Borderlands: The Buckinghamshire/Northamptonshire Border, c.650-c.1350

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by

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Abstract

This thesis represents the first detailed study of the evolution of a medieval county border in south-midland England. It explores when and how the border between Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire might have been drawn and considers the impact it had on the societies located on either side. The findings are then related to Phythian-Adams' idea of cultural provinces and his proposal of defining their boundaries by reference to culturally imposed county borders.

Evidence from documents, archaeology, place-names and the landscape is used to suggest how both counties evolved from earlier Anglo-Saxon schemes of territorial organisation and how they developed as social, political and jurisdictional units in the period before the mid-fourteenth century. Counties were not the only possible foci for social cohesion, however, and the boundaries of other institutions - honours, religious houses and the church – are investigated to establish their relationship to those of the shires.

The influence of the county border on the society and economy of the surrounding area is studied through a wide range of primary and secondary records which help shed light on the behaviour and mentality of border people. Numerical and statistical methods are frequently employed in analysing the data and results are presented making extensive use of maps of the border area.

The accumulated evidence suggests that the eastern and western parts of the border evolved at different times and in different ways and, subsequently, had materially differing impacts on their localities. It is further concluded that, before c.1350, the findings are not wholly consistent either with the cultural provinces proposed, or with their detailed delimitation by the current county boundary. The precise reasons for those conclusions differ in respect of each side of the border but, ultimately arise from the varying speeds at which peripheral areas became fully integrated into the counties.

<u>Acknowledgements</u>

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Abbreviations

ALEC	J. Whybra, *A Lost English County: Winchcombeshire in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries* (Woodbridge, 1990)
ANS	*Anglo-Norman Studies*
AON	G. Foard, 'The administrative organization of Northamptonshire', *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History,* 4 (1985), pp. 185-222
ASC	M. Swanton (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* (1996, London, 2000 edn)
ASE	F.M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (1943, Oxford, 1971 edn)
ASO	J. Blair, *Anglo-Saxon Oxfordshire* (1994, Stroud, 1998 edn)
ASSAH	*Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History*
Baker	G. Baker, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Northamptonshire,* 2 vols, (London, 1822-41)
BCM	Berkeley Castle Muniments
BEAE	M. Lapidge, J. Blair, S. Keynes and D. Scragg (eds), *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1999)
BHER	Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Record <https://ubp.buckscc.gov.uk/>
BHT	*Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Historic Towns Project* < http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/bcc/archaeology/Historic_Towns.page?>
BLARS	Bedfordshire and Luton Archives and Records Service
BOB	J.C. Clarke, *The Book of Brackley: The First Thousand Years* (Buckingham, 1987)
Bridges	J. Bridges, *The history and antiquities of Northamptonshire,* 2 vols (Oxford, 1791)
BRS	Buckinghamshire Record Society
CASS	J. Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford, 2005)
CBS	Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies

CChR	*Calendar of the Charter Rolls preserved in the Public Record Office,* 6 volumes (London, 1903-1927)
CCR	*Calendar of Close Rolls, 1227-1509* (London, 1892-1963) < www.british-history.ac.uk/catalogue.aspx?type=3&gid=184>
CFF	A. Travers (ed.), *A Calendar of the Feet of Fines for Buckinghamshire 1259-1307*, Buckinghamshire Record Society, 25 (1984)
CIM	*Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous (Chancery) preserved in the Public Record Office,* 8 volumes (London, 1916-2003)
CIPM	*Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem amd other analogous documents preserved in the Public Record Office*, 23 volumes (London, 1904-2004) <www.archive.org/search.php?query=calendar%20inquisitions%20AND%20collection%3Aamericana>
CPR	*Calendar of the Patent Rolls, 1216-1452* (London, 1891-1916) < www.uiowa.edu/~acadtech/patentrolls/>
CRR	*Curia Regis Rolls, 1189-1250,* 20 volumes (London and Woodbridge, 1922-2006)
CSP	J.G. Jenkins (ed.), *The Cartulary of Snelshall Priory*, Buckinghamshire Record Society, 9 (1952) < www.bucksinfo.net/brs/assets/other/brs-vol-09/>
CUH I	D. M. Palliser (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, Volume I: 600-1540* (Cambridge, 2000)
DB	Domesday Book
EcHR	*The Economic History Review*
EDH	K. Stringer, *Earl David of Huntingdon 1152-1219 : A Study in Anglo-Scottish History* (Edinburgh, 1985)
EHR	*The English Historical Review*
EMA	University College London, *English Monastic Archives database* <www.ucl.ac.uk/history2/englishmonasticarchives/index.htm>
EMARF	*East Midlands Archaeological Research Framework Project* <www.le.ac.uk/ulas/publications/eastmidsfw.html>
EPNE	A.H. Smith, *English Place-Name Elements*, 2 vols (Cambridge, 1956)

ETR	A.C. Chibnall (ed.), *Early Taxation Returns: Taxation of Personal Property in 1332 and Later*, Buckinghamshire Record Society, 14 (1966)
EWT	T.H. Lloyd, *The English Wool Trade in the Middle Ages* (1977, Cambridge, 2005 edn)
Feudal Aids	*Inquisitions and Assessments relating to Feudal Aids, with other analogous documents preserved in the Public Record Office, A.D. 1284-1431,* 6 volumes (London, 1899-1921)
GASE	H. R. Loyn, *The Governance of Anglo-Saxon England 500-1087* (London, 1984)
HDHS	Hanslope and District Historical Society
HKF	W. Farrer, *Honors and Knights' Fees*, 3 volumes (London, 1923-54)
IAI	L. Boatwright (ed.), *Inquests and Indictments from Late Fourteenth Century Buckinghamshire. The Superior Eyre of Michaelmas 1389 at High Wycombe*, Buckinghamshire Record Society, 29 (1994)
IHMB II	Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in Buckinghamshire II (North)* (London, 1913)
IHMN II	Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the County of Northampton. Volume 2, Archaeological Sites in Central Northamptonshire* (London, 1979)
IHMN IV	Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the County of Northampton. Volume 4, Archaeological Sites in South-West Northamptonshire* (London, 1982)
IPM	Inquisitions post mortem
LDB	Little Domesday Book
Lipscomb	G. Lipscomb, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Buckingham*, 4 vols (London, 1847)
LLRRO	Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Record Office
LPC I	G.R. Elvey (ed.), *Luffield Priory Charters. Part I,* Buckinghamshire Record Society and Northamptonshire Record Society (1968)
LPC II	G.R. Elvey (ed.), *Luffield Priory Charters. Part II,* Buckinghamshire Record Society and Northamptonshire Record Society (1975)

MA   Sir W. Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, 6 vols in 8, (1673-82, London, 1817-30 edns)
<monasticmatrix.usc.edu/bibliographia/index.php?function=detail&id=2659>

MAF   S. Letters, *Online Gazetteer of markets and Fairs in England and Wales, to 1516*
<http://www.history.ac.uk/cmh/gaz/gazweb2.html:>

MFS   R. Bartlett and A. MacKay (eds), *Medieval Frontier Societies* (Oxford, 1989)

MKHER   Milton Keynes Historic Environment Record
<www.heritagegateway.org.uk>

MVEL   R. Jones and M. Page, *Medieval Villages in an English Landscape:Beginnings and Ends* (Macclesfield, 2006)

NEUS   J. Taylor, G. Foard and J. Ballinger, *Northamptonshire Extensive Urban Survey*
<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/resources.html?northants_eus_2005>

NHER   Northamptonshire Historic Environment Record

NI   G. Vanderzee (ed.), *Nonarum Inquisitiones in Curia Scaccarii : temp. regis Edwardi III* (London, 1807)

NPP   *Northamptonshire Past and Present*

NRO   Northamptonshire Record Office

NRS   Northamptonshire Record Society

ODNB   *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004)
<www.oxforddnb.com>

OFN   D. Hall, *The Open Fields of Northamptonshire*, Northamptonshire Record Society, 38 (1995)

PNB   A. Mawer and F.M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Buckinghamshire* (Cambridge, 1925)

PNN   J.E.B. Gover, A. Mawer, and F.M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Northamptonshire* (London, 1933)

RFN   P.A.J. Pettit, *The Royal Forests of Northamptonshire: A Study in their Economy, 1558-1714*, Northamptonshire Record Society, 23 (Northampton, 1968)

RH   W. Illingworth, *Rotuli Hundredorum Temp. Hen.III & Edw.I in Turr' Lond' Et in Curia Receptae Scaccarij Westm. Asservati,* 2 vols (London, 1812)

RL   T.D. Hardy (ed.), *Rotuli Litterarum Clausarum in Turri Londinensi Asservati*, 2 vols (London, 1833)

ROB   *Records of Buckinghamshire*

S   British Academy and Royal Historical Society, *The Electronic Sawyer (Sawyer's Anglo Saxon Charters)* <http://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/chartwww/eSawyer.99/eSawyer2.html>

SFF   A.C. Chibnall, *Sherington: Fiefs and Fields of a Buckinghamshire Village* (Cambridge, 1965)

SRO   Staffordshire Record Office

STAR   *Solent-Thames Archaeological Research Framework – Buckinghamshire papers* < http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/bcc/archaeology/buckinghamshire.page?>

STRF   *Solent-Thames Archaeological Research Framework* <http://thehumanjourney.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=553&itemid=277>

TAN   M. Tingle (ed.), *The Archaeology of Northamptonshire* (Northampton, 2004)

TBE   L. Boatwright (ed.), *The Buckinghamshire Eyre of 1286*, Buckinghamshire Record Society, 34 (2006)

TBL   M. Reed, *The Buckinghamshire Landscape* (London, 1979)

TBT   D. Crouch, *The Beaumont Twins. The Roots and Branches of Power in the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, 1986)

TEALS   R.C. Love, *Three Eleventh-Century Anglo-Latin Saints' Lives: Vita S. Birini, Vita et Miracula S. Kenelmi and Vita S. Rumwoldi* (Oxford, 1996)

TEN   D.W. Sutherland (ed.), *The Eyre of Northamptonshire 3-4 Edward III, AD 1329-1330, vol 1*, Selden Society, 97 (London, 1983)

TNL   J.M. Steane, *The Northamptonshire Landscape: Northamptonshire and the Soke of Peterborough* (London, 1974)

TNS   J.H. Round, 'The Northamptonshire Survey', in W. Ryland, (ed.), *VCH Northamptonshire,* 1 (1902), pp. 357-92

TNTA   S. Swailes, *Transcripts of Northamptonshire Tax Assessments*
<http://www.medievalgenealogy.org.uk/subsidies/index.shtml>

TRHS   *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*

TTD   *The Taxatio Database*
<http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/taxatio/index.html>

VCH   *Victoria County History*

VCHB 1   W. Page (ed.), *VCH Buckinghamshire,* 1 (1905)
<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/source.aspx?pubid=249>

VCHB 3   W. Page (ed.), *VCH Buckinghamshire,* 1 (1925)
<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/source.aspx?pubid=279>

VCHB 4   W. Page (ed.), *VCH Buckinghamshire,* 4 (1927)
<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/source.aspx?pubid=519>

VCHN 1   W. Ryland, (ed.), *VCH Northamptonshire,* 1 (1902)

VCHN 2   R.M. Serjeantson and W.R.D. Adkins (eds), *VCH Northamptonshire,* 2 (1906)
< http://www.british-history.ac.uk/source.aspx?pubid=99>

VCHN 4   L.F. Salzman (ed.), *VCH Northamptonshire,* 4 (1937)
< http://www.british-history.ac.uk/source.aspx?pubid=539>

VCHN 5   P. Riden, and C. Insley (eds), *VCH Northamptonshire,* 5 (2002)
<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/source.aspx?pubid=247>

VCHO 6   M.D. Lobel (ed.), *VCH Oxfordshire, 6* (1959)
<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=63744>

WAA   Westminster Abbey Archives

WWP   C. Dyer, R. Jones, and M. Page, *The Whittlewood Project: Medieval Settlements and Landscapes in the Whittlewood Area*
<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/resources.html?whittlewood_ahrb_ 2006>

1

Introduction

Medieval people lived within a web of different borders as, indeed, we do today. Some of these borders, such as those that defined the limits of the land held by a family, were physical entities, whilst others were social or symbolic constructs, separating, for example, freemen from serfs, or life from death. No boundary stood in isolation, however, and all were subject to the influence of others. Over time some shifted, changed their nature or meaning, or even became redundant. For example, the social boundaries of kinship that defined early kingdoms slowly evolved into the physical boundaries of modern nation states. Similarly, early societies regarded burial sites as symbolic boundaries between life and death and these sites are often found to lie on territorial boundaries. It is not clear, however, whether the latter is an example of a physical boundary also gaining a symbolic significance or of a symbolic border gradually becoming a physical boundary.[1]

It is with a particular kind of physical border that this study is most concerned - the county boundaries imposed by the English state for the dispensation of royal justice and the raising of money and armies. Before setting out the detailed aims of the project, however, it is necessary to consider boundaries more generally - their evolution and their effects on the entities they divide.

The origin of political borders in England

The archaeological record of the sixth century reveals that a hierarchical structure had begun to develop within tribes all over Britain and that high status was usually marked by some form of enclosed space. The forms these spaces took varied from re-occupied Iron-Age hillforts in the British west to ditched enclosures in the Anglo-Saxon east but the main purpose of all of them seems to have been to demonstrate the authority of an

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[1] C. Daniell, *Death and Burial in Medieval England, 1066-1550* (London, 1997), p.100.

elite and to signal their control over the land.[2] These elite centres formed the foci for territories whose boundaries, at least initially, were probably with zones of unexploited land, and from which the tribes of the seventh century took their names - for example the *Cilternsaete*, or 'Chiltern-dwellers'.[3] Some tribes, such as the *Magonsaete* based near Magnis (Roman Kenchester), seem to have derived their names from Roman administrative and political centres leading to speculation that their territories, and indeed some of the tribes themselves, may have had their origins in the Roman, or earlier periods. Higham, for example, tentatively equates the *Wrocensaete*, who were based in what is now Shropshire, with the *Cornovii* of Roman Britain.[4] There have been many attempts to establish where the territories of many other tribal kingdoms lay - for example by Foard in Northamptonshire – but, except in rare instances, such as the boundaries of the *Hwicce* being preserved in those of the diocese of Worcester, they cannot be recovered with any certainty.[5]

Although territory was clearly important to the tribes, their membership was defined in terms of kinship – early kings ruled over people not land.[6] It was particularly important to such kings, therefore, to keep the loyalty of their followers who, as kinship ties weakened over time, increasingly expected to be rewarded with land and treasure. The need for both fuelled the drive for continued territorial expansion and led to a period of political turmoil. Gradually there emerged a group of more powerful kingdoms: Northumbria, Mercia and Wessex, whose success was due in part to locations which allowed them to conquer and expand into neighbouring British territory. Some smaller tribes continued to exist as separate entities, often as 'client' kingdoms, but most did not, their territories surviving only as administrative sub-divisions within the larger kingdoms which had absorbed them.[7]

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[2] S. Turner, 'Boundaries and religion: the demarcation of early Christian settlements in Britain', in D. Griffiths, A. Reynolds and S. Semple (eds), *Boundaries in Early Medieval Britain* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 50-57.
[3] *ASE*, pp. 42-3, 285-6.
[4] N. J. Higham, *The Origins of Cheshire* (Manchester, 1993), pp.68-77.
[5] *AON*, pp. 185-222; *ASO*, p.50.
[6] A. Lyon, *Constitutional History of the United Kingdom* (London, 2003), p.1.
[7] S. Bassett, 'In search of the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingdoms', in S. Bassett (ed.),*The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms* (Leicester, 1989), pp. 3-27; J. Campbell, E. John and P. Wormald, *The Anglo-Saxons* (1982, London, 1991 edn), pp. 53-99; *GASE*, pp. 4-5,50-3.

Northumbrian and Mercian expansionism caused particular conflict with the native British as boundaries were pushed further north and west. In the west, the eastern edge of the Welsh hills, which had always been a physical boundary between the Cambrian Uplands to the east and the lowlands to the west, became an important political and cultural frontier as the tribal territories at the foot of the hills came under Mercian control.[8] The distribution of British place-names in the Welsh borderlands gives some clues to the processes that might have been involved in the formation of this border. Instead of the numbers of such place-names increasing appreciably to the west, as may be expected, they are, rather, clustered in positions peripheral to later estate structures, suggesting that Anglo-Saxon language and culture spread outwards from the British tribal centres after being adopted by a local aristocracy increasingly forced to seek patronage from Mercia.[9] It also suggests that, at this time, the border took the form of a series of strong points or loyal estate centres, with sovereignty gradually petering out between and beyond them.[10]

By the eighth century, when Welsh society still remained tribal with authority fragmented, the Mercian kings were effectively overlords of England south of the Humber and their kings, notably Offa, had implemented systems for harnessing the wealth and military resources of his kingdom. Perhaps the most important innovation was the practice of placing a charge on estates granted to lay lords and, to a lesser extent, to the church, reserving obligations to the king for military service, the maintenance of fortifications and the repair of bridges. This led to service being seen as an ongoing obligation of land ownership, rather than something to be bought with continual gifts of new land, and meant that Offa could command and organise the resources necessary for the construction of large public works and defences such as Offa's Dyke.[11] This was a massive earthwork the main section of which ran for 64 miles

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[8] D. Sylvester, *The Rural Landscape of the Welsh Borderland: A Study in Historical Geography* (London, 1969), pp.23-4.

[9] Higham, *The Origins*, pp. 92-4.

[10] See for example: R. Ellenblum, 'Were there borders or borderlines in the middle ages? The example of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem', in D. Abulafia and N. Berend (eds), *Medieval Frontiers: Concepts and Practices,* (Aldershot, 2002), pp. 105-119; P. Squatriti, 'Digging ditches in medieval Europe', *Past and Present,* 176 (2002), p. 36.

[11] *GASE*, pp 33,40-1; Campbell et al., *Anglo-Saxons*, pp.118-9; D. M. Metcalf, 'Monetary affairs in Mercia in the time of Aethelbald', in A. Dornier (ed.), *Mercian Studies* (Leicester, 1977), pp. 87-106; C. Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages: The People of Britain 850-1520* (2002, London, 2003 edn), pp.50-1.

and separated Mercia from Powys. The purpose of this construction has been much debated and it has been seen variously as a fortification against Welsh raids, a boundary marker or as a symbol of Offa's power, built in debatable land and part of a wider European trend.[12] Whatever its original purpose, it does force a consideration of the form territorial boundaries took in the early medieval period.

The concept of a linear boundary was clearly familiar, as evidenced by charters from the period, and had probably derived from the church's need to be able to demonstrate its inalienable rights over clearly defined tracts of land. Charters usually related to estates whose bounds were often described in terms of a perambulation passing through a series of fixed points in the landscape, and which were sometimes said to be 'ancient' or 'well-known'. Rivers or streams were frequently used to mark sections of a boundary and this seems also to have been the case with borders between bigger political entities as evidenced by the very name Northumbria.[13] It is important to appreciate, however, that following the course of a river was merely a convenient method for marking a boundary that had arisen for social, political or cultural reasons. Natural features, other than oceans, rarely, if ever, were themselves the cause of a boundary no matter how strong a barrier they presented. In an extreme modern case, for example, neither the Atacama Desert in the north nor the Andes in the east contained the Chilean government's expansionist policies in the nineteenth century.[14]

For the most part, even if longer borders were linear in concept, which may itself be doubtful, political realities and the difficulties involved for a society which had no maps in their definition and policing almost certainly meant that they did not operate as such in practice.[15] The reality was probably that, in the main, kingdoms were separated either by tracts of sparsely occupied land, where there was no real need for a clear border, or

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[12] D. Hill, 'Offa versus the Welsh', *British Archaeology,* 56 (2000), pp. 20-21; M. Lieberman, *The March of Wales 1067-1300* (Cardiff, 2008), pp. 76-80; Squatriti, *Digging ditches*, pp.11-65.
[13] *ASE*, pp.307-9; E. Peters, 'Omnia permixta sunt: where's the border?', *The Medieval History Journal,* 4 (2001), pp. 123-4; P. H. Sawyer, *From Roman Britain to Norman England* (1978, London, 1988 edn), pp.142-6.
[14] J.R.V. Prescott, *Political Frontiers and Boundaries* (London, 1987), p.43.
[15] Ellenblum, 'Were there borders?', pp.107-11, 118; D. Power, 'Frontiers: terms, concepts, and the historians of Medieval and Early Modern Europe', in D. Power and N. Standen (eds), *Frontiers in Question: Eurasian Borderlands, 700-1700* (Basingstoke, 1999), pp. 5-6.

by more valuable but disputed territories such as parts of the Upper Thames Valley, the ambiguous status of which was recognised by both Wessex and Mercia.[16]

One of the earliest documented political borders is that which separated Danish occupied territories from those of Wessex, as agreed by Alfred and Guthrum c.878. The border is described, very briefly, as following the rivers Thames and Lea before proceeding in a straight line northwards to the Great Ouse, at Bedford, which it then followed as far as its junction with Watling Street at Stony Stratford. It is not known why the boundary apparently stops at this point but it seems likely that it then followed Watling Street north-westwards.[17] This clearly demonstrates the importance of rivers in marking boundaries but raises many questions as to how, or even whether, the section of over fifteen miles, between the Lea and the Ouse, was defined 'on the ground' and policed. It has been suggested that it may have followed the line of a minor Roman road and earthworks in the vicinity have been tentatively identified as border posts, but the position is far from certain.[18] The treaty, whilst forbidding migration between the territories, does recognise that the border was permeable, and contains clauses regulating trade and movement across it, which were clearly important to both sides. The boundary was soon superseded, but the cultural divide implied in the treaty continued.[19] To the north east of Watling Street, which provides a geographical approximation of the cultural border, place-names, dialect, sculpture and pottery manufacture all show strong Scandinavian influence and Domesday Book shows that Danish administrative divisions and measurements, such as wapentakes and carucates, remained in regular use.[20]

Many of the practices introduced by Offa for commanding and organising the resources of his kingdom were adopted and extended by Alfred and his successors and, for

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[16] *ASO*, p.93.
[17] *ASE*, pp. 260-2, but see also: D. N. Dumville, 'The treaty of Alfred and Guthrum', in D. N. Dumville (ed.), *Wessex and England from Alfred to Edgar: Six Essays on Political, Cultural, and Ecclesiastical Revival* (Woodbridge, 1992), pp. 15-6, 22-3.
[18] J. Dyer, 'Earthworks of the Danelaw frontier', in P.J. Fowler (ed), *Archaeology and the Landscape* (London, 1972), pp. 222-36.
[19] L. A. Symonds, 'Territories in transition: the construction of boundaries in Anglo-Scandinavian Lincolnshire', in Griffiths et al. (eds), *Boundaries,* pp. 28.; *ASE*, pp.260-2.
[20] M. Gelling, *Signposts to the Past: Place-names and the History of England* (1978, Chichester, 1997 edn), pp.215-37; Symonds, 'Territories in transition', pp.30-1; D. H. Brown, 'Bound by tradition: a study of pottery in Anglo-Saxon England' in Griffiths et al. (eds), *Boundaries,* p. 27; H. C. Darby, *Domesday England* (1977, Cambridge, 1986 edn), pp.2-3; *GASE*, pp.119-20.

example, the *burhs* that were so crucial to success against the Vikings, were constructed, manned and maintained through assessments on local estates.[21] However, the larger and more complicated kingdom required a more sophisticated system for governing the localities and its boundaries needed to be defined.

Government of the localities and the development of administrative borders

Early kings and their households were, of necessity, itinerant being dependent on food renders collected throughout their kingdoms. At an early stage the countryside was divided into hides, a unit which originated as the land needed to support one family, but which became the standard unit for assessing the amount of services and renders due from each locality. The whole system was run from a series of royal vills, each of which was responsible for collecting the renders due from the surrounding area, and at which the royal household would stay for a short period before moving on to the next. As kingdoms expanded and subsumed others, the king would often take tribute, generally in the form of livestock, rather than food renders, from both client kingdoms and the remoter areas of his own but, even with these exclusions, it became increasingly difficult to visit the remaining parts of the kingdom often enough to maintain personal control and, by the end of the seventh century, the beginnings of a wider administrative organisation can be seen.[22]

In Wessex a layer of government developed between the king and the royal vills, consisting of a number of *ealdormen*, each in charge of an area known as a *scir*. As Wessex absorbed firstly East Anglia and Mercia and then the Danelaw, similar shiring arrangements were introduced in those areas but were adapted to local arrangements and local customs were allowed to continue. The names of many shires reflect their origins - for example, Somerset derives from the *sumorton saete*, the original Saxon settlers in the area; and Wiltshire takes its name from Wilton the royal centre from which it was administered.[23] Sussex and Kent preserve the names, and probably also the territories, of ancient kingdoms, and Norfolk and Suffolk take their names from the

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[21] S. Bassett, 'Divide and rule? The military infrastructure of eighth- and ninth-century Mercia', *Early Medieval Europe*, 15 (2007), pp. 53-85.
[22] T. Charles-Edwards, 'Early medieval kingships in the British Isles', in Bassett (ed.) *The Origins*, pp. 28-33; Campbell et al., *Anglo-Saxons*, pp. 58-61.
[23] *GASE*, pp.133-4; M. D. Costen, *The Origins of Somerset* (Manchester, 1992), p.86.

people who occupied the northern and southern parts of the East Anglian kingdom.[24] The shires of Mercia, however, have a more artificial appearance, with those in the west deriving from the territories designated to support the series of *burhs* built by Alfred and Edward the Elder in their campaigns against the Danes and all bear the name of a central borough. A similar system operated in the east but here the central boroughs had been Danish military and administrative centres.[25] There is evidence that even some of these Mercian shires were based on earlier territorial units and, where their boundaries diverge from those of the earlier entity, their artificiality is clear - for example the confused borders of southern Cheshire, drawn to include an area with very different tenurial structures to the rest of the county.[26] Many shire boundaries were drawn to run through thinly populated areas of shared pasture, often woodland, and the allocation of such resources between the various estates in both counties may have dictated the shape of the borders in the locality. This seemed to have happened, for example, along part of Buckinghamshire's border with Northamptonshire and along Cheshire's borders with Shropshire and Staffordshire.[27]

A shire was defined territorially and not by reference to the personal holdings of the *ealdorman,* so there was little inherent danger of large, individual lordships developing. *Ealdormen* were generally blood relations of the king, or members of subordinated dynasties, but were acting as agents of the king in what was a largely administrative function and not in their own right. As the powers and territories of *ealdormen* grew, and they became increasingly remote from local administration, an extra layer seems to have been introduced into the hierarchy. The king's personal representatives in the shires became the shire reeves who were based in the *burhs* which, as a result, became centres for royal administration as well as trading centres. The administative units below the shire were the hundreds, whose origins probably lay in earlier royal estates,

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[24] M. G. Welch, 'Early Anglo-Saxon Sussex: from civitas to shire', in P. Brandon (ed), *The South Saxons* (Chichester, 1978), pp. 34-5; Sawyer, *From Roman*, p.197; T. Williamson, *The Origins of Norfolk* (Manchester, 1993), p.73.
[25] *GASE*, pp.135-6.
[26] Higham, *The Origins*, pp.118-9.
[27] *MVEL*, pp.74-5; Higham, *The Origins*, pp.141-2.

and below this were the vills or townships, although central government rarely penetrated this far.[28]

Shires and, within them, hundreds, were each allocated a number of hides which formed the basis of their assessment to geld and other public burdens and which determined the number of armed men they had to send when an army was being raised. They were also judicial units and every freeman had a right to attend the shire courts, which met twice a year and were generally presided over by an earl and a bishop, deputising for the king, and representing his royal and spiritual authorities respectively. In practice, however, only landowners and other important men generally attended. Most of the day-to-day business was transacted at the hundred court which was held every four weeks and generally met in the open air. Here justice was administered, according to local custom, in criminal cases such as cattle-theft, and matters such as land transfers and boundary disputes were settled. Policing was also a hundredal responsibility, delegated by the king, and freemen were organised into groups of ten providing mutual surety, known as tithings.[29]

The earliest known reference to hundreds dates from the mid-tenth century but in many cases their origins seem to have lain in much earlier estates and, as such, it seems likely that their formation pre-dated that of the shires.[30] In counties reconquered from the Danes, however, such as Norfolk, the hundredal organisation often seems to be later and boundaries frequently appear arbitrary, although even here the naming patterns and the important natural features which mark other boundaries suggest that earlier patterns have not been completely obliterated.[31]

By the tenth century the king was using the shire and hundred courts as part of the apparatus of royal government. He would send writs containing, for example, administrative instructions or notices of appointments to royal office, to the sheriff to be read out at the meetings and could thus communicate directly with the freemen of the

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[28] *GASE*, pp.48, 131-6, 140-1; Campbell et al., *Anglo-Saxons*, p.58; J. Campbell, 'The late Anglo-Saxon state; a maximum view', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 87 (1995), p.53; S. Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe 900-1300* (1984, Oxford, 1997 edn), pp. 114-5; Dyer, *Making a Living*, pp.51-2.
[29] *GASE*, pp.131-48.
[30] Sawyer, *From Roman*, pp.199-203; *GASE*, pp.140-1.
[31] Williamson, *The Origins*, pp.128-9.

district. Although nobles were involved in the judicial system, for example acting as reeves, presiding over courts and ensuring their tenants complied with judgements, their powers were delegated by the king, to whom they owed service, and were not theirs of right.[32]

The nature of frontiers

There have been many studies of individual medieval state frontiers which have considered, *inter alia*, the forms such a frontier might take, the organisation of opposing societies along it and the development of mechanisms to deal with the different laws and allegiances that existed in close proximity.[33] Broad similarities can be seen between the frontiers studied and most could be characterised by 'competing aristocratic and princely interests and ill-defined or fragmented jurisdictions'.[34] However, each frontier had some unique features, or combinations of features, which resulted from the political, social and cultural make-up of the societies concerned and the history of relations between them. For example, by the twelfth century, the English/Scottish border, which had arisen from a division of the ancient kingdom of Northumbria between England and Scotland, separated broadly similar lowland societies, both engaged primarily in pastoral agriculture and with as much in common with each other as with their upland neighbours. Anglo-Norman landowners had been settled on both sides of the border by the respective kings and often held estates in both countries. Religious links, based on the local cults of Saints Cuthbert and Kentigern, were also strong and cross-border ecclesiastical holdings were common, having their origins in the kingdom of Northumbria. For most of the thirteenth century the border was peaceful, as evidenced by the lack of castles in the area, and must have had little effect on the day-to-day lives of the people who continued to farm, trade, marry and form friendships across it.

The situation was very different in Wales where the border with England separated highland societies from lowland, each with different languages, politics and cultures.

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[32] *ASE*, pp. 548-50; Campbell et al., *Anglo-Saxons*, p.237; *GASE*, pp.138-9, 161-3.
[33] See, for example: D. Power, *The Norman Frontier in the Twelfth and Early Thirteenth Centuries* (Cambridge, 2004); M. Lieberman, *The Medieval March of Wales: The Creation and Perception of a Frontier, 1066-1283* (Cambridge, 2010) and the various individual studies in: *MFS*; Power and Standen (eds), *Frontiers*; Abulafia and Berend (eds), *Medieval Frontiers*.
[34] Power, *The Norman Frontier,* p.467.

Anglo-Norman settlement was extensive in the borderlands, and lordships, operating like small kingdoms with the lords having extensive judicial powers and rights, were established within a zone about 40 miles deep which became known as the Marches. Between the centres of the Marcher lordships, or Englishries, lay areas of Celtic tribal settlement, or Welshries, where dispersed settlement and pastoral farming predominated and English power was only nominal. The result was a highly fragmented area with many localised frontiers. Nevertheless both here and in the Scottish borderlands, similar institutions grew up to contain local feuds, deal with cross-border legal issues and to enable everyday interactions and trade to continue. Informal contact between stewards of neighbouring lordships to deal with mutual policing was common but more formal legal systems known as the 'laws of the March' grew up and were eventually sanctioned by the English Crown. These, hybrids of English and Welsh or Scottish law, operated alongside the common law of both countries, and were based on Marcher courts. The latter were usually held on or close to the border itself and dealt with cross-border crimes and disputes through the employment of mixed juries.[35]

The internal borders of England in the medieval period have been little studied, but faint traces of the marcher institutions can sometimes be seen there, indicating that similar 'border' issues had arisen between smaller entities at an earlier stage of integration and had been dealt with in a like manner. For example, a recent study has shown that, in the early medieval period, meeting-places of smaller political entities, such as hundreds, were frequently sited near to borders, probably in what was once 'no-man's land'. Such sites frequently became foci for political, judicial, legislative and social activities and some may have eventually developed into towns.[36]

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[35] For the Welsh and Scottish borders and the legal arrangements that operated there, see: R. Davies, 'Frontier arrangements in fragmented societies: Ireland and Wales', in *MFS*, pp. 77-100; S. G. Ellis, 'The English state and its frontiers in the British Isles, 1300-1600', in Power and Standen (eds), *Frontiers,* pp. 153-181; G. Barrow, 'Frontier and settlement: which influenced which? England and Scotland, 1100-1300', in *MFS*, pp. 3-21; R. Lomas, *North-East England in the Middle Ages* (Edinburgh, 1992), pp.20-31; A. Goodman, 'Religion and warfare in the Anglo-Scottish Marches', in *MFS*, pp. 245-266; R. Lomas, 'St Cuthbert and the Border', in C.D. Liddy and R.H. Britnell (eds), *North-East England in the Later Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2005), pp. 13-28; T. Rowley, *The Landscape of the Welsh Marches* (London, 1986), pp.93-124; Lieberman, *The March*; Lieberman, *The Medieval March*.
[36] A. Pantos, ''On the edge of things': the boundary location of Anglo-Saxon assembly sites', in Griffiths et al. (eds), *Boundaries,* pp. 38-49; B. K. Roberts, H. Dunsford and S. J. Harris, 'Framing medieval landscapes: region and place in County Durham', in Liddy and Britnell (eds), *North-East England,* p. 234.

The boundaries of lordship

The boundaries of royal government, as exercised through the counties, were clearly not the only ones that defined communities, or even the most important. Indeed there is even doubt as to whether they can be said ever to have fulfilled that role. The ties of lordship also bound people together and created societies, although a strong monarchy ensured that such societies were never allowed to develop along lines that threatened the existence of the central state. Nevertheless, lordship remained an important influence, particularly in the immediate post-Conquest period, and its development is considered in this section.

In Anglo-Saxon society there were three kinds of lordship based respectively on personal commendation, on bonds of land tenure and on jurisdictional rights, or soke. Men could, and frequently did, have two or more different lords - for example holding land from one lord but choosing to commend themselves to a different one.[37] The resulting complications and the subtleties of pre-Conquest lordship are not well reflected in the entries in Domesday Book. Where if any information about the Anglo-Saxon landholding is given at all, it is generally only the name of the occupier of the land, who may well only have been a tenant. Even in the few instances where further information is supplied, the exact meaning is often opaque.[38] Maitland, for example, regarded lordship by commendation as a weak bond. This was based on his reading of a phrase stating that a particular Saxon landholder was subject to 'only commendatory lordship', which frequently appeared in documents associated with the survey. In his view this was to be read in the sense of '*mere* commendatory lordship'. More recently this reading has been questioned by Baxter who argues that the meaning intended to be conveyed was 'commendatory lordship *only*'. In other words the phrase referred to the lack of other types of lordship rather than being descriptive of commendatory lordship. Further, Baxter suggests that Maitland's misunderstanding, as he sees it, coloured both

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[37] F.W. Maitland, *Domesday Book and Beyond: Three Essays in the Early History of England* (1897, Cambridge, 1987 edn), p. 67-107.
[38] P. H. Sawyer, '1066-1086: a tenurial revolution?' in P. H. Sawyer, (ed.), *Domesday Book: A Reassessment* (London, 1985), pp. 71-85.

Maitland's own view of Anglo-Saxon society and those of subsequent historians, leading them to underestimate the strength and importance of lordship within it.[39]

The inadequacy of pre-Conquest information in Domesday Book may also have led to other misapprehensions, particularly with regard to the continuity of estates. Sawyer, for example, contends that the failure to record the names of landowners has led historians to assume that the Conquest had brought about far more change in the composition of estates and the depth of the social tenurial hierarchy than was actually the case. He suggests that, where it is possible to construct pre-Conquest lordships, they are often seen to have passed more or less intact to a Norman successor and formed the basis of his honorial fee.[40] Roffe, whilst largely agreeing with this view, stresses that it was continuity in the legal form of tenure, and the rights and duties associated with it, that was important. In his view, the Norman tenant-in-chief was the Saxon king's thegn in all but name and Norman baronies 'represented pre-Conquest estates in both legal form and composition'. The main change was in the granting of land with full rights to mesne tenants, a process he suggests could not have happened before the Conquest when such grants remained a royal prerogative.[41]

Fleming, however, utilising a large computer database compiled from information contained in Domesday Book, sees far less continuity. She accepts that, immediately after the Conquest, there was a short period when land grants reflected pre-Conquest relationships and estate patterns were generally preserved but, thereafter, she suggests, grants were made on a geographical basis with the remainder being transferred by private arrangement or illegal seizure. The proportion of land transferred by these latter methods she calculates to be about 80 per cent and the result was, in her view, a seriously disrupted pattern of lordship and landholding.[42] Her methodology has been questioned, however, most recently by Baxter, who asserts, for example, that there is no

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[39] S. Baxter, *The Earls of Mercia: Lordship and Power in Late Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 219-25.
[40] Sawyer, '1066-1086'.
[41] D. Roffe, 'From thegnage to barony: sake and soke, title, and tenants-in-chief.', *ANS,* 12 (1990), pp. 157-176.
[42] R. Fleming, *Kings and Lords in Conquest England* (Cambridge, 1991).

basis to her assertion that before the Conquest, the family of Harold Godwineson, held more land than the king.[43]

All such analyses depend ultimately on interpretations of the incomplete descriptions of Anglo-Saxon lordship in Domesday Book, which were themselves written by people who probably did not have a clear understanding of the relationships they were describing. While much of the data in Domesday Book seems suited to a wide-ranging statistical analysis, in the nature of Fleming's, it is not clear that this is true in the case of that relating to pre-Conquest lordship. There is too much inconsistency in the data and too many possible interpretations of the formulae used to make it a sound base. It seems likely that further progress will only be made by detailed studies of the estates of individual landholders or compact geographical areas, where a more rounded approach can be taken.

After the Norman Conquest, William I deemed himself, as king of England, to be the ultimate holder of all the land in the country. The men who held land directly from him, his tenants-in-chief, also had tenants and, in Stenton's view, each of their estates, or honours, was 'a feudal kingdom in miniature'.[44] He essentially saw early post-Conquest society as organised in a hierarchy based on the rights and obligations of landholding, and thought that the honorial courts were largely responsible for the evolution of 'a coherent scheme of rights and duties out of the tangle of personal relationships'.[45] Reynolds disagrees fundamentally with this concept, however, arguing that an unbiased reading of the sources does not support it and that opinions have been influenced unduly by the arrangement of the information in Domesday Book. In her view, there is little evidence to suggest that rights in property 'automatically or normally included very much in the way of jurisdiction over free tenants, however they held their land'.[46]

Other historians have entered the debate and widened it to suggest alternative political foci to the honour. Crouch, for example, accepts that the honour was 'a potential focus for power and patronage' and that, indeed, some honours were politically effective aristocratic communities, but suggests that other units, such as the county, the

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[43] Baxter, *The Earls*, pp. 128-38.
[44] D. Crouch, 'From Stenton to McFarlane: models of societies of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries', *TRHS*, 5 (1995), p. 184.
[45] F.M. Stenton, *The First Century of English Feudalism 1066-1166* (Oxford, 1932), pp. 44-5.
[46] S. Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals:The Medieval Evidence Reinterpreted* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 342-95.

neighbourhood and the wider locality had as much potential. The honour was never 'the sole means of the exercise of magnate power ... merely a part of its armoury'.[47] Studies of individual honours have also tended to suggest a more complicated picture than that suggested by Stenton, revealing for example, that whilst the honour clearly did have some cohesion, its tenants generally had outside interests that tended to weaken its hold. Tenants of the honours of Clare and Huntingdon were shown to have held land from other lords to whom they also owed allegiance and barons of the honour of Leicester increasingly sought to dominate their own localities regardless of honorial structures.[48]

The honour began to decline in the twelfth century when legal reforms removed much of the business formerly dealt with by honorial courts and the supply of land for new enfeoffments began to dry up. By the early thirteenth century, the bonds of tenurial lordship were increasingly being replaced by patronage and bought-in services and it is clear that the honour had lost most of its significance as a social and political force. The development of royal government over the same period saw the increased use of county institutions, like the county court, and the involvement of the gentry in local administration. Magnates, at risk of being marginalised, were increasingly forced to exert their influence through domination of these county-based institutions. This they largely did by retaining, or otherwise offering patronage to, gentry office-holders or attempting to influence the appointment of officials such as sheriffs. Less savoury methods were undoubtedly also used, for example the bribing of juries and threats of ruin or physical violence against opposing parties in legal cases.[49] Carpenter has suggested that this is not the whole picture, however, and that magnates clearly had a role in the system providing both the 'means of enforcement for the public processes' and the essential link between centre and locality.[50]

Land was the basis of power and wealth throughout the medieval period and the protection of their estates remained the prime concern of lords. However, they could no

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[47] D. Crouch, 'Debate: bastard feudalism revised I', *Past and Present*, 131 (1991), pp. 165-77.
[48] R. Mortimer, 'Land and service: the tenants of the honour of Clare', *ANS*, 8 (1986), pp. 194-6; K. *EDH*, pp. 163-5; *TBT*.
[49] See, for example: P. R. Coss, 'Bastard feudalism revised', *Past and Present,* 125 (1989), pp. 43-4; P. Coss, *Lordship, Knighthood and Locality: A Study in English Society c.1180-c.1280* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 6-8; D. A. Carpenter, 'Debate: bastard feudalism revised II', *Past and Present*, 131 (1991), pp. 185-8.
[50] C. Carpenter, 'Gentry and community in medieval England', *The Journal of British Studies*, 33 (1994), pp. 358-9.

longer rely solely on tenurial bonds to give them wider social and political influence. Thus, whilst the boundaries of their estates remained important to them, they increasingly had to take account of those of wider government, notably those of the county.

Cultural Provinces

The identification of cultural boundaries within England has always been problematical and administrative boundaries, particularly those of the pre-1974 counties, have often been taken as approximations. This derives in part from the concept of a 'county community' originally postulated in respect of the seventeenth century but now carried back into the late medieval period.[51] Studies of such communities tend to focus on the lesser landowners, or gentry, who, by the beginning of the fourteenth century, had acquired considerable local influence through the holding of offices or other positions in county government.[52] The use of the county as a unit for study has been questioned, however, notably by Carpenter who points out that it presents many problems. The gentry inevitably had wider interests, holding land or having family connections in other counties, and this often makes it difficult to identify to which county they were primarily attached. Even where this can be done, a county based study will tend to underplay or even ignore their out of county concerns. Similarly, she suggests that limiting a study to a county hinders the identification of cross boundary social groupings and tends to marginalise the influence on society of magnates, whose power structures were generally not county-based.[53]

There is general agreement that, by the beginning of the fourteenth century, the county provided a focus for the activities of the gentry based within it, but this alone is not enough to define a society in anything but the narrowest sense of the word. Cultures have other ties binding them together, not least those of a common history and shared

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[51] J. R. Maddicott, 'The county community and the making of public opinion in fourteenth-century England' *TRHS*, 28 (1978), pp. 27-43; Carpenter, 'Gentry', pp. 341-2.
[52] See, for example, E. Acheson, *A Gentry Community: Leicestershire in the Fifteenth Century, c.1422-c.1485* (Cambridge, 1992); N. Saul, *Knights and Esquires: The Gloucestershire Gentry in the Fourteenth Century* (Oxford, 1981); S.J. Payling, *Political Society in Lancastrian England: The Greater Gentry of Nottinghamshire* (Oxford, 1991).
[53] Carpenter, 'Gentry', pp. 345-9, 356-65.

geography.[54] Whilst some counties are geographically coherent areas, deriving to some degree from earlier territorial divisions, many others are not and it is difficult to see why their boundaries should mark clear cultural divisions.

Above the level of the county, cultural regions have proved difficult to define as their boundaries change with individual perception and with time.[55] The current idea of Northumberland and Durham as the 'North East', for example, originates from nineteenth-century industrialisation, and is based largely on the extent of the Great Northern Coalfield. There is little evidence that before then it could be distinguished as a coherent region within the much larger area that had once made up Northumbria.[56] Nevertheless, many useful regional studies have been published, such as Hilton's on the West Midlands, a region which he admits has 'extremely vague frontiers' and which he chooses to base, for the most part, on the diocese of Worcester.[57]

In an attempt to offer a structured framework for more widely based local studies, Phythian-Adams has suggested that England can be divided into 'cultural provinces' consisting of groups of counties which all lie within the drainage basin of a major navigable river (figure 1.1). This, he suggests, reflects earlier divisions when societies were invariably valley based and watersheds marked their territorial boundaries, an arrangement which has remained largely unaltered despite the later imposition of county boundaries. Major centres in the river valleys, which themselves face downriver and eventually towards specific overseas neighbours, still form the heartlands of the provinces and are the main sources of cultural influence. As well as having been shaped by the same physical characteristics, local societies within a province will, therefore, tend to share an outlook and will have more in common with each other than with those in other provinces.

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[54] C. Phythian-Adams, 'Local history and national history: the quest for the peoples of England', *Rural History*, 2, no. 1 (1991), p. 6.
[55] E. Royle, 'Introduction: regions and identities', in E. Royle, (ed.), *Issues of Regional Identity* (Manchester, 1998), pp. 2-3; Phythian-Adams, 'Local history and national history', pp. 5-9.
[56] N. McCord, 'The regional identity of north-east England in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries', in Royle (ed.), *Issues,* p. 102.; A. J. Pollard, 'Introduction', in Liddy and Britnell (eds), *North-East England,* pp. 1-4.
[57] R. H. Hilton, *A Medieval Society: The West Midlands at the End of the Thirteenth Century* (London, 1966).

The natural boundaries between cultural provinces fall along watersheds which generally remain zones of low population after having been settled late by the valley-based societies on either side. In defining a province, however, it is the culturally imposed boundaries of the constituent counties that take precedence when they diverge from the line of the watershed. Phythian-Adams suggests that the 'overlap zones', the areas that lie between the watersheds and the county boundaries may have strong cultural traditions of their own and function as 'distinctive intermediate zones of individuality' between larger cultural regions'.[58]

Studies based on cultural provinces have so far been limited to the early modern period and the application of the concept to the medieval period has not yet been tested.[59]

Aims of this study

This study has two main aims. The first is to test Phythian-Adams's identification of cultural provinces and to establish whether, in the period from c.650 to c.1350, there is any evidence to suggest that societies in two particular, adjacent provinces really were different and how they may have been connected.

Although cultural provinces are broadly defined by reference to river-basins, Phythian-Adams holds that it is county boundaries that define their detailed limits. Accordingly, it is a county boundary which forms the basis of this research. The border chosen for study is that which divides the counties of Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire, which arguably separates a province centred on the drainage basin of the Great Ouse from one looking towards the Thames Valley (figure 1.2).

The second aim is to establish whether, in the medieval period, counties had become strong social and cultural foci with their boundaries becoming significant dividing lines. To do this it is necessary to investigate when the Buckinghamshire/ Northamptonshire

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[58] Phythian-Adams, 'Local history and national history', pp.1-23; C. Phythian-Adams, 'Local history and societal history', *Local Population Studies*, 51 (1993), pp. 30-45; C. Phythian-Adams, 'Introduction: an agenda for English local history' in C. Phythian-Adams (ed.) *Societies, Cultures and Kinship, 1580-1850: Cultural Provinces and English Local History* (Leicester, 1993), pp. 9-18. The position within the broader scheme of rivers that retained 'active frontier functions into later times' is discussed in: C. Phythian-Adams, 'Frontier Valleys', in J. Thirsk (ed.), *Rural England: An Illustrated History of the Landscape* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 236-262.
[59] See, for example: Phythian-Adams, (ed.) *Societies*; A.W. Fox, 'The Leicestershire – Lincolnshire border in the eighteenth century: a cultural frontier?' (unpub. Ph.D. thesis, University of Leicester, 2003).

border was drawn and the extent to which it preserved the boundaries of earlier political entities. It is important to know this, since, although the county border may appear to mark a divide, it may be following the route of an earlier boundary which had separated societies before the counties were formed. Conversely, where the county border is known to divert from an earlier, well-established boundary it is necessary to look at if, and how quickly, the former took over from the latter as marking a cultural divide.

The detailed research aims fall within three broad, inter-related, topics and the structure of the thesis reflects this. The first three substantive chapters focus on the landscape of the border area and how its resources were divided between different social and political entities in the pre-Conquest period. Chapter 2 serves as a general introduction to the landscape and the early political and social organisation of the area. Chapter 3 looks in more detail at the shared woodlands and pasturelands along the border and considers which estate centres had interests in them. The development of territorial organisation in the late Anglo-Saxon period and the formation of Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire is considered in chapter 4.

The county was not the only possible focus of social and political cohesion and the following two chapters are concerned with the boundaries of other institutions and their relationship to those of the county. Chapter 5 examines social relationships arising from lordship and landholding and considers the extent to which they may have fostered the development of an alternative community. Chapter 6 looks at the structure and organisation of the church.

The final three chapters concentrate on the economy and society of the borderlands. Chapter 7 looks at towns and trade. It considers how increasing commercialisation affected the area and whether developing trade networks tended to undermine or re-inforce intra-county relationships. Chapter 8 examines the rural economy to try to establish whether there was any sense in which the county boundary could also have been said to mark an economic border and whether this changed over time. Chapter 9 considers the impact of the border on people's lives, both on a daily basis and in the longer term. It reviews developments in royal government and the law and considers the extent to which they encouraged the formation of separate, county-based societies.

Records and methods

The breadth of the research, in terms of both geography and time, means that the sources employed have been, necessarily, varied. Domesday Book, charters, deeds, maps, tax records, inquisitions, manorial records and court rolls, in print and in manuscript form, have all been utilised and, although the survival of local records is patchy, overall, enough existed to enable data to be collected and comparisons made. The major exception is the records of the county courts which, sadly, have not generally survived. In addition to documentary records, use has been made of place-name analysis and archaeological evidence, particularly in respect of the pre-Conquest period.

The data has been analysed in various ways depending on its nature and the particular question being addressed. However, throughout the study extensive use has been made of maps to display the data in a geographical context. These maps are based on those of 'ancient parishes' produced by Kain and Oliver.[60] Whilst this is not ideal, parish boundaries rarely having been co-terminous with the boundaries of manors or other landholding units, it has proved the only practical way to proceed. Any distortions introduced are minor and have not materially affected the broader picture with which this study is primarily concerned.

Terminology and border studies

Borders and their evolution have been studied by historians, geographers, political scientists and people working in many other disciplines. In the English-speaking world the terms used by each are generally the same but their meanings alter with the context and location in which they are used. In North America, for example, the term 'frontier' denotes a zone of interaction lying between settled and untamed land. This concept was developed in Turner's influential study of 1893 which suggested that it was the rigours of life in such a zone that gave rise to the 'pioneer' spirit and led to most of the distinguishing features of American character and society.[61] In Europe, however, frontiers are more often seen as territorial divisions, sometimes linear and sometimes zonal, between different political entities. To geographers a frontier is a zone which has

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[60] R.J.P. Kain, and R.R. Oliver, *Historic Parishes of England and Wales: An Electronic Map of Boundaries before 1850 with a Gazetteer and Metadata* (Colchester, 2001).
[61] F.J. Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York, 1921).

evolved organically between societies, in contrast to a boundary which is an artificial line set within the zone.

Similar differences are apparent in the use of other common terms, particularly 'border' and 'boundary'. In geography each has a specific meaning – the boundary is a line and the border the zone on its fringes. In fact geographers generally see a progression between all three terms – frontier, border and boundary - in which a frontier diminishes becoming a border as parts are appropriated by the societies on either side. The nature of the zone is transformed from one of separation to one of contact and eventually a line, the boundary, will be drawn through it. In other disciplines, both terms, 'border' and 'boundary, can encompass many meanings and so are often qualified as in 'linear border' and 'boundary zone'. The situation is further complicated by the adoption of foreign language terms to describe particular types of borders. 'March', for example, has, in English and German, come to describe a militarised border zone, although the military connotation was not present in the Old French term 'marche' from which it derived.[62] In any study of borders, therefore, it is necessary to define the terms used.

This study is concerned with the internal administrative borders of a single nation state, which are not generally regarded as frontiers. However, many county boundaries were set in the period before England existed as a unified political entity and may have developed from the frontiers (defined in the European sense) that separated earlier kingdoms and tribes. Consequently, this is how the term is used in this thesis. 'Border' and 'boundary' are used interchangeably and qualified where their meanings may be unclear. The term 'borderlands' is used to denote the zone through which a linear border runs, or comes to run.

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[62] See: Prescott, *Political Frontiers*, pp. 1-50; Power, 'Frontiers', pp. 1-12.

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The landscape and early history of the borderlands

This chapter aims both to define more closely the area that will form the focus of this study and to serve as a general introduction to the landscape of the borderlands. It examines the precise route that the early nineteenth-century county border took, assessing what relationship, if any, it bore to natural or man-made features. It then considers the early settlement history and political organisation of the area concentrating particularly on evidence that indicates the presence of cultural divisions.

The study area

Geographically, south Northamptonshire and north Buckinghamshire lie in the south midlands and the border between them stretches for approximately 60 kilometres in a south-west to north-east direction (figure 2.1). The area included in the study could, therefore, potentially be very large and geographical limits need to be imposed. For practical purposes these have been chosen as the boundaries of the pre-nineteenth-century parishes that lay along the border (figure 2.2). Although not all of these boundaries reflect exactly the divisions between medieval townships and vills, it can be shown that many do and 'ancient' parishes are the earliest, and in most instances the only, land divisions whose boundaries are now known.[1]

Lillingstone Lovell, a parish that lies in the heart of the study area, was a detached part of Oxfordshire until the nineteenth century when it was transferred to Buckinghamshire.[2] Nevertheless, its geographical distance from Oxfordshire and its obvious origin as a single unit with Lillingstone Dayrell (in Buckinghamshire) mean that it has been decided to include it in the study.

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[1] F. Pollock and F.W. Maitland, *The History of English Law before the time of Edward I*, 1 (1895, Cambridge, 1898 edn), pp. 560-2; A.J.L. Winchester, *Discovering Parish Boundaries* (1990, Princes Risborough, 2000 edn), pp. 5-37.
[2] *VCHB* 4, p. 191.

Geology and natural features

The south midlands is a lowland region generally characterised by champion landscapes and nucleated villages.[3] Such a broad characterisation inevitably conceals much local variation, however, and smaller 'natural regions' which share geologies, landscapes and settlement histories are widely recognised. The greater part of the border between Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire lies along the watersheds separating the Ouse from the Nene and the Tove which take the form of a broad, low plateau elevated above, and physically distinct from, the Nene valley to the north and the clay vales of Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire to the south (figures 2.3 and 2.4). The plateau, known as the Yardley-Whittlewood Ridge, forms one of Natural England's Joint Character Areas and they suggest that the strong historic character of the landscape is due to the continued presence of large blocks of woodland appropriated as royal forests in the thirteenth century. This aspect of the landscape is considered further in chapters 3 and 9. The ridge is crossed at right-angles by numerous roads, many, like Watling Street, of Roman origin but no main routes run along it, perhaps an indication that the area was always sparsely settled.[4]

The border follows the general alignment of the geological strata which run from south-west to north-east but, apart from a small central section, it does not coincide with any particular geological features, passing, for the most part, through the band of Great Oolite limestones which lies to the north of the Ouse (figure 2.5). The whole area is overlain with drift boulder clay although this has largely been eroded from lower lying land, and the resulting soils are mixed and locally variable. The heavy clays left on the higher ground generally support woodland growth, notably within Yardley Chase and the forests of Salcey and Whittlewood, all of which lie at heights in excess of 100 metres above sea-level (figure 2.4), whilst the lighter, chalky clays and stonebrash are used for both arable and pastoral farming.[5]

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[3] See for example: B.K. Roberts and S. Wrathmell, *An Atlas of Rural Settlement in England* (London, 2000), p. 77.
[4] The Countryside Agency, 'Countryside Character. Volume 4: East Midlands',
<http://www.countryside.gov.uk/LAR/Landscape/CC/east_midlands/index.asp> (26/10/2003).
[5] *TBL*, pp. 27-8; *VCHB* 1, pp. 5-7.

From the north west of the ridge, near Brackley, the land rises steadily northwards to form part of the 'Northamptonshire Wolds' where much of the land lies between 120 metres and 245 metres and the Rivers Great Ouse, Nene and Cherwell all have their sources. To the east of the Wolds the land gradually falls away merging eventually into the alluvial soils and gravel terraces of the Nene Valley.[6]

To the south of the border the Ouse flows through a shallow valley with gently sloping sides and a narrow floor. This valley separates the Yardley-Whittlewood Ridge from the remainder of north Buckinghamshire where the Oxford Clays have been overlain with drift deposits of boulder clay and gravel resulting in a landscape of undulating clay vales and heavy, poorly-draining soils. [7]

The route of the border

Figure 2.3 shows the main rivers and their tributaries in the area and a clear correlation can be seen between the drainage systems and the location of the county border (mapped as at it stood in the mid-nineteenth century). The Ouse only marks the border for a length of about 10 kilometres in the centre. To the west it is a very small river, little more than a stream, and it is perhaps not surprising that, rather than following it, the border runs along the much more prominent ridge that forms the watershed between the Ouse and the Tove. However, more unexpectedly, the easternmost part of the border also follows the high ground, that of the Ouse/Nene watershed, despite the fact that the Ouse is a much more prominent landscape feature than it is further west.

In order to look at the location and the landscape of the border in more detail it has been mapped in two parts. The westernmost section (figure 2.6) is marked by a small tributary of the Ouse which separates the Northamptonshire parishes of Evenley, Brackley and Whitfield from Turweston and Biddlesden in Buckinghamshire. The modern border then leaves the stream but its shape, as it curves back on itself around Luffield, and the proximity of a detached part of Buckinghamshire strongly suggest that it originally continued along the river to Luffield. The detached portions of Brackley,

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[6] *TNL*, pp. 25-9.
[7] *VCHB* 1, pp.7-8; M.G. Sumbler, *British Regional Geology: London and the Thames Valley* (London, 1996), pp. 3, 47; *TBL*, pp. 27-8.

Biddlesden, Westbury and Greens Norton which lay along this stretch of the border probably originated in the division of the woodland between the vills which had earlier rights of common within it. This is considered further in chapter 3.

After leaving Luffield the county boundary follows the line of another tributary of the Ouse for about 2 kilometres. This stream then turns southwards forming the border between Lillingstone Dayrell and Lillingstone Lovell, and thus between Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire. To the north east of Lillingstone Lovell lies a detached part of Lillingstone Dayrell, the boundaries of which seem to have been defined by reference to woodland edges. After passing around the Lillingstones the border follows, southwards, the approximate line of the watershed between two tributaries of the Ouse, dividing Leckhampstead in Buckinghamshire from Wicken in Northamptonshire. The border meets the Ouse itself just to the north of Thornton. This is the only stretch of any length, to the west of Watling Street, where the border is not marked by a river or stream. From Thornton the border follows the Ouse north-eastwards for about ten kilometres and is crossed by Watling Street at Stony Stratford.

Figure 2.7 shows the eastern section of the border. As can be seen, once the Ouse/Tove confluence is reached, the border follows the Tove to the north west before resuming its north-easterly course to Bedfordshire, passing just south of the Ouse-Nene watershed. After it leaves the Tove the border is not marked by any existing natural features and evidence suggests that this may always have been the case. A charter of 979, transferring Olney from royal ownership, describes the bounds of the estate and thus, probably, part of what is now the county border. The boundary described skirts a croft, follows a ditch or dyke as far as the field or open country, and then runs along a *wyrttruma* (woodland verge). The final stretch runs from 'Hild's mound' to 'the stone', both now unidentifiable.[8] It seems, therefore, that in this period the border ran through a mixed landscape, passing through open ground and tracts of woodland, and was largely marked by man-made features – a ditch, a mound and a boundary stone.

