday record frequently refers to numerous small manors which are today represented by individual farms. Many such manors are recorded on the southern fringe of the estates which formed part of the *parochia* of Crediton minster in Devon (*Fig. 5*) and it is likely that they had broken away from central control before the Norman Conquest (*Hooke 1994*). In Domesday Book, Coombe, Fursham, Parford, Thornbury, Martin and Shilstone were all single-virgate holdings but they seem to have been rather more than single farmsteads. There were 6 smallholders at Coombe with only one plough, 5 villeins and 2 smallholders at Fursham with three ploughs, 6 villeins and a slave at Parford with one plough, 3 villeins and one slave at Thornbury with one plough, 2 villeins and one slave at Martin with 1 1/2 ploughs and 2 villeins, 2 smallholders and 2 slaves at Shilstone with 3 ploughs (with 2 villeins on a separate holding of the latter manor). Most of these manors possessed a greater amount of estimated plough-
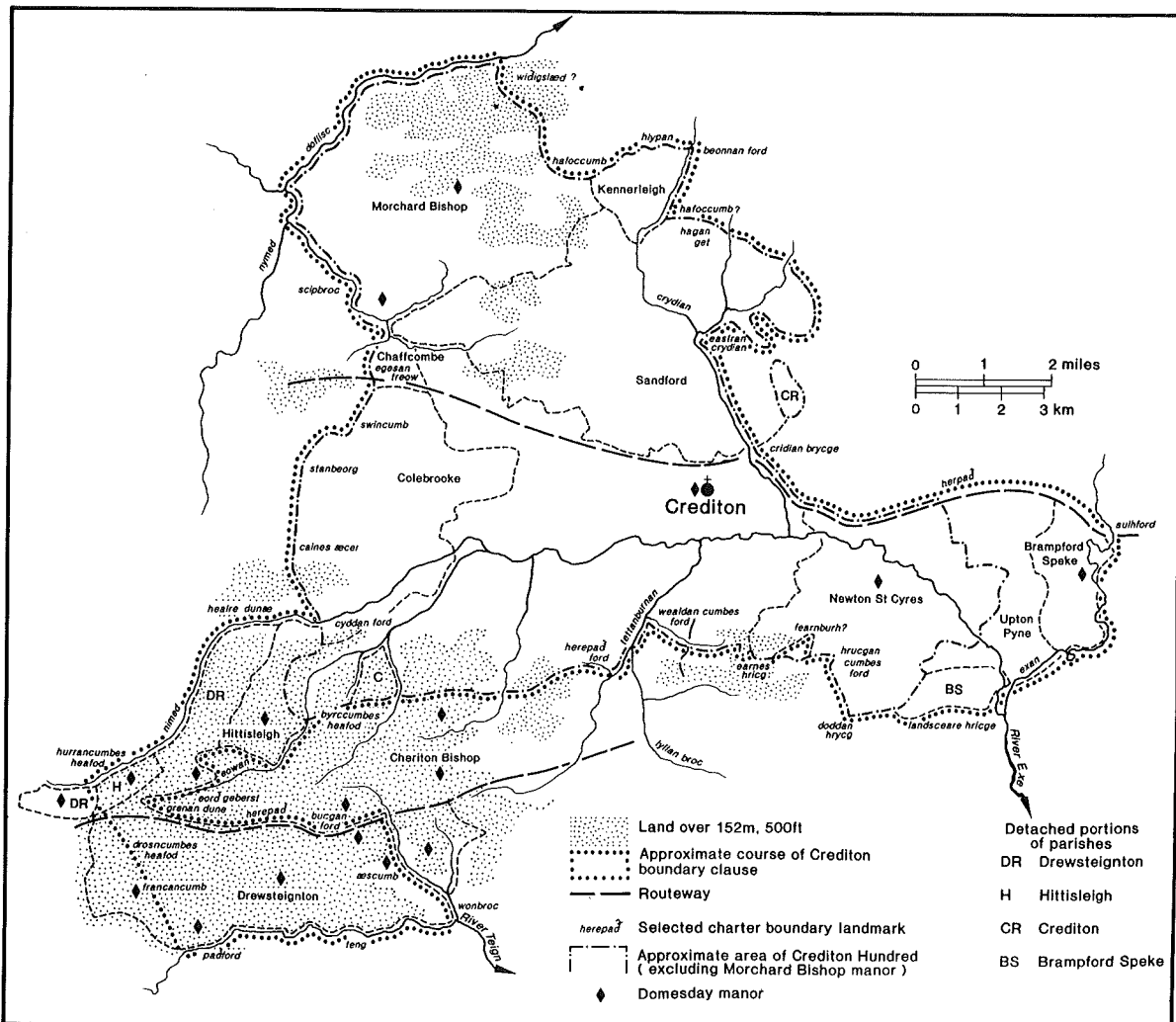