The lack of detached woodlands located at a distance from the mother vills, as was seen to the west of Watling Street, may indicate that this area was less wooded but more

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[8] A. H. J. Baines, 'The Olney charter of 979', *ROB*, 21 (1979), pp. 171-7; A. H. J. Baines, 'The Chetwode-Hillesden charter of 949', *ROB*, 24 (1982), pp. 1-33.

probably reflects the underlying geography. In the west the watershed between the Rivers Ouse and Tove lies over 5 kilometres from the Tove and 8 from the Ouse. These distances allowed settlements to develop on the valley sides, which later expanded separating the riverside vills from their woodland resources located on the higher ground. In contrast, in the east, the Ouse lies relatively close to the Yardley-Whittlewood Ridge that separates it from the Nene valley and so vills based on the Ouse could expand onto the slopes of the ridge without significant secondary settlements developing between. It can be seen, for example, that the bigger, and from their names, older, parishes on the Buckinghamshire side of the border - Lavendon, Olney and Hanslope – all included within their bounds both the river gravels and terraces suitable for settlement and crop growing and higher claylands for pasture and the supply of wood. [9]

The county border was drawn to run along the northern bounds of these Buckinghamshire parishes and thus along the southern edge of the ridge, meaning that the land on the top of the ridge, which included the wooded areas of Salcey and Yardley Chase, fell substantially within Northamptonshire. The organisation of land and resources on this side of the border is, in some ways, puzzling. The ridge lies much further from the Nene than the Ouse, a situation which, as in the west, allowed secondary settlements to develop higher up the valley sides. Despite this, however, the only parishes on the Nene known to have had detached areas of woodland located on the ridge were Cogenhoe and Great Houghton. Domesday Book reveals that, although there were links between the other Nene valley vills and those on the higher ground, they were not those of valley based manors holding higher land in order to exploit the woodlands and grazing grounds. Rather it was the manor of Yardley Hastings, located along the top of the ridge on heavy clay soils, that had members or sokelands in most of the surrounding Nene Valley vills.

[9] The place-names concerned all contain topographical elements - *denu* (valley), *eg* (island) and *slaepe* (slope), respectively. Such elements are now thought to be amongst the earliest occurring see for example: M. Gelling, *Place-Names in the Landscape* (1984, London, 2000 edn), pp. 1-9.

Pre-Saxon settlement, communications and land organisation

The only source of information on pre-Saxon settlement in the border area is archaeological data, obtained in the main from pottery scatters and soil or crop-marks shown on aerial photographs, and this has to be interpreted with care. Archaeological bias can be introduced in many ways – most obviously by the concentration of resources in particular areas. For example, many more sites are known in the Milton Keynes area, where archaeological investigations were focused in connection with the development of the new city, than in much of north-west Buckinghamshire which has been little studied. Other factors are also relevant, however, for example, the fragile nature of early pottery means that scatters are most likely to be found in areas that are under active plough erosion and crop marks form more readily on permeable geologies.[10]

Even allowing for these shortcomings, much can be learned about the early history of the border area from the archaeological record. Most crop-marks recorded in the parishes along the border date from the Iron Age and later, but one class of earlier monument - Bronze Age barrows and the ring-ditches which mark the locations of now vanished barrows - may give some clue as to territorial organisation at that time. Studies have shown that clusters of such monuments occur at regular intervals of approximately 5 kilometres along the Ouse valley. Such a regularity cannot be related to topography alone and it is thought that they must in some way relate to communal territories. Further, if these riverside barrows mark in some way the focus of a territory, it is possible that those placed on the higher land near or on the watersheds represented the territorial boundaries.[11] The map in figure 2.8 shows the sites of barrows and ring ditches located within the study area and also those in parishes that lie along the Ouse. As can be seen, they occur all along the Ouse, but in the west there is also a group located on higher ground and every one of these lies close to the county border. This strong correlation suggests that this part of the border may reflect a more ancient boundary.

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[10] A. Kidd, 'Later Bronze Age and Iron Age', *STAR*, pp. 1-2 (24/05/2009).

[11] H. S. Green, 'Early Bronze Age burial, territory and population in Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, and the Great Ouse Valley', *Archaeological Journal*, 131 (1974), pp. 75-139; T. Malim, 'The ritual landscape of the Neolithic and Bronze Age along the middle and lower Ouse Valley', in M. Dawson (ed.), *Prehistoric, Roman, and post-Roman landscapes of the Great Ouse Valley* (York, 2000), p. 81.

Work in both Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire has shown that, as the distribution of ring ditches suggests, Neolithic and Bronze Age settlement in the county was concentrated on the free-draining soils of the valley floors and sides and, although significant woodland clearance took place, it is likely that the higher clay lands remained areas of woodland used for hunting and foraging. However, the archaeological record clearly demonstrates that, in the Iron Age and Roman periods, population growth and social change led to exploitation of the clay lands for settlement, agriculture, pottery manufacture and ironworking (figure 2.9), and little woodland can have remained by the end of the period.[12] Environmental evidence suggests that by this time mixed farming had become standard but, even on the heavy soils of Whittlewood, arable agriculture was dominant.[13]

It has been observed that Iron Age settlement seems to have taken different forms in the valleys of the Nene and the Ouse. In the former small ditched enclosures containing one or more roundhouses were the norm but, in the latter, such enclosures formed only one element in a much more open and unenclosed landscape. The reasons behind this divergence remain to be investigated and it is not currently known where the transitional zone between the two settlement types lay, however, one of the few 'Nene-type' enclosed settlements recorded in Buckinghamshire lay in the border parish of Ravenstone, in the north east of the county. Pit alignments, generally regarded as marking Iron Age agricultural boundaries, share a similar distribution, being numerous in Northamptonshire but found only in the far north-east of Buckinghamshire.[14]

The Roman road network had an impact on the local settlement pattern as Watling Street and lesser roads began to attract settlement to them. Small towns developed at

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[12] A. Deegan, 'Archaeology on the boulder clay in Northamptonshire: some results from the Northamptonshire National Mapping Programme Project' in J. Mills and R. Palmer (eds), *Populating Clay Landscapes* (Stroud, 2007), pp.113-4, 117-8; Kidd, ' Later Bronze Age', pp. 3-5; D. N. Hall and J. B. Hutchings, 'The distribution of archaeological sites between the Nene and the Ouse valleys', *Bedfordshire Archaeological Journal*, 7 (1972), p.8; A. Kidd, 'Northamptonshire in the first millennium BC', in *TAN*, pp. 57-8.

[13] *MVEL*, pp. 52-3.

[14] M. Dawson, 'The Iron Age and Romano British period: a landscape in transition', in Dawson (ed.) *Prehistoric, Roman, and post-Roman landscapes*, pp. 114-5; Kidd, 'Later Bronze Age', pp. 6, 10. See also: L. Webley, 'An Iron Age pit alignment and burial at Aspreys, Olney', *ROB*, 47 (2007), pp. 63-80; A. Chapman, 'A Bronze Age barrow cemetery and later boundaries, pit alignments and enclosures at Gayhurst Quarry, Newport Pagnell, Buckinghamshire', *ROB*, 47(2007), pp. 83-208.

intervals along their lengths, for example, *Lactodorum* (Towcester) and *Magiovinium* (Fenny Stratford) lay along Watling Street to the north and south, respectively, of the study area. The only candidate within the border parishes for possible urban status is Ashfurlong, a site of several hectares, close to Olney, which probably lay along the road from *Magiovinium* to Irchester but which has been little investigated.[15]

Iron Age and Roman tribal and political groupings are not well understood and their associations with particular territories even less so. Some hillforts may have served as central places for local tribal groups in the early to mid-Iron Age and may thus have developed a political significance.[16] In the case of two – Whittlebury, within the study area, and Danesborough, to the south (figure 2.8) – it has been postulated that their political functions were taken over by *Lactodorum* and *Magiovinium* respectively, and that this may have preserved earlier territorial arrangements.[17] Other hillforts, such as that at Maids Moreton to the east of Buckingham, have not been investigated and their function remains unknown. Coin evidence suggests that by the late first century BC north Buckinghamshire and south Northamptonshire had become part of the territory of the Catuvellauni, a powerful tribe based in *Verulamium* (St Albans),[18] but what this meant in practice for governance, trade or communications, remains unknown. Political boundaries, if they ever existed in anything approaching a stable territorial form, probably remain largely irrecoverable.

Social and cultural divides can perhaps be more easily detected in archaeological data. Recent studies which cover the border area have generally concluded that, whilst there are cultural differences between the north and south of the region, these are gradual and part of an expected continuum, and it is the differences between the east and west which are often much more pronounced and, in many cases, abrupt. For example, a recent study focussed on the late Iron Age and early Roman period has found that socio-economic development followed a very different trajectory in the area around Milton Keynes, defined for this purpose to include most of north Buckinghamshire, from that

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[15] R.J. Zeepvat and D. Radford, 'Roman Buckinghamshire', *STAR* (24/05/2009); J. Taylor and M. Flitcroft, 'The Roman Period', in *TAN,* p. 68.
[16] B. Cunliffe, *Iron Age Communities in Britain: An Account of England, Scotland and Wales from the Seventh Century BC until the Roman Conquest* (1971, London, 2005 edn), p.396.
[17] Zeepvat and Radford, 'Roman Buckinghamshire'; *MVEL*, pp. 64-5.
[18] Kidd, 'Later Later Bronze Age', p. 7-9; Kidd, *Northamptonshire*, p.57.

around Bedford about twenty kilometres to the east.[19] Furthermore, evidence from ceramics and other artefacts show clearly that the trading and cultural connections of most of the Milton Keynes area were orientated to the west, whilst those of Bedford were to the north and east. From the beginning of the second century, for example, pottery from Oxfordshire dominated in Milton Keynes, despite the latter's proximity to the pottery producing areas of the lower Nene, and it seems likely that distribution was via the Alchester to *Lactodorum* road.[20]

Separately, it has also been noted that in Northamptonshire 'the pattern of settlements and their associated roads in the Roman period shows something of a fault line running down the middle of the modern county'. [21] The dense network of towns and roads in the lower Nene and Welland valleys were linked into a larger network reaching eastwards to East Anglia and south-eastwards to Verulamium. In the south-west of the county, however, there was a separate group located in the Upper Nene, Tove and Cherwell area, oriented towards Oxfordshire and, particularly, to Watling Street with its links to the north-west and London. It is suggested that these two separate networks of towns may have reflected, and influenced, wider patterns of communication, trade and transport.

Saxon and Medieval Settlement Patterns

The Saxon period was undoubtedly one of great social and organisational change but it is, unfortunately, poorly reflected in the archaeological record. The pottery used - hand made and fired at low temperatures – is rarely found and sites of the timber-framed and sunken featured buildings common in the period are difficult to detect. Further it seems likely that the remains of many successful late Saxon settlements lie beneath modern villages and towns and so remain largely undiscovered and uninvestigated.[22] Studies based within or close to the border area, in Whittlewood and Raunds, which lies in Northamptonshire about 16 kilometres to the north east, have shown that patterns of

[19] J. M. Meade, 'Divergent Identities? The middle and upper Ouse Valley in the late Iron Age and Romano-British periods' (unpub. Ph.D. thesis, University of Leicester, 2008). The Milton Keynes area was defined as that encompassed by the Milton Keynes Unitary Authority and the area to its west, as far as the Oxfordshire border (pp. 34, 52).
[20] Meade, 'Divergent Identities?'.
[21] 'Overview', *NEUS* (20/11/2006); see also: Taylor and Flitcroft, *The Roman Period*, p.65, for differences between these areas in rural domestic architecture.
[22] S. Crawford, 'The early medieval regional assessment', *STRF* (29/5/2009).

settlement and land use were influenced by numerous factors - cultural, social and environmental - and could vary even over relatively short distances.[23] In Northamptonshire, for example, an early Saxon dispersed settlement pattern of small farmsteads scattered across the better draining soils, changed in the eighth century when the farmsteads were abandoned and settlement became concentrated in fewer places. These changes were associated with an intensification of arable agriculture and an expansion onto clay soils.[24] This process was not visible in most of the Whittlewood parishes, however, where settlement remained dispersed and no evidence of a move to nucleation was found.[25]

In the medieval period, too, whilst broad national trends drove settlement change, local factors often dictated the form and timing of the response. For example, in Northamptonshire many nucleated settlements, such as Yardley Hastings, show evidence of re-planning in the period between the tenth and twelfth centuries when populations were growing. This resulted in vills with layouts in the form of regular grids or rows. Some Whittlewood parishes, like Lillingstone Dayrell, developed along similar lines but others, like Leckhampstead, did not. Here the expansion in population was accommodated by the growth of small hamlets which perpetuated the existing dispersed pattern of settlement.[26]

Figure 2.10 maps settlement types[27] in the border parishes in order to identify any patterns which could indicate broader social and cultural divisions. The map is based on the eighteenth-century county maps produced by Jefferys and so relies on basic village types remaining unchanged from medieval times. For many places this is a reasonable assumption but for others it is not and, therefore, some amendments have been made. Where villages have been affected by the development of eighteenth-century landscape gardens, earlier maps or plans have been consulted in order to categorise the settlement

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[23] S. Parry, *Raunds Area Survey. An archaeological study of the landscape of Raunds, Northamptonshire 1985-94* (Oxford, 2006); *MVEL*.

[24] A. Brown and G. Foard, 'The Anglo-Saxon period' in *TAN,* p. 94; G. Foard, 'An Archaeological Resource Assessment of Medieval Northamptonshire', *EMARF* (26/11/2006).

[25] *MVEL*, pp.85-7.

[26] C. Lewis, 'The Medieval Period (850-1500)' in N. J. Cooper (ed.), *The Archaeology of the East Midlands. An Archaeological Resource Assessment and Research Agenda* (Leicester, 2006), p. 191.; *MVEL*, pp.236-9.

[27] The settlement types used are those described in: C. Lewis, C. Dyer and P. Mitchell-Fox, *Village, Hamlet and Field: Changing Medieval Settlements in Central England* (1996, Macclesfield, 2001 edn), p.51.

and this is indicated on the map. Other medieval settlements may have shrunk or vanished altogether before the production of the maps and so, where archaeological records indicate the former presence of a settlement larger than one or two farmsteads, this has also been shown. In most such cases, however, the records do not enable the type of settlement to be established.

The map shows that a network of small towns had grown up, each lying about 10-15 kilometres from its neighbours, and all were situated alongside a river. Similarly, villages taking the form of nucleated clusters were, almost without exception, located on the lowest ground within each parish and most lay close to a river or stream. Local topography was obviously a major factor in the siting of these types of settlement. However, other patterns, not so obviously linked to topography, can also be seen.

To the east of Watling Street, settlement patterns vary from east to west but nowhere does the county border mark a discontinuity. To the east of Salcey Forest, most parishes, in both counties, consisted of one relatively large nucleated settlement. Between Salcey and Watling Street, however, the pattern changes to one of multiple small settlements in each parish, with nucleated clusters being found in close proximity to hamlets and nucleated and interrupted rows, as can seen particularly clearly in Hanslope and Hartwell. This reverses the position seen in the Iron Age and Roman periods (figure 2.9) when numerous settlements were found to the east of Salcey and very few to the west. At that time the east must have been largely cleared of woodland and probably remained so into the medieval period. In contrast the west seems to have remained heavily wooded and the medieval settlement pattern is one commonly associated with woodland clearance.

The nucleated centres of several parishes took the form of regular rows, orientated at right-angles to the county border. Some, like Hanslope and Ravenstone, lay along what seem to have been local roads, linking the valley floor to the woodlands, whilst others lay on more important routes - for example, Stoke Goldington, which lay on the road from Newport Pagnell to Northampton, and Yardley Hastings which straddled the Northampton to Bedford road. The general south-east / north-west orientation, although dictated partly by topography, suggests the importance of cross-border routes and possibly indicates the growing importance of Northampton as a local centre.

To the west of Watling Street the settlement pattern shows a similar disconnect with that of the Iron Age and Roman periods. Here woodland had clearly regenerated between Watling Street and the county border, and what had been a densely settled area, in western Potterspury and eastern Whittlebury, shows virtually no settlement in the medieval period. The county border seems to mark a significant dividing line. Each Northamptonshire parish, from Whittlebury to Brackley, contained at least one reasonably sized nucleated settlement. The Buckinghamshire side, however, seems to have been devoid of such settlements for much of its length, although it is possible that one or more of the deserted settlements, for example, Evershaw, which medieval tax records indicate was a reasonably populous place, originally took this form. Even allowing for this, the contrast is still noticeable and, given that there is no obvious difference in the landscape or geology on either side of the border, the explanation must lie in political, social or cultural factors.

Early political organisation

Place-name evidence indicates that south Buckinghamshire, in the Thames valley, was settled by Saxons and the north, in the Ouse valley, by Angles. It is probable that the land between the two continued to be occupied by Britons, until the West Saxons began to expand into central Buckinghamshire. In 571 they fought the Britons at a now unidentifiable place named Bedcanford and took the four *tuns* of Limbury (Luton), Aylesbury, Bensington (Benson) and Eynsham which between them probably controlled the area immediately to the north of the Chilterns. The Thames/Ouse watershed may have marked some kind of boundary at this time, although whether it separated the West Saxons from the Angles or from the Britons is impossible to say. The occurence of two place-names containing both British and Saxon elements close to this putative border – Chetwode, and Brickhill made up of both the British and Saxon words for 'wood' and 'hill' respectively – perhaps suggests the latter. [28]

Documentary sources for the mid-Saxon period are extremely rare and so little is known for certain about the administrative or political organisation of the area that later became

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[28] *PNB*, pp. xi-xvi, 30-1, 62. For British survival north of the Chilterns, see: K. Rutherford Davis, *Britons and Saxons: The Chiltern Region 400-700* (Chichester, 1982).

north Buckinghamshire and south Northamptonshire. It almost certainly lay within the territory of the Middle Angles, a loose confederation of tribal groups each with a separate king who occupied much of the south midlands.[29] Middle Anglia had been annexed by Mercia before 653 when Penda, pagan king of Mercia, appointed his son, Peada, as sub-king of the Middle Angles.[30] Bede states that Peada was responsible for the conversion of the area to christianity and archaeological evidence seems to support this.[31] He almost certainly founded the great abbey at Medehamstede (Peterborough), c.655, and the traditions of the western part of the Buckinghamshire/Northamptonshire border suggest that other members of the Mercian royal family were also involved in the founding and running of local religious establishments. The legend of Rumbold, a descendant of Penda, is considered in chapter 6, but seventh century Mercian princesses were also associated with religious foundations in Aylesbury, Bicester and Adderbury. It seems likely that these centres, as well as functioning as religious *foci*, were used to administer and maintain control over what were probably territories only recently acquired by Mercia.[32] This indicates that the border between Mercia and Wessex had moved southwards in the previous century, a trend that was to continue, in broad terms, until the ninth century when the Thames eventually became the (negotiated) frontier between them.[33]

The tribal groupings of Middle Anglia were included in the Tribal Hidage, a list of the tributes due to Mercian overlords by the peoples living in outer Mercia at some time in the seventh to ninth centuries. The text survives only in an eleventh-century document, of uncertain purpose, which introduces scribal errors into the name-forms it contains. The document provides the only evidence for the existence of many of the smaller tribal groups that were later absorbed into Mercia. Some tribes can be identified with particular places, for example, the *Cilternsaetna* clearly occupied land near to the Chilterns and the Gifla dwelt around the River Ivel in Bedfordshire.[34] Some attempts to

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[29] *AON*, p.193.

[30] *ASO*, pp.50-51.

[31] *VCHN* 2, p.1; R. Atkins, 'A middle to late Saxon cemetery at Seaton Rd, Harringworth', *Northamptonshire Archaeology*, 32 (2004), pp. 104-105.

[32] *VCHN*, 2, pp.3-4; A. Thacker, 'Kings, saints and monasteries in pre-Viking Mercia', *Midland History*, 10 (1985), pp. 1-2, 6-8,19-20.

[33] *ASO*, pp. 54-6, 93.

[34] See, for example: W. Davies and H. Vierck, 'The contexts of Tribal Hidage: social aggregates and settlement patterns', *Fruhmittelalterliche Studien*, 2 (1974), pp. 223-93; C. Hart, 'The Tribal Hidage', *TRHS*, 21 (1971), pp. 133-157.

locate the remaining tribes named by reference to place-names, topography and the order in which they appear in the document have involved consideration of the border area. In 1954, Leeds decided that none of the groups belonged there on the basis that 'the whole area enclosed between the Nene and the Ouse from their mouths to their source is archaeologically almost a blank'.[35] Davies and Vierck, broadly concurred suggesting that the lack of cemeteries between the upper Nene and the upper Ouse indicates that the area was heavily wooded in the seventh century.[36] However, the state of archaeological knowledge has progressed considerably since they wrote in 1974. In the past, most early to mid-Anglo-Saxon sites were known as the result either of chance finds or, particularly in Northamptonshire, of quarrying and mineral extraction.[37] The development of Milton Keynes, just to the south of the border area, in the 1970s and 1980s gave archaeologists the chance to study an area of about 22,000 acres in greater detail than had been possible before. Although no new cemeteries came to light the archaeologists concluded that: 'the evidence for pagan-Saxon settlement in the city area is relatively good in comparison with the rest of the southern Midlands'.[38] In the border area, too, archaeological work in advance of development has led to finds suggestive of early to mid-Saxon settlement. For example, burials and/or pottery of the period are known from Bozeat,[39] Easton Maudit,[40] Olney,[41] Weston Underwood,[42] Piddington[43] and, possibly, Yardley Hastings.[44] The existence of a cemetery at Passenham has been known since the nineteenth century and in 2007 the largest inhumation cemetery known in Buckinghamshire was discovered at Wolverton.[45] A late seventh century burial of a young man, together with a sword, helmet, and other items was discovered in 1997 in

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[35] E.T. Leeds, 'The end of Mid-Anglian paganism and the 'Tribal Hidage'', *The Antiquaries Journal*, 34 (1954), p. 199.
[36] Davies and Vierck, 'The contexts', p. 277.
[37] G. Foard, 'An archaeological resource assessment of Anglo-Saxon Northamptonshire (400 - 1066)', *EMARF*, p. 11 (03/07/2011).
[38] R.A. Croft and D.C. Mynard, *The Changing Landscape of Milton Keynes* (Aylesbury, 1993), pp. xi, 15.
[39] *IHMN* II, p.4, A. Deegan, 'Late Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman settlements and landscapes', in A. Deegan and G. Foard (eds), *Mapping Ancient Landscapes in Northamptonshire* (Swindon, 2007), p. 105.
[40] A. Brown and G. Foard, 'The Anglo-Saxon period', in *TAN*, p. 80.
[41] See, for example: A.T. Thorne and C. Walker, 'Excavations at the former Cowper Tannery, Olney' (unpub. report, MKHER, 2003); N. Flavell, 'Archaeological evaluation of land at Warrington Road, Olney, Milton Keynes' (unpub. report, MKHER, 2006) and various other entries in the MKHER.
[42] D. Enright, 'Archaeological investigations at Weston Underwood, Buckinghamshire in 1994: The Anglian Water Sewerage Scheme' (unpub. report, MKHER, 1995).
[43] Brown and Foard, 'The Anglo-Saxon period', p. 80.
[44] D. Jackson and G. Foard, 'Anglo-Saxon occupation at Yardley Hastings, Northamptonshire', *Northamptonshire Archaeology*, 25 (1994), pp. 93-98.
[45] *IHMN* IV, pp. 109-10; M. Farley, 'Saxon Buckinghamshire AD 410-1066' in M. Farley (ed.), *An Illustrated History of Early Buckinghamshire* (Aylesbury, 2010), p. 124.

Wollaston immediately to the north-east of Bozeat. The nature and quality of the grave goods suggest that the man was of high status and, since the burial lay in the southernmost part of the soke of Higham Ferrers, close to its boundary with Bedfordshire, he has been tentatively connected to a group belonging there. Further, it has been posited that the liminal location of the grave was 'making a statement about territoriality'.[46]

It is noticeable that all the sites referred to above lie to the east of Watling Street or, in the case of Passenham, just to the west of it. The lack of evidence of settlement in the period in the western border area may be due to a lack of archaeological effort directed to what is still a largely undeveloped area. However, the Whittlewood project which covered a large part of the western border area concluded that, before 850, the area was generally sparsely populated with a landscape of small, dispersed farmsteads. This suggests that the inhabitants belonged to one or more more groups centred some distance away, and the area may even have been a stretch of no-man's land between more closely defined tribal territories. Nevertheless, it is clear that the border area was not uninhabited and that some of the tribes included in the Tribal Hidage must have had interests there. In 1970, Hart suggested that the Unecung-ga occupied north Buckinghamshire, although he admitted that this identification was a 'long shot', whilst Northamptonshire formed a part of outer Mercia. He placed a third group, the Hendrica in north Oxfordshire.[47] Bailey, however considered that the Hendrica occupied north Buckinghamshire and north Oxfordshire and had 'central places' at Eynsham, Buckingham, Quarrendon, near Aylesbury and several other locations.[48] In reality it is not possible, at least with any certainty, to identify any of the tribes named with the border area but in any case the document describes what was probably a very short-lived situation.[49]

Foard, based largely on later documentary evidence, has suggested that the longer term organisation of Northamptonshire was centred on three large territorial units, or provinces. One of these was centred on Oundle, which seems to have been a provincial

[46] Brown and Foard, 'The Anglo-Saxon period', pp. 90-1.
[47] Hart, 'The Tribal Hidage', p. 151.
[48] K. Bailey, 'Early Anglo-Saxon territorial organisation in Buckinghamshire and its neighbours', *ROB*, 36 (1994), pp. 129-43.
[49] *AON*, pp.200-1; *ASO*, pp.49-52.

centre since the seventh century and which, in the eleventh century, had eight hundreds annexed to it.[50] The suggestion of (King's) Sutton as the centre of a second province arises from its apparent importance later in the medieval period. For example, Sutton held the jurisdiction of the hundreds of Sutton and Alboldestow in the twelfth century and the churches of Buckingham and Horley-cum-Horton in Oxfordshire were included within its ecclesiastical parish. The boundaries of this province have thus been drawn to include north-west Buckinghamshire. Northampton may have been the focus of the third province as, in the mid-Saxon period, it is thought to have been the administrative centre of the area which later fell under the control of the Viking army based there. Foard suggests that the Ouse formed the southern boundary of this province and it thus included Bunsty hundred, now a part of Buckinghamshire. Of the putative provincial centres only Northampton has been the subject of major archaeological investigations. The discovery of a high-status middle-Saxon complex of buildings, identified as either a royal palace or possibly a minster complex, adds support to the theory that it was a central place in this period.[51]

Below the level of the province, Foard identifies several smaller estate centres which may have formed part of a network of royal tuns, where food rents from the surrounding countryside were payable and justice was administered by the reeves.[52] Archaeological investigations have produced some evidence of middle-Saxon activity at Higham Ferrers, Passenham and Yardley Hastings, all proposed as smaller estate centres (within the provinces of Oundle, Sutton and Northampton, respectively).[53] Although Foard's paper is concerned primarily with Northamptonshire he does suggest that Buckingham may also have been an estate centre within the province of Sutton. No smaller centre is named in Bunsty hundred, a part of the Northampton province. This could be because it was deemed to fall within the Yardley estate – however, a case could be made that Olney was such a centre. It lay very close to a Roman town and seems to have been occupied throughout the Saxon period. Furthermore, its name contains the element *eg*

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[50] C. Hart, *The Danelaw* (London,1992), pp. 141-76.
[51] Brown and Foard, 'The Anglo-Saxon period', pp. 92-93; J. Blair, 'Palaces or minsters? Northampton and Cheddar reconsidered', *Anglo-Saxon England,* 25 (1997), pp. 97-121.
[52] *AON*, pp.185-222.
[53] Jackson and Foard, 'Anglo-Saxon occupation', pp. 93-98; Foard, 'An archaeological resource assessment', pp.15-16.

(island) which heads the list of place-name elements occurring before AD 730[54] and which was thought to be a particularly important element in place-name formation along the Great Ouse.[55]

Conclusion

In broad terms the county border follows the general alignment of the regional geology, passing along the watersheds between the Ouse and the Nene and the Tove in the east and west, and dipping down to the Ouse itself in the centre. The western section is marked for the most part by rivers and streams and its relation to the position of several Bronze Age barrows hints at an ancient origin.

Some broad regional divisions are apparent in the archaeological evidence from the Iron Age and Romano-British periods. In cultural terms much of north Buckinghamshire and south-west Northamptonshire seem to have had strong links to Oxfordshire and Towcester may have been an important local centre. Further to the east, the Iron age to medieval settlement forms common in the Nene valley extended across the border, as far as the Ouse, suggesting that political and cultural traditions had also spread southwards.

The borderlands, particularly those of the west, seem to have been sparsely populated in the mid-Saxon period. They almost certainly formed part of Middle Anglia and it has been suggested that provinces centred on Sutton and Northampton included the western and eastern borderlands respectively. The whole area was annexed by Mercia in 653 and thus, at that time, became a part of Mercia's southern borderlands.

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[54] B. Cox, 'The place-names of the earliest English records', *English Place-name Society Journal*, 8 (1975-6), pp. 12-66.
[55] M. Gelling, *The Place-Names of Berkshire,Part III* (Cambridge, 1976), p. 819.

3

Woodland, pasture and shared resources

In Chapter 1 it was suggested that many county boundaries were drawn through areas of shared pasture and woodland and that it was the allocation of such resources between estate centres located in each of the counties that dictated the shape of the border between them. However, whilst shared lands are indeed often associated with later borders, the relationship between them is not invariable. For example, the need to manage rights over inter-commoned lands sometimes served to unite people and may have underlain many of the political groupings of the mid-Saxon period. In such cases the shared lands would tend to have been located at the heart of territorial divisions well away from their boundaries. Alternatively, where the land concerned separated two already distinct political or social entities it is easy to see how it might have developed into a border. As population grew and pressure on resources increased the use of the land would have become more formalised and restricted. Over time, much of it would have been appropriated by individual estates, with parts being colonised and new vills emerging. In this manner the area of shared land would reduce until eventually it became a linear boundary between the individual entities which had initially shared it.

The aims of this chapter are to establish to what extent the Buckinghamshire-Northamptonshire border ran through such a landscape and to ascertain, as far as possible, which centres had interests in the area. It will also consider how the shared resources were managed and if, and how this changed once the border was drawn.

It is much easier to identify woodland in both the archaeological and written record than pasture, so the former inevitably forms the focus of the chapter. In order to establish where the woodland lay during the medieval period, and to which settlements it belonged, the chapter begins by comparing the information on woodlands contained in Domesday Book with the earliest maps of the border parishes. Evidence from place-names and archaeology is then used in an attempt to establish the nature of the border landscape before 1086 and how old any links to early estate centres might have been.

The chapter concludes by considering how the reduction in woodland in the centuries after the Conquest, when pressure for arable land was at its height, affected the position. In particular it will look at how woodland resources were accessed by vills with little or no remaining woodland, and the extent to which cross-border links were established or extinguished.

Border woodlands in Domesday Book

Figure 3.1 shows an attempt to map the border woodland onto pre-1851 parishes, based on the information contained in Domesday Book, but the following issues need to be borne in mind. The difficulties inherent in the interpretation of all types of Domesday data are compounded when entries for woodland from two different circuits are compared. (Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire fell respectively within circuits III and IV.)[1] As well as allowing for the different approaches adopted by each group of commissioners towards the data required, its collection and its recording, it is necessary to contend with the different units of measurement each used.

On the Northamptonshire side of the border the woodlands were recorded in terms of length and breadth, usually measured in perches, furlongs and leagues. It is not clear whether the dimensions were supposed to reflect the actual dimensions of a block of woodland and, if so, how irregular shapes were dealt with, and occasionally an acreage is given instead. The modern equivalents of all of the measurements used are not known with certainty. A league, for example, is often suggested to have been equivalent to 1½ miles (12 furlongs), but calculations have shown that in Northamptonshire it was more likely to have been the woodland equivalent of a mile (8 furlongs), and this is the ratio that has been adopted for this exercise.[2] For mapping purposes all linear measurements have been converted to acres using a rate of 640 acres to a square mile.

The woodlands in Buckinghamshire were recorded in terms of the numbers of pigs they could support. It is not known to what extent this measure reflected reality, and thus, for

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[1] H.R. Loyn, 'A general introduction to Domesday Book', in R. W. H. Erskine and A. Williams (eds), *The Story of Domesday Book* (1987, Chichester, 2003 edn), pp. 1-28.
[2] D. Hall, 'The woodland landscapes of southern Northamptonshire', *NPP*, 54 (2001), p. 35. (In practice this makes little difference for the purposes of figure 3.1, and only Passenham would have appeared in a higher category on the map).

example, took into account the numbers of oak and beech trees which supplied the acorns and mast on which pigs were fattened, or how far it was used merely to give an indication of the area of woodland concerned. If the former, it is unlikely that there is much correlation between the numbers of pigs given in Domesday Book and the actual area of woodland. It is perhaps more likely, however, that the number of pigs was used as a unit of measurement and, in practice, there does seem to have been some relationship between the acreage of a wood and the number of pigs it was said to be capable of supporting. Comparisons of Domesday figures with the known sizes of medieval woods in the eastern counties has shown that for woods over about 300 acres the ratio seems to have been about one pig per acre. For smaller woods the results were variable but generally well below this ratio.[3] Of the ten Buckinghamshire border vills with figures for woodland, only three show pig totals of fewer than 300 – Stoke Goldington (250 pigs); Weston Underwood (240 pigs) and Biddlesden (200 pigs). Allowing for the possible understatement of the amounts of woodland in these three vills, the categories mapped in respect of Buckinghamshire (in pigs), therefore, can probably be regarded as broadly equivalent to those mapped for Northamptonshire (in acres).

A further complication arises in that woodlands were generally accounted for in the entry for the manor to which they belonged even where they were situated at a distance - for example, the woodlands 'one league long and seven furlongs wide' included in the entry for Whitfield were almost certainly those of Hazelborough Walk, about 3 kilometres to the east in Whittlewood Forest. In the medieval period these woodlands formed a detached part of Whitfield but now fall within Syresham parish. As far as possible in figure 3.1 such woodlands have been shown within the pre-1851 parish in which they were situated and, in the above example, the Whitfield woods have been mapped in Syresham. Whittlebury is the only major place for which the area of woodland in 1086 is not known, as it was a subsidiary vill to (Greens) Norton and does not have a separate entry in Domesday Book. The woodland attributed to Norton totals 7680 acres, over seven times that of any of the border parishes, and well in excess of the total area of the modern parish. It seems clear that much of this woodland must have

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[3] O. Rackham, *Ancient Woodland: Its History, Vegetation and Uses in England* (1980, Dalbeattie, 2003 edn), pp.119-24.

lain within Whittlebury making it one of the most heavily wooded border parishes and it has, therefore, been mapped as such.

Even allowing for the above amendments, however, there is still a danger that other anomalies remain hidden within the Domesday data. To act as a check, therefore, it is necessary to map the woodlands at a date when their position is known with more certainty and to seek to explain any major differences between the distributions shown in the two maps.

Woodland in post-Domesday records

Written records, that begin to survive in quantity from the twelfth century onwards, reveal that, in the centuries after Domesday, the pressure for arable land was leading to the clearance of woodland on both sides of the border and along its entire length. For example, the hundred rolls reveal that in 1278/9 in Westbury there was one carucate (approximately 120 acres) of assart land in addition to 26 acres of assarts that had not yet been hidated.[4] Inclusion within the bounds of an aristocratic chase or royal forest does not seem to have prevented the practice and, in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, Earl David of Huntingdon was making assarts in his demesne in Yardley Chase, whilst his honorial tenants were clearing woodland in Salcey Forest 'encroaching in piecemeal fashion mainly from Piddington and Weston Underwood'.[5] Thirteenth-century rolls of regard of Salcey and Whittlewood forests confirm that assarting was taking place in the royal forests along the border in Horton, Grafton, Wicken, Ashton and in many other places.[6]

It is impossible to quantify the extent of this clearance from the piecemeal written records that exist and it is not until the widespread introduction of mapping, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, that a broader picture can be obtained of the survival of the border woodland. Figure 3.2 has been produced, therefore, from the earliest maps that are known to survive of each of the border parishes. Where no such maps could be found the county maps surveyed by Jefferys in the 1760s

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[4] *RH,* 2, p. 342.
[5] *EDH*, pp. 120, 258.
[6] TNA: PRO E 32/64, E 32/66.

(Buckinghamshire) and by Eyre in the 1770s (Northamptonshire) were used instead. (Areas of woodland that are known to have been modern plantations have been omitted.)

Figures 3.1 and 3.2 paint broadly consistent pictures and, for example, the Northamptonshire vills of Yardley Hastings, Whittlebury, Syresham, Easton Maudit, Wicken, Passenham and Silverstone appear as heavily wooded in both maps. There are some discrepancies however which need investigating. In three cases the woodland in the later period seems to exceed that recorded in Domesday Book. In the first of these, the concentration of woodlands in the extra-parochial part of Salcey Forest and in Piddington, apparent in figure 3.2, is not evident in the earlier map. This may be connected to what appears to be a corresponding loss of woodland between the dates, in Hanslope, which lies immediately to the south.

In 1086 Hanslope had recorded woodland for 1,000 pigs but, by the eighteenth century, the landscape seems to have been largely open with only a small area of woodland, known as Salcey Green, in the north-east corner of the parish and, further south, the woods in Hanslope Park. Whilst it is clear that much assarting took place in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries it does not seem to have been on a large enough scale to have removed in the order of 1,000 acres of woodland.[7] The entry for Hanslope in the 1279 hundred rolls is particularly full, containing the names and landholdings of over 200 tenants, but only three of these holdings were described as assarts, and no woodland is mentioned.[8] It seems likely that a large part of the woodland belonging to Hanslope in 1086 had lain in Northamptonshire, in the part of Salcey Forest that was 'extra-parochial' until 1879, when it was added to Hanslope civil parish despite it being in another county.[9]

Immediately across the border from Hanslope lies Hartwell which has a very fragmented settlement pattern, similar to that in Hanslope, but which is very unusual, if not unique, in Northamptonshire.[10] A parish survey has shown that the boundaries of Hartwell cannot be entirely ancient since, as well as cutting across at least one medieval

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[7] See, for example: J.A. Raftis, *Assart Data and Land Values* (Toronto, 1974), pp. 97-150.
[8] *RH,* 2, pp. 343-6.
[9] *VCHN* 5, pp.176-7.
[10] *OFN*, pp. 290-1.

furlong, some furlongs seem to have 'swapped' counties in later centuries.[11] This perhaps suggests that the county border was drawn late in this area and separated Hanslope from some of its woodlands and from Hartwell. The road from Hanslope to Northampton, which passes through Salcey Forest, marks a part of this stretch of the county boundary as well forming the dividing line between Hartwell and the extra-parochial forest land.[12] This indicates that it was an important and probably long-standing route by the time the boundaries were drawn and suggests close connections between the area and Northampton.

It is possible that the county boundary was drawn in conjunction with a more formal organisation of the woodlands, as surveys in Salcey Forest have shown that a scheme of coppices and lawns, probably implemented in the tenth or eleventh centuries, underlies that which was thought to have been in place in the thirteenth century.[13] A division of Hanslope's woodland across two counties may account for some anomalies in the operation of forest law in the area. It may, for example, explain why the pleas of the forest relating to Hanslope were generally heard by the justices for Northamptonshire rather than those for Buckinghamshire, as discussed in chapter 9.

Other parts of the Salcey woodlands may also have been included elsewhere: in Domesday Book, for example, Olney was known to have had detached woodlands in or near to Preston in the eleventh century.[14] Furthermore, parts of the woodland to the south of Horton belonged to the Nene Valley vills of Great Houghton and Cogenhoe in 1622.[15] The picture in 1086 was probably even more complicated as many small settlements in Horton (now a part of Hackleton parish) and Piddington were abandoned in the later medieval period and much reorganisation seems to have taken place.[16]

The second area which appears much more heavily wooded in figure 3.2 than in figure 3.1 is that centred on Biddlesden and the detached part of Westbury. This area, too,

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[11] D. Hall, 'Hartwell, Northamptonshire, a parish survey', *CBA Group 9 Newsletter*, 5 (1975), pp. 7-9.
[12] *VCHN* 5, pp.176-7.
[13] D. Hall, *Salcey Forest, Northamptonshire: archaeological interpretation survey* (unpublished report, NHER, 1996), pp. 12-13.
[14] Below, pp. 90-1.
[15] NRO, map 1351.
[16] *IHMN* II, pp. 61-71.

contained many areas of detached woodlands (see figure 3.3) and the inclusion of these in the Domesday entries for the 'mother' vills probably explains the discrepancy.

Finally, Bozeat, at the far eastern end of the border, recorded only twenty acres of woodland in Domesday Book but contained a much bigger area in the eighteenth century. It seems however that Bozeat, Easton Maudit and Grendon shared the woodlands that lay in all three parishes, an arrangement first recorded in c.1220 but probably with a much earlier origin.[17] The Bozeat woodlands, therefore, were almost certainly included in the Domesday entry for Easton Maudit.

Anomalies in the opposite direction, that is where the woodland recorded in 1086 seems to have shrunk or vanished by the time the first maps were produced, are more difficult to identify due to the widespread assarting that was known to have taken place. However in the case of Lillingstone Lovell the reduction seems particularly dramatic and it could possibly be explained by uncertainties in the data. There were two estates in Lillingstone Lovell recorded in Domesday Book and each was said to possess woodland of 10 furlongs by 5 furlongs (500 acres).[18] This could mean that one piece of woodland had been divided exactly in half, as was mapped in figure 3.1, but, alternatively each estate may have had access to the same piece of woodland. The amount of woodland in 1086 may thus have been overstated. Further, in the north-eastern corner of the parish was a block of woodland, within Whittlewood Forest, that later, at least, formed a detached part of Lillingstone Dayrell. The early tenurial history of this woodland is not known and it is probably sensible, therefore, for comparison purposes, to treat Lillingstone Lovell and Lillingstone Dayrell as the single unit they undoubtedly once were. On this basis, whilst it is clear that much woodland clearance has taken place, and indeed is evidenced in surveys and field-names,[19] the apparent reduction is not so dramatic or out of line with that in other parishes.

In summary, the maps in figures 3.1 and 3.2 can probably be relied upon to confirm that throughout the medieval period the border ran predominantly through woodland areas. The main exceptions were in the in the far west around Turweston, Brackley and

[17] *OFN*, p. 103.
[18] DB i 160b, c.
[19] 'Parish Survey - Lillingstone Lovell', *WWP*.

Evenley and in the Watling Street corridor where only the Northamptonshire parishes to the west of the road, Wicken and Passenham, retained any significant amounts of woodland. The next section looks at how far this position can be projected back into the Anglo-Saxon period.

Anglo-Saxon Woodland

In the absence of written records the only clues as to the nature of the border landscape in the Anglo-Saxon period come from archaeology and place-names. Unfortunately, for the most part, place-names indicating woodland are lacking from the border area although those indicating pasture are common. The names of Luffield (Buckinghamshire) and Whitfield (Northamptonshire) both contain the element *feld* which was used to denote open land, particularly intercommoned pasture, and is frequently found in the names of places along county borders.[20] This confirms that, along the western part of the border, the broad division between woodland and open land shown in figure 3.2, had probably existed for some time before Domesday. Further east the element *geat*, which was often used in the sense of 'pasturegate', is particularly common, being found in major place-names such as Bozeat and in smaller places around the perimeter of Salcey Forest, for example, Olnesiate and Halleyate.[21] The latter probably represented the entry points into the forest from vills with access rights. No place-names on the Buckinghamshire side of the border indicate the presence of woodland but some on the Northamptonshire side are worthy of further investigation.

In Chapter 2 it was suggested that the number and nature of Iron Age and Roman archaeological sites found along the border indicated that much of the ancient woodland had been cleared by the end of the latter period. The map in figure 2.9 reveals that, in Northamptonshire, there were three distinct clusters of such sites indicating areas of settlement, industry and agriculture: in the far west in Evenley and Brackley; in the centre where Watling Street passes through Potterspury and Yardley Gobion; and in the east in an area centred on Yardley Hastings but spreading to both east and west. As can

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[20] M. Gelling, *Place-Names in the Landscape* (1984, London, 2000 edn), pp. 235-45; *MVEL*, p. 225.
[21] A. Everitt, *Continuity and Colonization: The Evolution of Kentish Settlement* (Leicester, 1986), p.160; *PNN*, p. 189-90; NRO, BRU Exxiv q.

be seen, the centres of all three of the Northamptonshire clusters later became associated with place-names ending in 'ley' (Anglo-Saxon *leah*).

'*Leah*', which probably derives from the Old English *leoht* (light), is the most common English topographical place-name element and much has been written about its meaning. This seems to have varied over time and with local topography - for example, it was used to describe woods in open country but settlements within clearings in wooded country. It was used to name large areas of forest or wood pasture, such as the Weald of Kent and Sussex, but over time it came to be used more of pastures and meadows.[22]

The element, completely absent from parish names on the Buckinghamshire side of the border, was used to describe places of significance on the Northamptonshire side. Tables 3.1 and 3.2, for example, show that the four *leah*s identified above were the most populous of the Northamptonshire border vills, as well as being amongst the most valuable in both 1066 and 1086. (The comparisons are necessarily fairly crude as in most cases the entries include related manors, dependencies and outliers, but they illustrate the relative importance of the manors concerned.) The only other Northamptonshire border manor that came close to matching the '*leah*' manors, in terms of population or value, was the royal manor of Passenham (with its dependency of Puxley - another *leah*), and this has been included in the tables, for comparison, together with two other royal estate centres, (Kings) Sutton and Norton.

The discontinuity in naming patterns across the border may reflect a more open landscape in Buckinghamshire but, given the many different possible interpretations of *leah,* this position cannot be taken for granted. Further, figures 3.1 and 3.2 suggest that parts of Buckinghamshire were heavily wooded in 1086 whereas two of the Northamptonshire *leah*s, Brackley and Evenley, lay in what was, apparently, open country. The likelihood is that the differences were not due to the presence or absence of woodland alone - other factors must have been involved. In order to investigate

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[22] *EPNE*, 2, pp. 18-23.; Gelling, *Place-Names*, pp.198-207; D. Hooke, 'Early medieval woodland and the place-name term leah', in O. J. Padel and D. N. Parsons (eds), *A Commodity of Good Names: Essays in Honour of Margaret Gelling* (Donnington, 2008), pp. 365-376.

further it is necessary to look in more detail at each of the four Northamptonshire *leah*s identified above.

Estates with 'leah' place-names

Evenley

Much of the parish of Evenley lies on a flat plateau, at a height of approximately 135 metres OD. Several streams have their sources on this plateau and radiate out from it in many directions, flowing eventually into the Ouse or the Cherwell. The medieval village lay to the north-east where the ground slopes down to the Ouse which forms the parish boundary with Brackley. To the south-west lay the once prosperous, now deserted, vill of Astwick, and the border with Croughton.[23] A tract of heathland of several hundred acres, later known as Bayards Green, stretched southwards from Hinton-in-the-Hedges in the north, across Evenley, to Croughton. However, this was only the Northamptonshire portion of a much larger heathland that extended into Oxfordshire.[24] It is probably this stretch of countryside that gave Evenley its name which means 'the level *leah*'.[25]

Archaeology suggests that Evenley was a place of some significance in the Iron Age and it is a prolific findspot for coins of the period. It seems to have lain on the routeway which preceded the Roman road from Sutton to Magiovinium and this linked it to both Rainsborough hillfort and the Romano-British temple complex at Thornborough.[26] Aerial photographs have revealed settlement sites and enclosures in the parish, with one of the latter having a funnelled entrance suggesting its use lay in the control of stock, probably sheep.[27] In the Roman period the Sutton to Magiovinium road was crossed by the Alchester to Towcester road about 5 kilometres to the east of Evenley. There was known to have been an important Roman building in the north of the parish and two large hoards of coins, ranging in date from the first to the fourth century AD have been

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[23] *IHMN* IV, pp. 49-53.
[24] J. Morton, *The Natural History of Northamptonshire With Some Account of the Antiquities* (London, 1712), p. 9.
[25] *PNN*, pp. 52-3.
[26] A. Kidd, 'Later Bronze Age and Iron Age', *STAR*, p. 15.
[27] A. Deegan, 'Late Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman settlements and landscapes', in A. Deegan and G. Foard (eds), *Mapping Ancient Landscapes in Northamptonshire* (Swindon, 2007), pp. 107-8.

found, one of which was said to consist of over 23,000 coins contained in an earthenware vase.[28] No archaeological remains dating to the Saxon period have been found but there are six separate entries in Domesday Book pertaining to Evenley, with its dependent vill of Astwick and 'outlier' in Croughton. Five of the entries seem to relate to land held in 1066 by Leofnoth. The sixth refers to a one hide estate held 'freely' by Leofstan, whose name indicates that he was Leofnoth's kinsman. This suggests that all the entries refer to what had been a single estate and, indeed, it is clear that the multiple entries in Domesday Book arise from the fact that Evenley was divided between three different hundreds – Alboldstow, Sutton and Towcester.[29]

Geographically, Evenley appears to have lain on the border between the hundreds of Sutton and Alboldstow (figure 3.4), and so it would be easy to imagine an origin in woodland or pasture inter-commoned by members of both hundreds. However, the links between Evenley and Towcester are less easy to explain. They suggest that the shared resources in Evenley and Hinton-in-the-Hedges (another outlier of Towcester hundred[30]) were of a specialised nature not available nearer to Towcester.[31] This perhaps rules out woodland, which was plentiful in neighbouring Norton and its dependencies in Whittlewood and, indeed, no woodland is included in the Evenley Domesday entries.[32] It seems likely, therefore, that it was access to pasture on the large expanse of heathland that made Evenley desirable and the important Iron-Age and Roman routes to Sutton and Towcester could indicate that the links to both centres had ancient origins. The name of Evenley had probably initially described an area roughly coterminous with the more modern Bayards Green before becoming attached to the main settlement within it. The latter had probably grown out of the temporary settlements belonging to herdsmen attached to the estate centres and it may have had some role in the administration and control of grazing across the whole area.

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[28] *IHMN* IV, pp. 49-53.
[29] DB i 223d, 224b, 226c. See also: F.M. Stenton, 'Types of manorial structure in the Northern Danelaw', in P. Vinogradoff (ed.), *Oxford Studies in Social and Legal History. Volume II* (Oxford, 1910), pp. 14-5.
[30] Hinton-in-the Hedges is included in Towcester hundred in the Northamptonshire Survey but its position in Domesday Book could imply that it was in Foxley hundred at that date.
[31] DB i 227c.
[32] *MVEL*, pp. 108-10.

There was only a single vill in Evenley[33] and this was also divided between the three hundreds with the part belonging to each recording a population of between twelve and twenty-three, and at least one mill.[34] It is not possible to say with certainty whether the vill had grown up in this way, possibly at the meeting point of the three hundreds, or whether it had been divided at a later stage as part of administrative changes. As far as can be ascertained from Domesday Book, the division of the land of Evenley between the three hundreds was on a geographical basis.

Brackley

The parish of Brackley lies to the north-east of Evenley and both the original settlement and the later planned town of Brackley, which was laid out along the Northampton to Oxford road, are situated close to the parish boundary between them.[35] One of the two entries in Domesday Book relating to Brackley refers to an estate comprising one hide in Brackley, two hides in Syresham and two hides in Halse.[36] (Halse lies approximately 4 kilometres to the north of Brackley.) The estate contained woodland 2½ furlongs long and 1½ furlongs wide. The location of this cannot be established with certainty but most, if not all, of it probably lay within Syresham where there were detached woodlands initially belonging to Halse but later known as Brackley Hatch (figure 3.3).[37] The estate was held by Azur before 1066 and almost certainly consisted of the core of what had been the 'great Saxon manor of Halse'. The full extent of the Halse estate is not known but, as well as Brackley and Syresham, it had included Woodford Halse which lay over 12 kilometres to the north in Chipping Warden hundred.[38] The second Domesday entry for Brackley describes a two-hide manor held, like Evenley, by Leofnoth.[39] This almost certainly had once represented Halse's interests in the Bayards Green pasturelands.

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[33] Ignoring Astwick, whose name indicates that it was a late settlement, subsidiary to Croughton (*PNN*, p. 53).
[34] *IHMN* IV, p. 50.
[35] *IHMN* IV, pp. 21-3.
[36] DB i 224b.
[37] *RFN*, Map III, NRO, E(B) 108 and see: Bridges, 1, p. 153.
[38] Baker, 1, p. 322, 586.
[39] DB i 224b.

The Brackley/Halse estate had possessed at least two detached areas of woodland: in Syresham and, from its name, in Woodford Halse. This perhaps suggests that the area immediately around Brackley was not heavily wooded in the late Saxon period. The name of Brackley, which means a *leah* that either belonged to 'Bracca' or was full of bracken or fern, gives no clue as to the nature of the landscape.[40] There are several *graf* (meaning grove or copse) fieldnames to the south of the old town which indicate the presence of some trees but, since this term usually describes small woods surrounded by non woodland, this, too, implies a generally open countryside.[41] There is nothing in the archaeological evidence that indicates the position in earlier periods was substantially different. There seems to have been a nucleated Roman settlement within the old town, near to the church, and a routeway linking it to a similar settlement at Chipping Warden to the north. Saxon finds in the vicinity and the legend of the seventh-century Saint Rumbold, who was supposedly buried at Brackley before being moved to Buckingham, all, perhaps, suggest some kind of continuity of occupation at the site and also militate against a heavily wooded landscape.[42] Certainly the south-westernmost part of the parish seems likely to have shared a landscape history with Evenley, as it abutted onto the 'Bayards Green' heathland discussed above. The use of the *leah* place-name in both Evenley and Brackley is therefore puzzling. It may have been adopted late, when it had come to mean pasture in a more general sense, or perhaps it was used to indicate a detached area of open land in contrast to the detached woodland which both estates also possessed.

In summary, it seems likely that initially Brackley, like Evenley, was the name given to an area of pasture on the margins of a great estate. At some stage, a settlement had been established and this had grown in importance, eventually eclipsing the old estate centre further north. This growth was probably linked to the development, in the late ninth and early tenth centuries, of the *burhs* at Oxford and Northampton as they grew into important trading and administrative centres. Brackley lay at the midway point of the route between them and also had easy access to the nearby *burh* at Buckingham.

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[40] *PNN,* p. 49.
[41] Gelling, *Place-Names*, p. 194.
[42] Below, p. 128.

Yardley Gobion

Yardley Gobion is not mentioned as a separate manor until 1166 and was included with Potterspury in Domesday Book.[43] The combined manor had woodland 6 furlongs and 14 perches long and 2½ furlongs wide.[44]

Potterspury village lies just to the east of Watling Street and Yardley Gobion further to the north-east. However, the combined estate stretched across Watling Street giving both vills access to the woodlands in Whittlewood Forest. In the early medieval period a long strip running along the western side of Watling Street was assarted, the northern part belonging to Yardley and the southern part to Potterspury.[45] Given the shape and approximate dimensions of the assart it is difficult to conclude other than that this had been the woodland accounted for in Domesday Book. (The land further west in Whittlewood belonged to the separate manor of Wakefield and was, or later became, the site of Wakefield Lawn, a royal hunting ground favoured by the Angevin kings.[46]) It seems safe to conclude, therefore, that by 1086 the woodland lay primarily to the west of Watling Street and that the land to the east, in the immediate vicinity of Yardley Gobion, had been largely cleared. The name, Yardley, which combines *leah* with *gyrda* (rod or spar), thus indicating the presence of woodland from which rods or spars were taken, leaves no doubt that this eastern part of the combined estate was once wooded.[47] Further, the lack of Iron-Age and Roman archaeological sites to the east of Watling Street[48] probably signals that this woodland was ancient when Yardley was named.

The inter-mixture of landholdings and the tithing arrangements between Potterspury, Cosgrove and Furtho that survived into modern times, suggest that all three places had once formed a single estate from which Potterspury had broken away at an early stage.[49] All had probably once been attached to the royal manor of Passenham.[50] The village of Yardley Gobion grew up along a road that linked Watling Street to the Stony Stratford

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[43] *PNN*, p. 108; *VCHN* 5, pp. 289-345.
[44] DB i 225a.
[45] *VCHN,* 5, pp.289-345.
[46] *RFN*, p. 13.
[47] *PNN*, pp. 108-9.
[48] Figure 2.9.
[49] *VCHN* 5, pp.77-8.
[50] See, for example: *MVEL*, p. 62.

to Northampton road and, by the middle of the twelfth century, had itself acquired a subsidiary settlement at Moor End, about a kilometre to the west. Since Yardley Gobion never became an ecclesiastical parish separate from Potterspury, it is impossible to tell how big it was, or how quickly it grew, but as far as can be ascertained from later records, Yardley Gobion and Potterspury seem to have been of a similar size in terms of both area and population.[51]

Yardley Hastings

The use of *leah* in the naming of Yardley Hastings seems singularly appropriate as, even on modern maps the village can be seen to lie in a clearing surrounded by the woodlands of Yardley Chase. The nucleated village grew up at a crossroads where the Northampton to Bedford road crosses what is now a minor road leading from Salcey Forest in the direction of Higham Ferrers and Irchester. The axis of the village lies along the latter. This road is not known to be of antiquity, and certainly some roads to the north have clearly been diverted, presumably when the grounds at Castle Ashby were laid out in the seventeenth century.[52] However, it is thought that the known Roman road which leads from Stony Stratford to Stoke Goldington continued to Irchester and, if so, its route must have lain close to that of the current road through Yardley.[53]

Many Iron-Age and Roman settlements are known to have existed in Yardley Hastings and the traces of pottery manufacture and iron working often found in association with them suggest that the inhabitants were exploiting woodland resources.[54] The estate seems to have remained heavily wooded into the medieval period and Domesday Book recorded woodland 13 furlongs long and 8 furlongs wide.[55] It also revealed that Yardley Hastings had members in nine other vills and held the soke of parts of four more.[56] Its territory stretched from the Buckinghamshire border to the outskirts of Northampton. All but one of the subsidiary vills lay within the hundreds of Wymersley or Collingtree (later absorbed into Wymersley), the exception being Wollaston which belonged to the adjoining hundred of Higham Ferrers. The wooded nature of the area suggests that, like

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[51] *VCHN* 5, pp.289-345.
[52] see: *TNL*, p. 243.
[53] Viatores, *Roman Roads in the South-East Midlands* (London, 1964), pp. 327-32.; *IHMN* II, p. 188.
[54] *IHMN* II, pp. 182-4.
[55] DB i 228c.
[56] DB i 228b, 228c, 229a.

the other *leah*s considered above, it may have originated as woodland or pasture, exploited from one or more centres located nearby. The apparent importance of Yardley Hastings itself perhaps suggests a role in the management of the resources and may indicate that the centre, or centres, to which it was attached were large and important and it is necessary to consider where those centres might have been.

In terms of location, Northampton, about 12 kilometres to the north west, would be an obvious candidate and, certainly by the eleventh century, Yardley with its dependencies had become attached to the earldom of Huntingdon/Northampton and may have been a comital manor.[57] Direct evidence of an early link between the two places is elusive. It may be significant, however, that one of Yardley's dependencies, a two hide manor, lay within Hardingstone, which also contained the site of Hunsbury Hillfort.[58] It has been suggested that Hunsbury, like other hillforts, had an administrative role over a wide area in the Iron Age and archaeological evidence tends to support this, objects representative of intensive occupation, industry and trade having been found there.[59] Further, it is postulated that this governmental role was taken over by the nearby Roman town of Duston before passing to Northampton in the Saxon period.[60] It seems unthinkable that a growing centre like Northampton would have had no interest in the territory that lay immediately to its south east, particularly when this contained large areas of woodland and pasture. It seems safe to conclude, therefore, that there was some connection to Northampton and that it may have pre-dated the Viking invasions.

There is also some evidence of links between Yardley and an estate centred on Higham Ferrers.[61] Yardley's territory extended into Higham Ferrers hundred and the village itself lies along the road leading there. Further, Easton Maudit, which lies in Higham hundred, may have been named from its position in relation to Yardley Hastings.[62] It seems likely, therefore, that initially Yardley Hastings had been the name given to a

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[57] H.M. Cam, *Law-finders and Law-makers in Medieval England: Collected Studies in Legal and Constitutional History* (London, 1962), pp. 66-9. See also Chapter 4.

[58] DB i 228c. The main manor in Hardingstone was of five hides and was in royal hands in 1066 (DB i 219c).

[59] A. Kidd, 'The Later Bronze and Iron Ages (the First Millennium BC) in Northamptonshire', *EMARF* (30/10/2009).

[60] *AON*, pp. 201-3; above, p. 36.

[61] G. Foard, ' An archaeological resource assessment of Anglo-Saxon Northamptonshire (400 - 1066)', *EMARF* (21/10/2006).

[62] *PNN*, p.190 suggests that the East may refer to Denton or Whiston, but this seems unlikely.

wide area of woodland, and possibly wood-pasture, which had later been divided between Higham Ferrers and Northampton. The name of the wider area may have become attached to the main settlement, which seems to have had some sort of control over the whole area, and was perhaps the centre of a 'sub-estate'.[63] It is noticeable, for example, that in the list of twelve places associated with Yardley, nine or possibly ten have names ending in *tun* or *ingtun*. Both of these elements were often used to name estates carved out of larger ones and granted to thegns, or others of similar status. In seven of the names, *tun* or *ingtun* is compounded with a personal name, or in the case of Preston, a group of people (priests), which further strengthens the impression of the breaking up of an estate.[64] Yardley's influence over the area may date to the mid-Saxon period, as archaeological excavations to the north of the manor house there have revealed traces of a tenth or eleventh century building which overlay a ditch containing pottery from the seventh or eighth centuries. It has been suggested that fragments of mortar also found in this ditch may be indicative of 'an earlier high-status building at the centre of the soke of Yardley'.[65]

In summary, therefore, it is far from certain that the use of *leah* as a place-name element in the border area is a reliable guide to the close presence of ancient woodland. Yardley Gobion and Yardley Hastings clearly were located in wooded areas when they were named. However, Evenley and Brackley were probably named from their respective estate centres with *leah* being used to refer to detached areas of open land in contrast to the detached areas of woodland that the estates also possessed. If this was the case neither vill, necessarily, lay in wooded country.

The *leah*s do seem to share a long history of exploitation from important territorial centres. Domesday Book confirms their links to Anglo-Saxon estate centres but the connections probably go back further than that. All lay on Roman roads leading to the small towns or large settlements often suggested as the antecedents to the Saxon estate centres. All also lay in areas utilised for industry, pasture and settlement during the Iron Age and there are suggestions of links to hillforts that may have controlled the

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[63] A. Brown and G. Foard, 'The Anglo-Saxon period', in M. Tingle (ed.), *The Archaeology of Northamptonshire* (Northampton, 2004), p. 97; *AON*, pp.185-222.
[64] M. Gelling, *Signposts to the Past: Place-names and the History of England* (1978, Chichester, 1997edn), pp. 177-9.
[65] Brown and Foard, 'Anglo-Saxon period', p. 97.

territories in which they lay. Evenley, for example, had links to Rainsborough hillfort, Towcester and Sutton, which were probably successive centres of authority in parts of south-western Northamptonshire. A major realignment of the organisational landscape of the area occurred in the late Saxon period with the growth of the *burh*s, particularly Northampton, as important commercial and administrative centres, replacing for many purposes the older estate centres. The position of the *leah*s on roads linking Northampton to Oxford (Evenley and Brackley), to Bedford (Yardley Hastings) and to Watling Street (Yardley Gobion) seems to have stood them in good stead. All seem to have grown in this period, forming nucleated centres and developing subsidiary settlements of their own. In some instances the old estate centres seem to have declined and, in the case of Halse, its role seems to have been almost totally usurped by Brackley.

There are many possible explanations for the lack of *leah*s along the Buckinghamshire side of the county border, but perhaps the most likely is as follows. In the west, estates in the Ouse and Tove Valleys had once inter-commoned the woodland and pastures on the watershed between them. When the *burh* in Buckingham was established the lands belonging to it were defined territorially, probably for the first time.[66] The boundaries, which, as far as possible, seem to have followed rivers or streams, were drawn to include a part of what had been shared land. This is perhaps supported by the naming of Westbury to indicate that it was land 'at the west *burh*' or 'west of the *burh*'. At this time Westbury almost certainly included what later became Turweston, and possibly also took in Biddlesden and Shalstone, meaning that it had occupied the whole of the far north-western corner of the county and probably represented Buckingham's share of the pastures to its north and west. The remainder continued to be used by the Northamptonshire estates.

At the time of this division the *leah* settlements were either very small, and were excluded from Buckingham's lands, or, perhaps more likely, they had not yet formed. The conditions that seem to have been important to the development and growth of successful settlements bearing a *leah* place-name did not apply to the woodland and

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[66] Fox has suggested that, in Devon, the people of the *burhs* of Barnstaple (Pilton) and Totnes lost their common rights on Dartmoor so that the fighting men would not be away on the moors when danger threatened at home (H.Fox, *Dartmoor's Alluring Uplands* (Exeter, 2012), pp. 48-9). This is less likely to have been the case in Buckingham as the distances involved are much shorter.

pasture on the Buckinghamshire side of the border – it was no longer shared, it may not have been detached and no major routes passed through it. The new settlements that did arise, therefore, took their names from other features and were often named from the owners of the estates created as a result of the further division of the once shared land.

In the centre of the border, the Buckinghamshire vills lay along the Ouse and clearly did not originate as settlements in shared pasture and woodland. To the east of Watling Street, Northampton was the biggest and most important settlement in the area and must have controlled the largest portion of the shared land and the *leah* settlements. Its interests clearly took precedence when the border was drawn, as it ran to the south of the watershed dividing several estates in Buckinghamshire from their woodlands and leaving the *leah*s in Northamptonshire.

Access to woodland resources

The maps in figures 3.1 and 3.2 highlight a number of parishes which seemingly contained no significant amounts of woodland either in 1086 or in the early modern period. However, the inhabitants of the estates lying within them would clearly have needed the timber, firewood and pasture supplied by woodlands and it may be instructive to consider where and how they accessed these resources.

To the west of Watling Street the position in 1086 is fairly clear. Brackley, Evenley, Whitfield and Westbury all either possessed detached woodlands themselves or belonged to larger estates which did. The same seems to have been true of Thornton and Beachampton which lay further east along the Ouse. In Domesday Book they formed a detached part of Rowley hundred, the main part of which lay in and around Chetwode, to the south of Buckingham.[67] The Chetwode area shows some signs of having been an early estate - for example, most of the constituent vills owed suit of court at Chetwode into the nineteenth century and the names of two of them, Preston Bisset and Barton Hartshorn, indicate specialised functions.[68] It seems likely that Thornton and Beachampton had once been part of this estate and had had access to the woodlands of

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[67] J. Morris (ed.), *Domesday Book: Buckinghamshire* (Chichester, 1978), map 1.
[68] D.J. Elliott, *Buckingham: The Loyal and Ancient Borough* (Chichester, 1975), pp. 35-6; *PNB*, pp. 58-9, 63.

Chetwode. No such links have been found in respect of Calverton and Wolverton, immediately to the east of Beachampton. However, place-names suggest that both had once contained some woodland - for example, in Wolverton there were fields named Woodstock Close, Hodge Furze, Bush Field and Stacey (from *stocc*, meaning 'tree stump') Bushes, and the names of the hamlets of Upper, Middle and Lower Weald in Calverton reveal that Whaddon Chase once extended into the south of that parish.[69] (Although Wolverton lies to the east of Watling Street it has been included here as it clearly belongs to the same group of manors with no woodland, in figure 3.1.)

Turweston had no woodland at all in Domesday Book and in 1279 the hundred rolls record only two acres of woodland belonging to the lord.[70] The vill appears to have once been a part of Westbury, however, as the open fields of each vill lay next to each other, with no hedge or ditch between them, and the boundary clearly ran around the furlongs.[71] The name of Turweston, which means 'Thurulf's farm or estate', also suggests that it was created late and from the division of a larger unit.[72] Further, in the sixteenth century the lord of Westbury had tried to claim rights of common over part of Turweston, although his claim was rejected.[73] It is possible, therefore, that Turweston had once had some access to the detached woodlands of Westbury.

In all these cases the vills concerned lay within the same county as their associated woodlands, which indicates that this (western) stretch of the border had been carefully drawn to take account of the resources needed by each estate. This concern to preserve estates could also explain the shape of the border around Lillingstone Lovell and Leckhampstead. It is likely that, when it was drawn, the area lying to the east of Watling Street was in Danish hands. This means that, in theory, the border could have continued eastwards along its existing line as far as Watling Street but, instead, it turns southwards to the Ouse, thus excluding from Buckingham's territory the whole of the putative estate centred on Passenham.[74] Strategically, it probably made more sense for Passenham, which controlled the point where Watling Street crossed the Ouse, to be

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[69] F.E. Hyde and S.F. Markham, *A History of Stony Stratford and the Immediate Vicinity* (Wolverton, 1948), p.10.; *PNB*, pp. 18-9.
[70] DB i 151b; *RH*, 2, p. 340.
[71] *VCHB* 4, pp.251-2.
[72] *PNB*, pp. xvi, 49-50.
[73] *VCHB* 4, pp.251-2.
[74] See, pp. 36, 80-1.

linked to the *burh* at Towcester which lay further north, along Watling Street. In 917, the king stayed at Passenham whilst Towcester was being re-fortified which also suggests strong links between the two places.[75]

The position to the east of Watling Street was different. All of the border vills, excluding Wolverton, contained some woodland within their bounds. However, at least two Buckinghamshire vills, Hanslope and Olney, and probably more, held woodlands located across the border, which suggests that this part of the border was drawn at a different time and with less regard to preserving the unity of vills with their woodland.

Conclusion

The county border ran through areas of shared pasture and woodland for most of its length. The estate centres in Northamptonshire which utilised each of these areas can, for the most part, be identified from Domesday Book and other evidence, but nothing is known about centres in Buckinghamshire before the building of the *burh* in Buckingham. At this time Buckingham's interest in the shared lands seems to have been replaced by an allocation of land and a part of the border was drawn.

Settlements grew up on the Northamptonshire part of the shared pastureland and woodlands and some of these may have acquired administrative roles over the wider area in which they lay. Many were located on roads linking the *burh* at Northampton to those at other nearby centres, such as Oxford and Bedford. As the *burh*s grew in importance, for many purposes replacing the older estate centres, the new settlements seem to have prospered and eventually they appropriated the names, generally ending in *leah*, that had once described the wider inter-commoned areas.

To the west of Watling Street the border was drawn in a manner that left Northamptonshire estates intact and ensured that both they and the *burh* at Buckingham had access to the resources they needed. This meant that in 1086 most vills could meet their needs for woodland and pasture from within their respective counties.

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[75] *ASC*, p. 102 and n. 6.

To the east of Watling Street the border seems to have been drawn later and its position, to the south of the watershed, probably reflects the dominance of Northampton at the time. A concern to preserve estates and their resources is less apparent and, whilst detached woodlands belonging to vills based in the Nene Valley remained within Northamptonshire, the border separated some important Buckinghamshire vills from their woodlands. Thus cross-border holdings of woodland existed from an early date and, in many cases, persisted into modern times.

4

The origins of Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire

Shires formed the basis of local government in Wessex before the end of the ninth century and all those south of the Thames, then the boundary between Wessex and Mercia, are referred to in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle before 892. In contrast, none of the midland counties are mentioned in any contemporary chronicles of the ninth or tenth centuries. Instead, people and lands are described as 'belonging to' *burhs* or Danish garrison towns.[1] It is not until 1006 that a Mercian shire, Shropshire, is first named in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and then, between 1010 and 1016, reference is made to a further twelve. Buckinghamshire first appears in an entry for 1010 and Northamptonshire in 1016.[2]

The transformation of areas dependent on *burhs* into fully-fledged shires on the West Saxon model clearly took place between c.918, when the Danes south of the Humber had been defeated and Mercia fully absorbed into Wessex, and c.1010, when the shires are first recorded. However, historians are divided on exactly when and how this might have happened.[3] Stenton thought that the area was shired at the beginning of the period as, in his view, Edward the Elder was the king most likely to have ignored Mercian resentment and drawn the new units with scant regard to earlier boundaries and *foci*. For example, not only did the most important centre in Mercia, Tamworth, fail to form the core of a shire in the new scheme, but the boundary between Staffordshire and Warwickshire was drawn to run through it so that a part of it lay within each county.[4] Hart broadly agreed with Stenton and, based on an analysis of successive hidage assessments which survive for Northamptonshire, he suggested that that county at least was created as part of a re-organisation shortly after the events of 917, when the hundreds lying to the south west of Watling Street were added to the territory recently re-claimed from the Danes of Northampton.[5]

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[1] The term '*burh*' will be used to cover both types of centre in the remainder of the chapter.
[2] C. S. Taylor, 'The origin of the Mercian shires', in H. P. R. Finberg (ed.), *Gloucestershire Studies,* (Leicester, 1957), pp. 17-35.
[3] See: *ALEC*, pp. 1-15; D.H. Hill, 'The shiring of Mercia – again', in N. J. Higham and D.H. Hill, *Edward the Elder, 899-924* (London, 2001), pp. 144-5.
[4] *ASE*, pp. 336-8; D.H. Hill, 'The shiring', pp. 144-5.
[5] C. Hart, *The Hidation of Northamptonshire* (Leicester, 1970), pp. 12-4.

Other historians have favoured later dates. For example, Corbett, confidently attributed the shiring of Mercia to Edward the Elder's son, Athelstan, who ruled from c.924 to 939, although he does not cite any direct evidence to support this contention; whilst Loyn states that 'in all matters essential to the existence of a shire .... the Midlands had followed the West Saxon example by the end of the reign of Edgar'.[6] Taylor argued for an eleventh-century origin suggesting that the shiring of Mercia was a single administrative act carried out by Eadric Streona, shortly after his appointment as ealdorman of Mercia in 1007. Eadric was probably involved in a scheme for dividing Mercia into shipsokes, generally triple hundreds, for the purpose of raising money for the formation of a national fleet and it is possible that this exercise was extended to create shires. That he was involved in re-drawing administrative boundaries is confirmed by an eleventh century Worcester manuscript that accuses him of 'joining townships to townships and shires to shires at will' and also of 'amalgamating the hitherto independent county of Winchcombe with the county of Gloucester'.[7]

Many modern historians tend to the view that, rather than resulting from a single administrative act, the Mercian shire system evolved more slowly from the earlier, military, arrangements based on *burhs*. Stafford suggests that it was 'a gradual process subject to change and development throughout the tenth and eleventh centuries'. Blair cites evidence that in 995 the king's reeve in Buckingham, together with the king's reeve in Oxford, buried victims of a feud at Ardley near the current county boundary between Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire. This, he suggests, implies that the reeves were responsible for districts larger than the towns and were in effect acting as shire-reeves, or sheriffs, in all but name, long before the formal creation of the shires.[8]

This chapter aims to investigate the timing and processes that lay behind the formation of the counties of Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire, concentrating on the area close to the border between them. It begins by considering the ealdormanries and

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[6] W.J. Corbett, 'The foundation of the kingdom of England', in J.B. Bury (ed.) *The Cambridge Medieval History, volume III* (Cambridge, 1922), pp. 366-7; H.R. Loyn, 'The hundred in England in the tenth and eleventh centuries', in H. Hearder and H.R. Loyn (eds), *British Government and Administration* (Oxford, 1974), p.2.
[7] Taylor, *The origin*, p.17-51.
[8] P. Stafford, 'The reign of Aethelred II, a study in the limitations on royal policy and action', in D. Hill (ed.), *Ethelred the Unready: Papers from the Millenary Conference*, BAR British Series, 59 (Oxford, 1978), p.44, n. 74; *ASO*, pp.103-4. See also: *ALEC*, pp. 1-15. For a contrary view, see: D.H. Hill, 'The shiring', pp. 144-59.

earldoms that encompassed the area[9] before going on to look at pre-Conquest tenurial patterns that may be relevant to its administrative and political development. Finally it examines the evidence for districts attached to some of the *burh*s and similar centres thought to be associated with the two counties – Towcester, Northampton, Buckingham and Newport (Pagnell) – and how these districts might have been organised.

Ealdormanries and earldoms

In 877 Mercia was divided into Danish Mercia, under Viking rule, and English Mercia under King Ceolwulf II, often regarded as a 'puppet' king.[10] The dividing line between the two probably followed the boundary described, or implied, in the Alfred-Guthrum treaty,[11] so that the areas of the modern Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire which lay both to the north of the Ouse and to the north-east of Watling Street fell within Danish Mercia, whilst the remainder of both counties lay in English Mercia.

In English Mercia, Ceolwulf II was succeeded by Aethelred who had married Aethelflaed, the daughter of King Alfred of Wessex. Aethelred acknowledged the overlordship of Alfred, and later that of his son, Edward the Elder, so was generally, but not exclusively, referred to as the ealdorman, rather than the king, of Mercia.[12] English Mercia, under Aethelred, seems to have been divided into three sub-ealdormanries, the south-easternmost of which included the area later occupied by Oxfordshire and the non-Danish parts of Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire. It was almost certainly this sub-ealdormanry that Edward the Elder took in hand after Aethlred's death, in 911, when he was said to have 'succeeded to London and to Oxford and to all the lands that belonged thereto'.[13] His seizure of this territory was followed by the building of two *burhs* within it, at Buckingham in 914 and Towcester in 917, which led to the surrender

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[9] The general development of ealdormanries is considered above, pp. 6-8.
[10] *ASE*, pp. 254-5.
[11] Above, pp. 4-5.
[12] *ASE*, pp. 259-60; P. Stafford, *Unification and Conquest: A Political and Social History of England in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries* (London, 1989), pp. 25-7; S. Keynes, 'King Alfred and the Mercians', in M.A.S. Blackburn and D.N. Dumville (eds) , *Kings, Currency and Alliances: History and Coinage in Southern England in the Ninth Century* (Woodbridge, 1998), pp. 1-45.
[13] *ASC*, p. 97; A. Williams, 'Princeps Merciorum gentis: the family, career and connections of Aelfhere, ealdorman of Mercia, 956-83', *Anglo-Saxon England,* 10 (1981), pp. 161-2, n.97; C. Hart, *The Danelaw* (London, 1992), pp. 569-70.

of the Danes of Northampton under their commander, Thurferth, and those of Bedford under Thurketil.[14]

In the arrangements Edward put in place for ruling a re-conquered Mercia, he chose to keep in place the division between Danish and English Mercia, probably to prevent a rise in Mercian separatism. This meant that the parts of Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire that lay in Danish Mercia became part of the ealdormanry of East Anglia. Thurferth, the Danish commander who had surrendered to Edward in 917, retained control of the area around Northampton until 934, effectively acting in the capacity of a sub-ealdorman of East Anglia.[15] This perhaps militates against the dating of the creation of Northamptonshire to the early tenth century, as suggested by Stenton and Hart, as it would have meant giving control of Towcester and its surrounds to Thurferth. Since he had only recently submitted to Edward, largely as a result of the building of Towcester, this would have been an uncharacteristically reckless act on the part of Edward.

Authority over the sub-ealdormanry that contained the remainder of what became Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire passed back and forth between the ealdormen of East Anglia and Mercia, as their respective fortunes waxed and waned. The reign of Aethelred II saw many new men appointed to ealdormanries and most prominent amongst them was Eadric Streona, whose background is obscure but who was made 'ealdorman over the Mercian kingdom' in 1007. He was given Aethelred's daughter, Edith, in marriage and by 1010, he seems to have acquired priority over all other ealdormen, often acting as a sub-king.[16] In 1015 Eadric switched his loyalties from Aethelred to Cnut who took the throne the following year. Cnut divided the kingdom into four earldoms[17] and Eadric managed to retain control of Mercia until his execution in 1017. It is clear, from charter evidence, that there were many subsidiary earls

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[14] *ASE*, pp. 325-8.

[15] Williams, 'Princeps', pp. 161-3; Hart, *The Danelaw*, pp. 576-7.

[16] See, for example: Stafford, 'The reign', pp. 15-37; S. Baxter, *The Earls of Mercia: Lordship and Power in Late Anglo-Saxon England.* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 21-5; S. Keynes, 'A tale of two kings: Alfred the Great and Aethelred the Unready', *TRHS*, 36 (1986), p. 214; R. Fleming, *Kings and Lords in Conquest England* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 39-48.

[17] During Cnut's reign the term 'earl' replaced 'ealdorman' although this did not denote any change in power or function (P. Stafford, 'Ealdorman', in *BEAE*, pp. 152-3).

operating within the greater earldoms but virtually no detail of the geographical extent of their responsibilities is known.[18]

By the middle of the eleventh century, two powerful families - the Godwinesons, earls of Wessex, and the Leofricsons, earls of Mercia - were competing for control of the five smaller earldoms, of constantly shifting boundaries, that covered the midlands. One of these earldoms, that of the east midlands, was held by the Leofricsons and, from time to time, encompassed the whole of the border area until, in 1057, its southern shires (Hertfordshire, Middlesex and Buckinghamshire) were removed and combined with Essex, Kent and Surrey to form a new earldom for Leofwine the fifth son of Earl Godwine.[19] Later, but before 1065, the remaining (northern) part, including Northamptonshire, was given to Tostig, Leofwine's elder brother and Earl of Northumbria, and formed the core of what later became known as the earldom of Huntingdon.[20]

In 1065 the Northumbrians revolted against rule from the south and, after killing Tostig's men at York, made their way to Northampton, presumably in search of the earl himself. They remained there whilst negotiations with the king were taking place, and continually harried the countryside around the town before retreating with prisoners, cattle and other spoils.[21] Tostig was driven into exile and the king forced to accept Morcar as earl of Northumbria, as demanded by the insurgents. Shortly afterwards Tostig's other earldom, that of Huntingdon, was granted, possibly in compensation, to Waltheof, a descendant of the old ruling house of Northumbria. Despite his having fought against the Normans at Hastings and at the siege of York, Waltheof was one of the few Anglo-Danes to prosper under the Conqueror and, by about 1072, he had obtained the Northumbrian earldom and also married William's niece, Judith of Lens. His good fortune did not last, however, and in 1076, after rebelling against the king for a second time, he was executed at Winchester.[22]

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[18] S. Keynes, 'Cnut's Earls', in A. Rumble (ed.), *The Reign of Cnut: King of England, Denmark and Norway* (London, 1994), pp. 43-88.
[19] *ASE*, p. 574; Baxter, *The Earls*, pp. 64-71.
[20] A. Williams, 'The king's nephew: the family and career of Ralph, Earl of Hereford', in C. Harper-Bill, C. J. Holdsworth and J. L. Nelson, (eds), *Studies in Medieval History Presented to R. Allen Brown,* (Woodbridge, 1989), pp. 338-40. For possible earlier connections between Northumbria and Northamptonshire, see: Hart, *The Danelaw*, pp. 164-5.
[21] *ASE*, p.567.
[22] F. S. Scott, 'Earl Waltheof of Northumbria', *Archaeologia Aeliana,* 30 (1952), pp. 193-212.

Pre-Conquest Estates

It is impossible to establish with certainty which of the landholdings of sheriffs, ealdormen and earls were attached to their offices, and which they held in a personal capacity, perhaps as the result of a royal gift made to bolster their influence in the areas to which they had been appointed. Nevertheless it is clear that there was a relationship between the area in which royal officials held land and that in which they held office.[23] The study of tenurial geography could aid, therefore, in the identification of administrative units and political affinities and, with this aim in mind, this section attempts to reconstruct the pattern of late Saxon landholding in north Buckinghamshire and south Northamptonshire. The inadequacies of Domesday Book with respect to pre-Conquest landholdings have already been discussed, nevertheless, it remains the only source for such an analysis.[24]

Lands of the king, the Godwinesons and the Leofricsons

The lands in the area held by the king and the most powerful earls, notably the Godwinesons of Wessex and Leofricsons of Mercia, are shown in figure 4.1. The impact of the first Viking wars can still be seen clearly in the pattern of royal estates. The king held land in the *burhs* of Buckingham and Towcester which were built to defend Wessex against the Danes, and in and around Northampton, the Viking centre taken from them. A block of royal land stretching from Passenham to Towcester runs to the south west of Watling Street, once the boundary of the Danelaw, and must date at least to the time in 917 when the royal army stayed at Passenham whilst Towcester was re-fortified. These lands had clearly remained strategically important and had been retained in hand, whilst others, such as the estates around Buckingham and to the south of the Ouse, had been discarded. The concern to preserve intact this royal estate must have had some influence on the shape of the county border at this point.

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[23] P. A. Clarke, *The English nobility under Edward the Confessor* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 18-30; 135-40; Baxter, *The Earls*, pp. 141-9; S. Baxter and J. Blair, 'Land tenure and royal patronage in the early English kingdom: a model and a case study', *ANS*, 28 (2006) pp. 19-46; A. Williams, *The World Before Domesday. The English Aristocracy, 900-1066* (London, 2008), pp. 22-37.
[24] Above, pp. 10-13.

The few lands held by the Godwinesons and Leofricsons in north Buckinghamshire and south Northamptonshire, like those of the king, lay along, or close to, the south-western side of Watling Street further emphasising its strategic importance as a boundary as well as a main route into London. Harold Godwineson held no land in the area but his two brothers, Tostig and Leofwine, who had held the earldoms covering Northamptonshire and Buckinghamshire did. Earl Tostig had two estates, both of which lay close to important river crossings: Potterspury near to where Watling Street crosses the Ouse and Great Brickhill where it crosses the Ousel. Although the Godwineson family obtained land in many ways, not all of them legitimate, it seems likely that in this case it may have been granted by the king in return for the service of defending a vulnerable area, a pattern noted elsewhere in England.[25] Leofwine, earl of the southern shires, held land in all the counties that made up his earldom. In Buckinghamshire his estates lay mainly in the south and centre of the county and Leckhampstead was his only manor in the north.[26] Although this manor did not border on Watling Street it was within 2 miles of it and lay on the north bank of the Ouse between the royal manors of Passenham and Buckingham. It seems to belong, therefore, to the same cluster of strategically important estates that had not been granted to lesser thegns.

Lands of the earls of Huntingdon, Burgred and Gytha

Domesday Book contains the estates of several people associated with the earldom of Huntingdon and the, larger, east midland earldom from which it derived. These are mapped in figure 4.2.

The lands of Waltheof, earl of Huntingdon, passed to his widow, Judith, after his execution in 1076, and it is as her holdings that they appear in Domesday Book. As can be seen, her Northamptonshire estates were concentrated in two areas, one in the north of the county along the Leicestershire border and the other lying to the south of the Nene. [27] She held no land in Buckinghamshire although her estate in south

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[25] Fleming, *Kings and Lords*, p. 100.
[26] Clarke, *The English Nobility*, pp. 200-3.
[27] In 1086 Judith also possessed lands which had previously been held by a number of different thegns whom Stenton suggests were men commended to Waltheof (F. M. Stenton, 'Domesday Survey' in W. Page, (ed.), *VCH Huntingdonshire*, 1 (1926), pp. 334-5). Hart, however, has shown that at least some of these estates were likely to have been those forfeited to the crown by supporters of Hereward the Wake and granted to Waltheof in reward for his help in suppressing the revolt (C. Hart, *The Early Charters of*

Northamptonshire extended as far as the county border, which had clearly been defined by this time. This respect for the county border is a strong indication that her lands, once Waltheof's, were attached to the earldom of Huntingdon. Furthermore, Waltheof had held Yardley Hastings, which was probably a comital manor as it held the soke of land scattered throughout Wymersley hundred and, by the fourteenth century, had two hundreds (Wymersley and Hamfordshoe) annexed to it.[28] The arrangement in Wymersley hundred strongly resembles those of other sokes in the Danelaw, which Stenton suggests may have resulted from 'a royal grant to thegn or earl of the king's rights over all the unattached freemen dwelling within a given wapentake'.[29] In this case it is possible that such a grant had originated at the time the boundary was drawn between Northamptonshire and Buckinghamshire and that the then earl had been given control over both land and people in what had been a tract of no-man's land lying between Northampton and the Ouse valley.

Williams has suggested that Ralph, earl of Hereford, had once held the wider east midlands earldom which had initially encompassed the Huntingdon earldom. This is based largely on the location of the landholdings of his wife, Gytha. Over 90 per cent of her estates lay in Northamptonshire and Buckinghamshire and she may have been a member of the family of Burgred, a locally important thegn whose lands abutted hers and who held a number of important manors jointly with her.[30] The core of Burgred's estate, with a total value of over £100, lay to the north east of Watling Street and was bounded by the Ouse in the south and the Nene and the Ise in the north. There seems to have been no relationship between its extent and the county boundaries and his lands fell within Northamptonshire, Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire, but not within Huntingdonshire. Most of Gytha's lands, valued at £55 in 1066, lay within similar bounds to Burgred's but they extended to the west of Northampton and she held some scattered lands to the south-west of Watling Street and to the north of the upper Nene.[31] Amongst her most important holdings was Higham Ferrers which, like Yardley

Eastern England (Leicester, 1966), pp. 236-8). It seems unsafe, therefore, to regard any such lands as being associated with the pre-Conquest earldom and they have not been included on the map. For Waltheof's lands in other counties see the map in: Scott, 'Earl Waltheof', fig. 3.

[28] H. M. Cam, *Law-finders and Law-makers in Medieval England: Collected Studies in Legal and Constitutional History* (London, 1962), pp. 66-9.

[29] F.M. Stenton, 'Types of manorial structure in the Northern Danelaw', in P. Vinogradoff (ed.), *Oxford Studies in Social and Legal History,* II (Oxford, 1910), p. 45.

[30] Williams, 'The king's nephew', pp. 327-40.

[31] See: Clarke, *English Nobility*, pp. 225-6, 268-71.

Hastings, held the soke of most of a hundred, and which had probably also originated as a comital manor.

If Gytha and Burgred were members of the same family, it was clearly a locally very important one but, unfortunately, there are virtually no clues to the age and origin of their estates. Only Burgred's most valuable estate, Olney, is the subject of a pre-Conquest charter, dating from 979, but, since Burgred seems to have obtained it as the result of a swap with Peterborough Abbey, the charter offers no clues to Burgred's descent.[32] It seems likely, as Williams suggests, that Burgred and Gytha's lands were associated with the east midlands earldom before its division in 1057. If so, the distribution of their estates indicates that, at one time, the earldom's southern boundary had been marked by the Ouse and its western boundary by Watling Street. This implies that only the north-eastern corner of Buckinghamshire had then been part of the earldom, so that either Buckinghamshire had been a county divided between earldoms or this area had been part of Northamptonshire.

Gytha's few lands distributed to the south-west of Watling Street may have been late additions to the family estate, dating from the time when this area was combined with that lying to the north east of the road to found the modern county of Northamptonshire. A similar pattern can be seen in the holdings of Burgred's immediate family. Although he, himself, never seems to have acquired land across Watling Street, his sons held estates in Oxfordshire and north-west Buckinghamshire.

The only thegn, other than Burgred, who held multiple lands along the eastern part of the county border was Haldane who had no known connection with the earldom of Huntingdon, but whose lands show a similar distribution and so have also been included in figure 4.2. He held Hanslope in Buckinghamshire, valued at £24, as well as less valuable lands in Cosgrove, Ashton and other, now unidentifiable, places in Northamptonshire.[33] Although Haldane's estate, like those of Burgred and Gytha, sprawled across the county boundary, there is some evidence that estates of thegns based to the south-west of Watling Street were restricted to one side or the other.

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[32] Below, p. 121.
[33] DB i 152b; 226d.

Lands of Leofric, Leofnoth, Alric son of Goding, Azur son of Toti and Azur son of Thored

Figure 4.3 shows the landholdings of the above thegns, all with substantial estates in Buckinghamshire and/or Northamptonshire.

Leofnoth and his brother Leofric, sons of Osmund, between them held land in Bedfordshire, Oxfordshire (not mapped) and Northamptonshire valued at about £135.[34] They can probably be identified with the brothers with the same names who held large estates in Staffordshire and Derbyshire, some of which had been bequeathed to kinsmen in the will of Wulfric Spot, founder of Burton Abbey and possibly an ealdorman of Mercia.[35] The pattern of their landholdings to the south-west of Watling Street, where each held land neighbouring that of his brother, suggests an inherited estate divided between them and Leofric's son, another Osmund, seems to have retained some of this land after the Conquest. To the north-east of Watling Street their holdings were almost completely separate from each other's and probably represent an expansion from their core estate. Leofnoth's lands were located to the south of the Nene in Northamptonshire and Bedfordshire whilst Leofric's lay to the north of the Nene. Neither brother's lands extended into north Buckinghamshire, although Leofnoth held Ellesborough which lay much further south in the Chilterns.[36] This distribution of landholdings suggests that the brothers had prospered under the Leofricsons of Mercia at a time when they no longer controlled Buckinghamshire, perhaps after 1057 when it had become part of Leofwine's southern earldom.

Most of the land of Azur, son of Toti, whose estate was valued at about £66, lay within Buckinghamshire but he also held valuable lands in Middlesex, Warwickshire and possibly also in Oxfordshire.[37] The names of both Azur and his father were Danish and evidence suggests that Toti was Danish by birth and that his family had been established in the area before the successful Viking invasion of 1013-14.[38] A charter, believed to be

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[34] Clarke, *English Nobility*, pp. 319-22.
[35] S. Baxter, 'The Earls of Mercia and their commended men in the mid eleventh century', *ANS*, 23 (2001), p. 26. Wulfric's niece was Aelfgifu of Northampton, King Cnut's first wife whose name suggests that her family had interests in Northamptonshire.
[36] DB i 151d.
[37] Clarke, *English Nobility*, pp.253-4.
[38] F. M. Stenton, *The First Century of English Feudalism 1066-1166* (Oxford, 1932), p. 120.

genuine, reveals that in 1006-11 Aethelred II had granted 1 hide at Beckley and 5 hides at Horton to a Dane named Toti in exchange for one pound in pure gold 'for the purpose of paying the tribute'.[39] Beckley was a large parish on Otmoor that straddled the Oxfordshire/Buckinghamshire border and which contained the vills of Horton and Studley. Neither Horton nor Studley appears in Domesday Book but the Oxfordshire folios reveal that Beckley was in the hands of Roger d'Ivry in 1086.[40] Unfortunately, however, no information on the Anglo-Saxon landholder is given and, seemingly, no link can therefore be made between Toti the Dane and Toti, Azur's father. There was, however, a small manor, Nashway, which lay within the Buckinghamshire part of Beckley parish. During the thirteenth century Nashway was held as part of the fee of Beckley, suggesting that Nashway had originally been part of an estate centred on Beckley.[41] The Buckinghamshire Domesday shows that Nashway, like Beckley, had passed to Roger d'Ivry by 1086 but in this case it is revealed that, in 1066, it had been held by Azur, son of Toti.[42] It seems very likely, therefore, that at least a part of the Beckley estate, if not all of it, had remained in the family of Toti the Dane and that he was the father of Azur. If this is the case the charter may give an indication of the period when the estate was being built up.

Toti was presumably one of the many Danes who had arrived in England during the reign of Aethelred II and, given the location of the land he acquired, he may have been a member of the Danish community which existed in Oxford by the eleventh century.[43] From the name of his relative given in the charter, Celi, he had almost certainly married into an English family.[44] It is possible that he had received tribute money from Aethelred which he had chosen to invest in English land or even that he was one of the Danish mercenaries in Aethelred's pay. Whatever the origin of his wealth, however, it is clear that he was buying land in the Oxfordshire/Buckinghamshire area at the beginning of the eleventh century, a time when, under great financial pressure resulting from the large 'tributes' being paid to keep the marauding Viking armies at bay, Aethelred

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[39] Hart, *Early charters*, pp. 190-3.
[40] DB i 158c,d.
[41] *VCHB* 1, p. 268 n.10 ;*VCHB* 4, p.1 n.4. ; P. H. Sawyer, '1066-1086: a tenurial revolution?', in P. H. Sawyer, (ed.), *Domesday Book. A Reassessment* (London, 1985), pp. 71-85; D. Roffe, 'From thegnage to barony: sake and soke, title, and tenants-in-chief', *ANS*, 12 (1990), pp. 157-176.
[42] DB i 151d.
[43] *ASO*, p. 167.
[44] G. Fellows-Jensen, *The Vikings and their Victims: The Verdict of the Names* (London, 1995), p.11.

seemed to be selling royal land.[45] The likelihood is, therefore, that the estates around Buckingham held in 1066 by Toti's probable descendant, Azur, were acquired during this period and the break up of the royal estate there dated to that time.

Figure 4.3 shows that, of Azur's manors in the border area, only one, Wicken, his sole manor in Northamptonshire, lay outside Buckinghamshire. There is, however, evidence, although admittedly tenuous, that Wicken may once have been connected to Buckinghamshire. The hundreds of Stodfold and Rowley, which lie to the north and south of the Ouse surrounding Buckingham, show a strong pattern in Domesday Book of estates based on multiples of 5 hides - for example, Radclive and Stowe are assessed at 5 hides each.[46] Within Stodfold hundred, Leckhampstead, which shares the whole of its eastern boundary with Wicken, is rated at 23 hides, whilst the two manors, Wick Hamon and Wick Dive, which constitute Wicken, together account for 2 hides and it seems possible that the three originated as one 25 hide estate.[47] This is perhaps given further credence by the names of the Wicken manors. Both contain the word *wic* which means 'specialised farm' and implies dependence on a central place.[48]

In Domesday Book, Wicken was included in Cleyley hundred, which Hart has shown had obtained a 60 per cent reduction in its hidage between 1066 and 1086.[49] The application of this reduction to the individual manors within the hundred had generally resulted in assessments of fractions of hides and virgates replacing the original round sums - for example, an assessment of 'four parts of half a hide' at Cosgrove had resulted from the application of the 60 per cent reduction to an estate originally assessed at 1 hide. It seems clear, however, that the hidages of the Wicken manors had not been separately subjected to the adjustment, as their Domesday assessments were '1 hide and 1 virgate' and '3 virgates', neither of which could have resulted from a 60 per cent reduction to a round number of hides.[50] Whilst it is possible that the estate could have been split into two parts after the total hidage had reduced from 5 hides to 2 hides, there is no obvious reason why this should have happened at Wicken and nowhere else within

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[45] M. K. Lawson, 'The collection of danegeld and heregeld in the reigns of Aethelred II and Cnut', *EHR*, 99 (1984), p. 725.
[46] DB i 144d, 151d.
[47] DB i 144d, 147c, 149d, 225b, 228a.
[48] *EPNE*, 2, pp. 257-63.
[49] Hart, *The Hidation*, pp. 40-1.
[50] See the list in: Hart, *The Hidation*, p. 52.

the hundred, particularly in the light of the archaeological evidence which suggests that Wick Hamon and Wick Dive were contemporary settlements.[51] The obvious explanation seems to be that Wicken was not part of Cleyley hundred at the time the reduction in hidage was made and, in fact, if the hidage allocated to Wicken is subtracted from the, scaled-up, Cleyley total, the result is almost exactly 100 hides. It is possible that Wicken was included with Leckhampstead in the Buckinghamshire hundred of Stodfold but various factors make it difficult to analyse the total hidage accounted for in that hundred. For example, there is confusion between the entries for two vills named Westbury, only one of which lay within Stodfold hundred, and it is uncertain whether the 1 hide allocated to Buckingham north of the river should be included in the total.

Although Azur was a relatively common name and the Northamptonshire Domesday frequently fails to identify a particular holder of the name by, for example, including the name of their father, it is possible to establish with reasonable certainty that Azur, son of Toti, did not hold any further estates in the county. The same cannot be said, however, of Alric, son of Goding, another thegn with a large estate in north Buckinghamshire, and whose total estate was valued at at least £60.[52] In this case there were several Northamptonshire manors that were said to have been held by an otherwise unidentified 'Alric', who could have been the same person, and those in the border area have been marked on figure 4.3. One of these, in Cosgrove, lies just across the river from Alric, son of Goding's Wolverton lands so probably was his. This would make it his only known land outside Buckinghamshire, but the Domesday Book entry makes it clear that, although Alric held the land, for most purposes it still belonged to the Passenham estate, and had clearly originated as such. As noted above Haldane of Hanslope also held some land in Cosgrove, as did a third man, Godwin. Cosgrove was clearly an area of shared land, as seen along other parts of the border, although in this case it seems to have been the rich meadowland between the Ouse and the Tove, rather than woodland, that was being shared. It is perhaps less likely that the land in (King's) Sutton belonged to the same Alric but, whether or not it did, it seems clear that his lands were firmly centred in Buckinghamshire.

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[51] *MVEL*, p. 98.
[52] Clarke, *English Nobility*, pp. 228-9.

Like Azur, Alric held a block of manors around Buckingham and his estate extended eastwards along the Ouse valley. To the south west of Watling Street, as far as can be ascertained, the Northamptonshire border does appear to mark the extent of their estates. Both thegns held some land which lay to the north east of Watling Street and it seems that, in this area, it was the rivers that marked a boundary, with neither's estate extending north of the Ouse, into Bunsty hundred or east of the Ousel into Moulsoe. (The smaller estates of less wealthy thegns also seem to respect these rivers as boundaries - for example, Bisi held Calverton, Stantonbury and Great Linford, all of which lay to the south of the Ouse and west of the Ousel.)

It is difficult to generalise based on so few estates but the lack of links between the north east of Buckinghamshire and Buckingham itself is also indicated in Domesday Book. The entry for Buckingham reveals the presence of twenty seven burgesses of lords other than the king and, in most cases, it is possible to allocate each burgess to a manor lying within north Buckinghamshire.[53] None of these manors lie to the north east of Watling Street and not one of Burgred, Haldane or Gytha had a burgess in Buckingham.

Burhs and other administrative centres

Towcester

There is little evidence to suggest that Towcester was a significant settlement in the period between the departure of the Romans and its re-fortification against the Danes in 917.[54] Since the Danes of Northampton surrendered almost immediately after these works had been completed, it is not at all clear whether Towcester had any ongoing strategic or administrative role after this date. In this, it is similar to other Mercian *burh*s whose early histories remain unknown. In some cases, such as that of Winchcombe, references in later documents make it clear that the *burh*s in question had had districts attached to them and had been, at least briefly, administrative centres.[55] It is possible that this was the case with Towcester but the only known late tenth-century reference to

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[53] A.H.J. Baines, 'The development of the borough of Buckingham, 914-1086', *ROB,* 27 (1985), pp. 53-64.
[54] 'Towcester', NEUS, pp. 12-3.
[55] *ALEC*, pp. 10-1.

it sheds little light on its status. According to the Evesham Chronicle, written in the thirteenth century but incorporating older material, in 983 it was in the hands of Godwin, described variously as '*homo potens*' and '*princeps*'. Godwin was probably both the son of Aelfeah, ealdorman of central Wessex, and nephew of Aelfhere, ealdorman of Mercia, and there must be a possibility that he was also a royal official whose sphere of responsibility included Towcester. Godwin gave Towcester to the monk Freodegar in exchange for Evesham Abbey and its lands, and he paid the king three hundred *mancusae*, a substantial amount, to have Evesham confirmed to him and his successors for ever. The king took the money but then granted Evesham to Bishop Ethelsig instead. This began a long dispute between Godwin and the monks of Evesham and it is not clear what happened to the Towcester estate.[56] The episode suggests that, at the end of the tenth century, Towcester was in the hands of a powerful man, Godwin, rather than the king, which perhaps means that it was less likely to have been a regional centre at that time. However, in view of the unwinding of the Evesham transaction, there must be some doubt over the capacity in which Godwin had held it, and certainly by 1066, it was once more in royal hands.

If Towcester had been the centre of a district to the south-west of Watling Street, it raises questions as to how large this area was, how it might have been organised and what alterations were made to it when it became a part of the new shire of Northampton. In terms of size, the only guide is the Burghal Hidage which suggests that 160 hides were required to support each furlong of the defensive wall of a *burh*. Although a direct correspondence between this calculation and the size of the subsequent burghal district is disputed, there does seem to have been some relationship between them, in many cases.[57] The *burh* at Towcester probably encompassed a slightly smaller area than the 25 acres included within the Roman defences.[58] This means that c.850 hides would have been required for its support. In Domesday Book eight of the Northamptonshire hundreds lay wholly or partly to the south-west of Watling Street, and for fiscal

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[56] W. Dunn Macray (ed.), *Chronicon Abbatiae de Evesham ad Annum 1418* (London, 1863), pp. 79-82; Williams, 'Princeps', pp. 168-71.
[57] See, for example: N.P. Brooks, 'The administrative background to the Burghal Hidage', in D. Hill and A.R. Rumble (eds), *The Defence of Wessex: The Burghal Hidage and Anglo-Saxon Fortifications* (Manchester, 1996), pp. 128-50; Hill, 'The shiring'.
[58] *IHMN* IV, pp. 151-3.

purposes were seemingly treated as a group.[59] The likelihood must be, therefore, that they had once formed a unified territory attached to Towcester.

Figure 4.4 shows the likely boundaries of the Domesday hundreds of Northamptonshire drawn over the drainage systems of the area. It is clear that there is a strong correlation between the two: the hundreds of (Chipping) Warden and Sutton lay in the basin of the River Cherwell, Alboldstow in that of the Great Ouse and (Green's) Norton in that of the River Tove. Towcester hundred has every appearance of being a late addition to the landscape and seems to have been formed by the amalgamation of an estate based on Pattishall in the Nene basin with an area carved out of Norton hundred. That part of its area had once belonged to Norton is indicated by the division of Silverstone and its (later) chapelry, Whittlebury, so that the former became a detached part of Norton whilst the latter became part of Towcester hundred.[60] Perhaps more telling, however, is the naming of the hundreds in this area. Hundreds were often known by two names: that of their meeting place and that of the most important estate in the hundred.[61] In Domesday Book, Norton hundred is referred to as Foxley hundred but the vill of Foxley was said to lie in Towcester hundred.[62] Foxley hundred, therefore, appears to have been named after an estate in another hundred. This is unlikely, and the implication must be that Norton hundred and at least part of Towcester hundred had once consisted of a single unit, the meeting place of which had lain in Foxley.[63] (Towcester and Norton hundreds later seem to have acquired their own separate meeting places and estate centres.[64]) The fact that Domesday Book uses the 'old' name (Foxley) for Norton hundred may indicate that the latter occupied substantially the same territory as the former had done and that only a small part had been ceded to the new Towcester hundred. Further, it suggests that the separation may have been relatively recent, dating from the eleventh century rather than the tenth.

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[59] Hart, *The Hidation*, pp. 25-7, 39.
[60] TNS, p. 373.
[61] A. Pantos, 'Assembly-Places in the Anglo-Saxon Period: Aspects of Form and Location' (unpub. Ph.D. thesis, University of Oxford, 2001), p. 62.
[62] DB i 223c. The Northamptonshire Survey also includes Foxley within Towcester hundred. It lay near the boundaries between Towcester, Norton and Gravesend hundreds and may indicate earlier connections between these hundreds. It later became part of Blakesley parish, which lay in Norton hundred.
[63] It is possible that an assembly place in Foxley had lain on the boundary between the two hundreds but this would also indicate sub-division of a larger unit.
[64] Pantos, 'Assembly-Places', p. 389; *PNN*, p. 38.

The formation of Towcester hundred can perhaps be linked to the creation of the shire of Northampton. When shires emerged in something approaching their modern form it is clear that each was based around a major river on which the *burh* giving its name to the shire was situated.[65]Any *burh*s which lay on lesser rivers, and their attached districts, had to be incorporated into the new shires and in the process inevitably lost their elevated status. For example, in the changes made by Eadric Streona in the early eleventh century, Gloucestershire based around the River Severn seems to have consumed Winchcombe and its district which lay on the River Isbourne.[66] Similarly, Towcester on the Tove was probably absorbed into the new shire centred on Northampton and based around the Nene. Before this time Towcester itself was probably extra-hundredal, as, for example, Buckingham and many other *burh*s seem to have been.[67] Although in judicial terms such places were equivalent to hundreds in their own right, economically and financially many were too small to function as such and were often grouped with other hundreds for fiscal purposes.[68] It may not have been possible, politically or practically, for Towcester to have been assigned completely to another hundred when it became a part of Northamptonshire and by making it the centre of its own hundred it would have retained some importance and judicial independence. The addition of the Pattishall estate may have been part of a deliberate policy to unite areas across Watling Street, whilst its other detached areas look to have been added in order to give the new hundred a share in the resources of the area – woodland in Whittlebury and pasture in Evenley. In this regard the tenurial pattern is interesting. As can be seen from figure 4.3 Leofnoth and Leofric, who may have belonged to an important family based in south-west Northamptonshire, were major landholders in Towcester hundred and held the valuable Pattishall estate. In fact, between them they held 57 per cent of the hundred by value whilst the king held a further 28 per cent. Presumably the family was rewarded in the re-organisation that saw their area become subsidiary to Northampton.

Cleyley hundred also has the look of an artificial creation and, like Towcester, combined an old estate on one side of Watling Street, in this case Passenham, with what

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[65] C.B. Fawcett, *Provinces of England*, rev. edn by W.G. East and S.W. Wooldridge (London, 1960), p. 59-60.
[66] *ALEC*, pp. 114-25.
[67] F.W. Maitland, *Township and Borough* (Cambridge, 1898), pp. 40-2.
[68] J. Tait, *The Medieval English Borough: Studies on its Origins and Constitutional History* (Manchester, 1936), pp. 46-7, 135.

appears to have been a new administrative centre, Potterspury, on the other. This may indicate that it was formed at the same time as Towcester hundred and it seems to have been closely connected to it. Its bounds were drawn to include the stretch of Watling Street from its crossing of the Ouse to Towcester itself, which must reflect the earlier connection when the *burh* at Towcester was built by men staying at Passenham.

Before the creation of Towcester hundred the whole area to the south of the Nene and the south-west of Watling Street seems to have been divided into four districts based on the river systems, as described above and shown in figure 4.4. Each of these contained one known important estate centre which undoubtedly formed the administrative focus of the unit. Indeed three of the four units, Warden, Norton and Sutton, bear the names of these centres, a naming practice which dates from the tenth century.[69] The name of the fourth, Alboldstow, probably referred to the assembly place in Stuchbury, but its administrative centre was likely to have been Halse, as much of the area was still referred to as being within the 'soke of Halse' into the twelfth century.[70] Figure 4.4 reveals that, although the heart of Alboldstow lay in the drainage basin of the Ouse, it also encompassed the territories around the watersheds of the various rivers where there were numerous springs and identification with particular systems must have been difficult. It thus extended as far west as the Cherwell where it separated Sutton from Warden. This suggests that the bounds of Alboldstow had not been drawn by reference to any particular rivers or streams but rather that its area was that which had remained after more clearly identifiable territories had been carved out and structured into separate administrative units. This seems to indicate that Halse had once been the centre of a much wider area that had possibly stretched as far south as Buckingham.

There are other hints that Halse may have once been the centre of the wider area - for example, as discussed above, Woodford Halse, in the north of Warden hundred once belonged to it.[71] In 1329, the lady of Halse successfully claimed that twelve vills and hamlets in south-western Northamptonshire were members of the manor, although this may have related to later administrative groupings within the honour of Winchester.[72]

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[69] H.M. Cam, *Liberties and Communities in Medieval England: Collected Studies in Local Administration and Topography* (Cambridge, 1944), pp. 84-5.
[70] *PNN*, p. 47; *MA*, 6.1, p. 464; below p. 126.
[71] above, p. 49.
[72] NRO: E(B)12, below p. 101.

Furthermore, the geographical locations of Norton and Sutton are such that both could have been named from Halse, perhaps as part of the re-organisation of the area. In fact, Norton lies to the north-east of Halse and Sutton to the south-west, an orientation that seems to have come into use in Wessex under King Alfred and which was used in naming places until the second half of the tenth century.[73] Since this area of Northamptonshire did not come under the control of Wessex until 911 at the earliest, the naming of Norton and Sutton can, on this basis, be dated to the first half of the tenth century. In fact, it seems likely that this whole administrative framework originated towards the end of the reign of Edward the Elder, c.920-924, when he was known to have 'ordered his chosen servants to regularise district meetings in convenient territorial divisions (in Mercia often assessed at 100 hides) to ensure that each man could obtain his folkright'.[74]

Halse seems to have decayed rapidly after the new scheme had been implemented. Its administrative role had, presumably, been usurped by Towcester and, economically, it was soon overtaken by its daughter vill, Brackley. It even ceased to be a hundredal centre when Alboldstow was absorbed into Sutton hundred in the twelfth century.[75] It is this post-Conquest subordination of Halse to Sutton that seems to have led, indirectly, to the theory that it was the latter rather than the former that had once formed the centre of a substantial 'province'.[76]

Northampton

Northampton was an important centre in pre-Viking Mercia but by 913 it had become the base for a Danish army, under its commander Jarl Thurferth. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle reveal that men 'belonging to' Northampton occupied land as far north as the Welland which implies that, although it was the 'belonging' of men which defined the limits of Thurferth's control, there was also some recognition of territorial boundaries.[77] To the west and south-west of Northampton such a boundary probably lay close to Watling Street, although the Danes had clearly made incursions across the road since

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[73] R. Jones, 'Directional names in the early medieval landscape', in R. Jones, D. Parsons and S. Semple (eds.), *Sense of Place in Anglo-Saxon England* (forthcoming).
[74] Loyn, 'The hundred', p. 4; *GASE*, p. 141.
[75] Cam, *Liberties*, p. 91.
[76] See, for example: *AON*, pp. 197-9.
[77] ASC, pp. 102-3.

the Alfred-Guthrum treaty. The fact that Edward stayed at Passenham whilst Towcester was fortified implies that Towcester itself lay in contested territory.

It is not known for certain where the boundary between the Viking armies based at Northampton and Bedford lay, or even whether one existed. However the geography of the area to the north-west of Bedford suggests that there, at least, the Ouse is likely to have formed a dividing line between them (see figure 4.5). This means that much of the land between the Welland and the Ouse, to the west of Bedford, was under some degree of control from Northampton. However, whilst this part of the modern county of Northamptonshire is still defined by the Welland in the north, it no longer extends as far south as the Ouse. The analysis of earldoms and tenurial patterns in both Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire above indicates that the Buckinghamshire hundred of Bunsty, which occupies this part of the northern Ouse valley, retained strong links to Northamptonshire into the eleventh century, whilst there were no apparent links to Buckingham. Furthermore, chapter 3 has shown that the part of the county border separating Bunsty hundred from Northamptonshire was of a different type to that further west. Here the border had the characteristics of a boundary drawn for administrative purposes with little thought paid to existing local links, passing as it did along a watershed and separating vills from their woodlands. It seems, therefore, that Bunsty was once a part of Northamptonshire.[78] (Similar reasoning suggests that Moulsoe hundred, which lies to the east of the Ousel, was once a part of Bedfordshire but this area does not form a part of this study and so has not been investigated in detail. It should be noted however that the Ousel had been a significant boundary earlier in the Anglo-Saxon period.[79])

The landholdings associated with the earldom of Huntingdon, created in the mid-eleventh century, respected the current county border, indicating that it was in place by then. However, if Bunsty had been attached to Buckingham before the beginning of the eleventh century, when it seems that the royal estate there was breaking up and men like Toti were acquiring land and burgesses, Bunsty landholders would surely also have

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[78] See: T. Williamson, *The Origins of Hertfordshire* (Hatfield, 2010), pp. 112-4, for a possible similar transfer of territory between Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire.

[79] J. Haslam, 'The location of the *burh* of Wigingamere: a reappraisal', in A.R. Rumble and A.D. Mills (eds), *Names, Places and People: an Onomastic Miscellany in Memory of John McNeal Dodgson* (Stamford, 1997), pp. 111-30.

acquired some land and influence in the county town. The likelihood must be, therefore, that the area was annexed to Buckinghamshire some time in the first half of the eleventh century.

Figure 4.4 shows that earlier administrative arrangements to the east of Watling Street seem, like those to the west, to have been based on river systems with, for example, Wymersley located in the Nene valley and Bunsty in that of the Ouse. It is possible to speculate that another hundred based on the Nene had also once existed in the area. The inclusion of the Pattishall estate in Towcester hundred seems to have left an isolated half-hundred immediately to the east, which was named Collingtree in Domesday Book but which was quickly thereafter absorbed into Wymersley hundred. The likelihood must be that Pattishall and Collingtree had once formed a single hundred based on this part of the southern Nene Valley.

In Domesday Book, Northamptonshire consisted of thirty-two hundreds, of which eight seem to have been annexed in some way to Oundle.[80] Further, if, as speculated, a further eight hundreds had been attached to Towcester, the implication must be that the shire had been formed by the amalgamation of four eight-hundred units. It seems likely that one of the remaining two units had been based on the Welland Valley and the other on the Nene Valley, but the administrative history of Northamptonshire seems to have been particularly complicated and its detailed unravelling beyond the scope of this project.

Buckingham

According to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, Edward the Elder and his army often spent some time in an area where a *burh* was being constructed or re-inforced, and, for example, he stayed in Buckingham for four weeks whilst *burh*s on each side of the river were made.[81] The places in which he stayed were chosen, primarily, on defensive grounds but they must also have had access to an infrastructure capable of supporting a large army for several weeks. On this basis both Passenham and Buckingham were likely to have been royal centres of some description at the start of the tenth century. Passenham was thought to have been the caput of a large estate and Buckingham may

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[80] Hart, *The Danelaw*, pp. 141-76.
[81] ASC, p. 100.

have been, too.[82] However, it has also been suggested that Buckingham was a pre-existing *burh* constructed under Alfred in c.880. This would explain Buckingham's inclusion in the Burghal Hidage which seems to date from a period earlier than the beginning of the tenth century when the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle says the Buckingham *burh*s were built.[83] Unfortunately, Buckingham has produced virtually no archaeological evidence of either the total extent of its defences, or of occupation in any part of the Saxon period, and so the precise dating of its foundation must remain open to question.[84]

The Burghal Hidage reveals that Buckingham required 1600 hides assigned to it for its upkeep and it was almost certainly this territory that formed the basis of the later shire.[85] Thus Buckinghamshire may have been made up of eight-hundred units, as Northamptonshire seems to have been, but in its case only two such units would have been required. Domesday Book provides a clue as to the centre of one such eight-hundred unit. In one entry it is stated that eight hundreds 'lay in the circuit of' Aylesbury, which from other sources was known to have been an important royal centre since the seventh century.[86] This seems to echo the position of Oundle and suggests that Aylesbury had also been the centre of an administrative district. However, the new shire of Buckingham was based around the Ouse and Aylesbury, on the River Thame, had to be absorbed into it. Like Towcester, it seems to have become a hundredal centre within its new shire.

By 1086 Buckinghamshire contained eighteen hundreds, rather than sixteen. It is possible that the additional two hundreds may have been Bunsty and Moulsoe hundreds, transferred to Buckinghamshire from Northamptonshire and Bedfordshire respectively, as discussed above. This may be too simplistic a calculation, however, as some of the

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[82] *MVEL*, pp. 62-4.
[83] Haslam, 'The location', pp. 123-5; J. Haslam, 'King Alfred, Mercia and London, 874-886: a reassessment', *ASSAH*, 17 (2011), pp. 120-46; R.H.C. Davis, 'Alfred and Guthrum's Frontier', *EHR*, 97 (1982), pp. 803-10.
[84] 'Buckingham', *BHT*.
[85] Hill and Rumble (eds), *The Defence*, pp. 84, 88.
[86] DB i 143d; ASC, p. 19; 'Aylesbury', *BHT*.

(presumably) hidated land originally attached to Sashes, a temporary fort in the Thames, may have been added in the south of the county.[87]

Figure 4.6 shows the north Buckinghamshire hundreds mapped onto the drainage patterns of the River Ouse and its major tributaries but there is not such a clear correlation between the two, as was seen in Northamptonshire. Administrative units were not apparently centred on river valleys but, instead, rivers and streams seem more often to mark the boundaries between them. However, the pattern of detached parts of hundreds (figure 4.7) and divided estates in the north-west of the county, to the south of Buckingham, suggests that large scale alterations had been made to a pre-existing scheme. Rowley, the only one of the divided hundreds that formed a part of the county border, may warrant further examination. In 1086 the hundred consisted of three separate areas. The main part lay to the south of Buckingham, bounded by the river Ouse to the north and Padbury Brook to the south and east (figure 4.8). One small detached part, consisting of Thornton and Beachampton, lay further east along the southern side of the Ouse where it formed the border with Northamptonshire and another, Caversfield, lay wholly within Oxfordshire. The main part of the hundred was bisected by heavy woodland which covered the watershed between the Ouse and Padbury Brook. The land to the south of this consisted of the Chetwode/Hillesden estate, whilst Buckingham's satellite settlements including Bourton, probably the site of the southern *burh*, lay to the north. The Chetwode/Hillesden estate had been granted, in 949, by King Eadred to Aethelmaer, described as '*praeses*', which indicated that he was a royal official of some kind, most likely the king's reeve in Buckingham.[88] It is possible that this grant had arisen in the re-organisation that must have been required when the southern *burh* of Buckingham had been abandoned. The inclusion of Thornton and Beachampton within the hundred may also date from this time, as the latter would then have encompassed all of the Buckinghamshire settlements on the south bank of the Ouse, to the south west of Watling Street, which were presumably once attached to the southern *burh*.

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[87] See: D. Roffe, 'Wallingford in Domesday Book and beyond', in K.S.B. Keats-Rohan & D. Roffe (eds), *The Origins of the Borough of Wallingford: Archaeological and Historical Perspectives* (Oxford, 2009), pp.43-45.
[88] A. H. J. Baines, 'The Chetwode-Hillesden charter of 949', *ROB,* 24 (1982), pp. 1-33.

To the north of Buckingham, there is little evidence of major changes to the administrative geography. This may be because Stodfold hundred was enclosed almost entirely by natural features: the Ouse and its tributaries surround it to the south and west, and Whittlewood Forest to the north and east. Both the arrangement of the later parishes within the hundred and the place-name suggest that Stowe was once central to this area and the name of Lamport, a hamlet within Stowe parish, implies that an early market was held there.[89] A number of vills around Stowe contain the element '*mor*' within their names which indicates the presence of waste or uncultivated land, and it may be that this was once held in common.[90] Stodfold hundred may, therefore, have derived from an older unit developed to manage the common wasteland that lay at its centre.[91]

Stodfold's northern boundary, which later became part of the county border, preserved local links to detached woodlands and had the characteristics of one that evolved over time as nearby vills had staked their claims to areas of once shared woodland.[92] It could not have been drawn by a distant bureaucrat without local involvement and it may have originated 'on the ground' as the reeves based at Buckingham and Towcester had worked out the areas of their respective responsibilities. However, it is not possible to ascertain with certainty its age or even whether it pre-dated the formation of the *burghal* districts or shires.