Fig. 5. The estates associated with Crediton minster, Devon.

land than was then in use and this may reflect the estimated potential for developing woodland and waste in this region upon the northern fringes of Dartmoor. The boundaries of these small manors recorded in Domesday Book are unknown and some may have contained a number of separate farmsteads but in general the area of land attached to each seems to have been limited and it is likely that they formed tiny nucleated hamlet communities rather than individual farms - another indication of the misleading evidence presented on the modern map.

There has often been considerably more change in pastoral and woodland regions than has always been appreciated and a commonly met situation is one in which numerous scattered farmsteads or early hamlet clusters have become amalgamated at a later date. Charter evidence for a small area of the Warwickshire Arden appears to suggest that a number of separate farmsteads were obliterated soon before or after the Norman Conquest as a patch of open field developed around the manorial centre of Tanworth-in-Arden: of three settlements referred to in early documentation as Bickerscote, *willeworth* and *wynes wyrthe* only the former survived while a manorial centre was established at Tanworth near by (*Hooke forthcoming a*). Such changes may have been more frequent in pastoral regions than has always been realized and there is still much to learn about the early development of settlement in such areas. Traditionally, woodland regions in particular have been seen as ones in which much of the settlement pattern evolved in association with assarting in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. These probably were critical centuries for such patterns but an earlier ubiquity of scattered farms and hamlets has largely been overlooked, in spite of Dyer's recent observations (*Dyer 1991*).

In these regions change continued throughout subsequent periods. New farms and cottagers' hamlets were established but there was also considerable settlement loss, especially in post-medieval times (*Hooke - Marshall 1987; Dyer 1991*). In Great Langdale in the English Lake District it is known that a number of farmsteads disappeared in medieval times as their lands were amalgamated (*Denyer forthcoming*) and *Hoskins (1955)* noted a similar situation in other Lakeland dales. The situation is rather different in Wales where English customs replaced native organization after the conquest of Wales in the late thirteenth century: over twenty individual holdings in the royal vill of Ystumgwern in Ardudwy on the coast of Merioneth were eradicated as servile tenure was abolished in order to allow the land to be made over to the new burgesses of Harlech; today this earlier community is represented by only two modern farms (*Gresham 1987/8*).

Finally, how can one date outlying settlements from the modern map? Of course, this is not possible. In many regions outlying farms were only established at the time of parliamentary enclosure in the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries and these represent a major settlement change in regions that were formerly characterized by nucleated villages. Almost any region of the Warwickshire Feldon will illustrate this point, outlying farms adding an overlay of dispersion around village centres. Unlike the situation in Scania in southern Sweden, however, the villages themselves generally survived, many of them housing farm labourers and small industries before the agricultural depression of the later nineteenth century. In other regions, outlying farms and even hamlets appear to have been laid out over medieval open fields at some undisclosed, but much earlier date (*Taylor 1995*). Taylor notes examples in West Lindsey in Lincolnshire and in Northamptonshire which fall into this category.

Ways need to be found of dating outlying farmsteads in order to identify dispersion going back before the period of parliamentary enclosure. The date at which names were first recorded may be an indication of antiquity but without detailed documentary research it is not always possible to isolate names referring to settlements from other locational names. Some success has been had in Warwickshire and Oxfordshire by dating the surviving structure of outlying buildings (*Hooke 1993b; 1993c*). Obviously a considerable amount of rebuilding has gone on but in the Warwickshire Arden buildings of sixteenth and seventeenth-century date betray their origins in the use of timber-framed construction and many of these have now been listed as worthy of conservation. Fieldwork has added large numbers to the existing gazetteer but such buildings indicate an origin no later than their apparent construction date and many occupy much earlier sites. Moated farmsteads may be added to fill out the medieval settlement pattern.

Conclusions: regional patterns

This paper has been primarily concerned with the evolution of settlement patterns in early medieval England and, given the limitations of its length, has necessarily had to make sweeping generalizations. Obviously, there have been elements of both dispersion and nucleation present across the country in all periods, from the late prehistoric onwards, at least. Nevertheless, emphasis upon the recognition of regional characteristics in this period may help to tease out the various factors most influential in causing the different patterns we are only now beginning to unravel.

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