Newport

There has been a suggestion that the southern *burh*, said by the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle to have been built from Buckingham, was in fact located at Newport.[93] However, this requires a very liberal interpretation of the chronicler's words and does not fit with the pattern of double *burh*s built elsewhere. Further, the name of Newport suggests an origin in trade rather than defence. It seems likely that Newport owes its rise as an administrative centre to the addition of the hundreds of Bunsty and Moulsoe to

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[89] M. Gelling, 'Some meanings of Stow', in S. M. Pearce (ed.), *The Early Church in Western Britain and Ireland,* BAR British Series, 102 (Oxford, 1982), pp. 187-196; *PNB*, pp. 48-9.
[90] *EPNE*, pp. 42-3. For example, Chackmore and (Maids) Moreton.
[91] See: S. Oosthuizen, 'Archaeology, common rights and the origins of Anglo-Saxon identity', *Early Medieval Europe*, 19 (2011), pp. 153-81.
[92] Above, pp. 55-7.
[93] Haslam, 'The location', pp. 124-5, n. 22.

Buckinghamshire in the eleventh century. At this time Newport became the centre of a newly created triple hundred, a unit with growing importance in Buckinghamshire, which eventually supplanted the individual hundred as the unit of administration. (This was only possible because all the hundreds had remained in royal hands throughout the middle ages which was not the case in Northamptonshire.)[94]

The creation of the Newport triple hundred required a third individual hundred, Seckloe, to be formed, or, at least its bounds re-drawn. There are indications that in doing this the uniting of both sides of Watling Street within one hundred was seen as a priority, as had clearly been the case in Northamptonshire. One of the aims of this might have been to ensure that an important route did not become a legal and judicial no man's land where crimes might go unpunished. Seckloe hundred, like those of Towcester and Cleyley in Northamptonshire, therefore, was drawn to combine an important administrative centre (Newport) with an older estate (Water Eaton) based on different river systems and located on the opposite sides of Watling Street.[95] The implication must be that these three hundreds were created more or less concurrently and possibly as part of the larger scheme which saw the transfer of Bunsty and Moulsoe to Buckinghamshire.

The earliest evidence of the increasing importance of Newport comes from coins minted there in the reign of Edward the Confessor (1042-1066). The mint that produced them was founded from London but historians have been unable to suggest why it was needed. For example one of the latest studies states that:

'In terms of density of minting outlets Newport Pagnell is unattractive as a choice of site. It is close to an expanding mint (Northampton) and in any case does not survive the closure of Aylesbury and Buckingham. There is no parallel for the creation of a new and ephemeral mint so close to other mints which are about to close.'[96]

This perhaps suggests that its foundation was connected to the conferring of an appropriate status on Newport rather than on the practical need for coins. In fact, during

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[94] Cam, *Liberties*, pp. 91-106; H.M. Cam, *The Hundred and the Hundred Rolls: An Outline of Local Government in Medieval England* (London, 1930), pp. 137, 143.
[95] *VCHN* 4, pp. 274-83.
[96] A. Freeman, *The Moneyer and the Mint in the Reign of Edward the Confessor, 1042-1066*, BAR British Series, 145 (Oxford 1985), pp. 214-7.

the first part of Edward's reign there was a flurry of mint foundations at places with no other apparent importance which may indicate that this was a period when comparative peace had allowed a concentration on local organisational structures.[97]

Conclusion

The formation of the Mercian shires took place over the tenth and eleventh centuries as the West Saxon kings sought to put in place arrangements for governing their recently acquired territories. There is unlikely to have been a common origin and date of formation for all shires as local terrain, national defensive arrangements and political sensibilities all had to be reconciled in defining local units. However, by looking at the different types of evidence available in respect of Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire it is possible to suggest a time-frame for, and some of the reasoning behind, their creation.

In the latter part of Edward the Elder's reign, and probably continuing into that of his son Athelstan, arrangements were put in place for governing this part of southern Mercia and administering royal justice to its inhabitants. As part of this exercise the area was divided into districts attached either to a *burh* (Buckingham and Towcester); an older estate centre (Aylesbury and Oundle) or a Danish garrison centre (Northampton). The districts attached to Oundle and Aylesbury probably preserved, to some degree, older territories belonging to these centres. Similarly an estate centred on Halse may have formed the basis of the Towcester district. This then raises questions as to the origins of the districts attached to Buckingham and Northampton, and the extent to which they could have been totally new creations given that they occupied 'estate-sized' gaps between territories of older centres. Although Edward the Elder's organisation had clearly involved substantial change it is perhaps unlikely that it had completely destroyed the earlier administrative geography of the area.

Each of the districts was further divided into units that became known as hundreds, and it seems that, in the border area, it was usual for there to be eight of these attached to each centre. In the area between the Ouse and the Nene the basic pattern of these

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[97] R.H.M. Dolley and D.M. Metcalf, 'The reform of the English coinage under Eadgar', in R.H.M. Dolley (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon Coins* (London, 1961), pp. 146-7.

divisions remained visible into the modern period and it is clear that each hundred was based on the drainage basin of a particular river or stream. The creation of the hundreds required the foundation of some new administrative centres which frequently gave their names to the hundreds in which they were situated. Sutton and Norton were amongst these new centres, each seemingly being named from Halse in the first half of the tenth century. This dating suggests that both the creation of the over-arching districts, and their subdivision into eight hundreds, took place within a similar timeframe and the likelihood must be they were both part of a single exercise. The hundred of Stodfold may have originated from an older communal organisation developed to manage common land.

To the south of the Ouse, the hundreds had an artificial appearance and had clearly been subject to many alterations, the earliest of which may have been related to the abandonment of the southern *burh* of Buckingham, possibly in the mid-tenth century. The biggest changes, however, occurred when the whole scheme was re-worked and the shires formally created.

Each new shire was based around a major river and one of the existing centres that was situated on the same river became both its focus and the source of its name. Northampton on the Nene became the centre of a shire based on that river as did Buckingham on the Ouse. Other centres based on lesser rivers lost their enhanced status and had to be fitted into the new shires. Aylesbury and Towcester, absorbed into Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire respectively, each became the centre of a newly created hundred, and this required alterations to the existing hundredal pattern. In all the consequent changes there was an apparent concern to prevent Watling Street from becoming a boundary between hundreds. This was clearly connected to the defence of a strategic routeway but may also have been driven by the desire to prevent the road from becoming a judicial no-man's land where crimes might go unpunished. The three hundreds through which the road ran in the border area, Seckloe in Buckinghamshire and Cleyley and Towcester in Northamptonshire, seem to have been artificial constructions created for this purpose and each combined an older estate on one side of the road with a newer administrative centre on the other.

The new scheme required other major alterations, such as the movement of particular areas from the jurisdiction of one of the older centres into the shire formed around another. Bunsty hundred, based in the Ouse valley, clearly did not belong in a Northamptonshire centred on the Nene, and was transferred to Buckinghamshire. Similarly Moulsoe hundred in the valley of the Ousel was probably transferred from Bedfordshire to Buckinghamshire. These changes placed Newport in the centre of a new triple hundred, a unit that became increasingly dominant in Buckinghamshire, and led to its rise as a locally important administrative centre

The clear rationale behind the whole scheme, and the thorough way in which it appears to have been carried out, means that it must have been a part of wider ranging reforms, imposed by royal will, but designed and implemented by an experienced administrator. It is difficult, therefore, to disagree with Taylor's view that the shires were created in the first decade of the eleventh century and that Eadric Streona was the architect behind them. Tenurial patterns support the dating to some extent, as it appears that many estates built up at the beginning of the eleventh century or before had begun to spread across older boundaries, such as Watling Street, by 1066, when they had fallen into the hands of the children or grandchildren of the original landholders. However, taken at face value, the evidence from the make-up of earldoms and the rise of Newport all suggest a later date, perhaps in the reign of Edward the Confessor. In reality, this apparent delay probably reflects the time taken for the organisational changes to be implemented in full and for all the practical implications to become apparent and dealt with.

It is important to remember that the existence of a shire did not necessarily mean that its territorial boundaries had been set. Shires, like the earlier districts they replaced, were initially defined in terms of belonging and their transformation into territorially defined units was the final stage in their evolution. Since the drawing of boundaries between them depended on the allocation of much of the sparsely occupied no-man's land that separated estates and population centres, this was an ongoing process that continued well beyond the medieval period.

5

Honours and religious houses

The introduction to this study considered, in general terms, the development of lordship and the influence that honours may have had as cohesive social and political forces, creating communities based essentially on the ties of landholding.[1] This chapter focuses on the period between the Norman Conquest and the beginning of the thirteenth century when, arguably, society was dominated by such ties and examines the extent to which the boundaries of lordship tended to reinforce, or, alternatively, undermine, the impact of the Buckinghamshire/Northamptonshire border. The first section establishes which honours had interests in the borderlands and how this changed over time. It also considers the administrative organisation of the honours concerned and the relative strength of their institutions.

The same period saw a proliferation of monasteries in England due to the arrival of new orders concerned with a return to monastic ideals and the increasing desire amongst lords to found houses. Many houses built up substantial estates which were often administered in a similar manner to those of lay lords and their boundaries, too, may have had an impact on the borderlands. The second section, therefore, considers both the monasteries that were established along the border and those which had considerable landholdings there.

Development and impact of honours in the eleventh to thirteenth centuries

The Norman Conquest saw the development of a society organised in the form of a hierarchy of landholders, all with the obligation to do service in exchange for their land. In order to understand the effect that this had on the border it is necessary to consider three issues: the extent to which the estates of tenants-in-chief, or honours, preserved local Anglo-Saxon estate patterns; the likely strength of seigneurial justice and control operating through the honours in the area and the location of the honorial caputs. To enable this to be done, the honours to which the border manors belonged need first to be

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[1] above pp. 11-15.

established and the starting point for this is, once again, Domesday Book. Analysis reveals that, allowing for the re-distribution of the estate of the Bishop of Bayeux which had been broken up by 1088, seven Norman lords held between them almost 70 per cent by value of the border estates (see table 5.1). It is the development of the estates of these lords that will now be considered further.

The estates of Winemar the Fleming, the Bishop of Coutances and Countess Judith

The three Norman landholders with the most valuable border estates were based to the north-east of Watling Street and top of the list was Winemar the Fleming who had succeeded to the lands of Haldane and some unnamed freemen. His landholdings, mapped as far as possible in figure 5.1, were very localised, and did not extend beyond Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire. The barony was centred on Hanslope, a large and valuable manor lying within Salcey Forest, which he held in demesne and which was his only holding in Buckinghamshire. He held land in chief in the Northamptonshire hundreds of Cleyley and Higham, not all of which can be securely located from the descriptions in Domesday Book, but much of the remainder of his land lay in Wymersley hundred where it was held from either Countess Judith or the Bishop of Coutances. On Winemar's death his estate was split and Michael of Hanslope (probably no relation) acquired Hanslope and the land held in chief, all of which by c.1131 had passed to his son-in-law William Maudit, chamberlain of the royal treasury. The descendants of William Maudit, one of whom succeeded to the earldom of Warwick in 1263, continued to hold the honour of Hanslope into the fifteenth century when references to it cease. The lands held as mesne tenancies were inherited by Walter, son of Winemar, whose descendants became important local landholders taking their name (de Preston) from the manor of Preston Deanery.[2]

The Bishop of Coutances, second on the list, who succeeded to some of the lands previously held by Burgred, rebelled against William Rufus in 1088 and forfeited his

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[2] *HKF*, 2, pp. 321-3; E. Mason, 'Magnates, curiales and the wheel of fortune', *ANS*, 2 (1980), pp. 132-3; C.W. Hollister, 'The origins of the English Treasury', *EHR*, 93 (1978), pp. 262-75.

estates. His only border manor, Olney, was still in the king's hands in 1130 when it accounted for 45s in Danegeld, the levy appropriate to 22½ hides. Of this amount 42s was accounted for by the sheriff of Buckingham and 3s by the sheriff of Northampton.[3] This indicates that Olney was the head of a small cross-border fee and later records give some indication of where its dependencies lay (see figure 5.2). Olney itself was assessed at 10 hides in Domesday Book and the eleventh-century Northamptonshire Survey shows that land assessed at 2.75 hides in the Salcey Forest vills of Hackleton, Horton and Preston Deanery was held by tenants 'of the fee of Olney'.[4] In Buckinghamshire it seems likely that 11 hides held in 1086 by the Bishop of Coutances in the vills of Stoke Goldington, Weston Underwood, Clifton Reynes, Lavendon, Sherington and Emberton made up the balance, as all were attached to, or members of, Olney in the fourteenth century. By 1136 Olney had been acquired by the Earl of Chester but was back in royal hands from 1163 until 1174, and, the Pipe Rolls show that, in all but one of these years, it was the sheriff of Northampton, rather than of Buckingham, who was accounting for the farm of the manor. In 1174 Olney was granted to William de Bethune but before 1208 it was once more in the possession of the Earl of Chester, and it was probably at this time that the earl's other manors in Buckinghamshire, Shenley Church End and Woughton on the Green, became subordinate to it.[5]

On the death of Ranulph de Blondeville, fourth Earl of Chester, in 1232, Olney passed first to his nephew Hugh Daubeney, Earl of Arundel, and then, in 1284, it was divided between four of the latter's nieces.[6] The details of the partition of the manor reveal that at this date whole fees at Shenley and 'Alecot', and half fees at Emberton and Woughton on the Green, belonged to it.[7] The exact location of 'Alecot' is not known but an incomplete entry in the Northamptonshire Survey refers to an Alecot in Wymersley hundred which was part of the honour of Huntingdon.[8] Other records give further clues - for example, in 1302 a forester in Salcey Forest was known as Stephen de

[3] *HKF,* 2, p.18.
[4] DB i 145c; TNS, pp. 375-6.
[5] *HKF,* 2, pp. 18-20; *The great roll of the pipe for 9-21 Henry II*, vols 6-22 (London, 1884-1897).
[6] *HKF,* 2, pp. 19-20.
[7] *CCR 1279-1288*, pp. 289-94.
[8] TNS, p. 375.

Alcote, and the debtor in a chancery case of 1337 was 'Roger the son of Michael de Alcot in Preston next to Northampton'.[9] It seems, therefore, that Alecot lay in Salcey Forest near to, or within, Preston Deanery, although whether the fee held there had formed part of the Bishop of Coutances' original holdings in the area, or was a more recently acquired addition, is impossible to say.

Countess Judith, third on the list, had inherited the lands of her husband, Waltheof, and seems to have acquired more in her own right, all of which became part of the honour of Huntingdon.[10] The newly acquired lands extended into north-east Buckinghamshire, both north and south of the Ouse and, in Northamptonshire, she also gained a small manor in Paulerspury on Watling Street. The lands she gained in Wymersley meant that she held land or manors in every vill in the hundred as it was defined in Domesday Book.

Matilda, the daughter of Countess Judith and Waltheof, married twice: first, to Simon de Senlis, who became Earl of Huntingdon in her right; and, second, to David of Scotland, who was granted the earldom in 1113. This latter grant was accompanied by a charter containing an unusually comprehensive list of immunities, including freedom from scutage, tallage, suits of hundred and county courts, assizes, aids of sheriffs and serjeants, danegeld, hidage, assarts, and works on castles, walls, bridges and causeways. Earl David continued to hold the honour even after he succeeded to the throne of Scotland, but it was forfeited in 1136 after his abortive invasion of England and, again, two years later, it having been settled on David's son in the intervening period. This time Simon de Senlis II, son of Matilda by her first husband, who had been made Earl of Northampton by King Stephen, was granted the Huntingdon honour, holding it until his death in 1153. Thereafter, the honour alternated between the de Senlis family and the Scottish Crown as their respective political fortunes waxed and waned until, in 1184, the Senlis line failed and the honour was transferred, with the agreement of the Scottish king, to his brother, another David, who became Earl of Huntingdon. The

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[9] TNA: PRO, SC 8/315/E183; C 241/109/137.
[10] above pp. 66-7.

honour remained with his descendants until the fourteenth century when it was effectively dismembered.[11]

The map in figure 5.3 shows that all the honours crossed the county border but, ignoring the late additions to the Olney fee, all lay either on, or to the north-east of, Watling Street and none lay in Buckinghamshire outside the hundreds of Bunsty and Moulsoe, that is to the south of the Ouse and west of the Ousel. The whole of the eastern borderlands were clearly dominated, tenurially at least, by these honours, but the effect that this had on the development of the area would have depended on the strength of influence of the individual honours. In the case of Hanslope, little is known about the operation of the honour. The Maudits created a park at Hanslope and built a castle in a part of the parish that later became known as Castlethorpe, so, presumably, they did spend some time in the area, although it is impossible to say whether they ever attended the honorial courts.[12] It is unlikely that the earl of Chester spent any time in Olney, as the estates were clearly distant from his main centre of power in Cheshire, but the allocation of Olney as a local caput probably meant that more administrative resources were devoted to its management. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the Chester estate outside Cheshire may have been under the supervision of two stewards, based in Lincolnshire and Coventry. The position is confused, however, since there are also references to a steward looking after the earl's interests in Northamptonshire. In 1208 Simon de Olney was fulfilling the latter role and, since his family was based in Olney, and indeed provided stewards of the manor of Olney into the fifteenth century, this suggests that Olney continued to be regarded as part of Northamptonshire, at least for administrative purposes.[13] In any case the arrangements, with one resident steward and perhaps a further supervisory steward at Coventry, indicate that a fairly tight rein was kept on the area.

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[11] *HKF*, 2, pp. 296-301; M. F. Moore, *The Lands of the Scottish Kings in England: The Honour of Huntingdon, the Liberty of Tyndale and the Honour of Penrith* (London, 1915), pp. 1-12; *EDH*, pp. 10-29; R.H.C. Davis, *King Stephen 1135-1154* (1967, Harlow, 1990 edn), pp.129-31.

[12] *VCHB* 4, p. 149.

[13] D. Crouch, 'The administration of the Norman earldom', in A. T. Thacker (ed.), *The Earldom of Chester and its Charters. A tribute to Geoffrey Barraclough* (Chester, 1991), pp. 93-4; Lipscombe, 4, p. 398; TNA: PRO DL 29/637/10344.

The caput of the Huntingdon honour was Fotheringhay, but Yardley Hastings was a favourite residence and probably became the main administrative centre for the honour when Fotheringhay was taken into royal hands in 1212. The frequent changes in the holder of the honour clearly weakened any ties of loyalty but Earl David seems to have worked hard to impose a unity and his court was a personal court with no fixed place of business.[14]

Despite the best efforts of the barons to exert control and influence over their estates in the area, individual vills were fragmented and manors intermixed, so that tenants inevitably held land from more than one honour, and the honours themselves frequently held land from each other. This must have weakened the ties to any one particular honour and given a strong local identity, perhaps linked to the exploitation of Salcey Forest. It is difficult to see the influence of either county being stronger, especially since the Huntingdon honour was exempt from attendance at the Northamptonshire county courts which, in any case, seem to have been poorly attended[15] and the tenurial links from the rest of Buckinghamshire into the area seem to have been virtually non-existent.

Although all three honours included manors located along the same part of the county border, and all were exploiting land on both sides of it, there were important differences between them. The Huntingdon and Chester lands represented part of the southern fringes of much larger estates whose centres lay further north, whilst the Hanslope honour fitted into a pattern of smaller, more locally based estates. This is illustrated by figure 5.4 which shows honorial caputs, and local administrative centres, located along the border.

The pattern of centres on the Buckinghamshire side probably arose from a series of land grants, at some point, to 'new' men, that is men without existing land and estates, and it has faint echoes of planted settlements along a hostile border, for example those in the Welsh Marches. With the exception of Olney, discussed above, all of the

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[14] *EDH,* p. 113, 149-76.
[15] R. C. Palmer, *The County Courts of Medieval England, 1150-1350* (Princeton, 1982), p. 80.

Buckinghamshire centres seem to have been held, at least in part, by Anglo-Saxon men described in Domesday Book as *housecarls* of King Edward none of whom apparently had extensive holdings elsewhere.[16] The exact meaning of the term *housecarl* has been much debated but it is now thought to relate to members of the king's household troops who were of Danish extraction.[17] Clarke has suggested that Edward the Confessor gave land to such men, to ensure their loyalty at a time when that of the English nobility could not be assumed, and these holdings may be examples of this. If so, the grants of land along the Buckinghamshire side of the border probably took place in the troubled period when the earldom of Huntingdon, and the lands that went with it, were in the hands of Earl Tostig, Godwine's son.[18] The pattern of Norman honorial caputs possibly reflects the political situation in the area in the decade before the Norman Conquest.

The estates of Mainou the Breton, Walter Giffard, Robert d'Oilly and Roger d'Ivry

The border estates of the next four landholders in table 5.1 are shown in figure 5.5.

Mainou the Breton had succeeded to the estates of various pre-Conquest thegns, most of which lay in Buckinghamshire, but he also held Lutterworth in Leicestershire and the nearby manor of Maidwell in north Northamptonshire. All formed part of his barony centred on Wolverton, which owed fifteen knight's fees and service of defending Northampton Castle. Mainou was succeeded by Meinfelin, probably his son, who was sheriff of Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire in 1125. Thereafter the barony passed through the male line until all references to it cease in the fourteenth century. Although the lords of Wolverton were only minor lords there is some, admittedly late, evidence that they had connections with, and influence over, men who were not tenants of the honour but who were based within about 10 miles of Wolverton itself. This perhaps suggests that the honour was not the most important social unit in this area.[19]

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[16] DB i 145c, 152b, 152d.

[17] N. Hooper, 'The housecarls in England in the eleventh century', *ANS*, 7 (1985), pp. 161-176; R. P. Abels, *Lordship and Military Obligation in Anglo-Saxon England* (Berkeley, 1988), p. 170.

[18] P. A. Clarke, *The English Nobility under Edward the Confessor* (Oxford, 1994)*, pp. 128-9.

[19] *VCHB,* 4, pp. 506-7; A. Polden, 'The social networks of the Buckinghamshire gentry in the thirteenth century', *Journal of Medieval History,* 32 (2006), pp. 371-394.

The manors of Robert d'Oilly and Roger d'Ivry have been treated together as they were reputed to have been sworn brothers and held much land jointly or from each other.[20] The estates of both men were centred in Oxfordshire where Robert was sheriff and, together, they founded the collegiate church of St George within the castle in Oxford, which had been built by Robert for the king in 1071 and where he was the castellan.[21] Between them they had succeeded to all the estates of Azur son of Toti in the border area and the distribution is, therefore, very similar to that shown in figure 4.3. The only significant addition was the manor of Stowe, which they had held jointly from the Bishop of Bayeux, and which they had probably given to the church of St George (later absorbed by Oseney Abbey) before his estates were forfeited.[22]

Roger d'Ivry's estate had been granted to Rainald de St Valery by 1135, Roger having no male heirs, and the honour is generally known as the honour of St Valery.[23] Most of the manors belonging to it were located in Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire, but a small fee in Syresham, a Northamptonshire border manor, was acquired on the break up of the Count of Mortain's estate, some time in the twelfth century. The honour was seized by the king in 1226 and was, thereafter, granted successively to the earls of Cornwall, Norfolk and Cornwall again, before reverting to the Crown in 1312.[24] The caput was probably Beckley, but there is some evidence that it may originally have been Mixbury, which lies at the point where Oxfordshire meets both Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire, and thus borders two of the parishes in this study: Evenley and Westbury. A castle was built there and almost certainly occupied, at least temporarily, by both the d'Ivry and St Valery families.[25] The honour court met three-weekly at North Oseney, near Oxford, and was probably held outdoors. A view of frankpledge for all the honour's Buckinghamshire lands was held at Westbury, but this does not seem to have included the tenants of Syresham where the steward probably held a separate view.[26]

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[20] J.A. Green, *The Aristocracy of Norman England* (1997, Cambridge, 2002 edn), p. 331.
[21] A. Crossley and C. R. Elrington, (eds.), *VCH Oxfordshire, 4* (London, 1979), p.296.
[22] *VCHB* 4, p.232.
[23] K.S.B. Keats-Rohan, 'Additions and corrections to Sanders's *Baronies*', *Prosopon Newsletter* (2000), pp. 1-2.
[24] I.J. Sanders, *English Baronies: A Study of their Origin and Descent, 1086*-1327 (Oxford, 1960), pp. 9-10.
[25] *VCHO* 6, pp. 251-262.
[26] W.O. Ault, *Private Jurisdiction in England* (Oxford, 1923), pp. 181, 199.

The descent of Robert d'Oilly's lands was more complicated. In 1086 he held some lands in right of his wife, who was probably Ealdgyth, the daughter of Wigod of Wallingford, a member of the royal household of Edward the Confessor. On the marriage of Robert and Ealdgyth's daughter to Miles Crispin, castellan of Wallingford Castle, these lands appear to have passed to the honour of Wallingford.[27] The remainder of Robert's estates, including all of those in the border area remained attached to his honour of Hook Norton. This honour effectively broke up in the thirteenth century when it was inherited by Henry d'Oilly ' a mild, pious, incompetent man who could neither protect his men in their quarrels nor provide them with worthwhile reward'.[28]

The estates of Robert d'Oilly, Roger d'Ivry and Mainou lay mainly within Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire but in the latter county their holdings did not extend into the hundreds of Bunsty or Moulsoe, as shown in figure 5.5. They also held some land outside these counties, the location of which suggests that older links may perhaps have been preserved. For example, Wicken, where Robert d'Oilly and Mainou each held manors, seems to have remained attached to Buckinghamshire, tenurially at least. The distribution of Walter Giffard's lands, also shown in figure 5.5, was different. He had succeeded to the estate of his father, another Walter Giffard, in 1084 and held manors throughout Buckinghamshire, although he held none in Northamptonshire.[29] The caput of the estate was Long Crendon, which lies on the Buckinghamshire/Oxfordshire border to the south of the area being considered, from which the barony took its name. In north Buckinghamshire, the Giffards had obtained the lands previously held by Alric, son of Goding, but it appears that, in addition, they had acquired the lands held by men of Alric, as shown in figure 4.3, and thus their estate expanded across the Ousel into Moulsoe hundred. In 1086 Walter Giffard II also held one manor, Ravenstone, in Bunsty hundred, which had not been held by Alric or his men and which formed the only obvious tenurial link between this hundred and the Buckingham area. In this period earls generally took their title from the county in which their territorial strength lay and it is possible, but not certain, that Walter was made earl of Buckingham by William

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[27] A. Williams, *The English and the Norman Conquest* (Woodbridge, 1995), pp. 101-2; Green, *The Aristocracy*, pp. 61, 77.
[28] D. A. Carpenter, 'Bastard feudalism revised', *Past and Present,* 131 (1991), pp. 188-9.
[29] *VCHB* 4, p.38.

Rufus, acquiring the manor and borough of Buckingham at the same time.[30] The extension of what was Alric's original estate into Moulsoe and Bunsty hundred, thus giving a presence across the whole county, may also be related to this event.

In the twelfth century the Giffard's park at Long Crendon formed part of the grant by which they founded Notley abbey and it seems that, by this time, Long Crendon had ceased to be their chief residence. There had never been a castle there but they had had one built in Buckingham, which probably became their base in the area.[31] This situation could only have been short-lived, however, as on the death of Walter Giffard II's son, in 1164, the barony of Long Crendon escheated to the crown and remained in the king's hands until c.1191. It was then divided between Richard de Clare, Earl of Hertford, who was a descendant of Walter Giffard I, and William Marshal, later Earl of Pembroke, who was married to another descendant. They each paid 2,000 marks for their share of the fief with the caput in England going to the Clares and that in Normandy to the Marshals. The lands in both countries were divided amongst them.[32]

Figure 5.6 shows the likely division of the lands in the border area. The exact allocation of the English manors is difficult to reconstruct because some manors, including Long Crendon, seem to have been acquired by the Clares but sold, or otherwise transferred, to the Marshals shortly afterwards. Further confusion arises as, when the Marshal line failed in 1245, some of the Giffard lands they had acquired passed via a female descendant to Gilbert de Clare, who as earl of Hertford and Gloucester had also inherited his family's share of the lands.[33] The map reveals that to the south-west of Watling Street the Clares had acquired Buckingham and a block of estates stretching to the north and south of it, probably because by this time Buckingham had become the *de facto* caput of the Giffard estates. The Pembroke (Marshal) manors lie to the east of Buckingham in the Watling Street corridor, a distribution further emphasised when other estates obtained by the earls of Pembroke at later dates, are included on the map.

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[30] J. H. Round, *Geoffrey De Mandeville: A Study of the Anarchy* (London, 1892), p. 272 ; Green, *The Aristocracy*, p. 182.

[31] Round, *Geoffrey De Mandeville,* p. 272; Green, *The Aristocracy*, p. 182 ; R. Allen Brown, 'A list of castles, 1154-1216', *EHR,* 74 (1959), p. 263.

[32] Sanders, *English Baronies*, p. 62.

[33] M. Altschul, *A Baronial Family in Medieval England: The Clares, 1217-1314* (Baltimore, 1965), pp. 24-5; *VCHB* 4, p.38 ; Sanders, *English Baronies*, pp. 62-3.

To the north east of Watling Street the distribution is different and here Clare and Marshal manors lay inter-mixed and the rights to one of them, Bradwell, were disputed.[34] There were some common factors, however, the Marshal manors again lie relatively close to Watling Street, and, interestingly, the single manor in Bunsty hundred remained linked to Buckingham through allocation to the Clares.

There are some factors which suggest that the Giffard honour may initially have been a fairly strong focus for local society - it was quite concentrated geographically and the lord, a man in royal favour, probably spent some time residing near his park at Long Crendon or in Buckingham Castle, although he lived mainly in Normandy. The Clares and Marshals, who later divided the honour between them, were powerful families with large followings, again factors which often produced honours with a strong political unity.[35] In this case, however, the Giffard lands had been acquired late, when honorial power was in decline and long after both families had built up large estates and retinues and had established power bases in the Welsh Marches.[36]

The lands acquired by William Marshal seem to have continued as a discrete entity, known as the Crendon honour, and run by a long-serving steward, William Jardin. It seems that, generally, the stewardships of the various parts of the honour were rotated amongst favoured members of the earl's household, with each remaining in post for a few years before being moved on. The fact that William Jardin remained in post for almost the length of the earl's tenure of Long Crendon could indicate that the Crendon honour was being particularly well run but, more likely, it is an indication that it was not regarded as an important or integral part of the estate. Perhaps, apart from being a reliable source of finance, it was regarded as somewhat of an outpost. Certainly the links with William Marshal himself seem to have remained weak and few tenants of the Giffard lands joined his retinue.[37]

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[34] *VCHB,* 4, p.284.

[35] D. Crouch, 'From Stenton to McFarlane: models of societies of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries', *TRHS,* 5 (1995), p. 286.

[36] D. Crouch, *William Marshal: Court, Career and Chivalry in the Angevin Empire, 1147-1219* (Harlow, 1990), pp. 131-41; Altschul, *Baronial Family*; R. Mortimer, 'Land and Service: the tenants of the honour of Clare', *ANS,* 8 (1986), pp. 177-197.

[37] Crouch, *William Marshall*, pp. 164-5.

In contrast, the part of the Giffard honour acquired by the Clares did not keep a separate identity. The individual manors were absorbed into the existing Clare estates which were administered as part of large bailiwicks 'whose only unity lay in the fact that they were under the general supervision of the same receiver and the same seneschal, the major financial and judicial officials'. It is not known to which bailiwick, or bailiwicks, the Buckinghamshire manors were attached, although at an inquest into the de Clare estates held in c.1286, some Cambridgeshire lands were said to be 'held of the honour of Bokyngham, by a service which cannot be discovered'.[38] However, it is clear that Buckingham quickly lost any role in honorial administration that it may have once had. Soon after it was acquired by Richard de Clare, he granted it in dower on the marriage of his daughter Matilda to William de Braose, the eldest son of a fellow marcher baron.[39] It has to be doubted, therefore, whether the Giffard honour ever represented any kind of community or unifying force and, indeed, a recent study found no evidence of links of any kind between the Giffard tenant families studied and their overlords in the thirteenth century.[40]

The estate of the Count of Mortain

Seventh on the list, the Count of Mortain held lands throughout the border area, as part of his honour of Berkhampstead, which were forfeited by his son in 1106 when he fought against Henry I at Tinchebray. The honour was later granted to Henry I's chancellor who held it until 1123, when it reverted to the crown, but many of the lands that had previously belonged to it were divided between the honours of Leicester, Aquila and others.[41] Figure 5.7 shows the lands held by the honours of Leicester and Berkhampstead in the border area after this division. Once again the allocation seems to have been made by reference to Watling Street. To the north east, most of the manors remained part of Berkhampstead although Furtho and Cosgrove were shared with Leicester and Aquila.[42] To the south west of Watling Street the Northamptonshire manors, excepting Silverstone, which probably stayed in royal hands, passed to Robert

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[38] Altschul, *Baronial Family*, p. 222; *CIPM*, 3, p.236.
[39] *VCHB 3*, pp. 471-489; Altschul, *Baronial Family*, pp. 29-30.
[40] Polden, S*ocial networks*, p.383.
[41] *VCHN 5*, pp. 77-98; Sanders, *English Baronies*, p. 14.
[42] *VCHN 5,* pp. 77-98, 127-42.

de Beaumont, Earl of Leicester whilst those in Buckinghamshire remained part of Berkhampstead.[43] The honour of Berkhampstead retained little interest in the border area: some land in Weston Underwood and a shared interest in the manors of Cosgrove and Furtho; and is not, therefore, considered further.

The Earl of Leicester had also acquired lands in the area originally held by Earl Aubrey who had returned to France shortly after 1080, even though he is still included as a landholder in Domesday Book.[44] (The holdings of Earl Aubrey are considered further in the appendix). When these lands were combined with those from the Mortain fee they formed a substantial estate along the Northamptonshire side of the county border, stretching from Evenley in the west to Cosgrove in the east, with only the manor at Biddlesden falling within Buckinghamshire.

The honour of Leicester seems to have been a relatively sophisticated organisation in the twelfth century with an administrative system based on that used by the royal household. The demesnes were broken up into accounting units, known as sokes, each under local officials, who paid their farms annually in person at Leicester, the caput of the honour.[45] One such soke was Halse and the earl had built a castle at Brackley, which lay within the Halse estate. Although his main residence in England was Leicester, he clearly spent time in Brackley and employed a local man, Solomon, to act as his clerk when he was in residence there.[46] The earls founded religious houses at nearby Luffield and Biddlesden and had supported the foundation of a hospital in Brackley.[47] All the evidence, therefore, points to the honour of Leicester as having had a considerable local presence and it must have functioned in some respects as a focus for the community on the Northamptonshire side of the border. However, in 1204 the honour was divided between two heiresses and Halse became the centre of the honour of Winchester's holdings in Northamptonshire. Syresham and Evenley, however, remained a part of the

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[43] *LPC I*, pp.xv.
[44] L. Fox, 'The honor and earldom of Leicester: origin and descent, 1066-1399', *EHR,* 54 (1939), pp. 387-8.
[45] *TBT*, pp. 164-5.
[46] 'Brackley' in *NEUS*; *TBT*, p. 152.
[47] Below, pp. 101-6.

Leicester honour and were managed from Helmdon, which replaced Halse as the local administrative centre of the honour.[48]

Religious Houses

The wooded nature of much of the land along the border made it particularly suitable for donations to religious houses. It was amongst the lord's least valuable land but provided the solitude desired by many new orders, particularly the Cistercians, and offered scope for clearance and arable cultivation away from strict manorial control.[49] The motives of lords in founding religious houses or donating land to them were mixed and although piety undoubtedly formed a part, fashion, prestige and political factors were also important. Many patrons failed to maintain the links with the houses they had founded due to changing fortunes or indifference and the subsequent development of the houses often depended on local lay society. However, the parish was increasingly becoming the focus of lay devotion and the extent to which a religious house could develop alternative local associations and command the affections of the laity varied.[50]

Six religious houses were founded in the border parishes in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. These are shown in table 5.2 and mapped in figure 5.8. In order to consider the effect of these foundations, and other nearby houses, on developments in the borderlands, the area will be looked at in two sections, divided by Watling Street.

Houses associated with lands to the west of Watling Street

Luffield Priory and Biddlesden Abbey, together with the Hospital of St John at Brackley, all twelfth-century foundations of the Earl of Leicester, between them held

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[48] L. Fox, 'The administration of the honor of Leicester in the fourteenth century', *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*, 20 (1938-9), pp. 289-374.

[49] J. Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders in Britain, 1000-1300* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 72-3; M. Aston, *Monasteries in the Landscape* (1993, Stroud, 2009 edn), pp. 133-6.

[50] See, for example: Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders*, pp. 63-84, 210-32; Aston, *Monasteries*, pp. 79-100; D.A. Postles, *Missed Opportunities? Religious Houses and the Laity in the English "High Middle Ages"* (Washington, 2009), pp. 19-34.

land in every parish along the western border. All three were situated at the the southernmost limits of the heartlands of the honour[51] and there must have been a strong element, on the part of the Earl of Leicester, of wishing to mark the extent of his honour and signify its influence in an area where woodland clearance was underway and boundaries needed to be defended from encroachment.[52]

The Benedictine priory at Luffield was founded in c.1124 on lands which extended into both Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire. The county border passed through the priory's refectory, kitchen and dormitory, although it was undoubtedly the boundary of the honour rather than that of the county which dictated its location. The first monks came from Eynsham Abbey which continued to claim jurisdiction over Luffield until the beginning of the thirteenth century.[53] The Earl seems to have shown no further personal interest in the house and it is not known how or when Luffield acquired most of its early estates which were first listed in a papal bull of 1174.[54] However, there are hints that connections to the Earl and the Leicester honour were important and several gifts seem to have been of land where the donor's title was insecure or under challenge. This was particularly so during the anarchy of Stephen's reign when the Earl, a supporter of Stephen, seems to have acquired much new land. For example, the priory had acquired a small estate in the Buckinghamshire vill of Evershaw from the Beauchamps of Bedford. This family had been briefly supplanted in their estates by the Earl of Leicester's younger brother, who had been made Earl of Bedford, and relations between the parties were fraught. Given that the gift of Evershaw did not endure in full and was the subject of much later litigation it is likely that its origins lay in the politics of the period.[55] The priory's principal estate in the twelfth century, a manor in Silverstone, Northamptonshire, had once been in the hands of the de Kaynes family, who were barons of the Leicester honour, and it is possible it was donated by them. Members of the family certainly granted smaller estates in Dodford and Heyford, to

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[51] The central part of the honour extended southwards from Leicestershire through most of western Northamptonshire, but not into north Buckinghamshire (Fox, 'The honor', pp. 400-2).

[52] See, for example: E. Jamroziak, *Survival and Success on Medieval Borders: Cistercian Houses in Medieval Scotland and Pomerania from the Twelfth to the Late Fourteenth Century* (Turnhout, 2011), pp. 29-32; 53-4.

[53] *LPC I*, pp. xiii-xiv; *LPC II*, pp. xiii, xix-xx.

[54] *LPC I*, pp. vii, xiii, no. 8; *LPC II*, pp. xiii-xiv.

[55] *LPC II*, pp. lii-liv; *TBT*, p. 41, 50.

Luffield. However, it seems that they may have forfeited the Silverstone manor to the king before Luffield obtained it.[56]

By the end of the twelfth century, the priory held land in five counties but about three quarters of its income arose in Northamptonshire.[57] Gifts made to the priory in the thirteenth century were not extensive and the majority of them came from the Northamptonshire side of the border, resulting in various small holdings in Whittlebury, Brackley, Paulerspury, Maidford, Abthorpe, Cosgrove, Towcester and Burcote.[58] In contrast on the Buckinghamshire side they were given only a small amount of land in Akeley and two houses in Buckingham.[59] However, from the 1230s the priory began to purchase lands in Buckinghamshire from lords under financial pressure, increasing their holdings in Evershaw and building up new estates in Shalstone and Thornborough. By the end of the century these estates were providing over half the income of the priory.[60]

Biddlesden Abbey was founded on the Buckinghamshire side of the border in 1147 by another of the Leicester barons, Arnold de Bois. Its initial endowment consisted of land seized with dubious legality by the Earl of Leicester from Robert de Meppershall, another Bedfordshire lord, and thus fits the pattern, established in the case of Luffield, of the Earl 'exploiting the hungry new orders' need for land by unloading contentious parcels on them'.[61] In this way he both gained the privileges and prestige of a monastic founder and prevented the disputed land from being reclaimed.[62] One of the earliest donations Biddlesden received was of Marieland, an area of approximately 50 acres which is situated in the Northamptonshire parish of Syresham but which was regarded as part of Biddlesden and, therefore, Buckinghamshire, for most of the medieval period and beyond. It is possible that the Abbey's interest in Marieland accounted for its inclusion in Buckinghamshire, but there may be alternative explanations. There was a

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[56] *LPC II*, pp. xxxvii, xliv-xlv. The manorial history of Silverstone is confused, see *LPC I*, pp. xiv-xvii. For the de Kaynes (Cahaignes) as members of the Leicester honour, see: *TBT*, pp. 101, 129.
[57] *LPC I*, p. vii.
[58] *LPC I*, nos 165-79, 190- 215, 239-41, 262-86; *LPC II*, nos 331-6, 406, 761-2.
[59] *LPC I*, no. 164; *LPC II*, nos 417, 422.
[60] *LPC I*, pp. vii-viii.
[61] *TBT*, pp.198-9, 204.
[62] Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders*, pp.73-4.

chapel there in the thirteenth century but this probably had a much earlier origin since, when Luffield Priory was founded c.1118, the land given for the church and conventual buildings was said to lie between 'Cepieleia' and 'Limbroeda'. The former place-name almost certainly refers to a clearing with a chapel and this must have been very close to Marieland (figure 3.3).[63] It is possible that this chapel had belonged to the church of St Mary in Biddlesden when, on the Abbey's foundation, the latter became the conventual church.

Biddlesden's income before c.1200, like that of Luffield, came predominantly from its Northamptonshire estates although it had been gifted land in Dadford and Evershaw in Buckinghamshire, as well as in Biddlesden itself.[64] It, too, purchased estates in Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire in the thirteenth century, but was marginally more successful than Luffield in attracting smaller gifts from Buckinghamshire based lords and acquired land, for example, in Maids Moreton, Turweston, Bourton, Westbury and in Buckingham itself where it was given a messuage and a vineyard by the lords of the town.[65] It is noticeable, however, that many of the same lords, particularly those of the St Valery honour, also made donations to Oseney Abbey in Oxford. As a result Oseney, too, acquired estates in many of the same places including, in Westbury, on the border. However, the abbey does not seem to have acquired any land at all in the vills on the Northamptonshire side of the border.[66]

Competition between Luffield and Biddlesden seems to have prevented either from building up enough momentum to acquire a significant patronal network, or a large enough estate, to become a really influential force in the borderlands. Nevertheless, by the thirteenth century both must have been involved in border society, for example, in the provision of pastoral care, as lords of several manors, as holders of fairs and, not least, in their dealings in the wool trade in which both houses were strongly

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[63] *LPC I*, pp.xiii-iv.
[64] Rev. H. Roundell, 'Biddlesden Abbey and its lands', *ROB*, 1 (1858), pp. 277-87; C.W. Green, *Biddlesden and its Abbey* (Buckingham 1965), pp. 19-20. It's most valuable holding was Charwelton in Northamptonshire which had been given to them by the de Chenduit family who were barons of the Berkhamsted honour and had no known connection to the Earl of Leicester.
[65] Roundell, 'Biddlesden Abbey', pp. 286-7; Rev. H. Roundell, 'Biddlesden Abbey and its lands (cont'd)', *ROB*, 2 (1863), pp. 33-40; *LPC II*, pp. lvi-lxvii.
[66] H.E. Salter, *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey*, 6 vols (Oxford, 1929-36), 5, pp. 240-326, 386-486.

involved.[67] There are few signs, however, that people residing in the borderlands developed strong associations with either house. It is clear that neither was particularly successful in attracting grants of land from local people, although it seems that Biddlesden, located in Buckinghamshire, attracted more support from that county than did Luffield, although that could be due to the fashion for supporting Cistercian foundations as much as county loyalty. Very few small gifts, for the maintenance of lamps on altars and similar, are known to have been made and those that were often came from people living in towns, who probably came across the monks in the course of trade, and whose links to an urban parish church may have been new or fairly weak.[68] For example, in c.1220 Luffield was given the rent from a shop in Towcester to maintain a light in its church, and a house in the market-place at Brackley 'for the clothing of the monks'. It was also given a stall and two houses in Northampton by residents of that town.[69] Similarly the wife of a London salter gave a house in the city to Biddlesden.[70] Few people not associated with the founding families were known to have been buried in either house before the fifteenth century and records of sons of the local gentry being received into either community are rare.[71] (It should be noted however that the names of priors of Luffield indicate that several came from the local area.)

It is doubtful that either house fostered any lasting kind of cross-boundary community, although the evidence does not allow for certainty. Luffield, for example, after c.1230, seems to have run its manors as separate enterprises managed by different men. Courts seem to have been held in individual manors although there is a reference to the 'great court of the prior' which may imply that this was not always the case. Furthermore, charters confirming transfers of land situated in Buckinghamshire were witnessed

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[67] Both houses appear in the list of wool producers compiled in Italy, probably in the thirteenth century (W. Cunningham, *The Growth of English Industry and Commerce during the Early and Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1915), pp. 633, 640.

[68] For the significance of gifts to maintain lamps, and small gifts generally, see: Postles, *Missed Opportunities?*, pp. 35-60; 85-111.

[69] *LPC I*, no. 213; *LPC II*, nos 325, 327, 406.

[70] Roundell, 'Biddlesden Abbey (cont'd), pp. 38-9.

[71] For Biddlesden burials, see: Browne Willis, *The History and Antiquities of the Town, Hundred, and Deanry of Buckingham* (London, 1755), pp. 152-3. For the only three potential burials recorded at Luffield and admittances into the house, see: *LPC I*, no. 219; *LPC II*, nos 444, 490.

overwhelmingly by Buckinghamshire men and those concerning Northamptonshire land by Northamptonshire men.[72]

Houses associated with lands to the east of Watling Street

There was surprisingly little land in monastic hands along the border to the east of Watling Street, given that the area lay within about 10 miles of seventeen houses in Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire.[73] On the Buckinghamshire side of the border two houses, Lavendon Abbey and Ravenstone Priory, the latter not founded until the thirteenth century, remained small and never came to possess extensive estates. The former, founded by the lord of the small locally based honour of Lavendon, held land in Lavendon itself on the border and in a few vills further south, but none outside Buckinghamshire. The latter house seems never to have held land outside Ravenstone.[74]

The three main houses in Northampton –the Priory of St Andrew and Delapre Abbey, both Cluniac foundations of the de Senlis family, claimants to the earldom of Huntingdon, and the Augustinian Abbey of St James, founded by William Peverel, lord of Higham Ferrers – all had some interest in land on the Northamptonshire side of the border.[75] The Abbey of St James held a manor in Bozeat, which lay on the wooded south western margins of the soke and hundred of Higham Ferrers and so was typical of the sort of land donated by a founder. The abbey also held a small manor in Roade, which probably extended into the border parish of Hartwell and had links to a hermitage established at Grafton by the Woodville family, the lords there. (The lands of the latter, never extensive, were confined to the Northamptonshire vills lying to the north along Watling Street).[76] The Prior of St Andrew was the lord of a manor in Hackleton which

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[72] *LPC II*, nos 367, 444. For witness lists see, for example: Northamptonshire: *LPC I*, no. 207; *LPC II*, nos 313, 334; Buckinghamshire; *LPC II*, nos 479, 580, 760. It is possible that the names of some witnesses were omitted in the cartulary, see: Postles, *Missed Opportunities*, pp. 241-57.

[73] D.C. Mynard and R.J. Ivens, 'The excavation of Gorefields: a medieval nunnery and grange at Stoke Goldington, Buckinghamshire', *ROB*, 42 (2003), p.96.

[74] *VCHB* 1, pp. 381-2, 384-6; *EMA*. For the possible founder of Ravenstone Priory, see: R.P. Hagerty, 'The puzzle of the priestly effigy in Ivinghoe church', *ROB*, 32 (1990), pp. 105-19.

[75] *VCHN* 2, pp. 102-9, 114-6, 127-30.

[76] *VCHN* 4, pp. 3-7; *VCHN* 5, pp. 176-97, 345-74 G. Parker, 'The medieval hermitage of Grafton Regis', *NPP*, 6 (1981-2), pp. 247-52; Baker, 2, pp. 162-3, 171.

included some land in the Northamptonshire border parish of Piddington.[77] Neither house seems to have had any significant interests in Buckinghamshire but the third house, Delapre Abbey, had a grange at Gorefields which lay on the boundary between Stoke Goldington and Hanslope, close to Salcey Forest. However, this may have been a late acquisition as excavations suggest that the grange originated as a Benedictine nunnery. Nevertheless, by the end of the thirteenth century it represented the only significant Buckinghamshire estate held by a religious house based in Northamptonshire.[78]

The lack of any other manors in the hands of religious houses along the eastern border is, in some ways, puzzling as the wooded landscape was similar to that further west. However, the new monastic orders preferred the type of land, usually found on the edges of estates or larger political entities, where population was likely to be lightest and feudal control weakest. These aspects were important to the orders who wanted to farm their own lands rather than receive income from tenants, and they account for the proliferation of their houses in all types of frontier zones.[79] The eastern border, however, was dominated by a number of estates with closely spaced, locally based caputs and it seems unlikely that the land lying between them would in any way be subject to weak manorial control. Furthermore the woodlands would have been a convenient resource for the estate centres, and would have been too valuable to be donated to a religious house.

Conclusion

The land-holding pattern in the area did not alter significantly with the Norman Conquest. To the north-east of Watling Street the Huntingdon lands expanded into Buckinghamshire, the large pre-Conquest estate of Burgred was broken up and the Hanslope honour fell into the hands of a non-resident lord, but the area essentially remained one dominated by these three estates, albeit in new ownership. The intermixed nature of the landholdings, however, would have militated against geographical

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[77] *VCHN* 4, pp. 276-9.
[78] Mynard and Ivens, 'The excavation', pp. 19-101.
[79] See, for example: Jamroziak, *Survival*; Aston, *Monasteries*, pp. 88-9, 133-6; Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders*, pp. 72-3, 131-5.

boundaries being created between them and probably resulted in an identity linked to locality rather than to a particular honour or even county. The tenurial structure meant that very little land was in the hands of religious houses and the only foundations in the area almost certainly related to the social aspirations of the lords of Lavendon and Ravenstone.

The pattern of landholding in Northamptonshire to the south-west of Watling Street is distinguished by the continued royal ownership of land at Silverstone and Whitfield and by the estates built up by the earls of Leicester. In this case the Leicester honour seems to have had a significant local presence and probably did exert a cohesive force amongst its tenants and possibly others living nearby. Certainly there is no evidence of tenurial links across Watling Street to Northampton, which would surely have developed if there had been a strong county focus. The religious foundations of the earl and his men, Luffield and Biddlesden, were situated at the the southernmost limits of the heartlands of the honour which meant that they lay along the county border. They, like the castle at Brackley, were probably intended to signify the Earl's control of the area in the troubled times of Stephen's reign. Most of the land donated to the houses lay on the Northamptonshire side of the border and came from lords belonging to the honour. The land concerned had often been obtained by dubious means with its legal ownership subject to challenge and the houses thus served to legitimise and protect Leicester landholdings in the area. Both houses later purchased land in Buckinghamshire and received some gifts of land in the county, but they were in competition both with each other and with Oseney Abbey, the house associated with the St Valery honour. Neither seem to have acquired a large local following and their influence as cross-border foci was almost certainly weak and fleeting.

In Buckinghamshire, the lands belonging to the honours of St Valery, Hook Norton and Wolverton generally lay within the bounds seemingly established before Norman Conquest and did not extend beyond the Ouse into Bunsty hundred or beyond the Ousel into Moulsoe hundred. Only the lands of the Giffards spread beyond these rivers as, unusually in the area, they seem to have obtained lands belonging to the commended men of their Anglo-Saxon antecessors. This pattern seems to be linked to the creation of the earldom of Buckingham, and, as in the case of Huntingdon discussed in the previous

chapter, it is the comital holdings that seem to relate most closely to county boundaries. There is little evidence to suggest that the honour was a strong cohesive force in the area, particularly after its division between the Clares and Marshalls, with established retinues and power bases located a long way to the west in the Welsh Marches. Nevertheless the proximity of Buckingham to the border parishes, and the older links between them, probably led to a stronger county identity than elsewhere in the region.

6

The Church and its boundaries

The conversion of the Anglo-Saxons to christianity, which largely took place in the seventh century, was a top-down process which began with the rulers of the various kingdoms in existence at that time. Once a king had converted, his centre of royal government became, in addition, the seat of a bishop and was served by a group of clergy attached to a minster. Additional minsters would then be established under royal or episcopal initiatives at lesser estate centres from which communities of priests served and evangelised the surrounding countryside. Ecclesiastical structures, therefore, at least initially, mirrored those of secular administration. They generally proved longer-lasting, however, and, as secular units changed, ecclesiastical boundaries often came to preserve traces of the older political geography on which they had been based.[1]

The aim of this chapter is to examine ecclesiastical boundaries in the borderlands to see what they reveal about the early political development of the area and where the centres of influence lay. Such an exercise relies, to a large extent, on the ability to establish which churches in the borderlands originated as minsters. These minsters would have had influence over extensive areas, known as their *parochiae,* but are not easy to identify as they had often lost much of their significance before surviving records were made.

Their decline was due in the main to the break up of large estates. The thegns who, as a result, were granted land, established churches served by individual priests, as part of their new manorial complexes. These proprietary churches were initially subsidiary to the minster churches that had served the larger estate but gradually they acquired rights, most importantly those of burial, from the mother churches whose *parochiae* were thus eroded. The precarious position of minsters was recognised and they were given some protection in that churchscot and soulscot remained payable to them and could not be diverted to proprietary churches. However, this method of finance was gradually being

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[1] See, for example: J. Blair, 'Introduction: from minster to parish church', in J. Blair (ed.), *Minsters and Parish Churches: The Local Church in Transition 950-1200* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 1-19; *CASS*; S. Foot, *Monastic Life in Anglo-Saxon England, c. 600-900* (2006, Cambridge, 2009 edn), pp. 77-87.

superseded by one based on tithes and one third of demesne tithes could be paid to the estate church. Although the other two thirds were supposed to remain to the mother church this was interpreted liberally, particularly after the Conquest, and they were often donated to religious houses instead.[2]

Competition from smaller churches was not the only threat minsters had faced. In northern and eastern England the Danish invasions undoubtedly inflicted much damage both on individual minsters and the systems and institutions that underlay them. Nevertheless, there is evidence that many minsters survived and their presence continued to influence parochial arrangements into the twelfth century and beyond.[3] In the midlands the re-organisation of local government, put in place by Alfred and Edward in order to provide support to the system of *burhs* built to defend against Viking attack, was extended to areas later re-conquered from the Danes. In both cases the changes seem to have been accompanied by the foundation of new 'hundredal' churches in *burhs* or at new estate centres where a royal minster did not already exist. The financial position of these churches with respect to the old minsters that had previously served the area is unknown.[4]

The movement for monastic reform, which reached its height under Edgar, also inflicted damage on the network of minsters. One of its aims was to reduce lay involvement in ecclesiastical affairs, so monks were appointed to bishoprics and in a number of places large, disciplined monasteries replaced the rather loose and informal groups of clergy who had served the minsters. The reform movement continued to affect the system after the Norman Conquest, especially when, at the prompting of the Papacy, it was insisted that laymen could not own churches. Increasing numbers of proprietary churches were donated to the monasteries who often ignored the vestigial rights of the mother churches, using their power and influence to gain independent control.[5]

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[2] Blair, 'Introduction', pp.7-9; *CASS*, pp.369-71, 497-504; R. Faith, *The English Peasantry and the Growth of Lordship* (London, 1997), pp. 165-7.
[3] D. Hadley, 'Conquest, colonization and the Church: ecclesiastical organization in the Danelaw', *Historical Research*, 69 (1996), pp. 109-128.
[4] J. Blair, 'Secular minster churches in Domesday Book', in P. H. Sawyer (ed.), *Domesday Book: A Reassessment* (London, 1985), pp. 118-9; M. J. Franklin, 'Minsters and Parishes: Northamptonshire Studies' (unpub. Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 1982), pp. 11-3, 179-96, 313-33.
[5] J. Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders in Britain 1000-1300* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 1-6, 43-52; J. Campbell, E. John and P. Wormald, *The Anglo-Saxons* (1982, London, 1991 edn), pp. 192-3; S. Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe 900-1300* (1984, Oxford, 1997 edn), pp.88-9.

By 1066 the minster system had clearly been weakened but a good idea of the early minster networks in many areas can be obtained from Domesday Book. Unfortunately, the coverage of churches in the Northamptonshire and Buckinghamshire folios is poor and known to be incomplete. This means that the first records that give a full picture of ecclesiastical provision in the border area are those from the ecclesiastical taxes levied in 1254 and 1291.[6] By this time new ecclesiastical structures – archdeaconries, rural deaneries and parishes - had been put in place and some understanding of these units and their origins is necessary.

Archdeaconries, rural deaneries and parishes

It seems to have been Mercian practice to establish a separate see for each sub-kingdom and, in 737, a see serving the Middle Angles was established in Leicester. However, the Danish occupation of eastern Mercia in the ninth century forced a move to the existing see at Dorchester-on-Thames. The see of Lindsey ceased to exist at about the same time and thus Dorchester became the centre for a large diocese which covered most of the area between the Humber and the Thames.[7] Clearly the management of such a large area required the establishment of geographical sub-divisions and the appointment of agents of ecclesiastical authority below the bishop. This seems to have happened by 1092 when it is clear that the Norman system of territorial archdeaconries had been introduced, probably following Lanfranc's first general council in c.1072.[8] At about the same time the centre of the see covering Middle Anglia was moved from Dorchester to Lincoln as part of a programme to base English sees in larger towns in line with continental practice.[9]

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[6] W. Page, 'Some remarks on the churches of the Domesday Survey', *Archaeologia,* 16 (1915), pp. 90-3; Blair, 'Secular minster', pp.106-14; M. J. Franklin, 'The assessment of benefices for taxation in 13th century Buckinghamshire', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 29 (1985), pp. 73-4.

[7] *ASE*, pp. 42, 437-8; F. Barlow, *The English Church 1000-1066: A History of the Later Anglo-Saxon Church* (1963, London, 1979 edn), p. 215.

[8] A. Hamilton Thompson, 'Diocesan organization in the middle ages: archdeacons and rural deans', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 29 (1943), p. 14; F. Barlow, *The English Church 1066-1154* (London, 1979), pp. 48-9; C. Brooke, 'The archdeacon and the Norman Conquest', in D. Greenway, C. Holdsworth and J. Sayers (eds), *Tradition and Change: Essays in Honour of Marjorie Chibnall* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 1-20.

[9] Barlow, *English Church 1066-1154*, pp. 47-8.

The division of the Lincoln diocese into archdeaconries was achieved by the adoption of secular units of administration and archdeacons of Buckingham and Northampton were appointed to oversee the shires based on each town. This is not to suggest that the boundaries of the later medieval counties had crystallised by that time and, for example, the Northampton archdeaconry included the area that later became the separate county of Rutland.[10] In c.1219 Wikes (probably Wick Hamon later part of Wicken) was said to lie partly in the archdeaconry of Buckingham and partly in the archdeaconry of Northampton, which suggests that smaller anomalies remained into at least the thirteenth century.[11]

The units of administration below the archdeaconry were the rural deaneries but the exact process and timing of their formation remains unclear. Barlow thought that they reflected ancient parochial groupings and that their creation was, in effect, a re-naming exercise.[12] However, with a few exceptions, this is now known not to have been the case.[13] Within the Lincoln diocese the deaneries were based on groups of hundreds. The archdeaconry of Northampton was divided into twelve unevenly sized deaneries whilst that of Buckingham consisted of seven, each one corresponding to a triple hundred, a unit much used in county administration.[14] This perhaps suggests that a more thorough administrative re-organisation took place in Buckinghamshire, with less heed having been paid to historical groupings. Five rural deaneries covered the border area, but one, that of Higham Ferrers, included only two border parishes, Bozeat and Easton Maudit, and is not considered further. The other four are shown in figure 6.1.

Below the deanery the units of ecclesiastical governance and administration were the parishes, formed when smaller proprietary churches acquired rights over their localities from the old minster churches. The exact means by which parishes were created remain obscure and most studies on the subject concentrate only on the process of fission, looking for links to older churches from whose *parochiae* specific parishes may have

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[10] Hamilton Thompson, *Diocesan organization*, p.15.
[11] W.P.W. Phillimore (ed.), *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles Episcopi Lincolniensis A.D. MCCIX-MCCXXXV. Volume 1*, Lincoln Record Society, 3 (Lincoln, 1912), pp.3-4; Hamilton Thompson, *Diocesan organization,*, p.16.
[12] Barlow, *English Church 1066-1154*, pp. 49-50.
[13] Hitchin may be one possible exception in southern Mercia (T. Williamson, *The Origins of Hertfordshire* (Hatfield, 2010), pp. 119-25).
[14] Above, p.84.

evolved. However, in many cases, fission alone cannot have been responsible for the formation of a parish.

The *parochiae* of old minsters had initially been defined in terms of 'belonging'. The people who owed tribute to an estate centre or who were subect to its soke received pastoral care from the minster church based there. In the Anglo-Saxon world, however, this belonging was not always defined in terms of land occupation or ownership, although in many places the two did coincide.[15] Elsewhere, particularly within the Danelaw, more complicated structures had arisen where, for example, a vill might be divided amongst a number of lords, none of whom had jurisdiction over the others, or a soke might include only part of a vill or its inhabitants.[16] This divided tenure seems to have been reflected in early ecclesiastical arrangements with different groups of tenants in one vill sometimes looking to different churches for pastoral care. If a local church was built by, or for, one such group the relationship of this church to the remaining residents of the vill had to be resolved. Although in most cases a territorially defined parish containing one or more complete vills did emerge, it is sometimes difficult to see what 'parish' meant in reality. For example, some 'parishes' contained multiple, unconnected churches, whilst others were so divided that individual yardlands owed tithes to different churches, some inside and some outside the 'parish'.[17] In order to create a unified parish in such circumstances an additional process, that of fusion, was required. This can be demonstrated in cases where different lords or their tenants combined to build a single church, or when separate estates fell into common ownership.

The parishes along the border evolved in many different ways and within varying timescales. Cases of parishes formed by straightforward estate fragmentation are, perhaps surprisingly, the hardest to find, although many of the single manor parishes that occur, particularly in Buckinghamshire, such as Turweston and Thornton, must have been formed by such a process. Many of the border vills were divided tenurially, having originated within the areas of shared woodland or pasture which lay on the margins of large estates, and in many cases the parishes which grew up around such

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[15] See, for example: Blair, 'Introduction', pp.10-13; *CASS*, pp.426-33.

[16] Hadley, 'Conquest',pp.121-5; D. Hadley, *The Northern Danelaw: Its Social Structure, c.800-1100* (London, 2000), pp. 287-9.

[17] *CASS*, pp. 498-504; *OFN*, pp. 108-13.

vills remained similarly divided into the late medieval period. For example, in 1086 Syresham was divided into three separate fees.[18] The largest was later held by the Earl of Leicester and both the fee and the church built on it belonged to the soke of Halse.[19] A second fee had descended to William Fitz Alured, and, by 1280, and probably long before, there was a chapel there described as a 'free chapel which received tithes'.[20] This implies that it was not subsidiary to the church on the Halse fee. The third fee, which included the hamlet of Westcot, became a part of the Pinkney barony and in 1304 Westcot was described as owing churchscot to (Kings) Sutton church.[21] Whilst there could be many explanations for the number of churches with interests in the parish, the most likely must be that a tenurially divided vill had resulted in separate provisions for pastoral care and these had not been amalgamated.

United parishes were often created through the co-operation of different lords with interests in a vill. Beachampton is probably an example of this, as, from an early date, the church there was held in separate moieties by the two lords of the manor and had probably been constructed jointly by them.[22] A more complicated process seems to have occurred at Hartwell, Ashton and Roade. It appears that the lords of Hartwell and Ashton jointly established a church at Roade and made each of their existing chapels subsidiary to it. This was possible because there seems to have been a lack of a clearly defined manor in Roade in the post Conquest period. The arrangement proved unsatisfactory to one of the succeeding lords of Ashton, however, and in the sixteenth century he reversed the position of his chapel in relation to the church at Roade. Ashton was raised to full parochial status and the appropriate share of the church at Roade became a chapelry of it. The position of Hartwell was unaffected.[23] Such changes demonstrate that although parish formation was largely complete by the end of the twelfth century the position did not remain static and parishes continued to evolve.[24] Along the border, for example, the once separate parish of Evershaw was absorbed into Biddlesden probably in the fifteenth century; in 1587 Wick Dive and Wick Hamon

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[18] DB i 223c, 224b, 227b.
[19] Bridges, 1, pp. 193-5; A. Hamilton Thompson, *The Abbey of St. Mary of the Meadows Leicester* (Leicester, 1949), p. 8.
[20] TNS, p. 369; *MA*, 5, p. 367. Although located within Syresham this chapel may have belonged to Biddlesden in Buckinghamshire (see above pp. 103-4).
[21] Rev H. Roundell, 'Biddlesden Abbey and its lands', *ROB*, 1 (1858), p. 281; Franklin, *Minsters*, p. 268.
[22] *VCHB* 4, p.153.
[23] *VCHN* 5, pp. 59-76, 176-97, 345-74.
[24] Blair, 'Introduction', pp.10-3.

combined to form the unified parish of Wicken; and in the seventeenth century two new parishes were created at Stony Stratford replacing the chapelries of Wolverton and Calverton that had previously served the town.[25]

The identification of minsters in the borderlands

This section considers what the ecclesiastical arrangements might have been before the introduction of rural deaneries and, in particular, attempts to identify the minsters whose *parochiae* had extended into the borderlands. None of the border churches are recorded as receiving churchscot, the surest way of identifying a minster. In seeking to identify those which may have originated as minsters, therefore, a number of less reliable indicators have to be used. These include: royal or episcopal ownership; a particularly high value in the 1291 *taxatio*; an endowment or glebe capable of supporting a team of priests (generally accepted to be at least one hide); inclusion in Domesday Book and the existence of known daughter churches.[26] Church architecture and dedications have also been considered as these can be informative. For example, three of the four border deanery churches, Buckingham, Newport and Preston, as well as other known minsters in the area, such as Sutton, share a dedication to St Peter and St Paul. (Brackley is dedicated to St Peter alone although it may have lost the St Paul, over time.) Such a dedication is known to be associated with 'rich and influential churches including [those] at royal estate centres'.[27] The analysis which follows is organised by rural deanery.

Buckingham Deanery

The little evidence there is of the early church in Buckingham points to an origin, or perhaps a rapid rise in status, in the tenth century. The church was built down the slope from the crest of the promontory on which the town sits, indicating that it was a secondary element in the landscape, although this is perhaps to be expected given Buckingham's early strategic role. The medieval church was destroyed in the eighteenth century but an engraving suggests that it had a tower dating from the early eleventh

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[25] *VCHB* 4, pp.156-7; *VCHN* 5, pp. 413-38.
[26] See, for example: Blair, 'Secular Minster', p. 106.
[27] G. Jones, *Saints in the Landscape* (Stroud, 2007), pp. 135-40.

century and characteristic of high-status Northamptonshire minsters.[28] Even Buckingham's association with the legend of St Rumbold, discussed below, often cited to support a foundation date for the church in the seventh century, may not have arisen much before the end of the tenth.[29]

A glebe of approximately 1½ hides formed the basis of the financing of the church which was held in 1066 by Bishop Wulfwig and in 1086 by his successor Remigius, Bishop of Lincoln.[30] In 1086 most of this glebe lay to the south of the Ouse suggesting that the land was allocated after the construction of the *burh* which occupied virtually all the land to the north. In 1291 it was valued at £41 and the tithes from Buckingham parish amounted to at least £26, but probably more.[31] In addition the church may have received income as a minster, or hundredal, church as early thirteenth-century charters endowing chantry chapels in the neighbouring parishes of Thornborough and Radclive, each refer to land where the tithe of the tenth acre is given to Buckingham church.[32] The origin of such dues is not known but they are similar in amount to the '*annona*' paid at a rate of an acre per hide in royal vills such as Aylesbury. It has been suggested that *annona* arose from an attempt to re-structure the liability to churchscot[33], and, if so, it may have been the basis used to finance the new hundredal churches.

All the evidence is consistent with Buckingham church being either founded as, or raised to the status of, a hundredal church as part of the re-fashioning of local government in the tenth century. In c.1090 it was appropriated as a prebend of Lincoln Cathedral and the prebend was augmented about twenty years later, by the addition of the churches at Sutton and Horton-cum-Horley in Oxfordshire. Subsequently it seems that the prebend was re-organised, probably for administrative convenience, so that Buckingham and Horton became chapelries of Sutton and this remained the position

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[28] *TEALS*, p. 150.
[29] below, pp. 128-31.
[30] DB i 143a, 144a.
[31] *NI*, p. 331. The value of the tithes at £26 was accepted by the assessors as a basis for tax in 1341. In surrounding parishes, however, the tithes had decreased substantially in value between 1291 and 1341 (K. A. Bailey, 'Buckinghamshire in 1341', *ROB*, 48 (2008), pp. 125-39).
[32] *LPC I*, pp.45-7; F.N. Davis (ed.), *Rotuli Roberti Grosseteste Episcopi Lincolniensis A.D. MCCXXXV-MCCLIII necnon Rotulus Henrici de Lexington Episcopi Lincolniensis A.D. MCCLIV-MCCLIX*, Lincoln Record Society, 11 (Lincoln, 1914), p.366.
[33] D. H. Gifford, 'The Parish in Domesday Book' (unpub. Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1952), pp. 195-208.

until 1445.[34] The whole prebend was valued at £180 (270 marks) in 1291, and Buckingham made up more than a third of this total - a very high amount.[35]

If Buckingham had only become an important church in the tenth century, as a result of a political re-organisation, it is necessary to consider whether there had been an earlier minster with interests in the area. One candidate must be Stowe whose name, from the Old English *stow*, denotes an origin as a place of assembly or a holy place. It has already been noted that Stowe seems to have been central to Stodfold hundred, an arrangement that could indicate that it had once had a role as a secular meeting place.[36] However, most of the Anglo-Saxon men who held land within Stowe and its satellite vills of Lamport, Dadford and Boycott in 1066 had connections to the church, which is rare in the Buckinghamshire Domesday folios. Stowe itself, recorded as 'waste', was held by Baldwin, son of Herlwin, who is described elsewhere as a man of Archbishop Stigand and who was steward to the Bishop of Worcester.[37] Raven, a man of Wulfwig, Bishop of Dorchester, held estates in Lamport and Dadford, whilst Boycott was in the hands of Blaecmann, a wealthy priest commended to the Godwinesons and who possibly served them as a household priest. He was also 'a man of the church of Abingdon' and many of his Oxfordshire lands were leased, or otherwise held from the abbey.[38] This pattern of tenure perhaps suggests the break up of an early ecclesiastical estate which had lost its importance by the time of Domesday, but whose religious significance had not been entirely forgotten. Further, it is noticeable how many important churches in Buckingham deanery share Stowe's dedication to St Mary, including those of the border parishes of Leckhampstead, Turweston and Beachampton, as well as Lillingstone Lovell in Oxfordshire. Although nationally this was a common dedication, its distribution was not random[39] and, for example, in the 1291 *Taxatio* the top six churches by value in Buckingham deanery, excluding Buckingham itself, were dedicated to St Mary but none of the top eight in Brackley deanery were so dedicated. This strengthens the impression that Buckingham was a late addition to the ecclesiastical landscape.

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[34] Franklin, *Minsters*, pp. 261-4; *VCHB* 3, pp.471-89.
[35] D.E. Greenway (ed.), *Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae 1066-1300*, 9 vols (London, 1977), 3, pp.99-101.
[36] above, p.83.
[37] DB i 144 d; P.A. Clarke, *The English Nobility Under Edward the Confessor* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 45, 76.
[38] DB i 152 a, 153 b, 160 b; S. Baxter, 'MS C of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and the politics of mid-eleventh century England', *EHR*, 122 (2007), p. 1226.
[39] Jones, *Saints*, pp. 80-4.

Other border churches in Buckingham deanery with some features suggestive of possible minster status are Lillingstone Lovell, discussed in the appendix, and Leckhampstead, which was the third most valuable church in the deanery, with a value of over twice the deanery average. Leckhampstead had a daughter church at Akeley and was thus an early church of some local significance.[40] Unfortunately, nothing is known of its early history and, since it lay within a large and relatively valuable manor that had formed part of the estate of Earl Leofwine Godwineson in 1066, it may have originated as a high-status estate church.

Newport Deanery

In chapter 4 it was suggested that the triple hundred of Newport, on which the deanery was based was created as part of an eleventh century re-organisation of the area. If this was the case it is likely that the church at Newport only became important at that time and there is no surviving evidence which suggests an origin as an old minster. However, it must be remembered that its location on the very edge of the Danelaw would militate against the survival of any relevant records.[41]

The church was sited within the probable circuit of the Anglo-Saxon defences but its position, set back from the centre of the town but close to the castle, perhaps suggests an origin as a private chapel.[42] The current building dates from the mid-fourteenth century but it replaced an earlier high-status church, of cruciform plan, which was given to Tickford Priory, before 1161, by the Paynells, lords of Newport and founders of the priory.[43] Immediately to the east of Newport lay the only minster recorded as such in the Buckinghamshire Domesday folios, that of St Firmin in North Crawley.[44] The common ownership by Tickford Priory of all the churches in a wide area to the south of the Ouse, including a part of that of North Crawley, tends to mask evidence of the

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[40] *MVEL*, p. 71.
[41] *VCHB* 4, pp. 418-20; *SFF*, p. 16.
[42] H. Beamish and J. Parkhouse, 'New archaeological evidence for Anglo-Saxon activity at Newport Pagnell', *ROB*, 33 (1991), pp. 145-7; *VCHB* 4, p. 414; J. Robinson, *The evolution of the townscape of medieval Newport Pagnell in Buckinghamshire*, Bradwell Abbey Field Centre for the Study of Archaeology Occasional Paper, 2 (1975), pp. 7-11.
[43] *VCHB* 4, pp.418-22; *EMA*.
[44] R. P. Hagerty, 'The Buckinghamshire saints reconsidered 1: St Firmin of North Crawley', *ROB*, 27 (1985), pp. 65-71.

relationships between them.[45] However, it is possible that North Crawley had been the mother church of the same area and that its role (and income) had been effectively taken over by Tickford. Only one of the churches held by Tickford, that of Little Crawley, was known to have been a chapel of North Crawley, but there were probably more.[46] Furthermore, it is clear that, shortly after Tickford's foundation the minster at North Crawley went into decline.[47] Nevertheless it was still valued at £20 in the *Taxatio* of 1291 only £4 less than Newport and was the fourth most valuable church in the deanery.

There are no traces of early links from either Tickford or North Crawley to the Buckinghamshire churches which lay north of the Ouse, in Bunsty hundred. It is necessary to consider, therefore, whether any of these churches may have been minsters serving this area and there are three possible candidates: Hanslope, Lavendon and Olney.

In the *Taxatio* of 1291 Hanslope, together with its chapelry of Castlethorpe, was valued at £46 13s 4d making it the most valuable church in Newport deanery and the third most valuable in Buckinghamshire (after Aylesbury and Buckingham).[48] However, Hanslope, at approximately 5800 acres, was by far the largest of the border parishes and it seems that income from tithes accounted for virtually the whole of the value of the church.[49] The current church is a very large, high status building dating from the twelfth century, but a charter of the Bishop of Lincoln makes it clear that the chapel at Castlethorpe had been the mother church of Hanslope before 1148.[50] At this time the lords of the manor, the Maudits, had built a new church over 2 kilometres away and the original church at Castlethorpe had become a private chapel subsidiary to it. It seems that the Maudits' castle was being built at the same time, and the chapel, a much less imposing building

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[45] *EMA*.

[46] *VCHB* 1, pp.360-5; *VCHB* 4, p.43.

[47] A.C. Chibnall, *Beyond Sherington* (Chichester, 1979), pp. 18-9.

[48] *TTD*; K. A. Bailey, 'The church in Anglo-Saxon Buckinghamshire c.650-c.1100', *ROB*, 43 (2003), p. 72.

[49] *VCHB* 4, pp.348; *NI*, p.335.

[50] *IHMB* II, pp. 133-7; E. Mason (ed.), *The Beauchamp Cartulary Charters 1100-1268*, The Publications of the Pipe Roll Society, 43 (London, 1980), pp.100 no 168.

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than the new church, was enclosed within its walls.[51] Furthermore, in the thirteenth century Hanslope church held land of 69 acres, considerably less than the one hide suggested as being indicative of 'superior' status.[52] The indications are, therefore, that the church's grand building and wealth derived from the size of the parish and the status of its owners rather than from any early ecclesiastical significance.

A better case can be made for Lavendon which was a pre-Conquest church with at least one chapelry, Cold Brayfield. Amongst the landholders there in 1066 was 'a man of Bishop Wulfwig' who held over 2 hides.[53] This may have represented the church's lands and, if so, it was certainly enough to have supported the group of priests characteristic of an early collegiate minster. Furthermore, manorial connections suggest that Newton Blossomville, which lay across the Ouse to the south, was also once part of the Lavendon estate, although nothing is known about the late eleventh century church there.[54] By 1291 the church of Lavendon had been appropriated by Lavendon Abbey and its probable *parochia* broken up, so it is perhaps not significant that it was valued at only £7 6s 8d in the *Taxatio*.[55]

The Olney estate was held in 1066 by Burgred, an important midland thegn, but it seems that he had acquired it from Peterborough Abbey in exchange for lands closer to the monastery.[56] This swap was not regarded favourably by Hugh Candidus who presumably considered Olney, described as a '*regalem villam*', to be worth more than the lands exchanged.[57] In 979 the Olney estate had been granted by King Aethelred to Aelfhere, ealdorman of Mercia, so Peterborough had presumably acquired it at some time between 979 and 1066.[58] However, it is included in one version of Peterborough's foundation charter and, although this is a post-Conquest forgery, it is believed to preserve some early information.[59] It is possible, therefore, that the grant to Aelfhere

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[51] D. Bonner, J. Parkhouse and N. Smith, 'Archaeological investigations of the medieval earthworks at Castlethorpe, Buckinghamshire', *ROB*, 37 (1995), pp. 79-99. The conclusions of this paper in respect of the siting of the church are affected by the acceptance of an incorrect date given in the VCH for the foundation of the 'new' Hanslope church (*VCHB* 4, pp. 361).
[52] *RH*, p. 344; Blair, 'Secular Minster', p.106.
[53] DB i 148 a.
[54] *VCHB* 4, pp.422-5.
[55] *TTD*.
[56] R. Lennard, *Rural England 1086-1135* (Oxford, 1959), p. 169 n.3.
[57] E. King, *Peterborough Abbey, 1086-1310: A Study in the Land Market* (Cambridge, 1973), p. 10.
[58] A. H. J. Baines, 'The Olney charter of 979', *ROB*, 21 (1979), pp. 154-84.
[59] S 68; R. Fleming, 'Monastic lands and England's defence in the Viking Age', *EHR*, 395 (1985), p. 255.

was of an estate that had previously belonged to Peterborough with the ownership reverting after 979. This could be significant as the abbey seems, by the beginning of the eighth century, to have lain at the centre of a group of minsters which had been colonised from it and which reached across the midlands to the Thames.[60]

There is no documentary record of a pre-Conquest church in the town, in fact none at all until 1254, but other evidence suggests that there almost certainly was one.[61] Firstly Olney, in the century before the Conquest, had been in the hands, successively, of the King, Peterborough Abbey, a leading ealdorman and a regionally important thegn and it seems unlikely that it would have remained without a church. Secondly, although the earliest fabric in the existing church dates from the twelfth century, strong local legend suggests that there was an earlier church located about one kilometre to the north of the current building, in the area now known as the 'Old Churchyard'. The discovery of Saxon burials in this area in the nineteenth century and more recently, adds some support to this theory, although it could have been this that gave rise to the idea in the first place.[62] Thirdly, archaeological excavations in Weston Underwood, a chapelry of Olney throughout the medieval period, uncovered evidence suggesting the presence of a late Saxon church and manor complex to the east of the current twelfth century church there.[63] If this is correct there can be little doubt that the mother church at Olney had a pre-Conquest origin.

Above average status is also suggested by information in the *Taxatio*. The value of the church was recorded as £33 6s 8d, the second highest in the deanery, after Hanslope, and the glebe consisted of one carucate, equivalent to one hide. Finally the church, like those of the deaneries, was dedicated to St Peter and St Paul.

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[60] S. Keynes, *The Councils of Clofesho* (Leicester, 1994), pp. 30-48; F.M. Stenton, 'Medeshamstede and its Colonies', in D. M. Stenton (ed.), *Preparatory to Anglo-Saxon England: Being the Collected Papers of Frank Merry Stenton* (Oxford, 1970), pp. 179-192; Foot, *Monastic Life*, pp. 268-76.
[61] *VCHB* 4, p.436; S. Raban (ed.), *The White Book of Peterborough:The Registers of Abbot William of Woodford, 1295-99 and Abbot Godfrey of Crowland, 1299-1321,* NRS (Northampton, 2001), p.317.
[62] *IHMB* II, p.227; M. Collard, 'Archaeological investigation of 'the old churchyard', Olney', *ROB*, 30 (1988), pp. 165-169.
[63] Buckinghamshire County Museum Archaeological Service, 'Weston Underwood sewerage scheme', MKHER (9/03/2010).

Preston Deanery

The deanery that covered the Northamptonshire hundreds of Wymersley and Cleyley took its name from a small vill previously referred to as 'Preston juxta Northampton' but which became known as Preston Deanery.[64] The name, Preston, which means 'priests' estate', implies an early connection with the church, but, this apart, it is at first sight puzzling why a now deserted and otherwise undistinguished vill with a small, late, proprietary church gave its name to a deanery.[65] However, deaneries were sometimes named by reference to the place of residence of the dean until the second half of the thirteenth century when they became fixed.[66] By this time Preston had become the seat of the locally important family descended from Walter Fitz Winemar who had inherited the Northamptonshire portion of the Hanslope barony.[67] In 1194 the name of the archdeacon of Northampton was recorded as 'Winemer' and it seems likely that local and family connections had played some part in the selection of Preston.[68] Nevertheless, the choice perhaps indicates the lack of an obvious alternative in the form of an older or higher-status church within the deanery.

It has been suggested that Wymersley had its roots in a grant of the soke of the area to the earls of Huntingdon in the eleventh century.[69] It might be expected, therefore, that Yardley (Hastings), the comital manor, would have possessed an early, high-status church. However, it is known that the church of St Andrew there was dedicated by Alexander, Bishop of Lincoln, in 1126/27 or 1130.[70] Before this date it seems to have existed only as a private chapel. For example, on the foundation of the Northamptonshire priory of St Andrew, in 1093-1100, its endowments included all the demesne tithes of Yardley *'per consensum et donum Hugonis capellani'*.[71] Grants of tithes from other vills, made at the same time, were limited to two thirds of the total, suggesting the presence of proprietary churches there. By c.1185, the monks' entitlement from Yardley had also become limited to two thirds of the tithes 'from

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[64] *PNN*, pp. 150-1.
[65] *IHMN* II, pp. 63-5; *VCHN* 4, pp.279-82.
[66] Hamilton Thompson, *Diocesan organization*, p.178.
[67] *HKF*, 1, pp. 95-9; Mason, *The Beauchamp Cartulary*, p.xxvii.
[68] Greenway, *Fasti*, pp.30-2.
[69] above, p.67.
[70] S.A.C. Lawrie (ed.), *Early Scottish Charters prior to A.D. 1153* (Glasgow, 1905), pp.41-2, 312; M.J. Franklin (ed.), *The Cartulary of Daventry Priory*, NRS, 35 (Northampton, 1988), pp.1-2, no.2 n.1.
[71] *VCHN* 2, p. 102; *MA*, 5, p.190.

assarts present and future as well as the old demesne', again pointing to a change in status from private chapel to church .[72]

At its foundation the priory of St Andrew had been endowed with all the churches of Northampton and, in 1202, the prior took action in the Roman Court against the clergy he had appointed to them. This concerned their actions in allowing the laity to build chapels, for divine offices and burials, outside their control.[73] It seems likely that Yardley had once lain within the *parochia* of one of the Northampton churches, almost certainly that of St Peter, and the building of the new church there had fallen within the prior's complaint.[74] Further evidence that Wymersley hundred may have been carved out of lands that had once belonged to Northampton is provided by the anomalous status of Hardingstone which lay within the hundred of Wymersley, but was part of the deanery of Northampton, rather than that of Preston.[75]

The church at Passenham, which lay across Watling Street in the far west of the deanery, was probably a minster church. Passenham was a royal estate in 1066 and the dedication of the church to St Guthlac, a Mercian saint, suggests a pre-Conquest origin. In 1133 the church was given to Cirencester Abbey, on its foundation, as part of the estate of Regenbald, a royal priest and possibly royal chancellor, who held minster churches throughout southern and midland England.[76] It is likely that Regenbald had acquired Passenham from Edward the Confessor and this would imply that, not only had the church been omitted from Domesday Book, but that it was held separately from the manor, an indicator of 'superior' status. Its value in 1291, £12 13s 4d, was relatively low, and, although still above the deanery average, it had been exceeded by those of newer churches like Yardley.[77] Its decline was probably due to the division of its *parochia* between new hundredal churches and its position to the west of Watling Street may also indicate that it had been included in a grouping to which it did not historically belong.[78]

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[72] *EDH,* pp. 120, 258.
[73] Bodleian Library: MS. Ch. Northants a. 4, no. 7.
[74] For St Peter's role as a mother church, see: Franklin, *Minsters*, pp. 58-60.
[75] Raban (ed.), *The White Book,* pp.338-9; Franklin, *Minsters*, pp. 57-8.
[76] S. Keynes, 'Regenbald the Chancellor (sic)', *ANS,* 10 (1988), pp. 185-222.
[77] *TTD*.
[78] Franklin suggests a similar scenario in the case of Pattishall, another minster close to Watling Street (Franklin, *Minsters*, pp. 309-12, 339).

Brackley Deanery

Much modern research has suggested that Sutton once lay at the centre of a large estate that encompassed most of the area covered by the deanery of Brackley.[79] This is based to a great extent on Franklin's influential thesis of 1982 in which he suggested that the *parochia* of the church at Sutton once included an area much bigger than the Domesday hundred of that name. His conclusion depended ultimately on the issue, at the request of the prebend of Sutton cum Buckingham in 1304, of a 'general sentence of excommunication' which included the information that inhabitants of the parishes of Radstone, Thenford, Aynho, Wappenham, Westcot, Evenley, Thorpe and Astwell had failed to pay churchscot to Sutton. This, Franklin suggests, implies that Sutton was the mother church of all the named parishes. He goes on to link the churches in these parishes with other churches and thus expands the apparent area of Sutton's influence. For example, in the case of Evenley, the only border parish in the list, he states that because the tithes of 8 virgates of land there belonged to the vicar of Brackley in the thirteenth century, this suggests that Evenley was initially dependent on Brackley. Since Evenley also owed churchscot to Sutton the implication must be that Brackley (and its other chapelries) were also within Sutton's *parochia*.[80]

This thesis is open to challenge. The excommunication document was issued at a time when the territorially defined parish, financed by tithes, had become the unit of church government and administration. However, the liability to churchscot had arisen in the past when it was the 'belonging' to an estate and its ecclesiastical community that had mattered, rather than an exact geographical location.[81] The concept of a fourteenth century parish owing churchscot is therefore somewhat anachronistic and the use of the term 'parish' in this context must be questioned. (It is interesting to note that the list includes one place, Westcot, that never became a parish.) There is particular potential for confusion in areas which had originated as woodland or pasture shared by several estates, where parishes had formed late and often remained divided. Evenley lay in such an area. In 1086 it was a divided vill with six separate Domesday entries spread across three different hundreds (Sutton, Alboldstow and Towcester), probably as a result of the

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[79] See, for example: *AON*; D. Hayter, 'King's Sutton: an early Anglo-Saxon estate?', *NPP*, 56 (2003), pp. 7-21.

[80] Franklin, *Minsters*, pp. 256-333.

[81] See, for example, Blair, 'Introduction', pp.10-11.

division of what had been shared lands.[82] It seems likely, therefore, that by this date more than one 'mother' church had interests in the vill and the right to churchscot.

By the mid-twelfth century a church had been built in Evenley, almost certainly on the biggest fee which belonged to the Wahull honour. In 1147 this church, together with its dependent chapel at Astwick, was appropriated by Huntingdon Priory and the tithes of this fee were, therefore, paid to Huntingdon.[83] The remainder of the estate belonged to the soke of Halse which was a part of the honour of Leicester and which appears in some of the records of the Abbey of St Mary of the Meadows, Leicester. A charter from c.1143 confirms the initial endowment of the abbey and this included 'the churches of the soke of Halse with the church of Syresham which is known to be in the *parochia* of Brackley'.[84] This wording is odd and perhaps implies that, although Brackley was the mother church of Halse, there was some uncertainty as to which churches belonged to it. Its only known dependent 'church' at this time, apart from Syresham, was a chapel at Halse itself, but the tithes of part of Evenley, payable to the rector of Brackley, were included in the grant. Before this the Halse churches and, presumably, the Evenley tithes were almost certainly held by the predecessor of the abbey, a collegiate church founded c.1107 within the walls of Leicester Castle. Further, it is possible that prior to 1107 they had formed part of the endowment of the cathedral of the defunct Saxon see of Leicester.[85]

It would seem, therefore, that, at least up to the twelfth century, the Halse estate in Evenley had remained separate in ecclesiastical terms from the Wahull fee, with its tenants, at least in theory, looking to Brackley for pastoral care. Consequently, it is far from certain that the 'parish' of Evenley had existed in any meaningful sense at this time and, even if it had, whether it could be said to have included the residents who worshipped in, and paid tithes to, Brackley. It is certainly unsafe to conclude, as Franklin does, that a unified parish of Evenley had come into existence by 1130 and that it was dependent on Brackley.[86]

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[82] Above, pp. 47-9.
[83] *MA*, 6.1, p. 80. The Wahull family seem to have been closely connected to the earls of Huntingdon, known donors to Huntingdon Priory (*EDH*, p. 171; W. Page and G. Proby (eds), *VCH Huntingdonshire, 1* (1926), p. 393).
[84] *MA*, 6.1, p. 464.
[85] Hamilton Thompson, *The Abbey*, pp. 1-2.
[86] Franklin, *Minsters*, p. 273.

It would not be surprising if some inhabitants of the 'parish' of Evenley had owed churchscot to Sutton as parts of it, including the hamlet of Astwick, had lain within Sutton hundred and thus were probably within its *parochia*. It seems likely, therefore, that in 1304, the prebendary of Sutton was trying to exercise ancient rights to churchscot owed by only a part of what had later become a unified parish. (In fact, the order can be read in this sense as it refers to unspecified 'inhabitants of the parish'.) It is noticeable that many of the other vills in the list were also divided or multifocal settlements. For example, Radstone consisted of Upper and Lower Radstone, whilst Aynho and Astwell both contained separate hamlets (Cotnam and Falcutt respectively). As in the case of Evenley the excommunication order looks to be an attempt to collect churchscot from what had been Sutton's share of divided parishes, possibly those where the parish church had belonged to another fee. Furthermore, the exact meaning of churchscot at this date can also be questioned and, in particular, whether the term included payments received as a new hundredal church, similar to those of Buckingham.

In further support of his theory, Franklin notes that the church at Whitfield, which was a berewick of Sutton in Domesday Book, was also a daughter chapel of Brackley.[87] In reality, however, these relationships perhaps suggest the reverse of Franklin's position. If Sutton and its berewick of Whitfield had originated as part of the Halse estate, then Brackley, as the ecclesiastical centre of the soke, would have been the mother church. The ecclesiastical link may have survived, as was often the case, after Sutton became detached from the Halse estate.

The number of parishes within which the churches at Brackley and Sutton each had rights does suggest some early links between them. (It is possible that a similar relationship also existed between Brackley and (Greens) Norton but the patronage of local religious houses hides evidence of the parochial structure within the soke of Norton.[88]) It seems likely that Brackley deanery had once been the *parochia* of a single minster which, by the late Saxon period, had been divided between a number of churches each serving a newly created hundred. This would mirror the political re-

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[87] Franklin, *Minsters*, p. 277.
[88] Franklin, *Minsters*, pp. 304-5.

organisation postulated in chapter 4. The wording of the Leicester charter could also be explained in terms of such a re-organisation. The term 'churches of the soke of Halse', which had probably originated in a much earlier, possibly pre-Conquest, endowment had clearly once encompassed more churches than Brackley and Syresham. It seems, however, that most of them had been 'lost' by 1143, possibly transferred to the new hundredal churches, which included Sutton. Furthermore, although Domesday Book notes the presence of a priest in both Brackley and Sutton, unusually, it also records that there was a church on the Halse estate, and this was probably at Brackley.

It has often been suggested that the *parochia* of Sutton, or Brackley, once extended southwards to include Buckingham. Such a contention was based in part on the connection between the three places suggested in the legend of St Rumbold and this needs now to be considered.

The legend of St Rumbold

According to the eleventh-century *Vita S Rumwoldi*, Rumbold was the son of a daughter of Penda, the seventh-century king of Mercia, and her husband, a king of Northumbria. However, unusually, neither of his parents are named. Penda's daughter, a christian, had insisted that her pagan husband convert to christianity and be baptised before their marriage. Rumbold himself was supposedly born in a tent at Sutton, where his parents had stopped on their way to visit Penda, but only lived for three days. During this time he was said to have preached a sermon and directed that on his death his body should rest for a year at the place of his death, Sutton, then be moved to Brackley for two years, and finally laid to rest in Buckingham.[89]

Rumbold belonged to a group of seventh-century Mercian royal cults centred in north Buckinghamshire, west Oxfordshire and south Northamptonshire. This area, as part of Middle Anglia, had recently been annexed by Mercia and it seems likely that many of the saints' stories have their origins in the efforts of the Mercian royal family to secure

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[89] Several authors have considered the various versions of the life of St Rumbold, for example: G. N. Clark, 'The legend of St Rumbold', *NPP*, 3 (1963), pp. 131-135; J. Clarke, 'Medieval and post modern biography: the example of the Vita S. Rumwoldi', *The St Andrews University (Osaka) Journal of Christian Studies*, 21 (1997), pp. 49-71; R. P. Hagerty, 'The Buckinghamshire saints reconsidered 3: St Rumwold (Rumbold) of Buckingham', *ROB*, 30 (1988), pp. 103-110; *TEALS*, pp. 140-87.

what must have been a strategically important area.[90] Nevertheless, many took root in popular culture and developed into foci for popular religious followings, as seems to have happened in the case of Rumbold who was locally venerated into the sixteenth century.[91] Assuming, therefore, that the story had some basis in fact, however remote, the identification of Rumbold's parents as described in the *vita* is problematical. Penda had many daughters but, as he was a pagan king, it is unlikely that any were christian. Conversely the kings of Northumbria were christian by this time. If the story did arise from the political situation in the seventh century it seems that the details had been forgotten or corrupted over time. Several commentators have noted the similarity between the account of the marriage of Rumbold's parents and Bede's account of the conversion and subsequent marriage of Penda's son Peada to the daughter of the christian Northumbrian king, Oswiu.[92] It must be a possibility that Rumbold's *vita* contains a corrupt version of this, in which the Mercian and Northumbrian royal houses have each been identified with the incorrect parent, and, if so, it would both explain some puzzling features of the story and give a historical context for the origin of an infant saint. For example, in the *vita*, Rumbold's parents are summoned by his mother's father, Penda, before the birth, so that they 'might together establish civil administration by a fair division'.[93] There are no known events to which this could allude but if, instead, the father who had summoned them was Oswiu, not Penda, then it could relate to the period when Peada ruled southern Mercia under Oswiu, following his defeat of Penda at the battle of Winwoed.[94]

The death of the first child of the marriage of Peada to the Northumbrian princess, shortly after Peada's conversion to christianity, would have weakened him politically and seriously hindered efforts to convert Middle Anglia. It would have been in the interests of the Mercian and Northumbrian royal houses, no less than the church, that a 'spin' be put upon the tragedy. This may have become even more important when Peada died shortly thereafter and Middle Anglia, probably, reverted to local rule.[95] Wulfhere,

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[90] A. Thacker, 'Kings, saints and monasteries in pre-Viking Mercia', *Midland History*, 10 (1985), pp. 1-26; D.N. Dumville, 'Essex, Middle Anglia, and the expansion of Mercia in the South-East Midlands', in S. Bassett (ed.), *The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms* (Leicester, 1989), pp. 123-140; B. Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1990), p.110.
[91] *TEALS*, pp. cxliv-cli.
[92] Hagerty, *The Buckinghamshire saints* 3, pp.104-5; *TEALS*, pp. clxii-iii; Clark, *The legend*, p.132.
[93] *TEALS*, p. 97.
[94] S. Keynes, 'Middle Angles', in *BEAE*, p. 312.
[95] Keynes, 'Middle Angles', p.312.

Peada's brother and eventual successor, brought the area back into the Mercian fold but legends like that of Rumbold may have been important in forging shared identities and keeping the loyalty of the localities.

Although the *Vita S Rumwoldi* probably dates from the third quarter of the eleventh century, it seems clear that the cult that surrounded Rumbold was in existence by the end of the tenth century. The specific identification of the three burial places were late additions to the legend, evidenced, for example, by the scribe's admission that the vills named did not exist at the time of Rumbold's life. However, their inclusion is unlikely to have been the work of the *vita* scribe since Buckingham is shown as the resting place of Saint Rumbold in a list that almost certainly pre-dates the manuscript.[96] Posthumous journeys are common in south Mercian *vitae* and were often used as devices to reinforce links, both spiritual and territorial, between central minsters and their outlying dependencies.[97] This may explain the inclusion of the three named places and the legend has often been cited to suggest early ecclesiastical links between them.[98] However, it is perhaps more likely that they were added to the story as part of the efforts of tenth-century kings to make the hundredal churches they had developed at their administrative centres into foci for local devotion. In this connection it is interesting that the importance of Sutton and Buckingham is stressed over that of Brackley. For example, Sutton was identified as Rumbold's birthplace and the stone on which he was baptised was kept at the church there, whilst Buckingham was his final resting place and thus possessed his relics. Brackley, however, was only a temporary resting place. This may suggest that the cult was already well established in Brackley or perhaps that Buckingham and Sutton were seen as more important political centres. In neither case is any subordination of Buckingham to either Brackley or Sutton implied.

Rumbold was not the only saint venerated in the borderlands where there is an unusual cluster of places with names containing the element *stow*. As well as Stowe, discussed earlier,[99] two of only nine English hundreds whose names contain the element lie in the study area: Alboldestow (Ealdbeald's place) and Bunsty (from Bunestowe or Buna's

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[96] *TEALS*, p. cxliv, 113 n.6.
[97] J. Blair, 'A saint for every minster? Local cults in Anglo-Saxon England', in A. Thacker and R. Sharpe (eds), *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West* (Oxford, 2002), p. 484.
[98] Franklin, *Minsters*, pp. 261-4, 328-9.
[99] Above, p. 118.

Place). The identity of neither Ealdbeald nor Buna is known but there is a strong possibility that both were local saints whose existence is otherwise unrecorded. The exact location of Ealdbeald's stow has not been established but it probably lay just to the north of Halse on the Ouse/Tove/Cherwell watershed.[100] Buna's stow lay in the north of Gayhurst and probably formed the religious centre for the western half of Bunsty hundred, where, interestingly, no early minsters have been detected. It is noticeable that Halse and Bunsty were both located in elevated positions within, or close to, woodlands, as indeed was Stowe. Such sites were likely to have been lightly populated and the cults celebrated there were allowed, or even encouraged, to wither as religion became focussed in the churches of the river valley estates of Sutton, Newport and Buckingham. Only Rumbold's cult was allowed to flourish, presumably because its links with Mercian kingship and a wider Middle Anglian history made it particularly suitable for giving popular appeal and legitimacy to the new royal centres.

Conclusion

The ecclesiastical structure of the border area was re-organised to coincide with the changes in secular organisation put in place as a result of the Viking invasions and little remains of the earlier system. The only exception is perhaps to be found in Brackley deanery, where the inter-relationships of minster *parochiae*, hundredal boundaries and royal estate centres suggest an origin as a single unit. Strong links between Halse, the likely centre, and Leicester probably pre-date the Conquest and may even stretch back to the Middle Anglian see based there.

Elsewhere, it is possible only to speculate on what earlier arrangements might have been. To the south of Brackley, Buckingham seems to have become an important ecclesiastical centre for the three hundreds that surrounded it only in the tenth century. Before this, Stowe may have been the religious focus for the area occupied by Stodfold hundred north of the Ouse. There is no evidence that the area fell within the *parochia* of Sutton although the legend of St Rumbold is often said to suggest this. Instead, it seems probable that the boundary between the deaneries of Buckingham and Brackley, the county boundary in this area, marked an early ecclesiastical division, although the

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[100] The meeting place for Alboldstow hundred was in Stuchbury. Both Stuchbury and Halse are now deserted villages within the parish of Greatworth (*IHMN* IV, pp. 64-5).

legend of St Rumbold suggests that this was no barrier in terms of popular culture and belief. It is possible that this boundary had once marked the division between the diocese of Leicester and Dorchester and thus between Mercia and Wessex. If so, this would both explain the importance of the church at Brackley, which lay very close to the border, and give a context for its early association with the Mercian St. Rumbold.

It was suggested in chapter 4 that the area to the north of the Ouse and the east of Watling Street had been divided between Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire in the early eleventh century and the ecclesiastical evidence tends to support this. The part allocated to Northamptonshire, Wymersley hundred, seems to have lain within the parochia of one of the Northampton churches, probably St Peter's, before it was joined with Cleyley hundred to form the deanery of Preston. It is not clear, however, whether the influence of St Peter's had once extended beyond the southern boundary of the deanery and thus took in a part, or possibly all, of what became the Buckinghamshire hundred of Bunsty. After the Conquest, Bunsty hundred formed part of Newport deanery, but there is no evidence of any prior links, across the Ouse, to the church at Newport. Indeed it seems unlikely that the latter had been an early minster and it had probably originated as a proprietary church. The churches at Lavendon and Olney almost certainly had been minsters and connections between Olney and Peterborough Abbey are interesting. Although they may not pre-date the tenth century, they could indicate that the Olney area had once fallen within the ambit of this major Middle Anglian religious centre.

The ecclesiastical arrangements in the area around Watling Street's crossing of the Ouse are the most obscure of all. Passenham must have been a minster but virtually nothing is known about the extent of its *parochia*. Wealthy estate churches, at Hanslope and Leckhampstead, were established to its east and west, possibly both once within its *parochia*, which may have been substantially reduced as a result. Furthermore, its *parochia*, and thus its financial base, had almost certainly been disrupted when Watling Street became a frontier zone in the Viking conflicts and as a result it had been severely weakened. Thereafter it seems to have been fitted into new ecclesiastical structures based on administrative convenience rather than ancient links.

7

Border towns and trading networks

The rapidly commercialising economy of England in the centuries after the Norman Conquest meant that towns, founded on trade, became increasingly important and sometimes replaced royal or aristocratic estate centres as foci for political and economic power.[1] This chapter is concerned with the impact of this change on the border region and, in particular, the extent to which trading associations affected, or were influenced by, county ties and loyalties. It begins by looking at the factors that lay behind the distribution and location of early markets in the area, before going on to consider in more detail the developing urban centres of Brackley, Olney and Stony Stratford. An attempt will be made to reconstruct the hinterland of each of the towns, based on migration patterns, to ascertain the relationship they bore, if any, to the county border.

The third section uses records of merchant activity to look at the place of the border towns in regional trading networks. It considers the trading connections between merchants based in each of these towns with their counterparts in the larger centres of Northampton, Oxford and London and how this longer distance trade was organised.

Markets

The only market in the border area recorded in Domesday Book was that at (King's) Sutton, the administrative centre for the Northamptonshire hundred of Sutton. However, Domesday Book is known to be incomplete in this regard and it seems safe to assume that other markets were also being held by this time: in Northampton which was described as a *port*, or trading centre, in 1010; at Newport (Pagnell), whose name implies that it, too, was a *port*; and within the *burh* at Buckingham.[2] It is likely that a market was also being held in the 'Old Town' next to the church in Brackley.

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[1] See, for example: R. Britnell, *Britain and Ireland 1050-1530: Economy and Society* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 138-57; R. Holt and G. Rosser, 'Introduction: the English town in the middle ages', in R. Holt and G. Rosser (eds), *The English Medieval Town: A Reader in English Urban History 1200-1540* (London, 1990), pp. 1-18; P.T.H. Unwin, 'Towns and trade 1066-1500', in R. A. Dodgshon and R. A. Butlin (eds), *An Historical Geography of England and Wales* (1978, London, 1990 edn), pp. 123-149.
[2] P. Goodfellow, 'Medieval markets in Northamptonshire', *NPP*, 7 (1987-8), pp. 306-8; M. Reed, 'Markets and fairs in medieval Buckinghamshire', *ROB*, 20 (1978), pp. 565-7.

This pattern suggests that trading in the area at this time was, to a large extent, driven by the needs of the Crown, which, increasingly, wanted both to collect dues in coin, rather than in goods, and to protect its interests in the profits and regulation of trade.[3] It seems likely, therefore, that most trade took place within the boundaries of the administrative units served by each of the above markets and that the frequency of inter-county transactions was low. The position changed in the period between the Norman Conquest and the Black Death as population growth provided a stimulus to trade and the number of markets in England rose rapidly. Increasing urban populations led to a growing demand for rural produce and this enabled country dwellers to purchase more of the goods made in the towns. Although such transactions were mainly local, longer distance trade also became more common, a trend encouraged by England's growing exports, particularly in wool. Lords, whose manors lay on the burgeoning road system, were quick to take advantage of their position and border landlords were amongst them.[4] Figure 7.1 shows the markets probably in existence in the area by the beginning of the thirteenth century and demonstrates that all but one lay where major roads crossed substantial rivers. Along the border itself, markets were almost certainly being held at crossing points of the Ouse at Stony Stratford on Watling Street, at Olney on the road joining Wellingborough to Watling Street, and at a new location in Brackley on the route linking Northampton to Oxford and the south coast ports. Bridges were probably built at all three crossing points at an early date. That at Stony Stratford is first mentioned in 1254 but it had probably replaced the ford after which the town is named long before that. The bridges at Olney and Brackley were likely to have been later, seignorial constructions, built to increase traffic through newly established market places.[5]

By about 1200 the Crown had successfully established its right to license all new markets and the records generated show that they proliferated in the succeeding century and a half. Four licences were issued to lords of border manors. A market was granted to the monks of Biddlesden in 1314 to be held within the abbey grounds but there is

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[3] R. H. Britnell, 'English markets and royal administration before 1200', *EHR*, 31 (1978), pp. 189-90.
[4] See, for example: Britnell, *Britain and Ireland*; C. Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages: The People of Britain 850-1520* (2002, London, 2003 edn), pp. 145-7; S. Reynolds, *An Introduction to the History of English Medieval Towns* (Oxford, 1977), pp. 46-65.
[5] D. Harrison, *The Bridges of Medieval England: Transport and Society 400-1800* (2004, Oxford, 2007 edn), p. 157; *IAI*, p.5 no. 8; P. Goodfellow, 'Medieval bridges in Northamptonshire', *NPP*, 7 (1985-6), p. 152; *BOB*, p. 39.

doubt as to whether it was ever held.[6] The other three licences were issued to lords in respect of important demesne manors: Paul Pever for Lavendon in 1249, the Earl of Warwick for Hanslope in 1292, and John de Hastings for Yardley Hastings in 1314.[7] It seems likely that these applications were driven by considerations of status, rather than commercial viability, and only the market at Hanslope seems to have survived into the early modern period.[8]

The foundation of an increasing number of markets, driven by factors other than the needs of royal government, meant that new trading patterns became established and disputes arose over the rights of older markets with respect to the newer ones. Markets were generally regarded as potentially harmful to neighbouring markets if the distance between them was less than 6⅔ miles (10.7 kilometres), a distance which probably indicates the radius of a typical market catchment area.[9] The processes involved in the grant of a new market included a proclamation of the grant at the county court, both to publicise the market and to allow holders of nearby markets to object if it seemed that their trade would be harmed.[10] By their very nature markets held in border vills had the potential to attract trade from more than one county and it is clear that there were procedures in place to deal with this situation. For example, in 1223 the sheriff of Northamptonshire was ordered to prohibit the market at Odell in Bedfordshire if it were detrimental to that at Olney 9.7 kilometres across the border.[11] (Presumably the sheriff of Northamptonshire was involved since for many administrative purposes Olney was regarded as part of that county).

The measure of 10.7 kilometres was not universally accepted and, for example, the burgesses of Northampton claimed that by ancient right there should be no other market within ten leagues. (The modern equivalent of this distance is not known but in 1275 the burgesses complained that seven markets were being held within it, one of which was that at Olney, 15.9 kilometres away.)[12] However, the former, lesser distance was generally held to in the border area, with two major exceptions. Markets, probably

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[6] *VCHB* 4 (1927), p. 155.
[7] MAF (accessed 1/12/2006).
[8] Reed, 'Markets', p.570; *VCHB*, 4, p.379; 'Overview Appendices' in *NEUS.*
[9] Goodfellow, 'Medieval markets', pp.305-6.
[10] J. Masschaele, *Peasants, Merchants and Markets: Inland Trade in Medieval England, 1150-1350* (Basingstoke, 1997), pp. 64-7.
[11] *RL*, 1, pp. 531.
[12] Goodfellow, 'Medieval markets', p.312.

founded in the twelfth century, at Deddington, Banbury and Brackley lay within 5, 6 and 9 kilometres respectively of that at Sutton. They were each held on different days and there are no records of any complaints being raised but Sutton's market clearly suffered as a result of the competition and ceased to be held in the fourteenth century.[13]

Further to the east, by 1205, Newport's catchment area was encroached upon by markets at Olney, Stony Stratford and Fenny Stratford, respectively 7.6, 9.8 and 9.9 kilometres distant. Again, no complaints seem to have been raised by the lord of Newport and all four markets continued to be held. In this case, however, none of the markets had to rely solely on local trade, as that at Sutton had done, because all lay at river crossings on important routes from London to the north. The additional trade generated as a result must have allowed all to thrive with a smaller hinterland than that generally needed to support a successful market. There may also have been other factors relevant to their survival. For example, the minimum distance between Olney and Newport may not have been an issue as the direct route between them was often impassable particularly in winter months when the Ouse was in full flood. The medieval bridge in Olney was inadequate in these conditions and not until the eighteenth century, when a bridge of 'wearisome but necessary length' was constructed across the whole valley, could the route be guaranteed.[14]

It is also possible that the market on Watling Street, at Stony Stratford, provided an additional outlet for goods acquired from the market at Newport. The days on which the respective markets were held would have allowed such a trade, as, unusually, Stony Stratford's market was held on a Sunday. This may have been because Sunday was a busy day on Watling Street with long distance traders returning south after attending Saturday markets at bigger centres like Northampton. Newport, like Northampton and all the other hundredal centres in the area, held its market on a Saturday, so it would have been feasible for goods and victuals bought there to have been sold to travellers on Watling Street the following day. That there was trading between Newport and Stony Stratford is suggested by the description of a man pardoned of outlawry in 1424, who

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[13] 'Overview Appendices' in *NEUS.*
[14] *VCHB* 4, p.429. References to floods at Olney, and to people drowning there, occur frequently in records and litterature from all periods, for example: W. Cowper, 'Verses printed by himself on a flood at Olney, August 12, 1782', in Rev R. A. Willmott (ed.), *The Poetical Works of William Cowper* (London, 1860), p. 454; E. Hockliffe (ed.), *The Diary of the Rev. Ralph Josselin, 1616-1683* (London, 1908), p.8; *IAI*, pp. 5, 51.

was known alternatively as 'Simon Trikelow, mercer of Newport Pagnell' or 'Simon Trykloue, chapman of Stony Stratford'.[15]

Towns

Identification

Towns are difficult to define in precise terms and it is often impossible to draw a clear distinction between a large market village and a small country town. Nevertheless, some characteristics distinguish a vill with urban characteristics from a purely rural settlement. Towns tended to have larger populations than villages and a higher proportion of their residents made a living from crafts, trades and other non-agricultural activities. This resulted in a different appearance - buildings were more closely spaced and often arranged in rows around the market place, reflecting the importance of trade in the life of the town. Many buildings were subject to burgage tenure, meaning that they were held in return for money rents rather than agricultural service, and their occupants may have had some involvement in governing the town, perhaps through membership of a religious or trade guild. In addition towns often functioned as religious and administrative centres for the surrounding countryside.[16]

All four of the market vills along the border were included in the extensive urban surveys carried out in Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire, in which the above factors were considered.[17] It was concluded that one of them – Hanslope – was best characterised as a large market village, rather than a town, and it has not been investigated further here. The other three - Brackley, Stony Stratford and Olney – are considered separately below, as the records that allow urban characteristics to be studied differ from place to place. In each case some background to the origin and subsequent history of the town is given and the surnames of occupants are analysed in an attempt to establish both the occupational structure in force and the extent of the hinterland.

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[15] H. Kleineke, 'Borough Market Privileges (1421-1430)'
<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/source.aspx?pubid=345> (09/07/2010).
[16] See, for example: C. Dyer, 'Small towns 1270-1540', in *CUH I*, pp. 505-6; C. Dyer, 'Small places with large consequences: the importance of small towns in England, 1000-1540', *Historical Research*, 75 (2002), pp. 1-2; Holt and Rosser, *Introduction*, pp.1-4.
[17] *BHT, NEUS*.

Brackley

The Saxon settlement of Brackley was concentrated around the church in the area known as the 'Old Town' but the focus seems to have changed with the development of the Oxford to Northampton road which passed just to the west. In the late eleventh or twelfth centuries a castle was built where this road crossed the Ouse and the new town was laid out along the road between the castle and the Old Town. The southern end of the road widened to form the market place. Both the castle and new town were almost certainly built by the Earls of Leicester, the then lords of Halse, the estate centre to which Brackley belonged.[18]

The earliest reference to the market occurs in 1218 when the day on which it was held changed from Sunday to Wednesday.[19] The tolls from the market remained in the hands of the lord of Halse who in 1314 was entitled to '12s from standings at Brackele and 80s from a fair and market at Brackele'.[20] Property was held by burgage tenure by 1210 and in 1260 the lord granted liberties to the burgesses which effectively made Brackley a self-governing borough. There seems to have been twenty-eight burgesses, most of whom were merchants, and, although there is no evidence that they ever formed a guild to govern and protect trade, it has been suggested that they acted as such 'in all but name'.[21]

An idea of the occupational structure of the borough can be obtained from an analysis of the names of the 141 people who paid the 1301 lay subsidy.[22] This indicates that the inhabitants engaged in at least twenty-six different occupations, a number typical of a small town.[23] The list included carpenters, chapmen, ironsmiths, wheelwrights and taverners as well as a spicer, a goldsmith, a tunic-maker, a dyer and a wool-dealer. Brackley's involvement in the wool trade has been well documented and, although early records show the presence of weavers and fullers, it seems that most of the trade was in

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[18] 'Brackley', *NEUS*, pp. 14-16.
[19] MAF.
[20] *CIPM*, 5, p. 255.
[21] 'Brackley', *NEUS*, pp. 47-8, 53; *BOB,* p. 79.
[22] TNTA.
[23] Dyer, *Small towns*, p.513.

raw wool, often purchased from local religious houses such as Biddlesden and Luffield, rather than in cloth.[24]

The same names, supplemented by a list of burgesses compiled in 1279,[25] give an indication of the area from which Brackley drew migrants, mapped in figure 7.2. (Longer-distance migrants from Luton, Dunstable, Oxford, Holderness, Woodstock and Waddesdon are not included, but most were clearly connected with the wool trade.) As can be seen, most migrants came from within about 12 kilometres of the town and from the north, south and west. It is noticeable, however, that no-one came from Buckinghamshire to the east. This is not apparently due to geographical factors as several migrants bear the name 'de Boycot', suggesting that they came from the hamlet bearing that name which formed a detached area of Oxfordshire within North Buckinghamshire. It seems that Buckingham, rather than Brackley, was the favoured destination for migrants from north-west Buckinghamshire, possibly because of its position as county town and administrative centre.

In the subsidies of both 1301 and 1334 Brackley had the second highest assessment in the county, after Northampton, although this may have been due to the presence of a few very wealthy merchants rather than a large economically active population. However, the town had already entered a period of steep economic decline which archaeological evidence suggests may have begun as early as c.1300. This early decline may have been connected to the destruction of the castle but other factors soon began to add to Brackley's problems. By the mid fourteenth century the wool trade was contracting and the town was increasingly forced to rely on its role as a local marketing centre at the very time when a large part of the region it served was suffering the effects of crop failure and the Black Death. In the town buildings were deserted and unenclosed land lay waste.[26] For example, in 1361 22 acres of land held there by a merchant were said to be worth only 4d an acre a year 'because the land lies untilled and is in small strips in different places'.[27] Shrunken or deserted medieval villages at Astwell, Astwick, Falcutt and Stuchbury, all within 7 kilometres of Brackley testify to problems in the

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[24] *BOB*, pp.67-82; 'Brackley', in C. Dyer, P. Clark, and A. Grant, *Urban Hierarchy and Functions in the East Midlands in the Late Middle Ages, 1300-1550* <http://www.esds.ac.uk/findingData/snDescription.asp?sn=3822>.
[25] 'Brackley', *NEUS*, pp. 48-9.
[26] 'Brackley', *NEUS*, pp. 17, 45-6, 51-2, 60; *BOB*, pp. 72-4.
[27] TNA: PRO, C 131/13/10.

surrounding countryside.[28] Furthermore, trade from travellers on the Oxford to Northampton road would have fallen significantly as both places were themselves suffering severe decline.[29] By the time of the 1524 lay subsidy Brackley had fallen from being the highest tax-paying town on the border to the lowest.[30]

Olney

The plan of Olney shows burgage plots arranged around the market place and along the road to Wellingborough, to the north of what had been the earlier centre of the vill. Archaeological evidence suggests that these plots were laid out in the twelfth century when the manor was in the hands of the Crown or, possibly, the Earl of Chester who acquired it some time between 1195 and 1205.[31] The Monday market was held at farm and very little is known about its income or profitability before the fifteenth century. In 1410/11 Walter Fitz Richard, the then farmer, rendered account for the tolls of the market totalling £8 11s 4d. In addition 26s 8d was received in rents from stalls or shops (*selde*) and 78s 4d from the profits of the portmotes. Amongst the outgoings was 60s 8d spent on building nine bays of the shambles.[32]

A borough is first mentioned in 1237 and later records imply that there were about fifty burgage plots, most of which were divided into two, with the tenant of each part paying 8d or 9d. Agricultural service was due in respect of each burgage plot, consisting of three days reaping in Autumn, each day with one man.[33] By 1425/26, however, this seems to have been commuted to a payment of 12d per annum. It is possible that the burgesses were the farmers of the market but virtually nothing is known about their activities and the part they may have played in governing the town.[34]

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[28] *IHMN* IV, pp. 49, 64, 80.

[29] G. Foard, 'Medieval Northamptonshire', in M. Tingle (ed.), *The Archaeology of Northamptonshire,* (Northampton, 2004), p. 126; A. Crossley and C.R. Elrington (eds), *VCH Oxfordshire, 4* (1979), pp. 3-73.

[30] J. Sheail (ed.), *The Regional Distribution of Wealth in England as Indicated in the 1524/5 Lay Subsidy Returns*, List and Index Society Special Series, 29 (Richmond, 1998), pp. 27, 241.

[31] A. T. Thorne and C. Walker, 'Excavations at the former Cowper Tannery, Olney' (unpub. report, Milton Keynes HER, 2003), p. 87; above, p. 90.

[32] TNA: PRO, DL 29/637/10344. The figure for market tolls has been adjusted to include the fourth part paid to Lord de Grey.

[33] See: TNA: PRO, C 133/106/2, DL 29/637/10344-5; *CIPM*, vii, p. 272 no. 381.

[34] *VCHB* 4, pp.433.

A document of 1284, concerning the partition of the manor, lists the names of 174 Olney residents.[35] This indicates that at least twenty-five different occupations were being followed in the town. As well as the usual bakers, baxters and farriers there was a goldsmith, a shearer, a sievemaker and a winegrower/seller. Fullers and dyers appear in the 1412/13 portmote rolls, the earliest to survive, suggesting that there was a local cloth industry in existence by that date.[36] The names from 1284 do not evidence any other specialised industry but later records reveal the presence of barkers, tanners and skinners, implying that leather working was an important trade and, in 1389, William atte Shoppe was fined half a mark at the Eyre for incompetent tanning.[37] Archaeological evidence adds iron-working, copper working, malting and, possibly, cloth finishing to the list of commercial activities undertaken in the town before the fourteenth century.[38]

The extent of Olney's hinterland would best be indicated by the origin of the suitors at the town's portmotes. Unfortunately, however, few records have survived and those that do rarely note the origin of the people appearing, although men from both Northampton and London were recorded as pursuing debts from Olney tradesmen in 1412.[39] In the absence of such data the town's hinterland has been mapped based on the migration patterns indicated by the names in the 1284 partition of the manor (figure 7.3). As can be seen, migrants came from both sides of the county border but all originated from north of the Ouse. (Names from the 1332 lay subsidy in Newport suggest that its hinterlands were confined to the area south of the Ouse.)[40] Most migrants came from the area to the west of Olney but only one, described as 'de Whittlewood' seems to have crossed Watling Street.

Stony Stratford

Stony Stratford grew up just to the south of the point where Watling Street crosses the Great Ouse and enters Northamptonshire. Here, Watling Street marked the boundary between the manors of Calverton, to the west, and Wolverton, to the east, and the roadside settlements belonging to each, which later merged to form the town, are

[35] *CCR 1279-1288*, pp. 289-94.
[36] TNA: PRO, DL 30/1/7 (incorrectly dated in catalogue).
[37] *IAI*, pp.167-8, 177; TNA: PRO, DL 43/1/9.
[38] Thorne and Walker, *Excavations*, pp. 87-8.
[39] TNA: PRO, DL 30/1/7.
[40] *ETR*, pp. 94-5.

recorded in the twelfth century.[41] On the Calverton side, the existence of a trading community is evidenced by the market charter granted in 1194 and confirmed in 1199 and 1200, and it is possible that rents which were given by the lord, Hugh de Bolbec, to the Knights Templars c.1142-64 related to this separate settlement. On the Wolverton side of the road, plots of land, suggestive of planned development, existed in the 1180s when the name 'Stratford' was first recorded. Although it seems likely that there was a market on the Wolverton side by this time, there is no known record of it and only the market granted to the lord of Calverton continued to be held in subsequent centuries. A separate manor on the Calverton side, known as Stony Stratford West, was recorded in 1257 but the first reference to Stony Stratford East, on the Wolverton side, does not occur until the sixteenth century.[42] Immediately to the north of the river lay the Northamptonshire vill of Old Stratford, but little is known about its development and how it related to that of its neighbour.[43]

It is clear that, by the mid-fourteenth century, Stony Stratford was regarded as an entity distinct from the manors to which its separate parts belonged. For example, a pontage grant of 1349 was addressed to 'the bailiff and good men of Stony Stratford' and in 1386 John FitzRichard, the long-term farmer of Olney, was described as the steward of 'the town of Stony Stratford'.[44] Furthermore, the guild of St Mary and St Thomas the Martyr, founded in 1476, funded the priests who officiated in chapels on both sides of Watling Street.[45] It is not known how the town was governed as no borough records survive and burgesses are not referred to until 1420. Research in other areas has shown that informal trade was attracted to roadside towns where seignorial authority was often weak, and, as a result, such places tended to expand at the expense of more highly regulated towns nearby.[46] This certainly seems to have happened in Stony Stratford which grew rapidly between the subsidies of 1334 and 1524, overtaking both Olney and Brackley in terms of tax paid.

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[41] *LPC II*, pp. lxx-lxxi.
[42] R. H. Britnell, 'The origins of Stony Stratford', *ROB*, 20 (1977), pp. 451-453; *VCHB*, 4, pp. 476-482.
[43] *VCHN* 5, pp.198-207.
[44] *VCHB* 4, p.478; *IAI*, pp. 150-1, 172 no.357; For John FitzRichard as the farmer of Olney, see: *VCHB* 4, pp. 211, 453; TNA: PRO, E 40/849, m.3.
[45] *VCHB* 4, p. 479.
[46] See, for example: M. Bailey, 'A tale of two towns: Buntingford and Standon in the later middle ages', *Journal of Medieval History*, 19 (1993), pp. 351-357.

Unfortunately no early population lists exist for Stony Stratford and so, in order to look at the occupational structure of the town, names occurring there before c.1320 have been collected from two sources: the deeds for the town preserved in the Bodleian Library[47] and two entries in the Calendars of Patent Rolls, from 1310 and 1319 which name the participants in incidents where houses of prominent residents were broken into and goods 'carried away'.[48] Twenty-two different occupations are indicated by these names, which included a barker, a skinner, a sawyer, a shearman and a mercer. Most industry, however, was probably directed at supplying the needs of the travellers passing along Watling Street and many of the tradesmen recorded, such as a cook, a palfreyman, a barber, an ironmonger and even a brothel-keeper, were probably involved in this. The earliest known inn in the town, Grilkes Inn, was recorded in 1317.[49] Victualling was particularly important when parliaments were being held in Northampton. For example, in 1380, 'the bailiffs, true men and victuallers of Woburn, Stony Stratford and Newport Pagnell' were ordered 'to cause all sorts of victuals which will be needed for the coming of the king's lieges who will shortly be on their way to parliament in Northampton to be bought and purveyed and carried to the said towns'. The bailiffs were further instructed to 'put reasonable prices on all the goods to prevent any shortage or excessive dearness of victuals in these towns', suggesting the scale of the provisioning required and the effect it could have on the towns.[50]

The records described above have also been used to map the origin of people who held property in, or had connections to, Stony Stratford (figure 7.3). The majority of such people came from within 10 kilometres of the town and from both sides of Watling Street and the county border. However, the town does not seem to have drawn people from anywhere in north-east Buckinghamshire north of the Ouse, where Olney seems to have been more attractive. (The exception is one Stony Stratford resident bearing the name 'de Olney', probably a member of the family described below.)[51] In addition to the origins shown in figure 7.3 longer distance connections to Felsted (Essex), Hastings, Hereford, Luton, Raunds and Wallingford are indicated. Since all were prosperous

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[47] Taken from: Sir F. Markham, 'Notes and extracts relating to Wolverton and Stony Stratford from the Radcliffe MSS in the Bodleian Library and other records, 12C-16C' (unpub. book, CBS, PAR S, 1970).
[48] *CPR 1307-1313*, pp. 308-9; *CPR 1317-1321*, p. 467.
[49] F.E. Hyde and Sir F. Markham, *A History of Stony Stratford and the Immediate Vicinity* (Wolverton, 1948), p. 192.
[50] Kleineke, *Borough Market Privileges (1421-30)*.
[51] Below, pp. 150-2.

towns in their own right, it seems likely that it was trading opportunities that had brought their citizens to Stony Stratford.

Regional Trade

Identification of trading nodes

All towns were centres where local people could trade with their neighbours but some also developed roles as intermediate centres, or nodes, in larger trading networks. Such nodes can be characterised as places to which merchants would go in order to access the produce of the local region for use in manufacture or for onward sale in a bigger, regional centre. There is little dispute over the towns that, by c.1300, could be regarded as regional centres of trade and three of them lay within easy reach of the border: London, which sat at the apex of the network, Northampton and Oxford.[52] Below this level, however, there is disagreement over the timing of when, and the extent to which, smaller towns had evolved to become trading nodes in the network. In his study of 1997 Masschaele used the records of the *Inquisitiones Nonarum* of 1341 to identify places where merchants held stock and which, he therefore suggested, could be regarded as trading nodes. His study, however, produced unexpected results for the border area. For example, in Buckinghamshire, where the returns are relatively complete, none of the market vills shown in figure 7.1 was taxed as a town, nor did any admit to the presence of merchants. Masschaele regards this as an indication that whilst the markets there may have been trading successfully, they were operating in a purely local context. In fact, the only place in North Buckinghamshire and South Northamptonshire that reported the presence of merchants in the returns was Alderton, a small vill, with a castle but without a market, that lay between Grafton Regis and Watling Street. Here there were six merchants trading in wool, wine and other goods.[53]

The presence of a cluster of merchants in such an otherwise insignificant place is at first sight puzzling, but in 1306 the manors of Alderton and its neighbour Stoke Bruerne were purchased by William de Combemartin, 'the greatest city merchant in the early

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[52] See, for example: Masschaele, *Peasants,* pp. 73-83; C.M. Barron, 'London 1300-1540', in *CUH I,* pp. 395-440; B.M.S. Campbell, J.A. Galloway, D. Keene and M. Murphy, *A Medieval Capital and its Grain Supply: Agrarian Production and Distribution in the London Region c.1300* (London, 1993), pp. 1-12.
[53] Masschaele, *Peasants,* pp. 83-105; *NI*, p.34; *VCHN, 5*, pp. 39-58;'Overview Appendices', *NEUS.*

fourteenth century'. William exported large quantities of wool from London, Hull, Boston and Southampton and Alderton, near to the centre of the country and with access to Watling Street, would have been a convenient place for him to stay and for the collection and storage of wool.[54] He seems to have gathered around him a group of merchants, some of whom perhaps acted as his agents in the area, whilst others may have been his tenants hoping to profit from him or his connections. The trading links seem to have persisted beyond William's death in 1318 as, in 1338, Richard le Tresschere, merchant, of Alderton owed £20 to Henry Combemartin, merchant, of London.[55] The records of the *Inquisitiones Nonarum*, therefore, appear to have correctly identified a particular sort of trading centre, which may have been fairly common along Watling Street because similar clusters of merchants can be seen in Watford, and perhaps Pattishall.[56] However, it is not clear that the absence of trading stock elsewhere in the returns can be taken to imply the absence of merchants. At least one merchant was known to be operating in Stony Stratford throughout the 1330s and 1340s and it must be suspected that the same was true at Buckingham, Newport and Olney.[57] There may be many reasons for the apparent omissions such as tax evasion, or a misunderstanding of the requirements but in order to look for evidence of mercantile activity in the border towns it is accordingly necessary to turn to other records.

The records chosen to form the basis of the review are the certificates of debt, registered in accordance with the statutes of *Acton Burnell* (1283) and *Merchants* (1285), which have recently been calendared. These statutes established a process whereby debtors could appear before the mayors of certain towns (registries) to acknowledge their debts. The acknowledgments, or recognisances, were recorded by a clerk and a bond was drawn up and sealed. The bond was kept by the creditor who, in the event of default on the debt, could present it at the relevant registry where a certificate would be raised. This certificate was sent to the Chancery and this set in motion a process of debt recovery. Although very few recognisances have survived, the certificates sent to the Chancery have been preserved.[58]

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[54] *VCHN, 5*, pp. 374-413; *EWT*, p. 132.
[55] TNA: PRO, C 241/110/19.
[56] See, for example: TNA: PRO, C 241/17/40; C 241/92/65; C 241/117/111, 136, 309; C 241/140/151.
[57] See, for example: TNA: PRO, C 241/106/63, 127; C 241/115/118.
[58] C. McNall, 'The business of statutory debt registries, 1283-1307', in P. R. Schofield and N. J. Mayhew (eds), *Credit and Debt in Medieval England c.1180-c.1350* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 68-9; P. Nightingale, 'Monetary contraction and mercantile credit in later medieval England', *EcHR*, 43 (1990), pp. 565-6.

There are some advantages to using these certificates: their content is uniform, some exist for all the border towns and, above all, they are easily accessible. However, there are also disadvantages. The system, although designed for mercantile credit, was also used to secure other kinds of debt and, furthermore, there are questions as to how representative the 'bad' debts are of the entirety of transactions registered under the system. Work done on records from Coventry, London and elsewhere, however, suggests that the certificates do form a usable sample of the whole system. Nevertheless it must be recognised that this sample represents a small fraction, about 20%, of the total transactions that were registered and an even smaller sample of the entirety of credit transactions that took place.[59] Most debts were not registered under the system and defaulters were pursued by other means both legal and illegal.[60]

It is impossible to estimate how many creditors pursued debts by unofficial means but many cases involving the illegal seizure of goods, such as those in Stony Stratford referred to above, probably arose from unpaid debts.[61] The legal means included actions brought at the local manorial or borough courts, although from 1295 such actions were limited to debts below 40s.[62] There are signs that these courts were popular and debts may have been deliberately kept below the maximum - for example, in 1412 William Hoton was pursuing William Deventon in Olney's portmote for repayment of a debt of 39s 11¾d.[63] For larger amounts creditors could bring actions, under the common law, in the central or provincial royal courts, such as the county courts or the Court of Common Pleas.[64] Border merchants were involved in debt litigation in all of them - for example, in 1327/28 John Brende, merchant, of Stony Stratford was summoned to appear before the county court of Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire to respond to a plea of debt of

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[59] See, for example: Nightingale, *Monetary contraction*, p. 566; P. Nightingale, 'Norwich, London, and the regional integration of Norfolk's economy in the first half of the fourteenth century', in J.A. Galloway (ed.), *Trade, Urban Hinterlands and Market Integration c.1300-1600* (London, 2000), p. 84; P. Nightingale, 'The English parochial clergy as investors and creditors in the first half of the fourteenth century', in Schofield and Mayhew (eds), *Credit and Debt,* pp. 90-1.

[60] For a discussion of the types of trade credit in use and the records generated, see: M. Postan, 'Credit in medieval trade', *EcHR*, 1 (1928), pp. 234-261.

[61] Above, p. 143. The victim of one of these assaults, Henry Howeles, was a merchant (TNA: PRO, C 241/83/80), as were several of his attackers.

[62] P. Brand, 'Aspects of the law of debt, 1189-1307', in Schofield and Mayhew (eds), *Credit and Debt,* pp. 22-3.

[63] TNA: PRO, DL 30/1/7.

[64] P.R. Schofield, 'Introduction', in Schofield and Mayhew (eds), *Credit and Debt,* p. 4.

£40.[65] However, the records of such courts either do not survive in quantity, or are in a form which would make detailed analysis difficult and time-consuming.

Finally, it has to be recognised that not all transactions involved credit and that most trade, of all kinds, was probably conducted away from official market places, at the farm door or in the local inns, and left no trace.[66]

Regional Centres: London, Northampton and Oxford.

Certificates of debt can be used to indicate the towns which border traders regarded as being their regional centres. This can be done by examining the places where the debts were registered.[67]

London was the registry used by most border traders until others came into being at Oxford in c.1307 and Northampton in c.1320.[68] Figure 7.4 shows that from this date both Oxford and Northampton issued a similar number of certificates and, therefore, assuming a similar level of default, probably handled similar volumes of business. Although a full analysis of the business of these registries is beyond the scope of this study, it would be useful to know from which areas they drew their business. The transactions from one of the busiest years (1343) have therefore been examined and the results are shown in table 7.1.

Unsurprisingly, the majority of people using the registries at Northampton and Oxford came from Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire respectively but different patterns of use are visible. In respect of debts registered at Northampton, most creditors came from the town itself whilst most debtors came from elsewhere in the county. This suggests that a significant amount of the business related to goods being sold from the town to customers within its hinterland. The role of Oxford does not seem to have been as significant in Oxfordshire where most creditors as well as debtors came from elsewhere

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[65] G.H. Fowler, 'Rotulus Vicecomitis Bed' et Buk' de Brevibus et Returnis annis regni Regis Edwardi tercii septimo et octavo – full transcription' (BLARS, X 364/36/1), p. 68.
[66] See, for example: C. Dyer, 'The hidden trade of the middle ages: evidence from the West Midlands', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 18 (1992), pp. 141-157.
[67] All data in the subsequent analyses derive from TNA:PRO catalogue for class C 241.
[68] McNall, *The business*, p.80. Northampton is omitted from the list but see, for example: TNA: PRO, C 241/87/1.

in the county. The number of Berkshire residents appearing in the list suggests that Oxford was also acting as the registry for the upper Thames Valley. The other counties represented, whilst statistically insignificant, suggest a south-western bias to Oxford transactions and a northern and eastern bias to those of Northampton.

Traders from all the Northamptonshire border towns and from Olney in Buckinghamshire registered debts at London or Northampton, and thus travelled to both places to do business. Even those from Brackley, which is equidistant from Northampton and Oxford, tended to use Northampton rather than Oxford. Traders from Stony Stratford, the only border town south of the Ouse, were as likely to choose Oxford as Northampton. Away from the border, however, Buckingham men clearly preferred Oxford to Northampton, even though both places were easily accessible.[69] The different preferences of Brackley and Buckingham traders suggest that the western part of the county border may well have marked a boundary between trading regions.

Border towns as trading nodes

Certificates of debt, supplemented by information from other sources, can be used to examine patterns of trade in the border towns in order to establish to what extent they formed trading nodes in a wider network.

Stony Stratford

Twenty-five certificates, mostly dating from the fourteenth century, give some idea of general trading patterns in Stony Stratford and reveal a very active trading community based there. Most of the sixteen merchants owed money by Stony Stratford traders were located in London (seven) and Stony Stratford itself (five). Of the remainder, three came from Oxford and one from Yorkshire. In contrast, only one of the nine people owing money to Stony Stratford traders came from London, the majority came from close by in Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire. The amounts owed to the Stony Stratford men were generally much smaller than the amounts owed by them, and this suggests that goods generally came into the town in bulk from the capital and

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[69] Transactions involving the Gyffard family of Twyford have been excluded from the analysis of Buckingham debts. The family seem to have been involved in money lending, rather than trade, and acquired debts from an Oxford Jew (J.M. Rigg (ed.), *Calendar of the Plea Rolls of the Exchequer of the Jews preserved in the Public Record Office*, 2 vols (London, 1905-10), 2, pp. 26, 297-8).

were then distributed to the surrounding countryside. The nature of these goods seem to have varied and, for example, the creditors included a brasier, a blader and a pepperer. However, many of the merchants dealt in wool and Philip de Brende of Stony Stratford was amongst the 'greater wool merchants of their counties' summoned, in 1322, to advise the King and his council 'on the question of the staple'.[70]

Stony Stratford merchants frequently acted in partnership with others - for example, in a series of transactions dating from 1307, Donatus of Stony Stratford, together with John le Brade of Buckingham, bought Cotswold wool in Worcestershire which was then sold on to two other merchants.[71] Some of the merchants in partnership with Stony Stratford men came from London, such as the London dyer who in 1341, together with Thomas, son of John le Forester, of Stony Stratford owed £21 to a merchant from Sienna operating in London. The other partners came from Stony Stratford itself or, like John le Brade of Buckingham, from other Buckinghamshire towns.

There seem to have been particularly strong links between traders from Stony Stratford and Buckingham that extended beyond the buying of wool. Between 1382 and 1389 tanners from Buckingham, Stony Stratford and Towcester, almost certainly in collusion, were profiteering on hides bought at Buckingham and Stony Stratford. After tanning these were sold on, at excessive prices, to cobblers and others coming to the markets. In 1389 James Coupere of Stony Stratford, acting in common with two salters from Buckingham and one from Stowe, was prosecuted as a 'habitual forestaller of all the salt-carriers coming into the county'. The salters from Buckingham and Stowe were also accused of regrating salt coming into Stony Stratford market 'and set out for sale there'. In 1387, James Coupere, presumably the same man, was maimed in an attack at Stony Stratford organised by a Towcester weaver who had gathered together eighty men 'from the county of Northamptonshire armed and arrayed in warlike fashion' for the purpose. [72]

There is virtually no evidence of trading connections to the east of Watling Street with Newport or Olney, which accords with the pattern of migration mapped in figure 7.3.

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[70] J. C. Davies, 'An assembly of wool merchants in 1322', *EHR*, 31 (1916), pp. 596-606.
[71] TNA:PRO, C 241/55/127, 199.
[72] *IAI*, pp. l-li, 121-2, 157, 166-7.

Olney

There are no surviving certificates dating from before 1386 for Olney. This might indicate a lack of trade but could be due to other factors such as the use of different methods of debt collection. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to establish the role of Olney in regional trade from other sources due to the number of people bearing the name 'de Olney' who had become successful merchants by the fourteenth century. The earliest bearers of the name found are Gilbert de 'Ouney' and his son Simon who held land in Olney and Lavendon in 1207.[73] This Simon de Olney was the steward of the Earl of Chester and was almost certainly an ancestor of the William de Olney who is recorded as holding lands on the outskirts of Coventry in 1250.[74] Members of the family became successful merchants in Olney and Coventry but, by the end of the fourteenth century, they had migrated to London and had begun to divest themselves of many of their Buckinghamshire holdings. For example, in 1365 John de Olney, merchant, exchanged lands and tenements in Hanslope for a 'a bullary of ten pans of salt water' in Droitwich and William de Olney, a citizen and fishmonger of London, sold pasture in Olney and, in 1374, his manor of Hardmead.[75]

John le Barker, a wool merchant of Olney, whose name suggests he was a recent entrant to the trade, first appears in the records in 1339 and was involved in litigation over trade debts regularly thereafter. By 1362 he had acquired the manor of Weston Underwood, next to Olney, and afterwards changed his name to John Olney of Weston Underwood.[76] He seems to have continued in the wool trade, however, and in 1386 was owed £74 by Leicestershire wool merchants.[77] His son, John the younger, became receiver to the Earl of Warwick and was granted the estate of Birdingbury in Warwickshire in 1392.[78] He married the daughter and heir of a Warwickshire neighbour, another John Olney, who was generally described as 'of Tachbrook' and who almost certainly belonged to the 'de Olney' family described above.[79] It is impossible to say whether John le Barker had

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[73] *HKF*, 2, p. 20.

[74] These lands belonged to the Coventry manor of the Earl of Chester and had been held by Roger de Monhaut, another of his stewards, and son of one of the four co-heiresses of Olney (*CChR 1341-1417*, pp. 104-5; L.F. Salzman (ed.), *VCH Warwickshire*, 6 (1951), pp. 86-91, n. 13).

[75] Worcestershire Record Office, 705:349/12946/475229; TNA: PRO, E 40/849 m.3; A.C. Chibnall, *Beyond Sherington* (Chichester, 1979), pp. 142-3.

[76] *SFF*, pp. 135-6; *VCHB*, 4, pp.497-502.

[77] TNA: PRO, C 241/175/137.

[78] Salzman (ed.), *VCH Warwickshire*, 6, pp.37-9.

[79] C.W. Throckmorton, *A Genealogical and Historical Account of the Throckmorton Family in England and the United States* (Richmond, VA, 1930), p. 92 n. 13.

been a member of the Olney family, or had adopted the name in connection with the marriage of his son into the family, but it is clear that close links were maintained between all the people bearing the name. For example, on the death of the elder John Olney of Weston, the manor was held jointly by the younger John Olney of Weston, his mother, his maternal grandfather and John Olney of London.[80] Furthermore, in 1400, John Olney the younger of Weston was an executor of the will of John Olney the elder 'late citizen and wolman of London'.[81] It is almost impossible to distinguish the various Olneys in the records,[82] but it seems inconceivable that, since they were all successful merchants, they did not use their close family connections in the furtherance of trade. In fact the timing of the name-change of John Barker, and the marriage of his son into the family, suggests the cementing of a trade alliance entered into in response to changes then taking place in the wool market.[83] Such an alliance would have been formidable, combining as it did the advantages of contacts and influence acquired through honorial service, local land ownership, gentry politics and city trading. It is perhaps no coincidence that the Olneys became leading London exporters shipping 468 sacks of wool in 1365-6; 213 sacks in 1384-5 and 383 sacks in 1397-8.[84]

The seeming lack of large-scale wool merchants in Olney after John le Barker is probably due to the virtual monopoly operated by the family, by then based primarily in London. It is not known whether their commercial interests extended beyond wool to cloth manufacture or to the supply of other wholesale commodities, salt for example, to the town. The Olneys clearly had contact with local traders, sometimes standing surety for them at the Eyre, but there are no records of debt existing between them.[85] However, given their extensive local connections, the family is likely to have had more effective methods of debt management than those offered by the *Merchant* system. The fact that a

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[80] *VCHB*, 4, p.498. (For the identification of Sir Richard Abberbury as the father-in-law of John Olney the elder, see: Throckmorton, *A Genealogical and Historical Account*, pp. 30-1.)
[81] *CPR 1399-1401*, p. 314.
[82] See, for example: TNA: PRO, C 241/134/109 and C. Carpenter, *Locality and Polity: A Study of Warwickshire Landed Society, 1401-1499* (Cambridge, 1992), p.375 n.119.
[83] By 1360 English merchants were allowed to re-commence exports of wool after a temporary prohibition and in 1363 Calais became an overseas staple encouraging the concentration of the trade into the hands of a few wealthy merchants (*EWT*, pp. 193-224; P. Nightingale, 'Knights and merchants: trade, politics and the gentry in late medieval England', *Past and Present*, 169 (2000), pp. 50-1).
[84] *EWT*, pp. 251-3.
[85] See, for example: *IAI*, p.195.

member of the family was involved in the illegal seizure of goods from a Stony Stratford merchant in 1319 perhaps hints at what those methods might have been.[86]

Although no records of debt link Olney merchants to Stony Stratford, the above incident suggests that there were connections. The appointment of the farmer of Olney as the steward of Stony Stratford was perhaps an attempt to influence the government of a town which was important to the Olneys' trade.[87]

The only merchant not connected to the Olney family recorded as operating in Olney, John Erl, seems to have been singularly unsuccessful. In 1405-7 he owed £122 to two London mercers.[88] When he was pursued for one of these debts, the sheriff of Buckinghamshire reported that he was not to be found in the bailiwick but that his lands and tenements, consisting of a messuage with an adjacent croft and two acres of land worth in total 6s 8d, had been seized. He had no goods or chattels.[89] It seems that he might have fled across the county border into Northamptonshire, presumably with his goods and chattels, as three years later a John Erle 'of Brackley' was being pursued for debts of £45 7s 11d by another London mercer.[90]

Brackley

The eighteen certificates of debt surviving for transactions involving Brackley men show a very different picture to that applying in Stony Stratford or Olney. Only three involved Brackley traders buying from London merchants and one of those was John Erl, the recent arrival from Olney. Another involved a purchase from Tidemann Swarte described as an alien merchant of London.[91] However, this may be misleading as Tidemann had strong links to Brackley and may even have been resident there. In 1322 he was described as 'of Brackley' when he was summoned to London to advise on the staple.[92] The overwhelming number of transactions (thirteen), both debits and credits, and of high and low values, involved traders based elsewhere in Northamptonshire and in Oxfordshire. For example, in 1300 a Brackley dyer owed £4 15s to a burgess of

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[86] *CPR 1317-1321*, p. 467.
[87] Above, p. 142.
[88] TNA: PRO, C 241/197/58, C 241/198/14.
[89] TNA: PRO, C 131/55/16.
[90] TNA: PRO, C 241/201/41.
[91] TNA: PRO, C 241/27/113.
[92] Davies, *An assembly*, p. 601.

Corby, in 1377 Thomas Wyssenden of Brackley, acting in partnership with a Deddington man, owed £280 to John le Dyer of Banbury and in 1348 John le Saucer of Oxford owed 35s 8d to a Brackley merchant.[93]

In the mid-thirteenth century Brackley was part of a wool-collecting system centred on Dunstable, and its wool was sent through Buckingham and Great Brickhill and then down Watling Street to Dunstable.[94] From Dunstable the wool was transported to London for onward shipping to Flanders. Several of the wealthiest merchants in the town, who probably acted as collecting agents for the surrounding area, had names indicating that they had come from the Dunstable area - for example, Richard de Donestaple and Roger de Lutone were both burgesses in 1279.[95] Although both held property in the town it is not clear that they were permanent residents there, as, in 1288, the latter was recorded as 'staying in Brackley'.[96] When, at the beginning of the fourteenth century, the wool trade contracted and Dunstable ceased to be a centre for wool, its merchants seem to have left Brackley for good.

Although there is little evidence of any wool being supplied to London directly from Brackley, some seems to have bypassed Dunstable as at the end of the thirteenth century a London wool merchant named Michael de Brackley can be seen purchasing wool from near to Banbury.[97] With the demise of Dunstable, the focus for wool exports from the Brackley area may have changed from London to Southampton, perhaps the more convenient port for the area. At about this time merchants bearing the name 'de Brackley' vanish from the London records and in the mid-fourteenth century Walter de Brackley appears as a burgess of Southampton.[98]

Conclusion

The earliest markets in north Buckinghamshire and south west Northamptonshire were located at centres of royal administration and the border area was served by those at Buckingham, Newport, Northampton, Sutton and possibly Brackley. A rapidly

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[93] TNA: PRO, C 241/35/421, C 241/159/33, C 241/125/29.
[94] *EWT,* p. 54; *BOB*, p. 70.
[95] 'Brackley', in *NEUS*, pp. 48-9.
[96] TNA: PRO, C 241/9/183.
[97] TNA: PRO, C 241/1/111.
[98] See, for example: TNA: PRO, C 241/110/173.

commercialising economy in the twelfth century saw the focus change, however, and there was a wave of new market foundations linked to the expanding road network. Many of the busiest roads passed through the border area and markets were established at all the points where these roads crossed a major river. The density was highest in north-east Buckinghamshire, where roads linking London to the midlands and the north-west, via Watling Street, had to negotiate the confluence of the Ouse and Ousel. As a result, markets in this area, including those in the border vills of Olney and Stony Stratford, had restricted local hinterlands. Nevertheless, the traffic on the London roads seems to have been sufficient to support them and all developed into towns. To the south-west of Watling Street there were fewer important roads and those crossing the area tended to link provincial centres to each other rather than to London. Brackley, on the Oxford to Northampton road, was the only new foundation on the western county border and it too grew into a successful town.

Migration and trading patterns reflect the same boundaries that have been apparent in other contexts. To the west of Watling Street the county border did seem to mark a division. For example, migrants from south west Northamptonshire went to Brackley whilst those from north-west Buckinghamshire went to Buckingham, with seemingly very few exceptions. Similarly merchants from Brackley regarded Northampton as the regional centre whilst those from Buckingham looked to Oxford. To the east of Watling Street it was the rivers, rather than the county border, that marked divisions. Olney attracted migrants from both Northamptonshire and north-east Buckinghamshire but not from south of the Ouse. In contrast, Buckinghamshire migrants to Stony Stratford all came from south of the Ouse and west of the Ousel. Olney merchants regarded Northampton as the regional centre but those of Stony Stratford were just as likely to look to Oxford.

Trade with London, particularly in wool, was most important to the economy of the towns. It was organised differently in all three places and it was this which, to a large extent, led to divergent economic histories. Brackley's wool trade with London was indirect with much of it under the control of Dunstable merchants who invested in the town but who probably never lived there. When the trade contracted and Dunstable ceased to be a centre for wool, its merchants sold up in Brackley and left the town. Thus the ending of Brackley's large-scale involvement in the wool trade was sudden and

absolute, and, occurring as it did, at a time of general decline in the area, was largely responsible for Brackley descent from wealthiest border town in 1334 to the least wealthy in 1524, as measured by subsidy payments. In contrast, over the same period Stony Stratford grew to be by far the wealthiest border town, paying almost twice as much tax as Brackley did in 1524. Stony Stratford had grown up on the border between manors where seigniorial authority was weak and this had proved attractive to entrepreneurs. The merchants there had always traded directly with their London counterparts and often acted in partnership with them. The town seems to have developed into a collection and distribution centre for goods going into and out of the capital, a role which probably expanded as London's dominance of trade grew.

Olney, which experienced neither the rapid growth of Stony Stratford nor the dramatic decline of Brackley, appears to have been part of a trading network based within what had been the Honour of Chester. This had resulted from the influence of one local family who came to prominence in honorial service but later developed into extremely successful merchants. The centre of their commercial activities moved progressively from Olney to Coventry and then to London but they maintained close links with their relatives who had remained in Olney and who were in touch with the town's local trading community. The family's involvement may have prevented rapid economic growth in the town, by limiting opportunities for other entrepreneurs to enter the market, but it almost certainly provided a guaranteed London outlet for the area's produce.

There is little record of what effect the county border had on local traders on a day-to-day basis but it clearly had some relevance to them. One debt-laden Olney merchant seems to have fled to Northamptonshire to escape the siezure of his goods and chattels by the sheriff of Buckinghamshire and this is unlikely to have been an isolated incident. Further, although Northamptonshire traders were prepared to co-operate with their Buckinghamshire counterparts in illegally manipulating prices in the border markets, there is evidence of a resort to county identities when trade disputes escalated into violence.

8

The rural economy

The period of population growth and economic expansion, which began in the ninth century and continued into the thirteenth, was characterised by the increase in the number and size of settlements, the foundation of many towns and the bringing into cultivation of marginal land.[1] Chapter 3 has shown that the Buckinghamshire/ Northamptonshire border ran through a thinly populated landscape dominated by shared pastures and woodland and, as prime arable land became scarce, the area must have come to be regarded as a valuable resource, ripe for colonisation and agricultural development.

The decision over how any particular tract of land was utilised was influenced by many factors. Clearly at its heart lay whether the land and local climate favoured arable or pastoral farming and, within these categories, which particular crops or animals.[2] However, this could not be the sole determining factor, and, for example, it would be self-defeating to turn land over to arable agriculture where there was neither the labour force to support it, nor the demand for the crops produced. Equally, the demand from a growing population for grain, the basis of the medieval diet, meant that much land more suited to stock rearing fell under the plough. Any attempt to isolate the influence of other factors, such as those of local politics and culture, that may be expected to differ across the county border would require a detailed analysis beyond both the scope of this study and the quantity of surviving records. The chapter begins, therefore, with a general analysis of agriculture along the border before going on to look in more detail at some of the methods used in arable farming, in particular the field systems adopted by individual vills, where the influence of cultural factors may be expected to have been strongest.

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[1] For general discussions of economic growth in this period, see, for example: R. Britnell, *Britain and Ireland 1050-1530: Economy and Society* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 158-222; C. Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages. The People of Britain 850-1520* (2002, London, 2003 edn), pp. 101-227; J. Hatcher and M. Bailey, *Modelling the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2001), pp.21-65.

[2] For the influence of environmental factors on landscape development and farming practices, see: T. Williamson, *Shaping Medieval Landscapes: Settlement, Society, Environment* (Macclesfield, 2003).

The third section reviews the extent to which patterns of growth varied along the border in the period of general economic expansion, using data from Domesday Book and the 1334 lay subsidy, the latter being assessed and collected close to the probable peak in the medieval population.

Border agriculture

This section is based largely on a series of tables summarising data relating to the rural economy before the mid-fourteenth century, chosen to give as wide a geographical spread as surviving documents permit. The data comes from IPM extents (table 8.1) and, in the case of Buckinghamshire, detailed assessments from the lay subsidy of 1332 (table 8.2).[3] Unfortunately, similar assessments for Northamptonshire vills have not survived and information from only one document has been included in table 8.2. This is a list of the tenants and stock of Hackleton, now in Piddington parish, which, although dated to the early thirteenth century, is very similar in form and content to later lay subsidy assessments.[4]

Arable farming

Tables 8.1a and 8.1b demonstrate the importance of cereal growing to the economies of the demesnes of the border manors before the mid-thirteenth century. Arable land formed by far the biggest component in the total valuations of all of them except two, Yardley (Hastings) and Passenham, where it was outweighed by the value of meadowland and pasture. All the demesnes studied contained substantial areas of arable, ranging from 1000 acres at Hanslope to 180 acres at Yardley. It was generally valued at either 4d or 6d an acre, although the lower values all appear in fourteenth-century extents and may reflect generally declining values. Only the value at Halse lay outside this range. There, the arable land was said to be worth 12d an acre in 1295, a high value even when considered against those of the wider region.[5] It may be that an

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[3] Sources: IPM extents - see tables; lay subsidy assessments - *ETR*.
[4] BL Cotton Nero C III 28 fol. 184b, printed in: J.S. Somers, *A Fourth Collection of Scarce and Valuable Tracts*, 4 vols (London, 1751-2), II, pp. 331-2. For the possible provenance of the document, dating etc, see <http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/cotton/mss/ner3.htm>.
[5] B.M.S. Campbell and K. Bartley, *England on the Eve of the Black Death* (Manchester, 2006), pp. 168-9; J.A. Raftis, *Assart Data and Land Values* (Toronto, 1974), pp. 19-48. Similarly high values were recorded at Lavendon, next to Olney in 1315/16.

acre in Halse was bigger than elsewhere or that a different system of evaluation was used, but there may be other factors giving rise to the high valuation. These are unlikely to have been related to the quality of the land, given the location of Halse close to the Ouse/Nene/Cherwell watershed, even though an unusual pattern of ridge and furrow indicates that field layouts were particularly well adapted to the landscape. In the north-east of the village, for example, the ridges radiated outwards, in a fan shape, reaching up the slopes of a west-facing combe.[6] A more likely explanation is that grain was grown for sale in the increasingly important market in Halse's daughter settlement of Brackley, where it could command high net prices.[7] (Large quantities of grain were clearly sold in Brackley and the daily prices fetched there were sometimes used by Luffield Priory for valuing payments in kind.[8])

The detailed lay subsidy returns, summarised in table 8.2a, indicate that both arable and pastoral farming were important to the border tax-payers. However, it must be noted that the figures exaggerate the investment in livestock as they reflect capital values rather than annual values. (The latter would be calculated by dividing the former by the length of times the animals were kept - generally, about three years for sheep and up to five years for cattle.[9]) Furthermore, in the case of Hackleton, the subsidy was assessed in spring when grain stores would have been getting low.[10] When allowance is made for this, it is clear that arable farming was the main component of all sectors of the rural economy. Its domination seems to have been particularly pronounced in Turweston and this may again be due to its close proximity to Brackley's markets.

Table 8.2b shows that the main crops grown by both lords and peasants in the vills on the Buckinghamshire side of the border were wheat and dredge (a mixture of oats and barley). Oats seem to have been a more important crop in the west of the region and legumes in the east. The earlier document from Northamptonshire includes percentages of wheat and legumes similar to those later recorded in the vills of eastern Buckinghamshire but no oats seem to have been grown and maslin (generally a mix of

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[6] *IHMN* IV, p. 70.
[7] See: B.M.S. Campbell, *English Seigniorial Agriculture, 1250-1450* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 350-3; Campbell and Bartley, *England*, pp. 165-6.
[8] *LPC II*, no. 321E.
[9] M.M. Postan, *Essays on Medieval Agriculture and General Problems of the Medieval Economy* (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 239-40.
[10] *EDH*, p. 119 and n. 98.

wheat and rye) was sown rather than dredge. This difference may be due to the early date of the records, however, and the proportion of oats grown everywhere may have increased over time with, for example, the growing use of horses for ploughing and carriage.[11] Certainly other Northamptonshire records indicate that the mix of crops grown was similar to that grown on the Buckinghamshire side of the border. For example, early thirteenth-century assarts in both Salcey and Whittlewood forests were sown with wheat and oats whilst in Silverstone more than half of the demesne land was devoted to wheat in 1279-81, with about 40 per cent devoted to oats and the remainder to dredge. Similarly wheat and oats predominated at Potterspury in 1326-7.[12] In 1329 the tithes of Ashton and Roade included barley, oats and dredge.[13] Elsewhere, barley is only recorded in any quantity on the demesnes at Beachampton, Thornton and Potterspury and thus may have been grown primarily in the central border area close to Watling Street. (This may have been due to demand from the many brewers involved in the victualling of travellers on the road.)

The arable acreage was extended by assarting all along the border in the thirteenth and early-fourteenth centuries. A study of the records of the regarders of the royal forests suggest that there was more assarting in Salcey Forest on the Buckinghamshire side of the border than on the Northamptonshire side.[14] However, this fails to take into account the privileges granted to the lord and free tenants of the Huntingdon honour to 'manage their woods and fields quit of waste of forest, assart, ward and regard'.[15] This meant that, although most of the Huntingdon manors were involved in woodland clearance, they rarely appeared in the forest regards.

Pastoral farming

Although cereal-growing dominated the border economy the value of pastoral farming should not be underestimated. The figures in table 8.1 tend to understate the value of pasture because no account was taken in the extents of communal pastures either within

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[11] See, for example: J. Langdon, 'The economics of horses and oxen in medieval England', *Agricultural History Review*, 30 (1982), pp. 31-40; J.N. Pretty, 'Sustainable agriculture in the middle ages: the English manor', *Agricultural History Review*, 38 (1990) pp. 1-19, esp. p. 10.
[12] Raftis, *Assart Data*, pp. 111-4; *MVEL*, pp. 135-6.
[13] *TEN*, p. 392.
[14] Raftis, *Assart Data*, p. 138.
[15] *EDH*, p. 120.

the manor or in the forests of Whittlewood or Salcey. Furthermore, woodland has been excluded from the figures in the table as the methods used to value it depended on its primary use and varied considerably from manor to manor. For example, in Yardley coppices to the value of £23, over eleven times that of the arable land, are included in the extent, their value being derived from the expected proceeds of wood sales even where these would not be realised for many years. Elsewhere woods seem to have been valued on the annual profits generated from pasture and underwood.

The IPM extents rarely refer to the types of animals kept, but the lay subsidy records indicate that the main livestock along the border were cattle and sheep (see table 8.2c). The Hackleton document shows a lower ratio of sheep to cattle than was apparent across the county boundary in Ravenstone and Weston Underwood, but this may be a function of its earlier date, as the numbers of sheep increased over the whole area in the fourteenth century.[16]

A much higher proportion of the cattle kept in the east of the area were steers and bullocks, indicating the importance of both the local and London markets for meat. In the west dairying was likely to have predominated, as indicated by account rolls for Silverstone from 1275-9. Pigs were kept in most vills but in lower numbers than might perhaps have been expected given the woodland environment. This may be due to the exemption from taxation of goods that were kept for the owner's own consumption and other animals, known to have been farmed in the area but not appearing in the tax lists, may have been omitted for similar reasons. For example, the lords of Leckhampstead and Lillingstone Lovell were known to have kept herds of goats, and poultry was kept by almost everyone, with many manorial dues being paid in hens or eggs.[17] Flocks and herds kept by religious houses were also excluded and these could be substantial - for example, in 1291-2, Luffield Abbey kept over 300 sheep and 60 pigs.[18]

Meadows along the Ouse were generally valued at a relatively high 2s an acre and were clearly a valuable resource. Many were common meadows and were divided into strips

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[16] See, for example: *MVEL*, p.143.
[17] *MVEL*, p.141.
[18] *LPC II*, p. 438.

or 'doles'.[19] Later records for Olney, Passenham and Yardley Hastings reveal that these strips were allocated by the drawing of lots.[20]

Woodlands

The border woodlands were the source of many valuable commodities but within the royal forests of Salcey and Whittlewood these belonged to the king and the extent to which they were available to local residents varied. Only the king, and those to whom he had granted special privileges, were allowed to hunt in the forests and much of the timber and underwood was either used by the royal household or given to religious houses. For example, in 1306, 200 stools were felled in Salcey Forest for fuel for the king's children, who were staying in Northampton Castle, and between 1233 and 1258 over 100 oaks from the same forest were given to the Black Friars of Northampton for building their church.[21] The rights to other forest produce often lay with the royal foresters - for example, in 1278 the nuts from the royal demesne at Wakefield belonged to the Whittlewood foresters and, in 1373, the porter of Moor End Castle, in Yardley Gobion, was pardoned for passing himself off as a forester and, amongst other crimes, taking 7 gallons of honey worth 4s, found in Whittlewood Forest, 'which should have pertained to the king'.[22] However, the residents of vills which lay within the forests were allowed to pasture their animals there at certain times of year. This was reputedly in recompense for damage that resulted from the unhindered access the king's deer had to their lands.[23] Royal servants often had these privileges extended - for example, in 1255 Philip Lovell of Hanslope, king's clerk, was granted free pasture for all his beasts in both forests, was allowed to have his piggeries wherever he thought proper and was permitted to hunt 'the fox, the hare and the cat'.[24] Villagers generally also had rights, often negotiated with royal foresters, to collect wood for fuel, fencing and building often in return for food renders.[25]

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[19] See: A. Brian, 'Lammas meadows', *Landscape History*, 15 (1983), pp. 57-69.
[20] SRO, D 742/G/1 -1,3; *MVEL*, p. 146-7; NRO, 377P/48.
[21] *CCR 1302-7*, p. 485; *VCHN* 2, pp. 144-6.
[22] G.J. Turner, *Select Pleas of the Forest* (London, 1901), pp. 123-4; *CPR 1370-4*, pp 353-4.
[23] *RFN*, p.153.
[24] *CPR 1247-58*, pp. 84, 406.
[25] Turner, *Select Pleas*, pp. 123-4; *MVEL*, p.124.

Most of the border lords established parks in the woodlands for rearing and hunting game, but Yardley Chase, in the hands of the Earls of Northampton and their descendants throughout the medieval period, was on a bigger scale than most. Although its exact boundaries in the medieval period are unknown, in a survey of 1565 its circuit was said to be 7 miles, with that of Yardley Park being a further 3 miles. It contained large areas of woodland and wood-pasture and, although it was still formally a part of the royal forest of Salcey, it seems to have been administered distinct from, but along similar lines to, the remainder of the forest. For example, pleas of the forest were held each year at the earl's swanimote. The earl granted a regular supply of underwood to the Abbey of St Mary de Pratis outside Northampton and to several hospitals in the town. Game was generally consumed by the lord's household, although some found its way onto more distant tables, like the venison from Yardley that was consumed at Framlingham Castle in Norfolk in 1387/8.[26] Several documents record the right of villagers to pasture their animals on the chase, for example, the 1565 survey states that there was common pasture of 300 acres for all tenants.[27] The customs of the manor, set down in 1608, state that it was customary 'for the parson, his tenants and the whole town to put their calves into the chase and there be summered'.[28]

Field Systems

Although there is no consistent perceptible difference in the types of crop grown on either side of the county border, the methods used in arable farming, and in particular the field systems adopted by individual vills, may have been influenced to a greater extent by cultural factors, and may thus be expected to vary across such a boundary. In order to investigate this, the number of open fields in each of the border vills has been ascertained from the earliest available records, and are shown in tables 8.3a and 8.3b. (Where the number of fields seems to have altered, the earliest date at which each number was recorded is noted.) The tables indicate that, along the western and central parts of the border, a three-field system was almost universal. Furthermore, there is evidence that, in the early thirteenth century, many vills had each had only two fields and that the arable land had been re-organised in the following centuries. A change from

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[26] J. Ridgard (ed.), *Medieval Framlingham: Select Documents 1270-1524*, Suffolk Record Society, 27 (1985), p.11.
[27] NRO, Catalogue of NRA 21088 (Compton family archives).
[28] NRO, 377P/48.

a two-field system to one based on three is well attested in many areas of England (although it is not universally accepted that this happened on a large scale), and the reasons behind it are much debated.[29] However, the desire to increase the area under cultivation in each year must have been a factor.

Further to the east, the situation looks more complicated but this is partly a function of the later date of the records. There was a tendency for the number of fields to increase over time, primarily as a result of assarting, but new land was generally incorporated into a three-course rotation. This appears to have been the case, for example, in Olney, which had six fields, and in Yardley Hastings, its neighbour across the border, which had five. In both cases many furlongs had names indicating woodland clearance and probably represented land claimed from Salcey Forest and incorporated into existing rotation schemes.[30] In other cases multiple fields can be explained by the presence of hamlets, now vanished, which had once had their own fields. For example, Roade had five fields but two seem to have belonged to the hamlet of Hyde.[31] A similar explanation probably lies behind the bewildering number of fields recorded at Hanslope in Buckinghamshire and its neighbour in Northamptonshire, Hartwell. Both lay next to Salcey Forest and both had similar dispersed settlement patterns.[32] In the former there were two main nucleated sites (Hanslope and Castlethorpe) each with their own fields and at least six, and probably more, smaller settlements or 'ends'. In the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries many of these ends were the centres of smaller subsidiary manors and at least two, Tathall End and Bullington End had their own fields.[33] Assart data and the names of furlongs, such as 'La novelasartt'[34] recorded in the mid-thirteenth century, indicate that some arable land was created from woodland but, unfortunately, it is impossible to determine how this was integrated into existing field systems, or how such systems were operated and managed in the medieval period. The position in later centuries is no less confused - the names of eleven different fields have been found in documents from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and nineteen in those from

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[29] H.L. Gray, *English Field Systems* (Harvard, 1915), pp. 72-82; H.S.A. Fox, 'The alleged transformation from two-field to three-field systems in medieval England', *EcHR*, 39 (1986), pp. 526-48.
[30] SRO, D 742/G/1 -1,3; *OFN*, p.367.
[31] *VCHN* 5, pp. 345-74.
[32] Above, pp. 42-3.
[33] *VCHB* 4, pp. 348-62; R.J. Williams, 'Hanslope: an archaeological survey' (unpub. report, MKHER, 1986); E. Mason (ed.), *The Beauchamp Cartulary Charters 1100-1268*, The Publications of the Pipe Roll Society, New Series, XLIII (London, 1980), no. 210.
[34] Mason (ed.), *Beauchamp Cartulary*, no. 275.

1740-60. However, it is clear that Castlethorpe and Bullington End retained their own fields and it seems likely that Tathall end did too.[35]

Hartwell contains the sites of six deserted villages, a few of which had survived into the early modern period, as well as the nucleated settlement that now forms its centre. The common fields had extended over virtually the whole of Hartwell before c.1520, when a park was made which took in the western part of the arable land and which must have precipitated a re-organisation of the fields. In 1605 eleven fields were recorded, the most anywhere in Northamptonshire and, although no detail is available about how these fields were operated, it seems likely that, as in Hanslope, some hamlets had had their own fields.[36]

There is, therefore, no evidence to suggest that there was any difference in the field-systems operated on either side of the county border. Although there may have been differences between the east and west of the area, these were reflected in the practices of the vills in both counties, as demonstrated in the cases of Olney and Yardley Hastings and Hanslope and Hartwell.

Economic change 1086 - 1334

In order to investigate whether and how economic expansion was affected by the county border, the relative growth in prosperity of vills on either side of it must be analysed. The only data available that enables this to be done are from Domesday Book, compiled near to the start of the period of prosperity, and the records of the lay subsidies of 1334, levied close to its end. However, there are many problems with using these datasets, both alone and in comparison, and these are considered below.

The general inadequacies of data in Domesday Book have already been considered[37] but there are particular problems in the measurement of the value of estates. The annual values, or income, given in Domesday Book have long been regarded as poor indicators

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[35] HDHS, '1599 Glebe Terrier' <http://www.mkheritage.co.uk/hdhs/survey/1599Index.php?panel=1> (05/08/2011); CBS, D 104/18; D 117/37; D 208/1/1/3-4, 20-21; D 208/3/4/1.

[36] D. Hall, 'Hartwell, Northamptonshire, a parish survey', *CBA Group 9 Newsletter*, 5 (1975), pp. 7-9; *OFN*, pp. 290-1; *VCHN 5*, pp. 176-97; *IHMN* IV, pp. 74-80.

[37] Above, pp. 11-15.

of the economic resources of the estates concerned, primarily because they do not appear to bear a constant relationship to either total population or the number of plough teams in operation. However, more recently this view has been challenged on the basis that it fails to take account of the value of pastoral and other non-arable resources, and statistical analyses of the Domesday data for Essex and Wiltshire have shown that annual values do indeed seem to vary with total manorial resources.[38] For the purposes of this study annual values have been used in preference to the number of plough teams (the usual method) for two reasons. First, pastoral farming was likely to have been important in the border manors, given their general situation on clay soils and close to woodland, and it would seem perverse to base values on the number of plough teams alone. Second, there is every likelihood that the numbers of plough teams recorded in Northamptonshire manors reflect an earlier tax assesment rather than economic reality.[39]

The problems in using figures from the 1334 lay subsidy have also been well rehearsed elsewhere and it is clear that the data cannot be used to give an indication of absolute wealth in any one vill. It is not known, for example, how many people in each vill were exempt from the tax, how goods were valued, how much tax evasion went on, or even whether some settlements were omitted from the tax collecting process altogether.[40] Nor is it known how these factors might have varied by area, by settlement type or with social structure.

Additional issues are introduced when it is sought to compare data for wealth from 1086 with that from 1334. In particular, wealth was assessed on different bases at the two dates: on real property in 1086 and on the value of moveable goods in 1334. Nevertheless, it has been suggested that if data from each date can be regarded as giving some indication of general wealth, then, logically, they can be compared.[41] This approach has been taken, not without criticism, in several published analyses of changes

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[38] J. McDonald and G.D. Snooks, 'The economics of Domesday England', in R.W.H. Erskine and A. Williams (eds), *The Story of Domesday Book* (Chichester, 2003), pp. 130-7.

[39] J.H. Round, 'The hidation of Northamptonshire', *EHR*, 15 (1900), pp. 78-86.

[40] See, for example, E.J. Buckatzsch, 'The geographical distribution of wealth in England, 1086-1843: an experimental study of certain tax assessments', *EcHR*, 3 (1950), pp. 180-202; R.E. Glasscock (ed), *The Lay Subsidy of 1334* (London, 1975), pp. iii-xxxii; J.F. Hadwin, 'The medieval lay subsidies and economic history', *EcHR,* 36 (1983), pp. 200-17; H.S.A. Fox, 'Taxation and settlement in medieval Devon', *Thirteenth century England*, 10 (2005), pp. 167-85.

[41] Buckatzsch, 'The geographical distribution', pp. 182-4.

in English regional wealth and has been adopted here.[42] Figure 8.1 shows comparisons between the 1334 taxable values of the border vills and their values in 1086, mapped by quintile. However, given the many inadequacies discussed and the fact that problems may be magnified when considering areas as small as vills, the map is used only as a starting point in the discussion of the border economy.

The map shows that, in general, vills on the Northamptonshire side of the border grew more than those on the Buckinghamshire side. This is partly due to the relatively low valuations given to Northamptonshire vills in 1086, which are often said to have resulted from the damage caused around Northampton during the Northumbrian revolt in 1065.[43] This cannot be the whole explanation of the differences across the Buckinghamshire/Northamptonshire border, however, as it is difficult to see why rampaging armies would have halted their destruction at the county border. Indeed, the ASC states specifically that neighbouring counties were affected.[44] Furthermore, many of the affected Northamptonshire manors had been restocked and had substantially increased in value in the twenty one years between the revolt and 1086, although many lands were still described as 'waste'.[45]

In fact, the map in figure 8.1 is better understood as highlighting the diverse patterns of economic growth seen in different geographical locations and landscapes, which often transcend county borders. For further analysis, therefore, the border vills have been divided into three main groups: those located on the northern banks of the Ouse: those on the southern banks and those on the higher ground close to the watershed with the Nene. Places with urban characteristics, considered in chapter 7, have been grouped separately. Figure 8.2 shows how the vills have been split between these groups.

By comparing figures 8.1 and 8.2 it can be seen that, excluding the towns, the 'watershed' vills, as a group, showed the highest increase in value between 1086 and 1334 and those to the south of the Ouse, the lowest. The reasons for this can now be explored further.

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[42] See: Buckatzsch, 'The geographical distribution'; H.C. Darby, R.E. Glasscock, J. Sheail and G.R. Versey, 'The changing geographical distribution of wealth in England: 1086-1334-1525', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 5 (1979), pp. 247-62; Hadwin, 'The medieval lay subsidies'.
[43] Round, 'The hidation', p. 85; above, p. 64.
[44] *ASC*, p. 193.
[45] Round, 'The hidation', p. 85.

Settlements near the watershed

In the traditional theory of settlement expansion, the heavily wooded claylands, near the watershed, would only have been brought into cultivation when population growth had led to the more easily worked valley soils becoming fully exploited. Although this theory is now thought to be too simplistic, because it ignores factors other than soil type which might have been influential, it would explain the high relative growth seen in the band of vills between Bozeat in the east and Potterspury in the west, all of which appear in the first or second quintiles in figure 8.1.[46] The experience of some individual vills in the area needs to be considered to see how well they fit the theory.

The vills recording the highest growth figures, Hartwell, Ashton and Roade, all lay on wooded claylands to the west of Salcey Forest and the name of Roade reveals its origin as 'cleared land'.[47] The main road from Watling Street to Northampton ran through Roade, whilst Ashton and Hartwell lay within a mile and 3 miles of it respectively. The vills were assessed together in 1334, but not in 1086, when estates at both Ashton and Roade were 'waste'.[48] In total, their value at this date was 90s, which placed them twenty-seventh out of the twenty eight border estates in terms of value per acre. (Ashton and Roade had recorded even lower values in 1066.) Although all three vills expanded between 1086 and 1334 most of the growth seems to have occurred at Roade.[49] In 1086 the two estates there recorded a total population of three bordars, a class of tenant often associated with settlement expansion particularly in woodland areas.[50] These bordars had one plough. In 1172, one of the estates had been granted to the canons of St James, Northampton, who had been heavily engaged in assarting in the area and, by the end of

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[46] For a general discussion, see: C. Dyer, *Everyday Life in Medieval England* (1994, London, 2000 edn), pp. 13-26.
[47] *PNN*, p. 106.
[48] DB i 226a, 220b.
[49] The total population of Ashton in 1086 was eleven, but in 1301 thirty-six people paid the subsidy. At Hartwell, where twenty-one people were recorded in 1086, there were forty-nine taxpayers in 1301. (Source: *TNTA*). Unfortunately no breakdown of the 1334 lay subsidy figures exists for Northamptonshire, but that for 1301 which survives in part has been used for the analysis of population growth. It should be noted, however, that unlike in 1334, there was no minimum wealth qualfication in 1301.
[50] S.P.J. Harvey, 'Evidence for settlement study: Domesday Book', in P.H. Sawyer (ed.) *Medieval Settlement. Continuity and Change* (London, 1976), pp. 198-199. (One of the Roade estates is entered under Ashton in DB (Dbi 226d, *VCHN* 5, pp. 345-74).

the twelfth century, both estates had their own arable fields, and a mill and a church had been built.[51] In 1301 twenty-two people paid the subsidy in Roade.[52]

Roade, therefore, has all the characteristics of a settlement formed on marginal land as a result of population expansion. Its development probably began relatively late and the fact that part was described as waste in 1086 seems to indicate that it had suffered an early setback, possibly as the result of the Northumbrian revolt. It seems to be typical of many of the settlements on the watershed and similar, although less extreme, patterns of growth can be seen at Horton, Piddington, Bozeat and Easton Maudit. Roade's position on a main road to Northampton must have magnified the economic changes seen elsewhere in the area. For example, its accessibility from Northampton would have made it an early target for the Northumbrians but, conversely, it would have benefited from increasing through traffic and access to the town's markets.

Some places like Potterspury, on Watling Street, and Yardley (Hastings), in the woodlands south of Northampton, seem to have been more developed by 1086, with populations of thirty-one and twenty-eight respectively.[53] This must be connected to the fact that both had been important centres associated with the pre-Conquest earls of Huntingdon.[54] However, both had relatively low population densities on account of the large areas of woodlands within their bounds and thus much scope for further expansion.

The position of the vills near to the watershed to the west of Watling Street is less clear as it has not been possible to calculate growth figures for five of them. Whitfield, Whittlebury and Silverstone were not assessed separately in 1086 but were included as part of the royal manors of Sutton and Norton whilst Luffield and Biddlesden were in the hands of religious houses and thus exempt from the 1334 lay subsidy. Consequently calculations have been possible for only three vills and two of them, Syresham and Lillingstone Lovell, appear in the third quintile in figure 8.1 suggesting they had grown much less than their neighbours further east. However, growth in Syresham may have been understated as, in 1334, the ownership of the vill was essentially divided between

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[51] *VCHN* 5, pp. 345-74.
[52] *TNTA.*
[53] DB i 225a, 228b,c.
[54] Above, pp. 65-6.

Luffield Priory, Biddlesden Abbey and the Hospital of St John and St James in Brackley and it must be suspected that some of its wealth had been exempt from the subsidy.[55] Lillingstone Lovell was assessed as part of Oxfordshire in 1086 and 1334 and it is possible that it had been assessed on a different basis at one or both dates.[56] However it should be noted that its growth placed it at the top of the third quintile and was not materially lower than that of Lillingstone Dayrell, which lay close to the bottom of the second quintile.

Settlements in the southern Ouse valley

The settlements located on the southern banks of the Ouse, that is from Thornton to Wolverton, experienced the lowest growth in the period. They recorded the highest values and population densities in 1086 probably because their locations in the Ouse valley had made them attractive early settlement sites and proximity to the increasingly important Watling Street had enhanced their appeal. Most of them evolved into single, nucleated settlements surrounded by open fields and Domesday Book suggests that by 1086 they were well developed with limited potential for further expansion.

The records of one of them, Beachampton, enable its development between 1086 and 1334 to be traced in more detail. In 1086, Beachampton had had the second highest value per acre of the border manors, excluding urban centres, although it had been more highly valued in 1066. Domesday Book records that it was held as two separate manors: Beachampton I was a 5 hide manor held by Walter Giffard; Beachampton II was held by Leofwin of Nuneham and consisted of 4 hides. There was also one hide of land held by Roger d'Ivry but there is no further trace of this land.[57] Tables 8.4 and 8.5 compare Beachampton I and II, as described in extents of 1333/4 and 1252 respectively, with the Domesday entries.[58] As can be seen, although the population had more than doubled, the amount of land under cultivation seems to have remained substantially unaltered. In fact, it seems there was little room for expansion. The figure of 100 acres per hide, implied in charters preserved in the cartulary of Snelshall Abbey, means that c.1000

[55] P. Pettit, *Syresham, a forest village and its chapel* (Syresham, 1996), pp. 29-39.
[56] For county differences in 1334, see, for example: Buckatzsch, 'The geographical distribution'; Hadwin, 'The medieval lay subsidies', pp. 208-9.
[57] DB i 147d, 153a, 151d; *VCHB* 4, pp. 149-53.
[58] TNA: PRO, SC 11/800, C 132/13/2.

acres were in arable cultivation with meadowland occupying approximately a further 180 acres. This, with the addition of the (unmeasured) pastureland, equates to almost the full extent of the modern parish (c.1500 acres), and suggests that the land was fully exploited by 1066. Certainly by the mid-thirteenth century Beachampton's open fields (the East and West Fields) stretched from the village in the north of the parish to abut Whaddon's fields in the south.[59] The part of the woodlands of Whaddon Chase which, presumably, had once stretched into Beachampton had long been cleared, in spite of it being part of the royal forest until 1242.[60]

It is possible to compare the taxpayers in 1332 with the rental of Beachampton I made in the following year.[61] This shows that the lord and eight of his thirty-seven tenants paid tax. The lady of Beachampton II was also a taxpayer as were a further six people who were, presumably, her tenants. This suggests that only about 22 per cent of the tenants paid tax, a relatively low proportion.[62] Whilst there could be many explanations for this, it most probably indicates that most of the population were too poor to pay.

In order to see if the distinctive patterns of growth apparent on this small stretch of the southern banks of the Ouse extended beyond the study area, the ratios used in figure 8.1 have been calculated for three vills lying further to the east: Sherington, Great Linford and Tyringham and Filgrave. In each case the ratio calculated would have placed the vill concerned in the fifth quintile on the map, suggesting that the pattern continued eastwards. Furthermore, one of the vills, Sherington, has been extensively studied and it seems that, as in the case of Beachampton, virtually the whole of its lands were under cultivation by 1086.[63]

Thornton, to the west of Beachampton, shows the same characteristics but beyond that lies Buckingham which extends across the Ouse and which may be expected to show a different rate of growth because of its urban functions.

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[59] *CSP*, no 115.
[60] *TBL*, pp. 129-30.
[61] *ETR*, pp. 37-8.
[62] C. Dyer, 'Taxation and communities in late medieval England' in R. Britnell and J. Hatcher (eds), *Progress and problems in medieval England* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 168-90.
[63] *SFF*, p. 88.

Settlements in the northern Ouse valley

Economic growth in the northern Ouse valley settlements, from Olney to Wicken, fell within the middle quintiles. The boundaries of each of them reached up towards the watershed and encompassed areas of woodland or moorland as well as parts of the valley. All were poly-focal settlements, to a greater or lesser degree, containing both nucleated settlements like those of the southern Ouse valley and expanding hamlets like those found higher up the valley. In simple terms their median growth figures seem to have resulted from a combination of the factors affecting both types of settlement. For example, the settlements of Horton on the watershed and Eakley Lanes, part of Stoke Goldington in the northern Ouse valley, lay approximately 2 miles apart on either side of the county border. Each of them lay on clay at about 300 feet OD and each had a name indicating an origin in marginal land – Eakley's denoting woodland clearance and Horton's clay soils.[64] In addition, both contained field-names suggestive of assarting and religious houses usually associated with this activity had holdings in each.[65] Both grew to be settlements of some size and would be expected to have shown similar patterns of growth.[66] However, in 1334 Horton was assessed as an individual vill and its taxable value was over fifteen times higher than its Domesday valuation had been. Eakley, in contrast, was assessed as part of the much larger vill of Stoke Goldington, where the Domesday values had only increased eight-fold – Eakley's rapid growth presumably being offset by much lower growth in other parts of the vill.[67]

There were many hamlets similar to Eakley along the northern Ouse valley: for example Warrington in Olney; Dagnall in Wicken; Isworth in Cosgrove; and various 'ends' in Hanslope. Hanslope village itself could probably be added to this list as it seems to have originated as a daughter settlement of Castlethorpe.[68] Many if not all of these were secondary settlements situated close to Salcey and Yardley Chase where land could be cleared and added to the arable fields.

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[64] *PNB*, pp. 13-14; *PNN*, pp. 148-9.
[65] *OFN*, pp. 298-9; NRO: G(H)812, 889.
[66] *IHMN* II, pp.65-7; WAA: 'Dr Busby's Charity Estates at Willen and Stoke Goldington' (copy at MKHER).
[67] Glasscock (ed), *The Lay Subsidy*, pp. 18, 217.
[68] Above, pp. 120-1.

Woodland resources were utilised in other ways by the people of these hamlets, and indeed by those of the 'watershed' vills, which would have added to their economic growth. There is little written evidence of the woodworking which undoubtedly took place but men bearing the name Turner were found at Bozeat and Hanslope in 1379 and 1332 respectively.[69] Wood and charcoal were used to fuel the small scale iron smelting that took place in Easton Maudit in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and slag patches found elsewhere, for example at Warrington, Addersey (in Lavendon), and Bozeat, indicate that the industry was widespread along this part of the border.[70] Clay was plentiful and pottery production sites are known to have existed at Olney Hyde, Yardley Hastings, Hanslope, Hartwell and further west at Silverstone, Potterspury and Yardley Gobion.[71] Field names, such as the kiln-fields found in Eakley and Horton above, and personal names, for example two men bore the name 'Potter' in Bozeat in 1379, suggest that other smaller-scale sites also existed.[72]

Excavations at Olney Hyde, now a deserted medieval settlement lying to the north of the town, revealed it to have been an important pottery production centre with at least fourteen kilns in operation from the mid-twelfth century to the early fifteenth. Its products included roof tiles and a wide range of pottery, much of which was wheel-thrown and well-made. Unfortunately the pottery was very similar to that produced in other kilns along the Ouse Valley and so the exact distribution area for the Olney pots is difficult to reconstruct.[73] Nevertheless it has been found throughout north Buckinghamshire and south Northamptonshire and further afield at Bedford and Oxford.[74] The demise of the industry was probably due to the effects of the Black Death

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[69] *ETR*, p. 75; C. Fenwick (ed.) *The Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381, Pt 2: Lincolnshire-Westmorland* (Oxford, 2001), p. 244.

[70] D. Hall, 'The excavation of an iron-smelting site at Easton Maudit, Northamptonshire', *Bedfordshire Archaeology*, 16 (1983), pp. 91-5; MKHER CASS nos 194802000, 131800000; D.N. Hall and N.Nickerson, 'Sites on the north Bedfordshire and south Northamptonshire border', *Bedfordshire Archaeological Journal*, 3 (1966), pp. 1-6.

[71] D. C. Mynard, 'A medieval pottery industry at Olney Hyde', *ROB*, 26 (1984), pp. 56-85; K. Brown, 'A medieval pottery kiln at Yardley Hastings, Northamptonshire', *Northamptonshire Archaeology*, 25 (1993-4), pp. 159-75; Williams, 'Hanslope'; *IHMN* IV, p. 78; *MVEL*, pp. 117-8; *VCHN* 5, pp. 289-345.

[72] Fenwick (ed.), *Poll Taxes, Pt 2*, p. 244.

[73] Mynard, 'A medieval pottery industry'.

[74] D. G. Hurst and J. G. Hurst, 'Excavations at the medieval village of Wythemail, Northamptonshire', *Medieval Archaeology*, 13 (1969), pp. 182-4; Albion Archaeology, 'Extensive Urban Survey for Bedfordshire. Bedford Archaeological Assessment.' <http://www.bedfordshire.gov.uk/Resources/PDF/EnvironmentAndPlanning/HeritageAndEnvironment/Bedford%20EUS.pdf> (02/10/2010); D. Sturdy and J. Munby, 'Early Domestic Sites in Oxford: Excavations in Cornmarket and Queen Street, 1959-62', *Oxoniensia*, 50 (1985), p. 89.

as, in 1353, the hamlet of 'La Hyde' was said to be worth £4 10s per annum and 'not more on account of the pestilence'.[75]

The Potterspury/Yardley Gobion industry seems to have begun about a century later than that at Olney Hyde and the sites of at least six medieval kilns are known. Potterspury pottery also had a relatively wide distribution area and shards have been found in archaeological excavations throughout south Northamptonshire and north Buckinghamshire.[76] The Whittlewood project found that much of the pottery used in the area came from Potterspury, with no trace of any from Olney Hyde. This perhaps suggests that the main distribution area of the latter lay to the east of Watling Street.[77]

There are two settlements on the northern banks of the Ouse, Lavendon and Leckhampstead, which, according to figure 8.1, do not appear to have expanded in line with their neighbours. In both cases, however, there is reason to suspect problems with the base data. There were ten entries for Lavendon in Domesday Book and its territory extended to both sides of the Ouse. It is not possible with certainty to identify individual Domesday entries with the particular hamlets which later become visible in the records. By 1334 some of these hamlets were assessed as part of vills other than Lavendon and it is possible that the 1086 data has been incorrectly allocated to them.[78] Further, a large part of Lavendon, in 1334, was in the hands of the abbey based there and, as such, may have been wholly or partly exempt from the subsidy.[79]

Leckhampstead on the north bank of the Ouse shares the same characteristics as its neighbours further east: it was a woodland settlement of loosely connected, dispersed hamlets, with capacity for expansion. For example, in 1086 there was said to be capacity for a further five ploughs and by 1279 the lords of both estates there, Great and Little Leckhampstead, had expanded their demesnes with assarts. In Great Leckhampstead the recorded population had grown from twenty-six in 1086 to over sixty in 1279 when it would appear that the land was fully utilised. The position in Little

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[75] *CIPM*, 10, p.82.
[76] *VCHN* 5, pp. 289-345.
[77] *MVEL,* p.153.
[78] For example, Newton Blossomville was assessed as part of Clifton Reynes (Glasscock (ed), *The Lay Subsidy*, pp. 17).
[79] Above, p. 121.

Leckhampstead was similar.[80] It is odd, therefore that Leckhampstead shows so little growth in figure 8.1 and it seems that the problem may lie with the 1334 lay subsidy figures used in the calculation. In the 1332 assessment, which formed the basis for that of 1334, twenty one people paid the subsidy.[81] Four of them belonged to the Chastillon family, the lords of Great Leckhampstead, and a further two were major tenants of the same manor.[82] There is no entry for any of the the de Leaume family, the resident lords of Little Leckhampstead, nor for any of their known major tenants, and it must be suspected that Little Leckhampstead was omitted from the assessment. It is not known why this might have happened but it could have been connected with the long running feud between the Chastillons and the de Leaume families, in which many of their tenants became involved.[83] For example, tax assessors from one of the vills may not have wished to enter the other.[84]

Conclusion

The border economy was dominated by arable agriculture but pastoral farming was also important. Although some specialisation was apparent, it seems to have varied along the border, from east to west, rather than across it - for example, more cattle were kept for dairying in the west and for meat in the east. The effect of Brackley's markets was also visible, in that cereal growing was particularly dominant in the vills neighbouring it on both sides of the county border.

In the period between 1086 and 1334 the eastern county boundary appeared to mark an economic divide, separating the rapidly expanding settlements of Northamptonshire from the more developed but stagnating settlements on the Buckinghamshire side of the border. To a large extent this apparent division is illusory, however, and settlements on either side of the border grew along similar lines. Those in Buckinghamshire belonged to, or at least were assessed with, larger settlements further down the Ouse valley, which disguised their late development. In contrast, on the Northamptonshire side of the border, settlements in the Nene valley seem not to have annexed significant areas of the

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[80] DB i 144d; *RH*, pp.338-9.
[81] Dyer, 'Taxation and communities', pp. 172-3; *ETR*, pp. 39-41.
[82] William and Hugh le Vavasour were almost certainly their tenants (*VCHB* 4, pp. 180-7).
[83] *VCHB* 4, pp. 180-7.
[84] For other possible reasons for the omission see, for example: Fox, 'Taxation and settlement', pp. 167-185.

watershed woodlands, perhaps because resources were available closer to hand, and so the Northamptonshire watershed vills stood alone. This part of the border seems, therefore, to mark a political or administrative divide rather than an economic one.

The major economic boundary in the border area seems to have been the Ouse, at least to the east of Buckingham. To its south lay nucleated settlements surrounded by open fields that reached as far as the parish boundaries where they met those of their neighbours. By the time of Domesday the vills were close to being fully exploited and there was little scope for expansion. In contrast, to the north of the Ouse, vills could and did expand into the higher wooded lands and all remained polyfocal in nature. Although some hamlets had relatively short lives, the bigger centres all survived with their open fields intact.

The position along the western border is more difficult to assess. Many of the Northamptonshire border manors belonged to royal centres further north and were taxed as part of them. This was not the case in Buckinghamshire and so, although it is clear that the border again marked some kind of political or administrative divide, there is insufficient data to establish whether it was also an economic boundary. The situation was further complicated by the presence of religious houses at Luffield and Biddlesden which were major landholders along the border and exempt from lay taxation. However, the large parish and manor of Buckingham spanned the Ouse, which meant that the river almost certainly did not mark a strong economic divide in the west.

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Border society, local government and law

The aim of this chapter is to establish, as far as possible, if and how the border affected the people who lived either side of it. Clearly a full survey covering the whole medieval period would be beyond the scope of this study, even if records had survived in sufficient quantitities to enable one to be undertaken. Instead, individual sections consider different topics and periods where either information is particularly rich or where developments in the law, government or society might have tended to re-inforce or diminish county differences.

The chapter begins, at the start of the period, with a brief survey of the information concerning the structure of society recorded in Domesday Book, looking particularly for evidence of differences across the border. The second section looks at how border society was affected by the expansion of royal government in the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries, in which the county formed the primary unit of local government. Many local men were drawn into county administration and some commentators have seen in this, the beginnings of county society and the origin of the gentry. The administrative regime that surrounded forest law ran in parallel to, but almost completely separate from, county government. Most of the borderlands fell within it, for at least some of the medieval period, and the third section considers whether this was likely to have re-inforced separate county identities or, alternatively, constituted a unifying force across the border.

The fourth section looks for evidence of the extent to which people crossed the border, both on a day-to-day basis and more permanently. Finally, the very few stories thought to have been current in the border area are reviewed for any indication they might give of how border people viewed themselves.

Domesday Society

Domesday Book records a total population of 819 in the border vills. Figure 9.1 provides an analysis of this figure, by county, across the various categories of manorial

tenant described. This suggests some differences between the counties, primarily in the percentage of bordars recorded which was higher in Northamptonshire than in Buckinghamshire. It should be noted, however, that the mean figures for each county used in the table mask significant differences between individual vills and between the east and west of the region. Furthermore, it is clear that different methods of recording the population were used in the two counties. This is demonstrated, for example, by the apparent omission of priests from the Buckinghamshire figures. In an attempt to minimise the effects of these shortcomings basic statistical analysis has been used to isolate more significant differences in the population and the results are mapped in figure 9.2. This shows the vills where the proportion of slaves and bordars is particularly high (defined for these purposes as above one standard deviation from the mean). In addition it indicates the vills where freemen were recorded or to which they were legally attached.

The map shows little difference between the two counties but rather demonstrates a series of broadly east-west divisions. In both counties, high proportions of slaves were recorded only in the vills to the south-west of Watling Street. However, in the case of bordars the highest proportions were found just to the north-east of Watling Street, surrounding what was once the centre of the Hanslope estate. Only Beachampton, studied in chapter 8, deviates from this pattern but it differs in other ways, too. For example, lying to the south of the Ouse it had a much higher population density than the other vills highlighted so, whilst the bordars further north seem to be associated with the cultivation of new land on the edges of estates, those in Beachampton, were part of an established, highly manorialised, economy.

Freemen were recorded along the central and eastern borderlands in both counties, but none were present in the western vills. They were generally found in outlying parts of large estates: two were recorded at Puxley (in Passenham), seven in the part of Weston Underwood that belonged to Olney and three in an unidentified manor forming part of Lavendon.[1] Many were recorded in manors belonging to Yardley (Hastings) but none were present at Yardley itself.[2] Furthermore, it is possible that some of the fifteen freemen found in (Greens) Norton were actually based in Whittlebury, the latter vill

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[1] DB i 145c, 220a.
[2] DB i 228b, c.

being included in the same Domesday entry.[3] The east/west division continues further to the north of the border in Northamptonshire with, for example, no freemen being recorded in the western hundreds of Sutton and Alboldestow. In north Buckinghamshire, freemen were limited to the north of the Ouse in Bunsty hundred. (A few are found much further south around the royal estate centred on Aylesbury.[4]) Given the known association between freemen and the Danelaw, this pattern suggests that the boundaries of the latter had continued to be marked by the Ouse and Watling Street, as described in the Alfred-Guthrum treaty. Furthermore, it adds support to the theory that it was the Ouse, rather than the county boundary which formed the important dividing line in the central and eastern parts of the region.

Gentry lords and county identity

Reforms resulting from the baronial movement of the mid-thirteenth century saw many local men, generally members of the lesser nobility or 'gentry', becoming involved in shire government and justice. They were increasingly called upon to serve as sheriffs and sit on juries and various commissions of enquiry, gaol delivery and similar. The duties rose considerably during the wars of Edward I when commissions of subsidy, charged with collecting taxes, and commissions of array, for recruiting soldiers, were introduced. Two 'knights of the shire' were elected at the county court to attend various parliaments, and local men had also become responsible for keeping the peace in the counties, which involved the supervision of community policing. It has been suggested that 'by the 1320s, if not before, at least 75-80 per cent of county knights were functioning in various capacities as agents of the state'.[5] Consequently, although the greater barons remained important in political life, the gentry often became the focus of local power and influence.

Another series of legal reforms was aimed at making local officials, particularly the sheriffs, more answerable to central (royal) government. For example, sheriffs became accountable to the exchequer for the income of the shire, rather than merely paying a

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[3] DB i 219c.
[4] DB i 143b-d, 149b.
[5] P. Coss, *The Origins of the English Gentry* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 15, 44-68, 165-201; W.L. Warren, *The Governance of Norman and Angevin England 1086-1272* (London, 1987); R. Gorski, *The Fourteenth-Century Sheriff* (Woodbridge, 2003), pp. 1-9.

lump sum as they had done in the past, and many legal issues and cases were transferred from the jurisdiction of the sheriff and the county court to that of visiting royal commissioners.[6] These reforms created a need for lawyers, administrators and other royal officials and many men prospered by this route. They were sometimes given land by the king or wealthy patrons, but increasingly they began to take advantage of the financial straits in which many minor lords found themselves by purchasing their estates from them. They often married into the gentry and many were absorbed into its ranks.

There has been much debate amongst historians regarding the cumulative effects of these changes on county identity. At one extreme, those who regard the county court as the only likely focus of shire unity see the reduction in its powers, and resulting drop in attendance, as fatal to any concept of an emerging sense of county community. Others, however, suggest that the impact, on the local gentry, of the dramatic increase in the county's administrative functions more than made up for its diminished judicial role.[7]

In order to investigate the role of the border gentry it is necessary to establish which men might have belonged to it, beginning with the lords who were resident in their border manors. The *Nomina Villarum* of 1316, a survey of the vills in the bailiwick of each sheriff, has been used to produce figure 9.3, which shows the distribution of resident and non-resident lords, both ecclesiastical and non-ecclesiastical, in the border manors.[8] (Some of the wealthier families, such as the de Hollands at Brackley and the de Hastings at Yardley Hastings, clearly spent some time in their border manors, but their visits were probably of relatively short duration and they have been treated as non-resident.) For the purposes of discussion the border has been split into areas where common conditions seem to have applied.

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[6] R.C. Palmer, *The County Courts of Medieval England, 1150-1350* (Princeton, 1982), pp.287-96; Warren, *The Governance*, pp. 78-86, 192-5.
[7] See: Coss, *The Origins*, pp. 202-15; C. Carpenter, 'Gentry and community in medieval England', *The Journal of British Studies*, 33 (1994), pp. 340-80.
[8] *Feudal Aids,* vol. 1, pp. xxiii, 107-15; vol. 4, pp. 19-30.

The Buckinghamshire side of the western and central border (from Westbury to Wolverton)

As can be seen, the manors with resident lords are found almost exclusively within this area and all lay fairly close to Watling Street. The resident lords all came from families long established in the area. In fact, the only manors where the resident families were seemingly not descended from tenants recorded in Domesday Book were Lillingstone Dayrell, where the Dayrells were first recorded in 1166, but may well have been resident long before that, and Thornton, which had been acquired in the thirteenth century by the descendants of the Domesday tenants of nearby Leckhampstead.[9] Only the landholdings of the de Wolvertons, the only resident baronial lords until they lost this status c.1328, seem to have extended across the county border into Northamptonshire. Polden's study of Buckinghamshire gentry, however, suggests that the influence of this family over their own tenants may not have been strong, being rather concentrated in an area lying within about a ten mile radius of Wolverton.[10] There is no record of the other resident Buckinghamshire lords – the de Chastillons and the de Leaumes at Leckhampstead and the junior branch of the de Chastillons at Thornton – holding any manors in Northamptonshire in 1316.[11]

Polden drew attention to the particularly dense and frequent connections between members of the gentry in north west Buckinghamshire, which included the Chastillons and Dayrels.[12] The Chastillons, for example, served on juries for Stodfold hundred at the Eyre of 1286, together with other prominent men of the hundred, and frequently witnessed charters granting Buckinghamshire land to Luffield Priory along with other Buckinghamshire lords such as the Dayrels.[13] However, as well as being rooted in their immediate locality, members of both families served as knights of the shire for Buckinghamshire in the fourteenth century and as sheriffs of Bedfordshire and

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[9] *VCHB,* 4, p.188, 243-9.
[10] A. Polden, 'A crisis of the knightly class? Inheritance and office among the gentry of thirteenth-century Buckinghamshire', in P. Fleming, A. Gross and J. R. Lander (eds), *Regionalism and Revision: The Crown and its Provinces in England 1200-1650* (London, 1998), pp. 34; A. Polden, 'The social networks of the Buckinghamshire gentry in the thirteenth century', *Journal of Medieval History,* 32 (2006), pp. 371-394; *VCHB* 4, p.507.
[11] *Feudal Aids,*1, pp. 19-30.
[12] Polden, 'The social networks', p. 393.
[13] See, for example: *TBE*, pp.471-2; *LPC II*, nos. 370, 550, 556.

Buckinghamshire.[14] (From the mid-twelfth century there was always a joint sheriff of Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire.[15]) Their interests, both tenurial and political, seem to have been linked almost exclusively to Buckinghamshire and their proximity to Buckingham, the county town, probably enhanced the sense of county identity they undoubtedly felt.

The Northamptonshire side of the western border (from Evenley to Whittlebury)

This area was still dominated, in 1316, by the holdings of the king, the disintegrating Leicester honour and religious houses. Robert de Holland, lord of Halse and Brackley, the old honorial centre in the area, had risen from the ranks of Lancastrian gentry to become a landholder in sixteen counties and his continued connections with north-west England and his role in national politics meant he could have spent little time in Brackley.[16] The names of some of the other prominent men in the area can be obtained from Luffield Priory charters but there is no evidence to suggest that any of them were involved in county government. It is not until about a century later that a group of Northamptonshire men connected both with each other and with county administration, as was seen earlier in Buckinghamshire, becomes visible in the records. This network centred around three families, the Lovetts of Astwell in Syresham, the Stotesburys of Evenley, Whitfield and Sulgrave and the Wauncys of Astwell and Wappenham.[17] Their contacts extended over most of south-western Northamptonshire but not apparently into the border vills of Silverstone and Whittlebury, which lay further east within the hundred of Norton. The witness lists of Luffield charters seem to suggest that there may have been a different network operating in this hundred.[18]

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[14] Lipscomb, 1, pp. xv,xx.

[15] H.A. Hanley, *The Buckinghamshire Sheriffs* (Aylesbury, 1992), p.2.

[16] J.R. Maddicott, 'Thomas of Lancaster and Sir Robert Holland: a study in noble patronage', *EHR*, 86 (1971), pp. 449-72.

[17] For history and connections, see, for example: Berkeley Castle Muniments, catalogue entries for BCM/G/5, BCM/G/5/2; LLRRO, 26D53/646, 864. For roles in county administration, see: Bridges, 1, p.7; *CPR 1405-8*, p. 495; *CPR 1476-85*, pp. 400, 491, 568.

[18] See, for example: *LPC I*, nos. 132-133B, 274.

The Northamptonshire side of the central border (from Potterspury to Hartwell)

In 1316, the only resident lord along this part of the border (which fell entirely within Cleyley hundred) was Philip le Lou, who held the manor of Ashton.[19] Although he was not shown as lord of any manors elsewhere in Northamptonshire in 1316, he was probably related to the le Lous who held Haversham and part of Beachampton in Buckinghamshire.[20] The political links of the Ashton branch of the family were exclusively to Northamptonshire and Philip's father, John, had belonged to a small group that dominated the panels of justices for gaol delivery for the county in the 1280s and had served on commissions of oyer and terminer in 1281, 1282 and 1285. He was the county's coroner c.1285 and was amongst the keepers of the peace appointed for Northamptonshire in 1287.[21] A John 'of Ashton' was sheriff of Northamptonshire for six years between 1301 and 1307.[22]

Elsewhere, some tenants of absentee lords had become involved in county affairs and foremost amongst them were the Woodvilles of Grafton (Regis). From the thirteenth century members of the family had gradually been accumulating land in the surrounding area. During the reign of King John they acquired the hundred of Cleyley at farm and were still in possession in 1329, when the hundred courts were held at Grafton.[23] As a result they must have had links throughout the hundred but they were also very active in the government of Northamptonshire. Members of the family served as sheriff of the county in nineteen of the years between 1361 and 1438 and sat on numerous commissions.[24] By 1366, the family had also acquired the Buckinghamshire manor of Bow Brickhill, possibly by marriage.[25] They were less involved in Buckinghamshire affairs but one member served as sheriff in 1383 and others sat on commissions of oyer and terminer in 1366 and 1392.[26]

Several 'new men' had built up estates in Cleyley hundred - for example, Henry Spigurnel, a royal justice, from Edlesborough in Buckinghamshire, who by 1316, had

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[19] *Feudal aids,* 4, pp. 19-30.
[20] *Feudal aids,*1, p. 110.
[21] Coss, *The Origins,* pp. 154-5.
[22] Bridges, 1, p. 5.
[23] *VCHN* 5, pp. 1-18; 142-76.
[24] Bridges, 1, pp. 5-6, and see: *CPR 1361-4*, pp. 207,233; *CPR 1391-6*, p. 233; *CPR 1396-9*, p. 98.
[25] *VCHB* 4, pp. 289-93.
[26] Hanley, *The Buckinghamshire Sheriffs,* p. 36; *CPR 1364-7*, p. 356; *CPR 1391-6*, p.81.

acquired the manors of Cosgrove and Furtho and much land in Passenham. He began his career in Northamptonshire and lived in Buckinghamshire throughout his life, but he does not seem to have been involved in the affairs of either county.[27] The most infamous 'new man' in the area, however, was Elias de Tingewick, who had prospered as a keeper of Whittlewood Forest, but who had also been a minor official of the Exchequer, as well as bailiff of Harmondsworth Priory, and active in the affairs of the abbeys of Luffield and Biddlesden.[28] His name suggests that his family had originated in Buckinghamshire and his father may have been the Roger de Tingewick who appears in records as a riding forester in Rockingham and Salcey forests between 1246 and 1255.[29] Elias held the manor of Deanshanger (in Passenham), where he almost certainly lived, and had interests in many of the surrounding vills (some in Buckinghamshire). His son, John, resided at Moor End in Potterspury but he had purchased Evenley from the previous tenant and was returned as lord there in 1316.[30]

It is very difficult to ascertain Elias' county allegiance, if indeed he had one, because he was deeply involved, on the side of the king, in the politics surrounding the Barons' War of the mid-thirteenth century. When the baronial cause was in the ascendancy he was generally deprived of his bailiwick in Whittlewood and sometimes gaoled, only to be pardoned and re-instated by the King, when the tide turned.[31] After the final defeat of the barons in 1265 he seemed intent on prolonging the conflict, seeking revenge and retribution throughout the area, nevertheless he was appointed to a commission to deliver Northampton gaol in 1270-1.[32] In 1276 he managed to find twelve men to stand surety for him when he was accused of committing trespasses at Newport Pagnell. These men came from both Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire, but, interestingly, none seem to have been from the immediate border area.[33] Later, in 1281, he was pardoned along with twenty-six other men for the death of a Welshman, Peter de Radnor, in a fight at Oxford. This was almost certainly related to Welsh support for the

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[27] P. Brand, 'Spigurnel, Sir Henry (b. in or before 1261, d. 1328)', *ODNB*.
[28] *LPC II,* pp.xxii-iii.
[29] G.J. Turner, *Select Pleas of the Forest* (London, 1901), pp. 28, 79, 95, 96, 108.
[30] *VCHN* 5, pp. 208-45, 289-345.
[31] See, for example: *CPR 1258-66*, pp. 14, 525.
[32] *TBE*, pp. 33, 44-7; Coss, *The Origins,* p. 272.
[33] *CCR 1272-9*, pp. 267-73. They included, for example, William and Walter de Bradden (of Bradden, Easton Neston and Towcester); William de Hamton (Northampton) and Robert Barre and Ralph de Arderne (both of Aylesbury hundred).

baronial cause and was one in a series of such incidents at Oxford University.[34] Twenty of Elias' twenty-six associates can be identified, with varying degrees of certainty, and most of them were from north-western Buckinghamshire and part of the close network previously identified there.[35] It seems therefore that Elias had retained strong contacts within his home county despite his landed base lying almost entirely within Northamptonshire.

The eastern border (from Hanslope to Lavendon in Buckinghamshire and from Piddington to Bozeat in Northamptonshire)

Along both sides of the eastern border the lords, in 1316, were generally absentees. Unfortunately, few records survive for the area as a whole and virtually none for the Northamptonshire side of the border, so investigation into social networks is, necessarily, limited. Nevertheless it is possible to suggest that affinities linked solely to one county were rare, probably because of the many cross-border landholdings and interests that existed in the area. For example, at the 1286 Buckinghamshire Eyre, of the twelve jurors that sat for Bunsty hundred (the hundred which included all the Buckinghamshire vills along this part of the border), four were landholders in other counties (Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire),[36] a further two had Northamptonshire connections[37] and a seventh was a man appointed by the Hospital of St John in Northampton.[38] This pattern was not repeated in the juries of the other hundreds of north Buckinghamshire.[39]

Three of the jurors had some involvement in the governance of Buckinghamshire. John de Beauchamp was a member of the baronial family of that name, who were based in Bedford, but who also held land in Lavendon. Members of the family served as knights of the shire for Buckinghamshire and as sheriffs of Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire, but their county affinities lay primarily with Bedfordshire.[40] Another juror was William

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[34] *CPR 1272-81*, p. 460; R.W. Hays, 'Welsh students at Oxford and Cambridge Universities in the middle ages', *Welsh History Review*, 4 (1969), p. 333.

[35] These include Stephen de la Haye of Foscott, near Buckingham, who had been a coroner in Buckinghamshire and who had been associated with Elias in other incidents (*TBE*, pp. 45, 53).

[36] William de Nowers, Miles de Hastings, John de Beauchamp, Adam de Furtho.

[37] William de Mortimer, William le Lou.

[38] John de Luvente.

[39] *TBE*, pp. 469-80.

[40] Lipscomb, 1, pp. xv,xx.

de Nowers, whose family had held the Buckinghamshire manor of Gayhurst since 1086 but also held land in Easton Maudit and Paulerspury in Northamptonshire.[41] He served on the commission for delivery of Northampton gaol in 1283-4 but appears not to have been involved in Buckinghamshire government.[42] However, his son was a knight of the shire for Buckinghamshire in 1297.[43] It seems unlikely, therefore, that the family identified themselves with one particular county alone. Only the third man, Ralph de Tothall, who held a small manor in Hanslope, seems to have been connected solely to Buckinghamshire, his father and grandfather having served as sheriffs of Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire.[44]

Cross-border connections and influences are visible in many areas of society and culture, for example, in the architectural styles adopted in the area. The only two 'really fine [medieval church] spires' in Buckinghamshire are found on the Bunsty churches of Hanslope and Olney, both built 'under the influence of Northamptonshire just over the border'.[45] The links could cause problems with the administration of justice within the county system. For example, some tenants in Bozeat, Northamptonshire were required to attend views of frankpledge at the lord's manor at Harrold in Bedfordshire. When the operation of these courts was queried in 1329 the justices at the Northamptonshire eyre had to take advice as to which county should try the matter. It was decided that 'a jury be brought from each of the two counties'.[46]

It is clear that belonging to one of the major honours in the area still involved much cross-border social contact. For example, in 1287 the members of the Hanslope honour witnessing a land grant included John le Lou, of Ashton, Ralph de Tothall, of Hanslope, and William de Nowers of Gayhurst.[47] In contrast, there is no evidence to suggest that the Bunsty gentry were involved in regular contact with men from the rest of Buckinghamshire and it is difficult to imagine that they felt a strong sense of county identity. Indeed it may have been this apparent isolation that had led to the state of affairs discernible in the area by the late fourteenth century. Cases at the 1389 eyre

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[41] *VCHB* 4, pp. 343-7; *VCHN* 4, pp. 11-17; *VCHN* 5, pp. 245-89.
[42] Coss, *The Origins,* p. 272.
[43] Lipscomb, 1, xx.
[44] Hanley, *The Buckinghamshire Sheriffs,* p.35.
[45] N. Pevsner and E. Williamson, *The Buildings of England: Buckinghamshire* (1960, London, 2000 edn), p. 42.
[46] *TEN*, pp. 106-7,126-7.
[47] *CCR 1279-88*, p. 488.

revealed 'a society in which the leading men, including officials like town bailiffs and constables, took the law into their own hands often at the head of gangs.'[48] For example, the bailiff of Olney and other leading men of the town beheaded a man arrested for felony, rather than sending him for trial. In what seems to have been an open act of defiance they sent his head to the 'king's gaol' at Aylesbury and were accused at the Eyre of 'usurping the royal power for themselves'.[49] Although this act may have been related to the ongoing struggle between central government and the local gentry for the control of criminal justice, it is noticeable that such incidents only took place in Bunsty and Moulsoe hundreds, both almost certainly late additions to the county.

Forest Law

The Anglo-Saxon kings had enjoyed hunting and, under them, some wooded areas had been designated as royal hunting grounds, but it was the Normans who first introduced forest law into England. Under this, large tracts of land, which included arable and pasture land as well as woodland, and which belonged to lords other than the king, were designated as royal forests and activities within them severely restricted. The main purpose of the regime, at least initially, was to protect the king's hunting but it also served to demonstrate his power and prestige. However, forest law gave the king the ability to interfere in, and levy money from, the lands of his subjects, and it rapidly became an important source of royal income. For example, fines and fees were extracted in respect of activities and offences such as woodland clearance, poaching, the keeping of dogs or the erection of fences to exclude deer from cultivated land.[50]

The bounds of the forests changed over time but most of the lands along the Buckinghamshire/Northamptonshire border fell within one of two royal forests - Salcey and Whittlewood - for at least a part of the medieval period. It is not generally known when, or by what means, individual forests were created but Whittlewood is first mentioned in c.1130 and Salcey in 1206, although people bearing the name 'de Salceto'

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[48] *IAI*, p. xvii.
[49] *IAI*, pp. xiii, xvii-xviii, nos 348-9, 374, 408.
[50] C.R. Young, *The Royal Forests of Medieval England* (Leicester, 1979), pp. 1-32; J.M. Steane, 'The forests of Northamptonshire in the early middle ages', *NPP*, 5 (1973), p. 8.

were recorded much earlier.[51] Before 1154, Whittlewood Forest seems not to have extended into north Buckinghamshire but very little is known about the extent of Salcey.[52] In 1184, after the Assize of Woodstock was passed, Henry II extended the forests of the south midlands so that they ran in a continuous line from Northamptonshire and Huntingdonshire through Buckinghamshire to Oxfordshire.[53] As a result it seems that both Whittlewood and Salcey were extended southwards to the Ouse (see figure 9.4). The River Tove marked the boundary between them.[54] In the west, Whittlewood reached as far as the Oxfordshire border and in the east Salcey probably extended into Bedfordshire.[55] This meant that all the border parishes to the north of the Ouse were under forest law and remained so for about a century. The five parishes to the south of the Ouse – Evenley, Thornton, Beachampton, Calverton and Wolverton - never fell within it.[56]

Both Salcey and Whittlewood were subject to the same restrictive laws, but the judicial arrangements were different in the Buckinghamshire parts of each. In Whittlewood, serious offences were dealt with by forest eyres held in the county in which the offence had been committed so that offences in the Buckinghamshire part of the forest went before the justices of the Buckinghamshire forest eyre. However, in Salcey it seems that everything was dealt with by the Northamptonshire eyres, even where the relevant offence had taken place in Buckinghamshire.[57] Most of the work to prepare cases for the forest eyres was done by inquisitions to which individual vills were summoned to give evidence and decide on offences committed in their vicinity. It is likely that such inquisitions were held in locations close to where the offences had occurred. Lesser infringements of forest law were dealt with in the courts of attachment, which were held in individual forest bailiwicks.[58] It is not known exactly how either Whittlewood or Salcey was organised in the thirteenth century but it must be suspected that, in

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[51] *PNN*, pp. 1-2; *LPC I* , no. 2; *VCHB* 4, pp. 466-70; F. Palgrave (ed.), *Rotuli Curiae Regis*, 2 vols (London, 1835), 1, p.138.
[52] M. Page, 'The extent of Whittlewood Forest and the impact of disafforestation in the later middle ages', *NPP*, 56 (2003), p. 25.
[53] I.M.W. Harvey, 'Bernwood in the middle ages', in J. Broad and R. Hoyle (eds), *Bernwood: The Life and Afterlife of a Forest* (Preston, 1997), pp. 3-4.
[54] For Whittlewood, see: Page, 'The extent', p.25. For the bounds of Salcey within Northamptonshire, see: TNA:PRO E 32/77. For the inclusion of Buckinghamshire vills, see: TNA: PRO, E 32/70.
[55] M.L. Bazeley, 'The extent of the English forest in the thirteenth century', TRHS, 4 (1921), p.162.
[56] Bernwood Forest extended eastwards as far as the borders of Thornton, which was excluded (Harvey, 'Bernwood', p. 4).
[57] Turner, *Select Pleas*, p.lii.
[58] Turner, *Select Pleas*, pp. xxvii-l.

Whittlewood at least, the bailiwicks were confined to a single county. This is less likely to have been true in Salcey where, even in the seventeenth century and beyond, the bailiwick of Hanslope extended across the county border.[59]

The forest laws were always resented, not least because they 'contained an arbitrary element and the punishments (particularly for poaching) were disproportionately harsh'.[60] Changes to their operation became linked to Magna Carta and the struggles to limit the power of the king and they thus remained a political issue throughout the thirteenth century.[61] Under Edward I the boundaries of the forests began to contract and one of the first major changes to the extents of Whittlewood and Salcey was the disafforestation of the Buckinghamshire portions, which had been added after the Assize of Woodstock. The records of the Buckinghamshire eyres for this period have not survived but the anomalous treatment of Salcey allows those of Northamptonshire to be used to ascertain when this change was likely to have taken place. In 1287 Salcey's bounds were described before the justices in eyre in Northampton. Those on the Northamptonshire side of the border remained unchanged from a century earlier but only a very small part of Buckinghamshire (in Hanslope and Stoke Goldington) seems then to have been included within the forest.[62] The eyre had clearly not visited Northamptonshire for some years and at the same meeting inquisitions were presented from the intervening period. One of these, from 1276, concerned an incident of poaching in the Buckinghamshire vill of Little Linford and the neighbouring vills of Haversham, Gayhurst and Stoke Goldington had been called to give evidence. It appears, therefore, that parts of north-eastern Buckinghamshire had remained under forest law in 1276 but had been disafforested by 1287. In 1277, Edward I had been forced to concede to new perambulations being made which resulted in demands for disafforestation from many counties. Most of these were ignored but a few concessions were made.[63] It would seem, from the timing, that the disafforestation of the Buckinghamshire part of Salcey might have been amongst them.

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[59] *RFN*, Map II.
[60] A. Musson, *Medieval Law in Context* (2001, Manchester, 2007 edn), p. 11.
[61] Young, *The Royal Forests*, pp. 135-48.
[62] TNA:PRO E 32/77. The perambulations are impossible to follow precisely but a part of the bounds is stated explicitly to run along the Buckinghamshire/Northamptonshire border, which was marked by a ditch. Hanslope and Stoke Goldington continued to appear in forest inquisitions into the fourteenth century so it appears that the bounds extended, to some extent, into those vills (see, for example TNA:PRO E 32/108).
[63] Bazeley ' The extent', pp. 156-7.

By 1299, the Northamptonshire portion of Salcey Forest had also diminished. The bounds then described made up two circuits, one either side of Yardley Chase, which seems to have been excluded from the forest. The vills along the Nene and many woods in the hands of religious houses had also been disafforested.[64] Figure 9.5 shows the border vills which remained wholly or partly within the forest. By the eighteenth century the forest had shrunk considerably from these bounds, but records suggest that this had happened in the early modern period.[65]

Whittlewood Forest, with the exception of a wood belonging to Lillingstone Dayrell, was confined to Northamptonshire before 1301 and it is likely that the Buckinghamshire section had been disafforested at the same time as Salcey, although no records exist to confirm this. Many of the vills on the margins of the forest in Northamptonshire had also been disafforested - for example, Brackley in the far west and the vills to the east of Watling Street, which had become the effective boundary of the forest. Surprisingly Wicken, which lay close to the heart of the forest, had also been excluded, perhaps another indication of its ambiguous status with regard to the county boundary. These bounds remained largely unaltered throughout the remainder of the medieval period and beyond.[66]

Lords clearly had an interest in disafforestation which gave them more freedom to manage their estates and hunt deer.[67] However, it should be noted that the impact of disafforestation on illegal hunting along the border was muted. Even after 1300, men from woodland manors no longer subject to forest law continued to be caught hunting in the woodlands of those that were. For example, in 1348 men from Olney, Weston Underwood and Yardley Hastings were caught in Salcey Forest with bows and arrows.[68] It seems that the royal forest had more appeal than the parks and woodlands closer to home. To the ordinary inhabitants the inclusion of local woodlands within the royal forest meant increased restrictions on their activities and, almost certainly, exposed

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[64] NRO, BRU Exxiv q; TNA:PRO C 99/80/6. See also: *The Seventh Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Enquire into the State and Condition of the Woods, Forests, and Land Revenues of the Crown* (London, 1792), pp. 21-2.
[65] TNA:PRO, MPEE 1/62. Easton Maudit and Bozeat, for example, were disafforested in 1639 (*VCHN* 4, pp. 11-17).
[66] Page, 'The extent', pp. 24-9.
[67] Page, 'The extent', pp. 29-32.
[68] TNA:PRO, E 32/114.

them to more corruption and extortion on the part of forest officials. The shared experience of living in a forest probably gave them a common outlook that, to some extent, transcended local political boundaries.

The administration of forest law and the judicial systems associated with it probably had most impact on the border gentry. In Whittlewood Forest the whole forest regime was based on the county and thus served to reinforce the boundaries of local government and royal justice. The networks of county society would, if anything, tend to be strengthened. This was not the case, however, in Salcey Forest. There, the forest courts and much of the administration seem to have been centred on Northampton and, although some matters were dealt with locally, the county border was probably meaningless in this context. This situation may have served to weaken the county loyalties of Buckinghamshire men and particularly those who served as forest officials, who must have developed strong ties to Northampton. Although some north-eastern Buckinghamshire vills remained part of the royal forest throughout the medieval period the impact of this would have been weakening from the early fourteenth century. By that time the whole forest regime was falling into decline as its administration became less effective, and its laws were gradually overtaken by the common law.[69]

Crossing the border

The extent to which people, particularly those at lower levels of society, moved across the border is difficult to recover in any systematic way from surviving records. However, this section attempts to build up a picture of how common such movements were by considering, firstly, migration patterns in the border area and, secondly, the, admittedly scarce, evidence for people crossing the border on a day-to-day basis

Migration

The surnames of early border residents often referred to their places of origin and can be used in analyses of migration patterns. Such analyses, however, require lists of the residents of individual vills, which, in practice, rarely exist and so the fourteenth

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[69] Young, *The Royal Forests*, p. 151.

century lay subsidy records are often used to give an approximation. The names of taxpayers in 1301 are available for most of the vills on the Northamptonshire side of the border and they have been used to map the origins of taxpayers bearing locative surnames in figure 9.6.[70] (Unfortunately those for Wymersley hundred do not survive.) As can be seen, to the west of the River Tove, where it forms the county boundary, migration was almost exclusively from other Northamptonshire vills. No names indicate a Buckinghamshire origin although one man in Syresham appears to have come from Boycott, the detached part of Oxfordshire which lay, geographically, within Buckinghamshire. This pattern is strikingly similar to that mapped in chapter 8 for Brackley, the town in this area. To the east of the Tove names are only available for two vills, Ashton and Hartwell, but the former contained a taxpayer bearing the name de Hanslope suggesting he originated in Buckinghamshire. This hints that the pattern seen further west was not repeated along this part of the border but the sample is too small for firm conclusions to be drawn.

Lay subsidy records do not contain the names of the taxpayers of many Buckinghamshire border vills. A better coverage is obtained from the 1279 hundred rolls, which list many tenants, and these form the basis of the map in figure 9.7, which also includes data for Lillingstone Lovell in Oxfordshire, for completeness.[71] The four Buckinghamshire vills to the west of the part of the county boundary formed by the Tove recorded sixteen locative names, eleven of which related to other vills within Buckinghamshire and one to Finmere in Oxfordshire. Only four vills within Northamptonshire appear in the list and one of these is Wicken whose status with respect to the county border has already been questioned. It seems therefore that although there was some migration across the county border from Northamptonshire to Buckinghamshire it was not substantial. To the east of the Tove the picture is different. Of the twenty nine locative names thirteen relate to places in Buckinghamshire, fourteen to places in Northamptonshire and two to Bedfordshire vills. Furthermore, it is noticeable that only one person seems to have originated from the part of Buckinghamshire that lay south of the Ouse and west of the Ousel. Again this closely resembles the pattern mapped for Olney, the main town in the area, in chapter 8.

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[70] TNTA. Only places with distinct and identifiable names have been mapped and lords known to have resided elsewhere have been excluded from the analysis.
[71] *RH*, 2, pp. 334-53.

However, in that case the data was compiled from different records which gives additional confidence in the distribution.

Routine journeys

It is very difficult to establish what, if any, impact the county border had on people's daily lives. A systematic study is not possible because it is usually only chance mentions in records dealing primarily with other matters that shed any light on the situation. Nevertheless, the numerous mentions of people crossing the eastern border for routine purposes suggests that in this area the boundary had little meaning. Examples include John le Frere of Cosgrove (Northamptonshire) who, in a 'proof of age' case of 1293, declared that he remembered the date of birth concerned because the previous day he had gone to share a meal with the father-to-be at Hanslope (Buckinghamshire) and then went with him to his home at Hartwell (Northamptonshire) where he spent the night.[72] In 1376 John Seward, chaplain of Hanslope (Buckinghamshire) crossed the border to buy lambs in Horton (Northamptonshire), but was killed by a forester in Salcey Forest.[73] In 1254 William de Yardley (Hastings) drove his horse and cart into a group of drunken revellers in Olney (Buckinghamshire) and was hit with a hatchet, dying later at his father's house in Yardley (Northamptonshire).[74]

Many more records have survived from the western part of the area and have been searched for various purposes in the course of this study, but, despite this, no similar mentions of people crossing the border for routine purposes have been noted. There could be many explanations for this, particularly in the selection of the types of records for examination, nevertheless the suspicion must be that people in the west did not routinely cross the border as frequently as did those in the east.

Border stories

The way in which medieval societies perceived themselves can really only be approached through their literature, the stories they told and the heroes they chose.

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[72] *CIPM*, 3, no. 151.
[73] *IAI*, no. 24.
[74] *CIM*, 1, no. 2087.

Stories told and passed down along borders tend to be those dealing with the relationship between marginal societies and those in authority at the centre. Some of these stories are promulgated from the centre in an attempt to bind the outer edges more closely into the whole and impart a common sense of identity. Others, originating at the margins, stress a separate identity and resentments felt at control from the centre find expression in the adoption, as heroes, of outlaws and men who have otherwise made trouble for central authorities.[75]

The only two stories that were known to have had resonance along the Buckinghamshire/Northamptonshire border were both associated with the western border to the north of Buckingham. The legend of St Rumbold has already been discussed and seems to have been of the first type, originating in Mercia when its control over its borders was in danger of weakening.[76] The second story is that of Hereward the Wake, who was remembered for his resistance to the Normans as they tried to consolidate their hold over England, but who was also the head of a gang of robbers and thugs. Before the nineteenth century, Hereward's popularity was largely confined to his home territory of the Fenlands, but he also seems to have been long remembered in the Buckingham area. An early tradition suggests that he spent some time as a captive in Buckingham Castle, although many manuscript sources refer rather to Bedford Castle.[77] In 1269, a Luffield Priory charter, in describing the bounds of a wood, named a particular landmark as 'castellum Herewardi'. This can be identified with a, now ploughed-out, rectangular earthwork at Castle Farm in Biddlesden, a few yards from the current county border.[78] Whilst it is perhaps unlikely that the real Hereward was associated with this 'castle', its name suggests that the people of the area identified with him and kept alive the stories of his exploits into the late thirteenth century.

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[75] T.S. Jones, *Outlawry in Medieval Literature* (New York, 2010), pp. 51-9.
[76] Above, pp. 128-31.
[77] Jones, *Outlawry*, pp. 74-87; *VCHB* 3, pp. 471-89; M. Swanton, 'The deeds of Hereward', in T.H. Ohlgren (ed.), *Medieval Outlaws: Twelve Tales in Modern English Translation* (West Lafayette, 2005), pp. 28-99.
[78] *LPC II*, no.399; 'Biddlesden, enclosure earthwork excavated', BHER, CAS 0193. By the eighteenth century, according to Jefferys' map, the 'castle' was known as 'Warwick Castle'.

Conclusion

The composition of society in 1086 does not seem to have differed greatly across the county border and, in fact, it is an east/west division that is more noticeable. The distribution of freemen, however, highlights the contrast between society and estate structure in the Buckinghamshire hundred of Bunsty and that in the rest of the county. This apparent divide is also visible in the strong cross-border links between Bunsty and Northamptonshire, evidenced in migration patterns, architecture, jury selection, honorial affairs and in day-to-day activities. Bunsty gentry were sometimes involved in Buckinghamshire administration but this was usually matched by service in other counties and there is little sign of particular commitment to the county. All this suggests that the people of Bunsty did not belong, culturally or socially, to the rest of the county. Moreover, central government seems sometimes to have shared this view, effectively treating the area as part of Northamptonshire for the purposes of the administration of forest law.

Further to the west local networks, centred on hundreds, but involved in county affairs can be clearly seen. The gentry seem to have identified with their particular county and the legal affairs of both counties were kept completely separate, even when parts of both fell within the royal forest of Whittlewood. There is little evidence that people at any level of society frequently felt the need or desire to cross the border either on a routine basis or more permanently. Given that the very different situation in the east had its roots in the pre-Conquest period, it is possible that the 'county' divisions apparent in the west also had older origins. This is perhaps consistent with the stories current in the area both pre and post-Conquest which suggest that the people there had long regarded themselves, as belonging to a marginal society. The apparently strong identity with county may have had as much to do with more ancient divisions as with changes in royal government.

10
Conclusion

The aims of this thesis were to examine the applicability of the concept of cultural provinces, as defined by Phythian-Adams, in the medieval period and whether such provinces could always be defined by reference to culturally imposed county boundaries. To test these ideas the history and development of one such border that between Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire has been studied both in terms of its origins and the impact it had on the people of the borderlands. Literature dealing with national frontiers has shown that, although medieval borders had many characteristics in common, each one had some unique features resulting from the make-up of the societies on either side and the history of the relationship between them. As a result few borders were, in reality, uniform, linear constructs and most could best be regarded as a series of localised frontiers. This concept has been particularly relevant to the county border studied where the eastern and western parts exhibited very different characteristics.

Most county boundaries were set in the period before maps were in use and so they tended to be marked by clearly visible, natural features in the landscape. It might be expected, therefore, that a boundary drawn in the vicinity of the current Buckinghamshire/Northamptonshire border would utilise either the River Great Ouse or the high ground of the Yardley-Whittlewood ridge to mark its course, the choice between them being dependent on the relative dominance of these features in a given area. Along the westernmost part of the borderlands, the high ground of the ridge, where it rises to form part of the Northamptonshire Wolds, is more prominent than the Ouse, which, close to its source, is little more than a stream. Further east, near to Watling Street's crossing of the Ouse, the position reverses - the ridge largely disappears whilst the river widens. The course of the current county border reflects this change and runs along the high ground in the west before dropping to the river just to the west of Watling Street. Further east still, beyond the confluence of the River Tove with the Ouse, the ridge begins to rise once more, although it never reaches the heights seen in the west, and the Ouse, broadening further, remains the focus of the landscape. However, the county boundary, instead of continuing along the Ouse, follows the Tove to the high ground and then continues eastwards along the ridge into Bedfordshire. This

diversion from the river gives the first hint that this part of the border (the eastern border) may have had a different origin and history from the remainder (the western border).

In order to investigate the border further this thesis has used a series of themes based around landscape, society and economy and the arrangement of chapters reflects this. In each section evidence from documents, landscape, archaeology, place-names and other appropriate records has been used to explore the theme concerned and, where possible, to identify patterns in, or resulting from, human behaviour, that either continued across the county border or altered at it. The method of analysis varies from chapter to chapter but the general approach has been to use maps and analyse data numerically wherever possible. In this way any underlying patterns have been brought out and have enabled a coherent picture of the evolution and effects of the border to be drawn. Data is often sparse and the conclusions drawn in relation to any single topic are, necessarily, somewhat tentative. However, by exploring the position through a number of different themes, the cumulative evidence enables rather stronger overall conclusions to be developed.

Chapter 3 has shown that, in the late Anglo-Saxon period, the border, for most of its length, ran through alternating tracts of shared woodland and pasture. This type of landscape often separated more distant centres of population and frequently developed into a linear boundary, as the land was allocated between the people who had once shared it. Such development was not inevitable, however, as some societies were organised around the management of shared land which, rather than dividing them, served to unite them. In that case, the land concerned would tend to lie close to the centre of a particular territory rather than at the margins. However, this study has found much evidence to suggest that the lands along the western border were of the former type and had long been part of a liminal zone perhaps dating back to the Bronze Age. The area was sparsely populated in the mid-Saxon period and evidence from Domesday Book, and other sources, reveals that, in the eleventh century, much of the pasture and woodlands on the Northamptonshire side of the border had belonged to estate centres situated further to the north. The position on the Buckinghamshire side is less clear but there is, perhaps, a hint of a social grouping centred on the management of the

moorlands around Stowe, which undoubtedly would have had some interest in these lands.

The development of the *burh* at Buckingham probably hastened the formation of a linear border in the area, as it seems likely that a part of the shared land was attached to it in some way. In the far west, a tributary of the Ouse was used to mark the boundary of this land where it ran through the open pastures between Brackley and Syresham and this was probably the first section of the border to be fixed. Further east the border left this stream, as it passed through the woodlands of Whittlewood, and a linear boundary was slower to emerge. The division of the land, between the centres with interests in the woodlands concerned, probably took place over a long period of time and arose through many separate negotiations, trespasses and compromises. Its final shape owed much to the activities of the earl of Leicester and the religious houses he founded in the area in the twelfth century, probably for the purpose of protecting his interests in the ongoing process of land division. Even later still to be settled was the section that ran from the high ground to the Ouse and eventually separated Wicken from Buckinghamshire. Evidence has been found indicating that at least a part of Wicken was once attached to Buckinghamshire and remained so, at least ecclesiastically, into the thirteenth century. The overall result, however, was a border that preserved links between vills and their detached woodlands, leaving both within the same county, and which, it has been shown, there was little need to cross on a regular basis. The research has indicated that the only anomalies in this area – the attachment of Lillingstone Lovell to Oxfordshire and Marieland, a detached area of Biddlesden in Northamptonshire – probably both resulted from ecclesiastical links.[1]

It has been demonstrated that the easternmost part of the border, where it diverts from the Ouse, had different characteristics. It is clear that people belonging to the surrounding centres in both the Nene and the Ouse valleys shared the woodlands and pastures of Salcey Forest and Yardley Chase. Moreover, the ubiquity of placenames containing the element '*geat*', and the early organisation of the woods into lawns and coppices, may indicate that some form of cross-border communal management was in place. There is no firm evidence that larger regional centres had an interest in the land,

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[1] The position of Marieland is considered in chapter 5, but that of Lillingstone Lovell is analysed more fully in the appendix.

although it must be suspected that Northampton did. The county border, when it was drawn, passed just to the south of the watershed, probably following the woodland edges and field boundaries of Buckinghamshire estates. As a result, most, if not all, of the previously inter-commoned lands fell on the Northamptonshire side of the border and seem to have been annexed to the earldom of Huntingdon. Yardley Hastings, a demesne manor of the earl, held the soke of much of the area and may have been used as an administrative centre. The border separated several important Buckinghamshire vills from their woodlands and no evidence has been found of a slowly evolving, negotiated boundary, as seen in parts of the west. It is difficult to believe other than that such a boundary was imposed from above, its sole purpose being to delineate an area of land north of the Ouse (Bunsty hundred) to be transferred from Northamptonshire to Buckinghamshire. Such a transfer would have involved attaching a part of what had been Danish territory to a Mercian shire, however the cultural differences seem to have pre-dated the Viking invasions. All the sources studied, ranging from the archaeology of iron-age settlement patterns to the distribution of freemen in 1086, indicate that it was the rivers (Ouse and Ousel) rather than the county boundary that had divided people belonging to different political and cultural groupings.

It is probable that a part of Bedfordshire, lying to the east of the Ousel, was transferred to Buckinghamshire at the same time as Bunsty, but without a more detailed study of the Bedfordshire/Buckinghamshire border it is impossible to be certain. Newport Pagnell, situated at the point where the two 'new' areas met the original north-eastern limits of the shire, almost certainly owes its rise as a local administrative centre to these additions. It has been demonstrated, by considering changes in tenurial patterns, in the make-up of local earldoms, and in the status of Newport, that the extension of Buckinghamshire can probably be dated to the first half of the eleventh century. This is also consistent with the lack of links apparent in 1086 between Bunsty and the remainder of the county, in terms of either landholdings or burgesses in the county town. These would surely have developed had the changes been much earlier. In particular, this study has shown that the royal estate of Buckingham was breaking up at the beginning of the eleventh century and Bunsty landholders would have had an interest in acquiring some of its lands had they belonged to the shire based around it. The whole scheme can, perhaps, be attributed to Eadric Streona who was known to have been involved in the re-drawing of county boundaries, shortly after his appointment as

ealdorman of Mercia in 1007. Whatever their precise origin, however, these changes were almost certainly the last major amendments to a framework which had been developing for more than a century.

Foard has suggested that, in the mid to late Saxon period, the border area was subsumed within two provinces. The eastern province, which was centred on Northampton, extended southwards as far as the Ouse, and thus included the Buckinghamshire hundred of Bunsty. This study, in broad terms, has found nothing to contradict that and the idea that this part of Buckinghamshire was once attached to Northampton is supported by evidence occurring throughout the period studied. The proposed western province was centred on (Kings) Sutton and extended further southwards, beyond the Ouse, encompassing the Buckinghamshire hundreds of Stodfold and Rowley, although Foard noted that both the identification of the centre of the province and its extent needed further research. His contention that the province extended into north-western Buckinghamshire was based largely on the legend of St Rumbold, which linked Buckingham to Sutton and Brackley. It seems, however, that, although the legend may have been current in the broad area from an early date, it did not become attached to the actual places with which it was later associated until the late tenth century, probably as part of a drive to popularise the churches established at administrative centres. Further, this study has identified the western part of the county border as being particularly strong throughout the medieval period and potentially of ancient origin. This suggests that it had separated different political entities and was likely to have formed the southern boundary of Foard's western province, although it would be interesting to extend this research southwards to look for enduring evidence of his suggested southern boundary.

Foard's identification of Sutton as the centre of the province rests primarily on links suggested in a fourteenth century document, in which the church there attempted to collect churchscot from people belonging to parishes situated over a wide area of south-western Northamptonshire. However, this document is very late, and somewhat anachronistic, and there are alternative interpretations of the evidence it contains. Furthermore, evidence from place-names and later landscape divisions suggest that Halse had a good claim to have been the centre of an area that had included Sutton within it. Indeed, both Sutton and (Greens) Norton, another estate centre, may even

have been named by reference to their location with respect to Halse. If so, the extent of the province to which both belonged may have been preserved in the boundaries of the archdeaconry named from Brackley, a daughter vill of Halse.

There is no doubt that the Viking wars and subsequent political re-organisations fundamentally affected the administrative geography of northern Buckinghamshire and southern Northamptonshire, although some elements of an earlier system may have survived. Chapter 4 considers the development of the shires and suggests that the *burhs* at Towcester and Buckingham, and the Viking centre at Northampton, each had a part of the borderlands attached to them. These areas were further divided into hundreds, probably in the tenth century under Edward the Elder. It has been demonstrated that these divisions were based on river systems, as can be seen particularly clearly in the high grounds of south-west Northamptonshire where several rivers have their source and where the medieval hundredal pattern preserved the divisions. In that area the boundaries of the hundreds were based on watersheds, but further to the east and south, where the land was lower-lying and the rivers dominated the landscape, the rivers themselves often formed the boundaries.

A system of eight hundreds being attached to *burhs* and other centres in the border area seems to underlie the whole arrangement. In some cases, for example, that of Towcester, this may be related to the length of the defences being supported. It does, however, mirror an older system found at Oundle and hinted at in the Domesday records for Aylesbury. When the counties were formed they seem to have consisted of an amalgamation of such units – two in the case of Buckinghamshire (1600 hides) and four for Northamptonshire (3200 hides). It is likely that a unit centred on Aylesbury joined with one centred on Buckingham to make Buckinghamshire, whilst Towcester, Northampton, Oundle and, presumably, another unit were united to form Northamptonshire. At that time the boundary between the shires, as far as it was defined, probably ran along the high ground to the west of Wicken and then along the Ouse as far as the Ousel, which marked the then easternmost limit of Buckinghamshire.

The differing ages and origins of the eastern and western borders produced divergent effects on local societies and these remained visible throughout the medieval period. The eastern part of the border - that which marked out Bunsty hundred, the area

transferred to Buckinghamshire in the eleventh century - probably comes closest to many modern concepts of an administrative boundary. It was almost certainly drawn for a particular purpose, in a single exercise, and it bisected an area which, seemingly, had not previously been divided. Perhaps because of this, it seems to have had little impact on society in the post-Conquest period. For many administrative and legal purposes Bunsty hundred continued to be regarded as part of Northamptonshire. For example, forest pleas from north east Buckinghamshire were heard in Northampton and it was the sheriff of the latter county who was responsible for the income and administration of the Bunsty manor of Olney when it was in royal hands. The hundred seems never to have become fully integrated into Buckinghamshire. In the fourteenth century, the jurors that sat for the hundred were as likely to have been landholders in neighbouring counties as in Buckinghamshire and links to cross-border honours remained at least as important as county ties. The leading men of the hundred seem to have had an uneasy relationship with the county's judicial system and had their own methods, more cursory and violent, of keeping order.

Analyses of surnames suggest that, although there was migration into Bunsty's towns and vills, virtually none of it came from the remainder of Buckinghamshire, and, indeed, there was very little in the opposite direction. The county border was crossed regularly for social, business and criminal purposes and clearly had no impact on day-to-day life. Moreover, there is no evidence that this part of the border marked an economic division in terms of agriculture. The mixed economy of Bunsty hundred, where pastoral farming was as important as arable, seems to have been similar to that seen across the border in Northamptonshire and settlements on either side developed along the same lines. Furthermore, it is striking that, although field systems varied from east to west in the area, the same variations were reflected on either side of the border and nowhere did the latter mark a change in practice. Rather it seems that it was the Ouse that separated this mixed economy from one of extensive arable farming further south, where the open fields stretched to the parish boundaries and the land was fully exploited by the time of Domesday.

In contrast, the western part of the boundary had developed from a liminal zone that had long served to separate societies and it continued to fulfill this role in the medieval period. For example, thirteenth and fourteenth century surnames suggest that there had

been virtually no migration northwards across the border and very little in the opposite direction. Nor is there any evidence to indicate that crossing the border on a routine basis was a common occurrence, as was so clearly the case in the east. Stories popular in the medieval period suggest that a border mentality prevailed and the unifying effect of religious houses founded on, or close to, the border seems to have been minor and shortlived. By the mid-thirteenth century, society on the Buckinghamshire side of the border, at least at the level of the gentry, had become centred on the county, a movement perhaps fostered by the close proximity of the county town and the relatively weak grip on the area by the honour of Clare. On the Northamptonshire side the Leicester honour was a strong early focus but, by the early fifteenth century, a county-centred gentry had clearly emerged there, too.

The growth of a market economy does not appear to have changed the position significantly and the same differences between the eastern and western borderlands can be seen in the trading networks and relationships that developed. For example, the merchants from the towns on the Northamptonshire side of the border and from Olney, in the Buckinghamshire hundred of Bunsty, all preferred to register their debts at the Northampton registry, whilst those of other Buckinghamshire towns generally used Oxford. Furthermore, there is little evidence of trading networks spanning the western border. Before the beginning of the fourteenth century the wool trade in Brackley had been in the hands of merchants from Dunstable in Bedfordshire and, after that date, Brackley men tended to trade with those based in Oxfordshire and Northamptonshire, rather than in Buckinghamshire. On the Buckinghamshire side of the border men based in Buckingham and Stony Stratford often acted together in transactions involving wool and other commodities. Although they were occasionally joined in illegal price manipulation by men from the Northamptonshire side of the border, this seems often to have resulted in disputes in which the participants divided along county lines. There is, however, no record of Olney merchants acting in consort with their counterparts based further west in Buckinghamshire - instead they seem to have developed their own networks based on older honorial connections.

In Phythian-Adams' scheme of cultural provinces the whole of Buckinghamshire was allocated to a province centred on the Thames and Northamptonshire to one centred on the Bedfordshire/Huntingdonshire Ouse. The use of the county boundary to define the

provinces meant that the north Buckinghamshire borderlands which, geographically, lay within the latter province with Northamptonshire, were instead 'pulled' into the Thames province with the remainder of Buckinghamshire. However, this study has found evidence of a strong east/west divide running approximately along the line of Watling Street. To the east of this line, it is clear that the county border did not mark a social or cultural division and therefore did not form the boundary of a cultural province. There is no apparent justification for the allocation of the part of Buckinghamshire lying to the north of the Ouse (Bunsty) to a Thames province with which it had no links, and it surely belonged in the Ouse province with Northamptonshire.

To the west of Watling Street the position was different. As far as can be ascertained, the links to the Buckinghamshire borderlands seemed to be primarily from the south and west and they probably did belong in the Thames province as Phythian-Adams suggested. However, there is no evidence to support his allocation of south-west Northamptonshire to the Ouse province. Links to and from the area rarely extended eastwards across Watling Street to the remainder of Northamptonshire. Instead they tended to be with the north and the west, towards Leicestershire, Warwickshire and North Oxfordshire. It is not certain, therefore, that this area would fit comfortably within any of the provinces defined by reference to river valleys. Instead, its focus was perhaps the high grounds that formed the headwaters of the rivers Ouse, Cherwell and Tove. The conclusion must be that, whilst the broad concept of cultural provinces had some relevance in the medieval period, the extent to which provinces based on river valleys extended into the higher grounds of central England has to be questioned. Furthermore, it is clear that medieval cultural provinces cannot be defined by reference to current county boundaries. However, both of these limitations were probably removed in later periods when the county had become an important and accepted focus for society. By that time it is likely that border societies with initially different outlooks may have been 'pulled' into the provinces in which the majority of their respective counties lay.

This thesis is probably the first detailed study of a medieval county border in south central England. It has shown that county boundaries cannot be considered as monolithic constructs, even in an area where they are often thought to have been imposed unilaterally and without regard to earlier landscape divisions. Whilst the

eastern part of the Buckinghamshire/ Northamptonshire border may conform to this stereotype, the western part does not. Furthermore, the evidence makes it clear that the imposition of a county border along a line which had not represented an earlier division did not, in the medium term, serve to separate a previously united society. Older and stronger local ties remained more important than loyalty to the new county and, as the power of the latter increased, relationships with county authorities often became uneasy. In contrast, where a county border ran through an area of longstanding liminality, the separateness of the societies on either side tended to be enhanced as they each began to identify with one county or the other. In the absence of strong ties across the border to pull in the opposite direction, social and trading networks tended to develop in a county context.

These findings - that the social, economic and, perhaps more surprisingly, the administrative, effects of the imposition of a new internal boundary, or the removal of an older one, were slow to develop - have wider implications. First, the appropriateness of a modern county as a unit for the analysis of data, or for a study based in the medieval period, needs, in some cases, to be questioned. Second, it is clear that analyses of later records of many types can be used in combination to give an indication of where older boundaries might have lain and thus aid in the understanding of the development of wider political geographies.
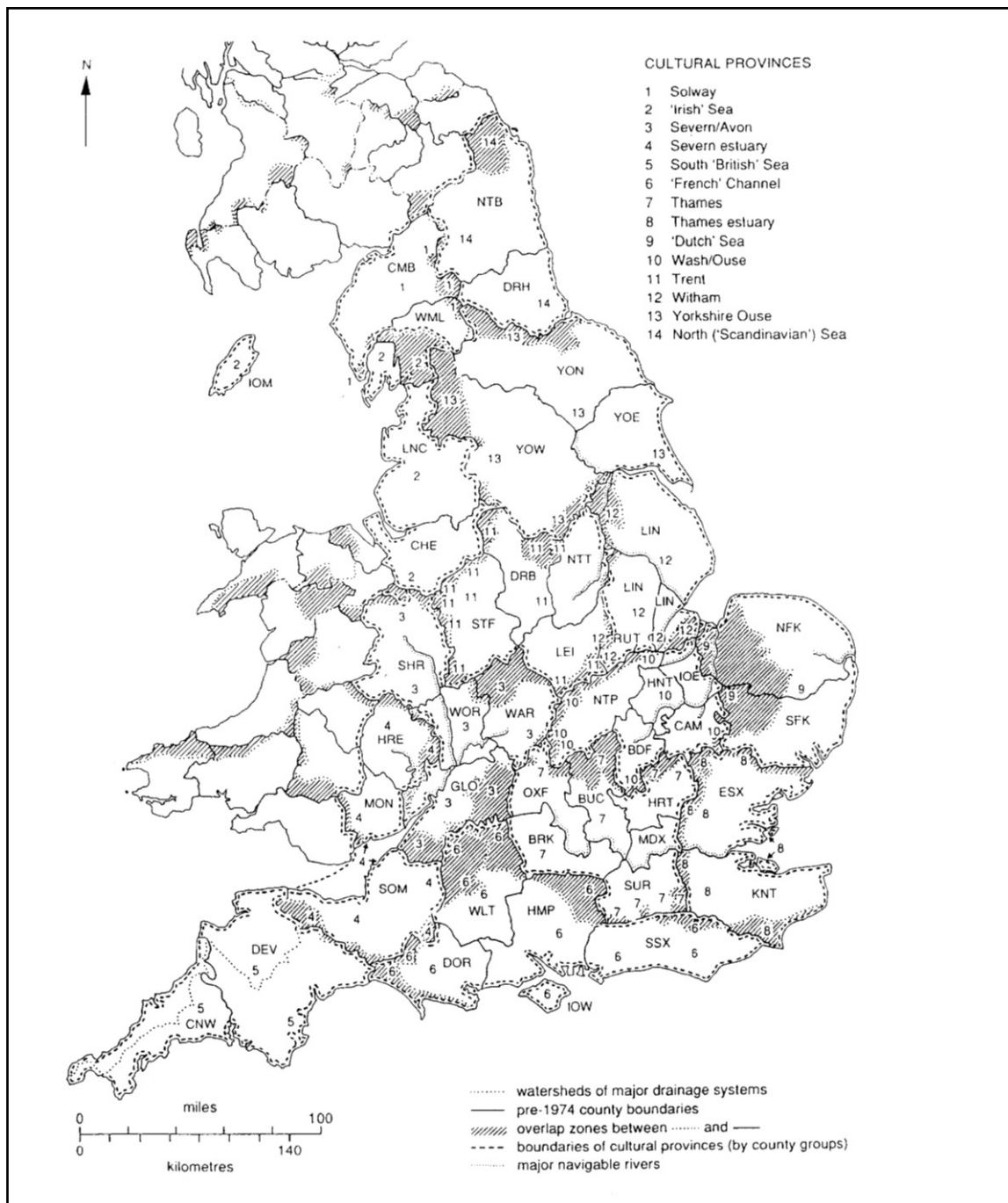
Figure 1.1. Cultural Provinces

(From: C. Phythian-Adams, 'Frontier Valleys' in *Rural England. An Illustrated History of the Landscape,* J. Thirsk, (ed.) (Oxford, 2000), p. 239)
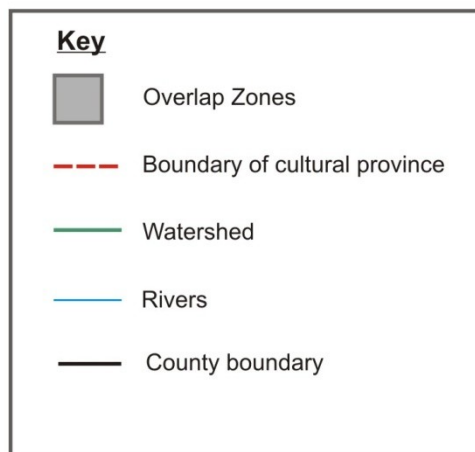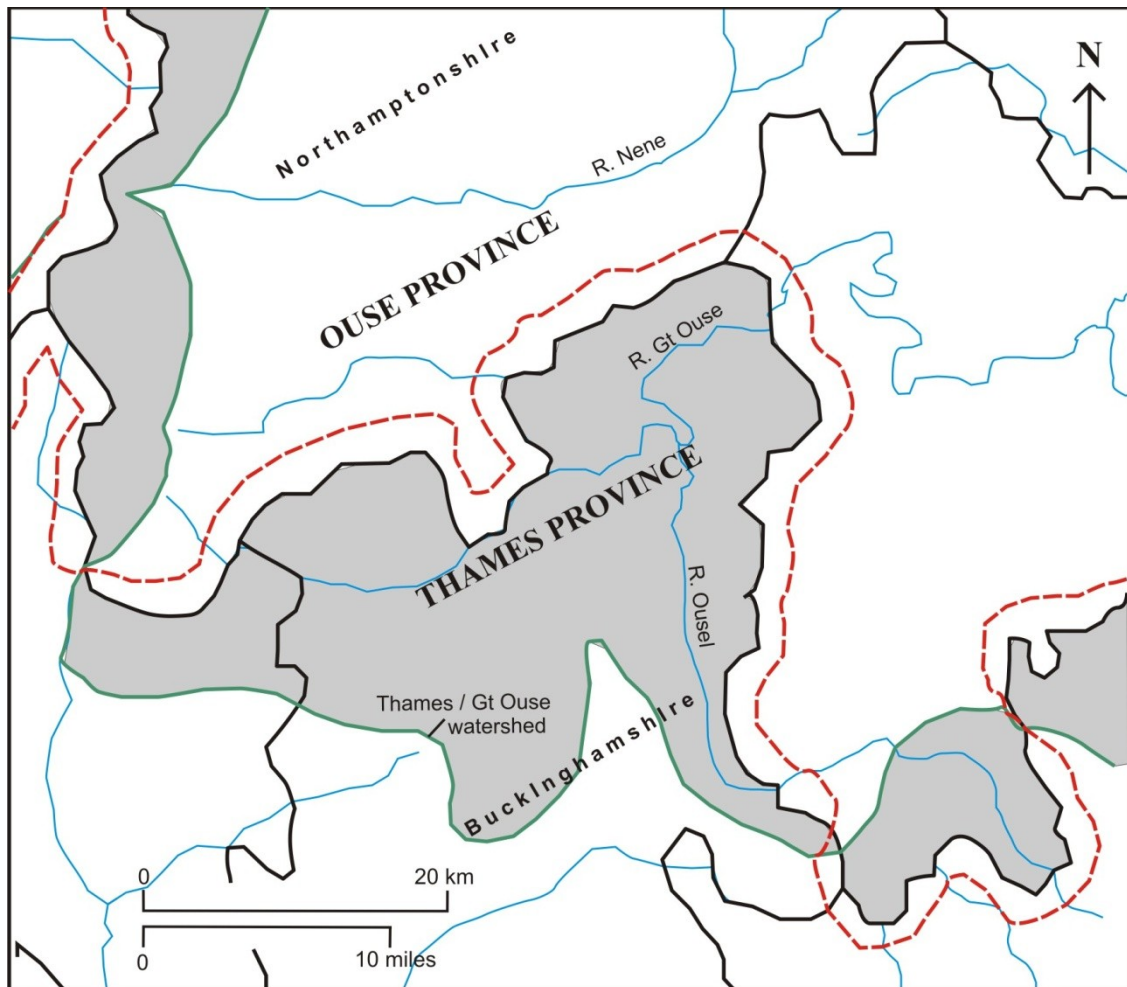
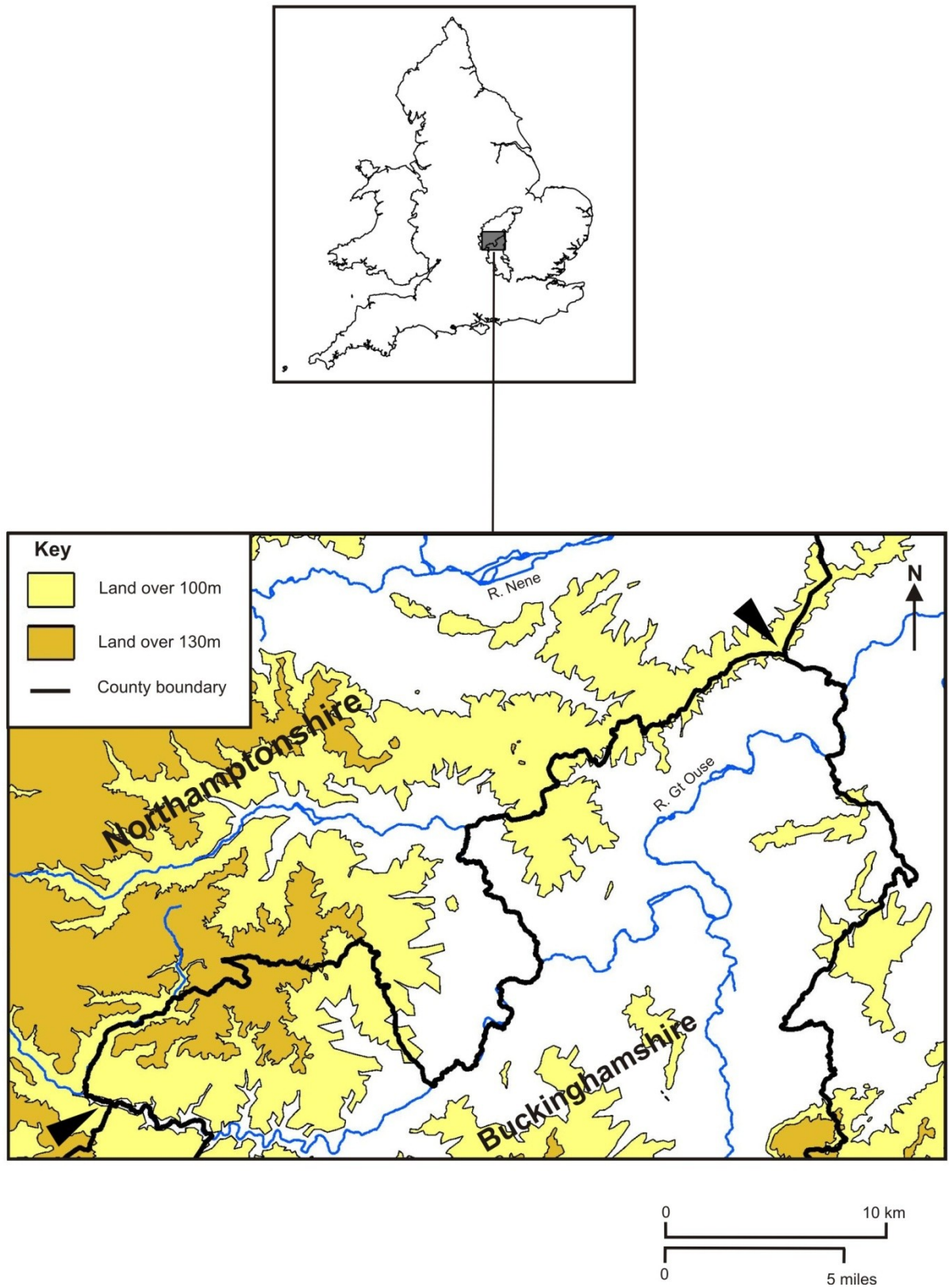**Figure 1.2. The boundary between the Great Ouse and Thames cultural provinces**

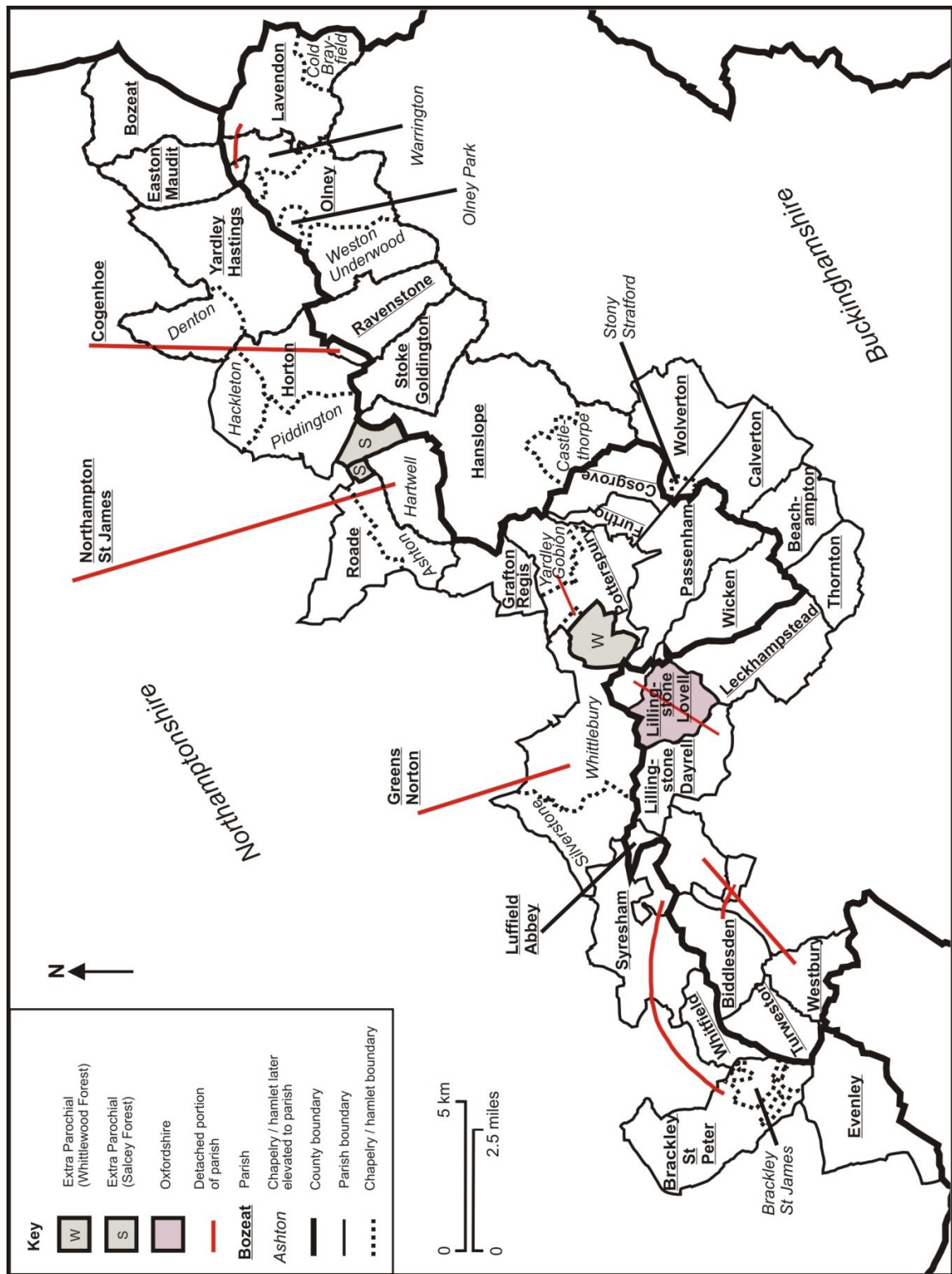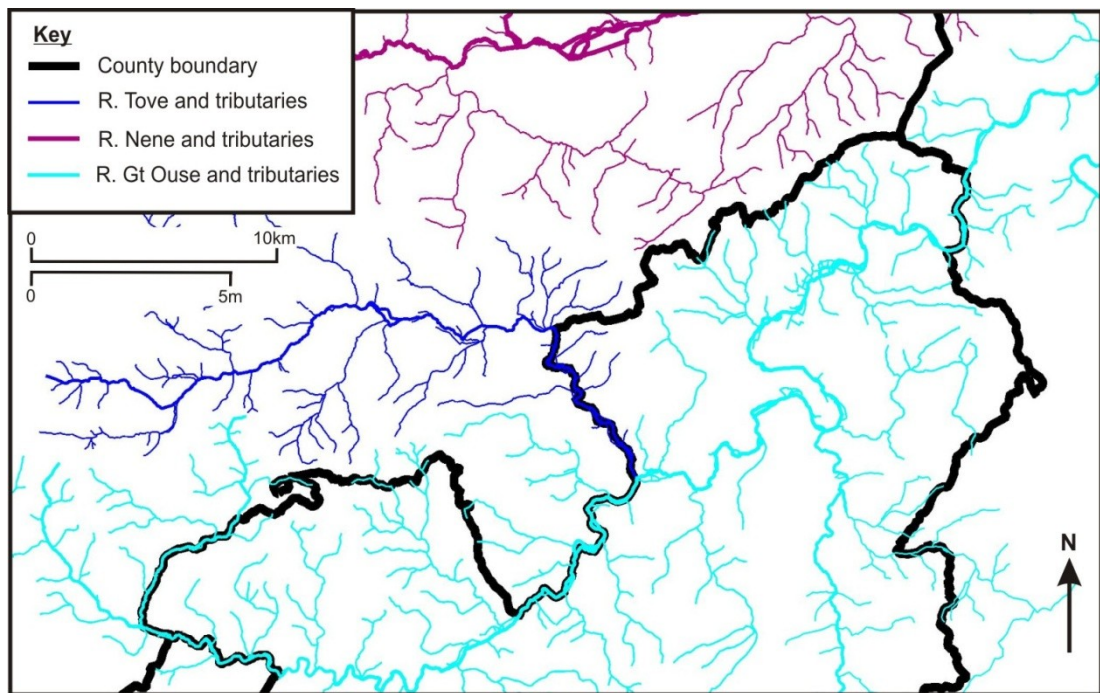**Figure 2.1. The Buckinghamshire/Northamptonshire border.**

Figure 2.2. The study area

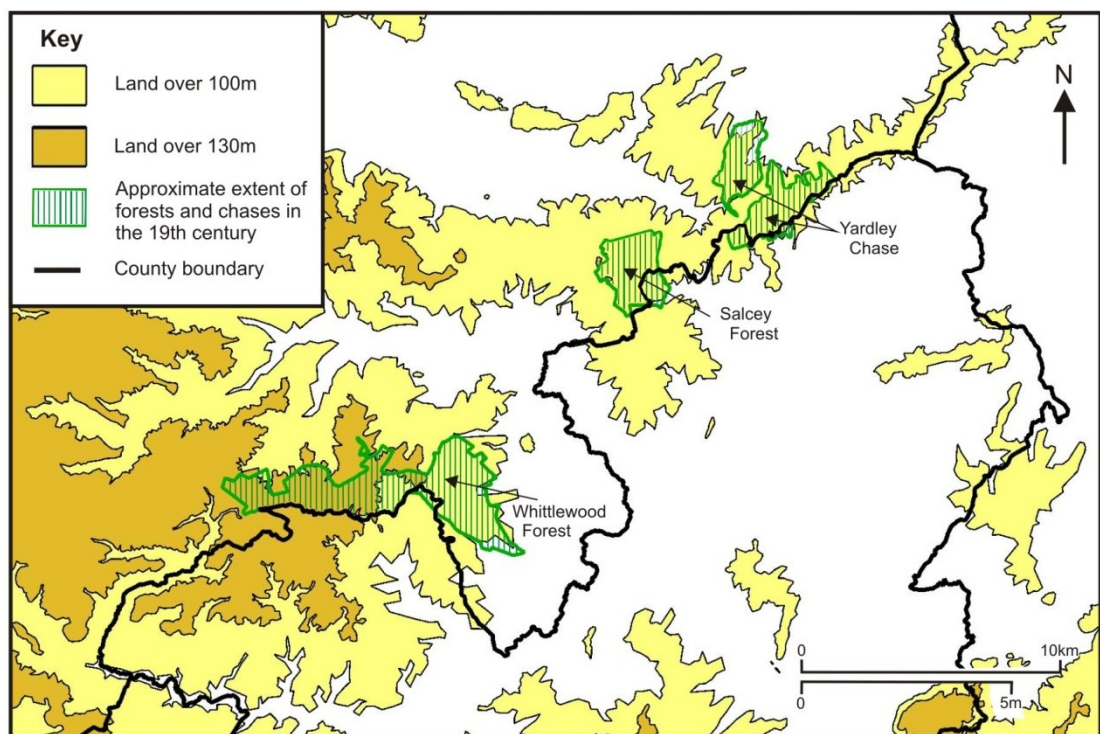**Figure 2.3. River systems in the border area.**

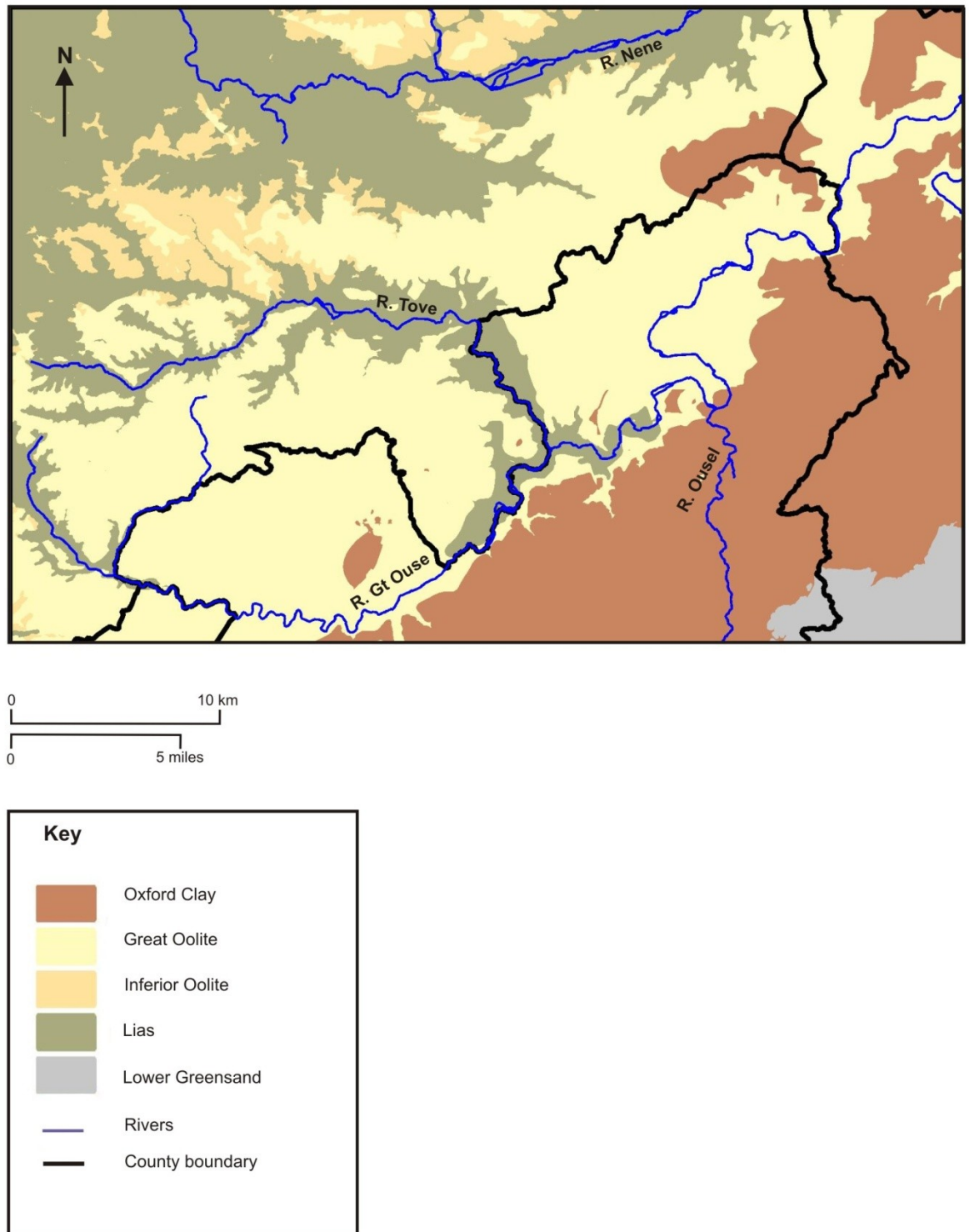**Figure 2.4. Relief and forests in the border area.**
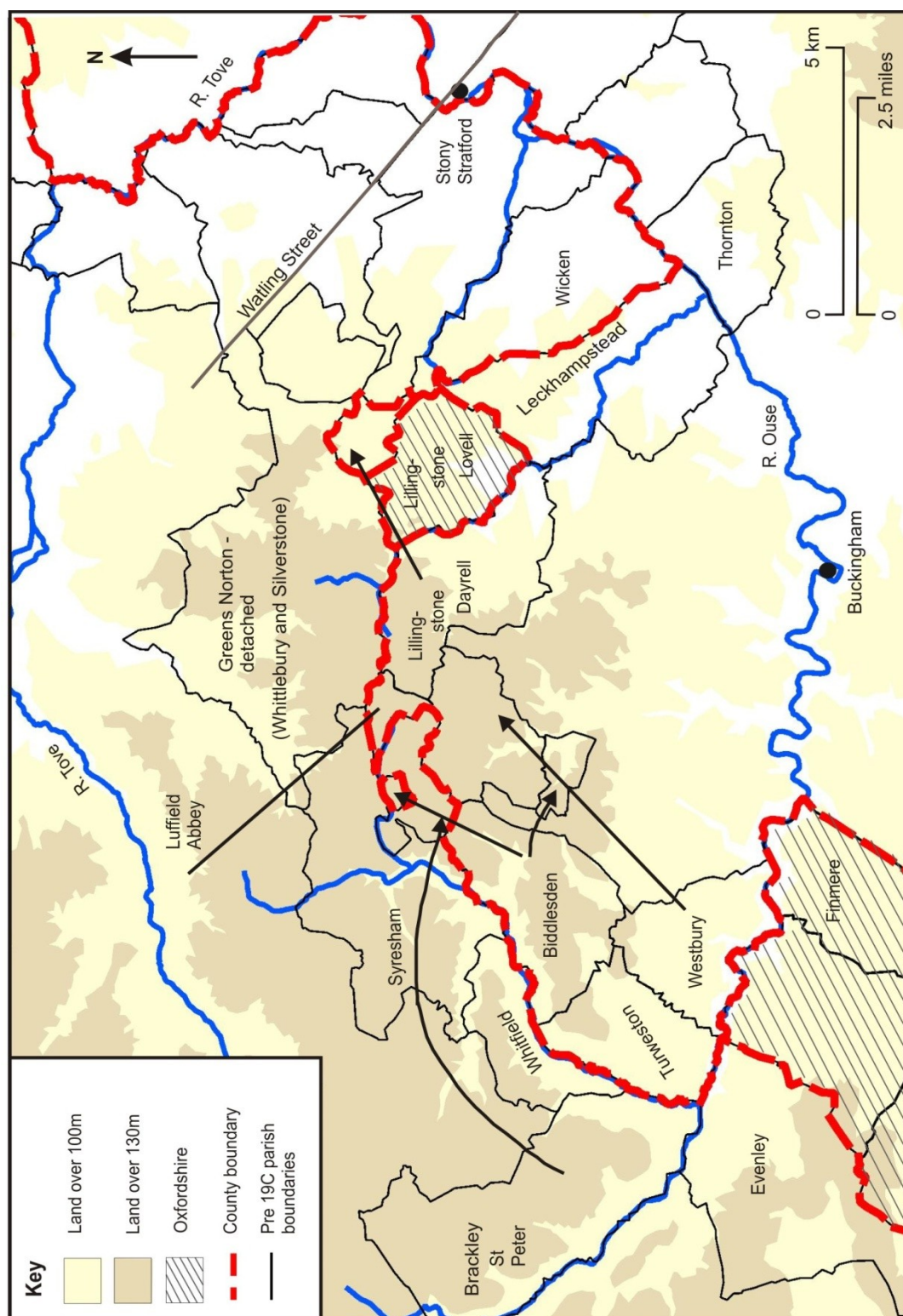
Figure 2.5. The geology of the border area.

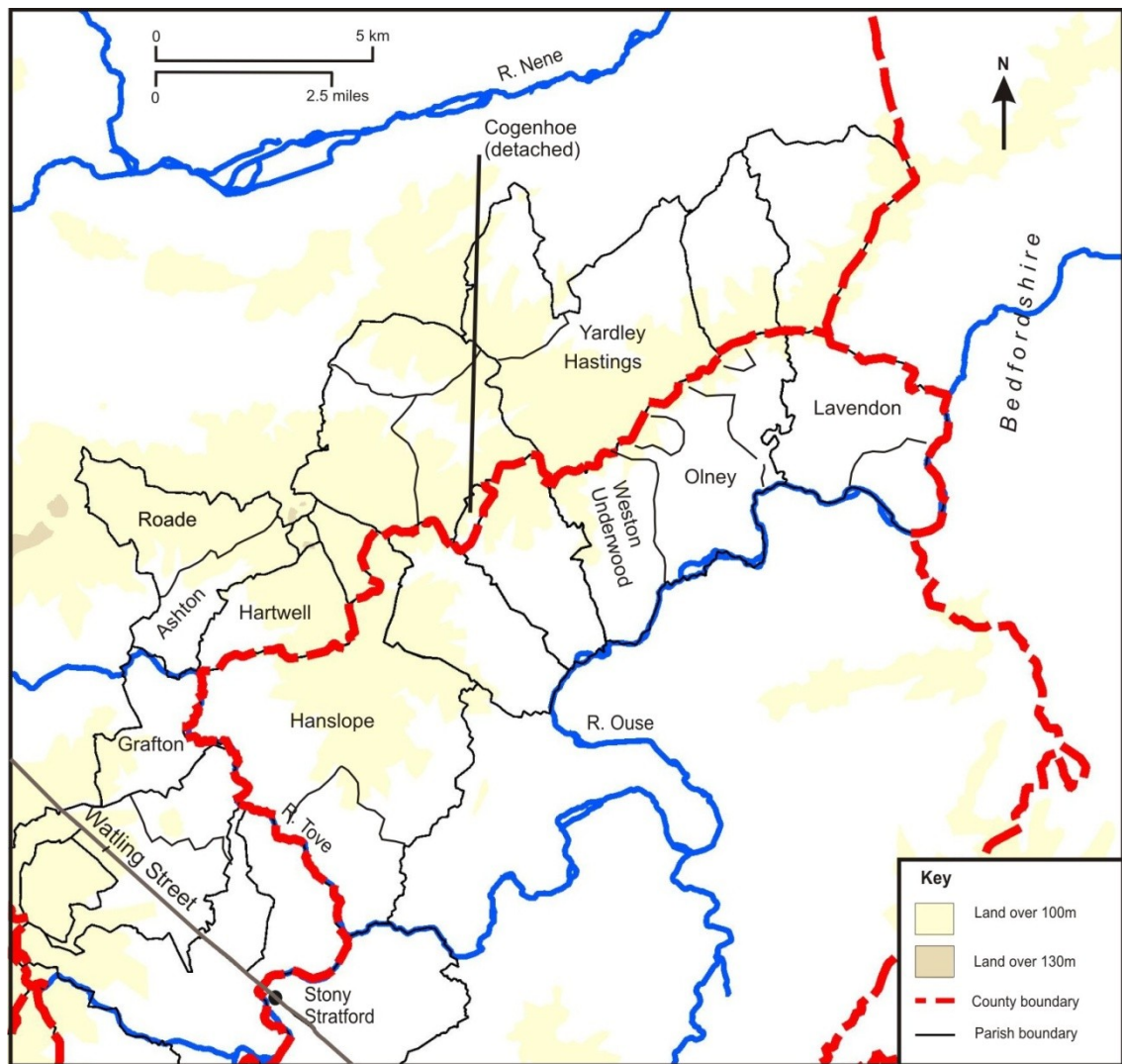**Figure 2.6. The western border.**
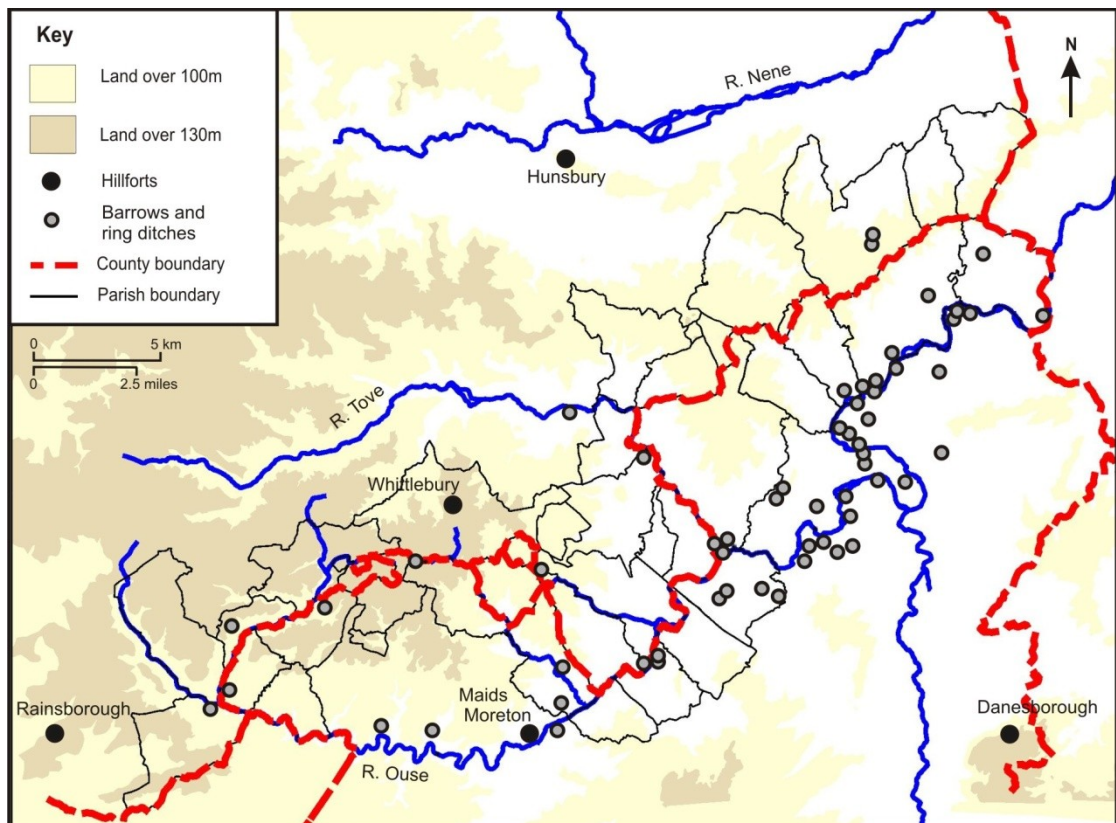
Figure 2.7. The eastern border.

Figure 2.8. Hillforts, barrows and ring ditches in the border area.
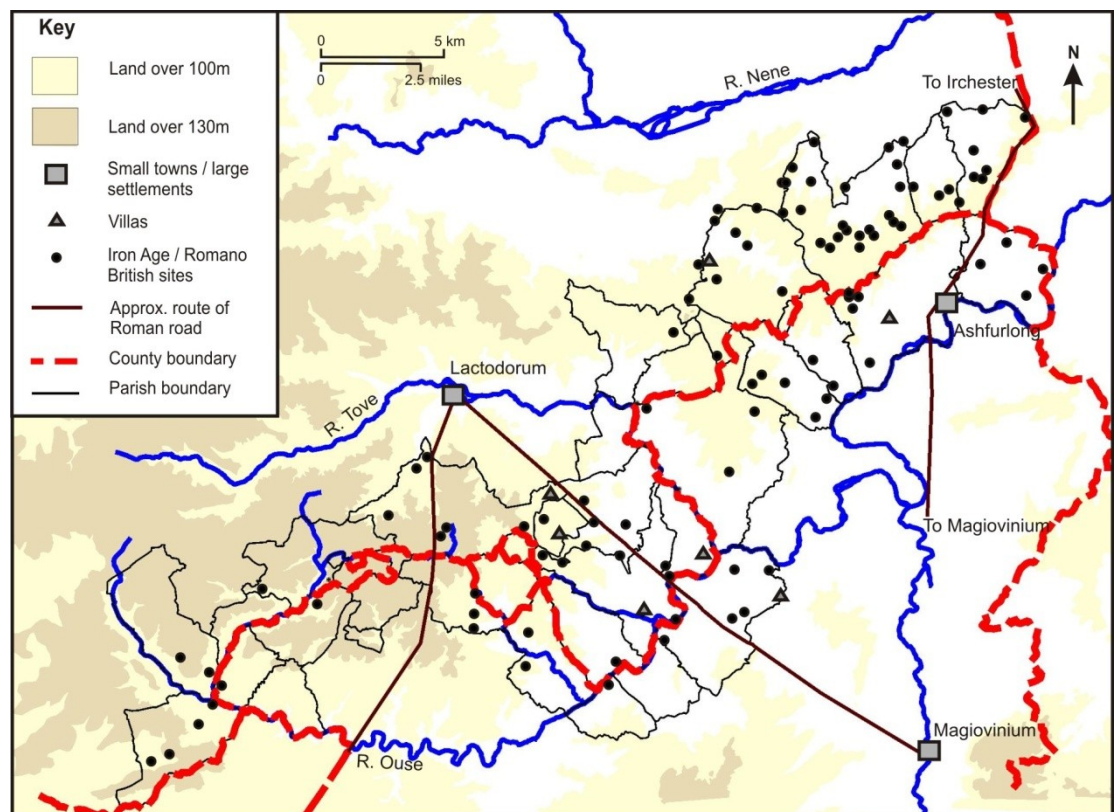

Figure 2.9. Iron Age and Roman sites in the border area.

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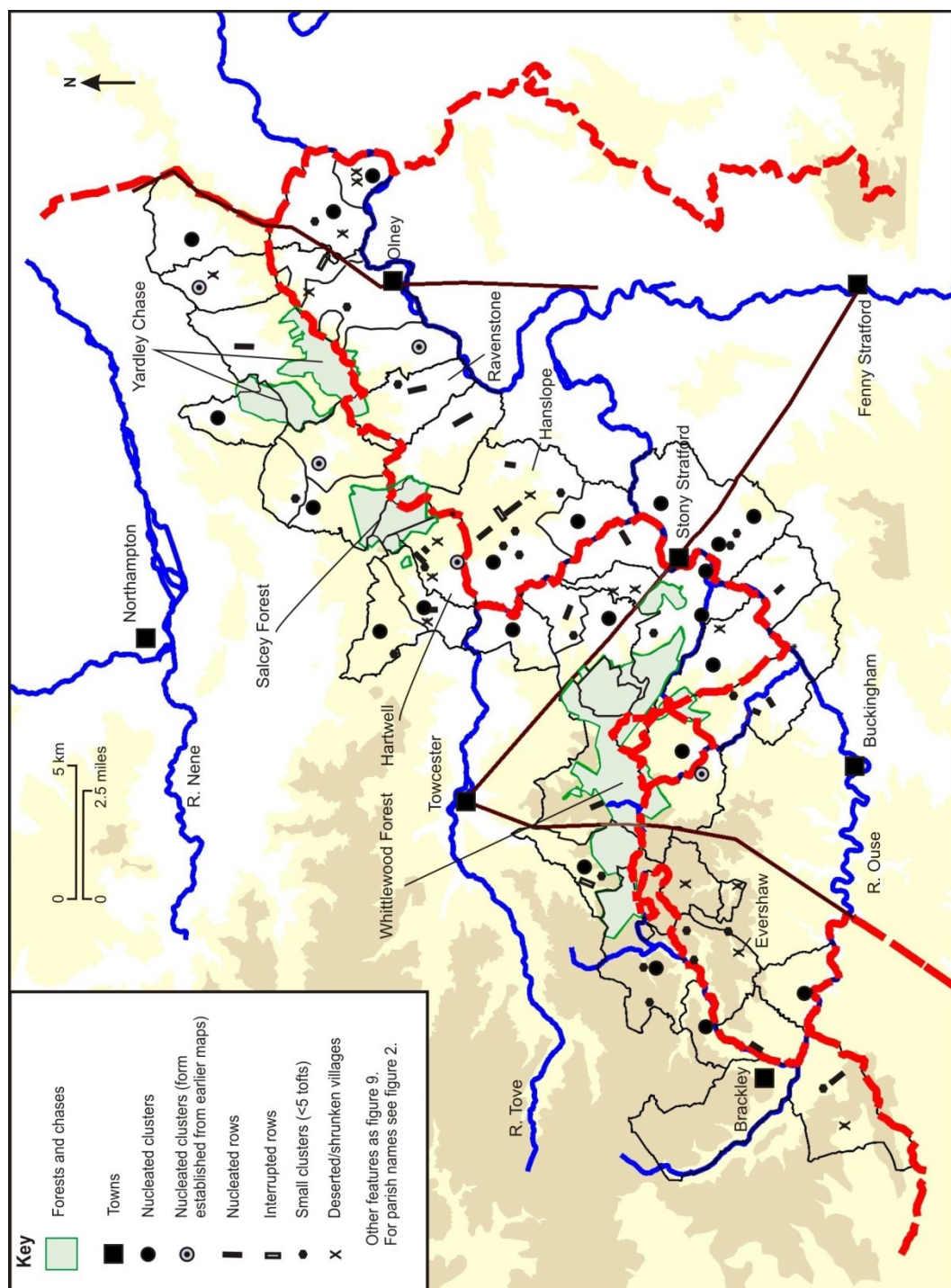
Figure 2.10. Medieval settlement in the border area.

Key

- Forests and chases
- Towns
- Nucleated clusters
- Nucleated clusters (form established from earlier maps)
- Nucleated rows
- Interrupted rows
- Small clusters (<5 tofts)
- Deserted/shrunken villages
- Other features as figure 9.
  For parish names see figure 2.

Yardley Chase

Salcey Forest

Whittlewood Forest

Northampton

R. Nene

Olney

Ravenstone

Hanslope

Stony Stratford

Fenny Stratford

Hartwell

Towcester

Buckingham

Evershaw

R. Ouse

R. Tove

Brackley

5 km
2.5 miles

N

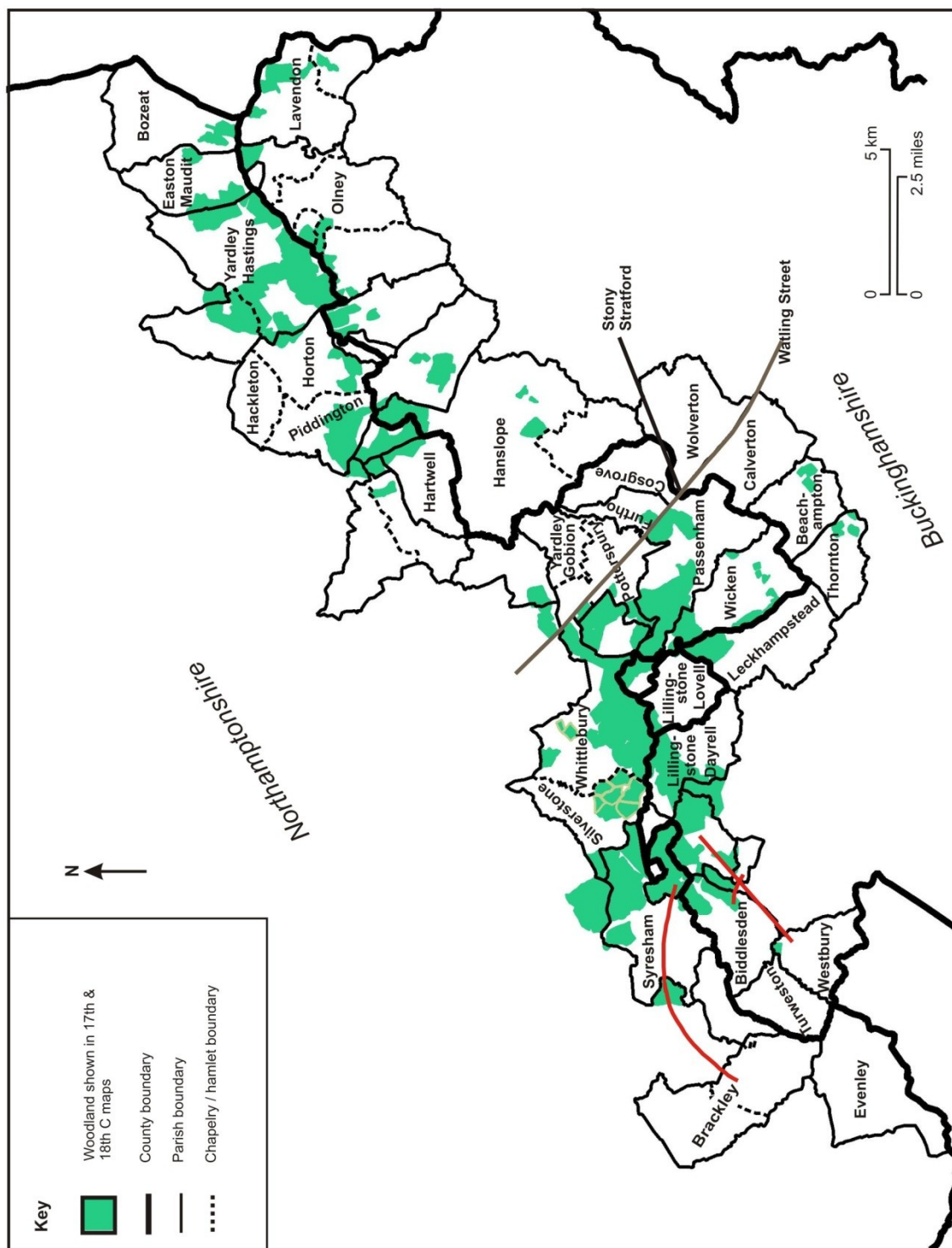**Figure 3.1. Domesday woodlands.**

Figure 3.2. Woodlands shown in seventeenth and eighteenth century maps.
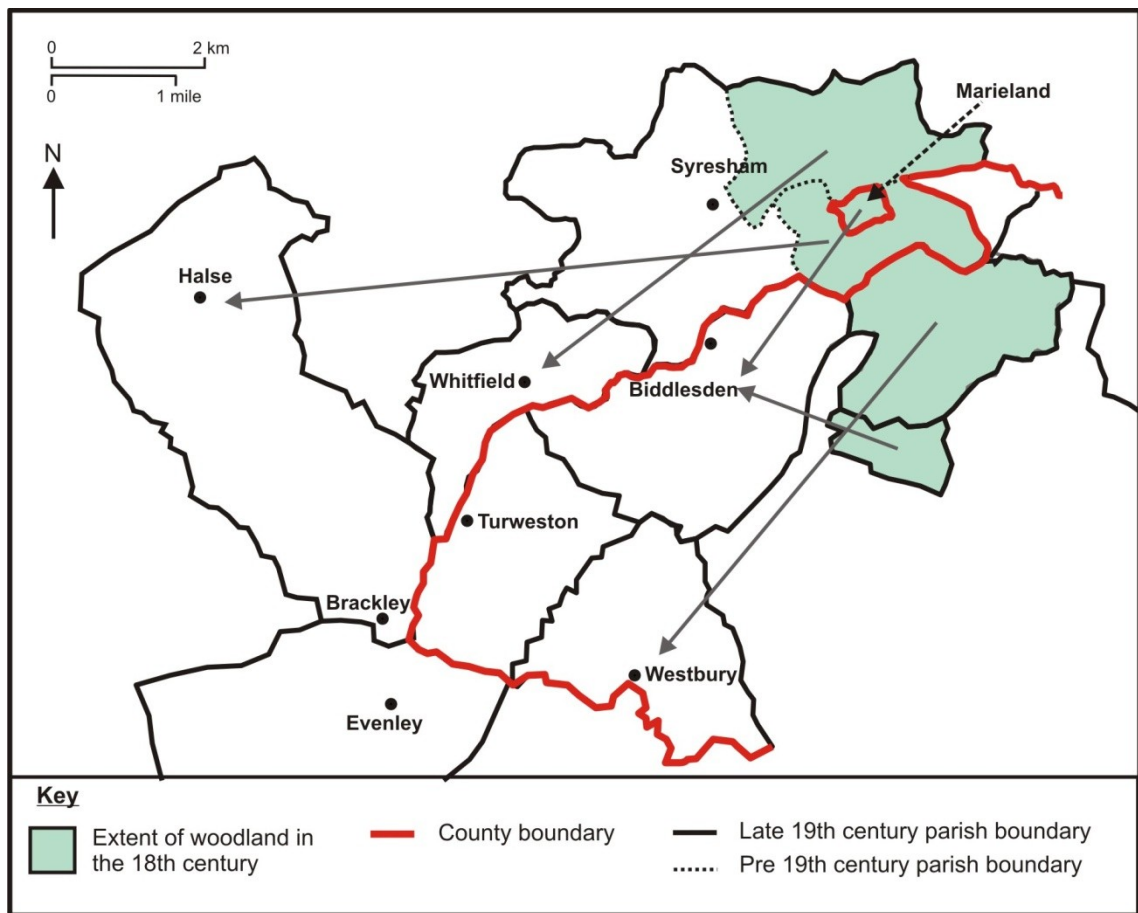
Figure 3.3. Detached woodlands in Biddlesden, Syresham and Westbury.
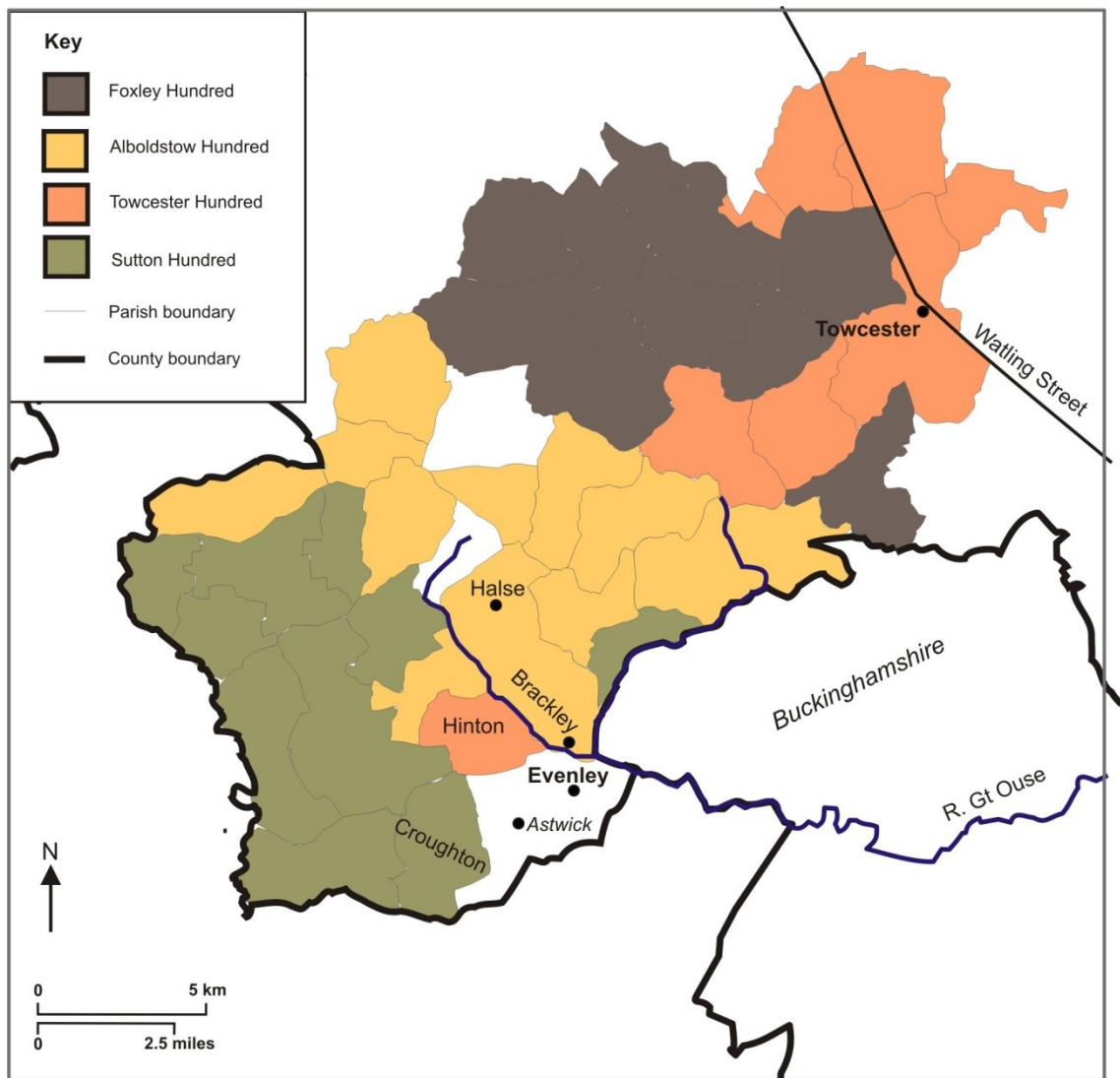
Figure 3.4. Evenley and the hundreds of south-western Northamptonshire

Key

Land held by the King

Land held by Earl Leofwine
(Godwineson)

Land held by Earl Tostig
(Godwineson)

Land held by Burgheard
(son of Earl Aelfgar Leofricson)
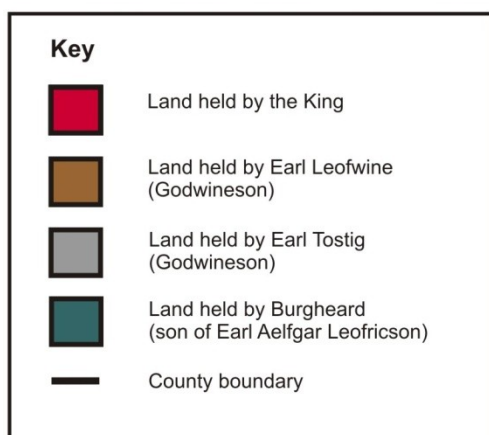
County boundary
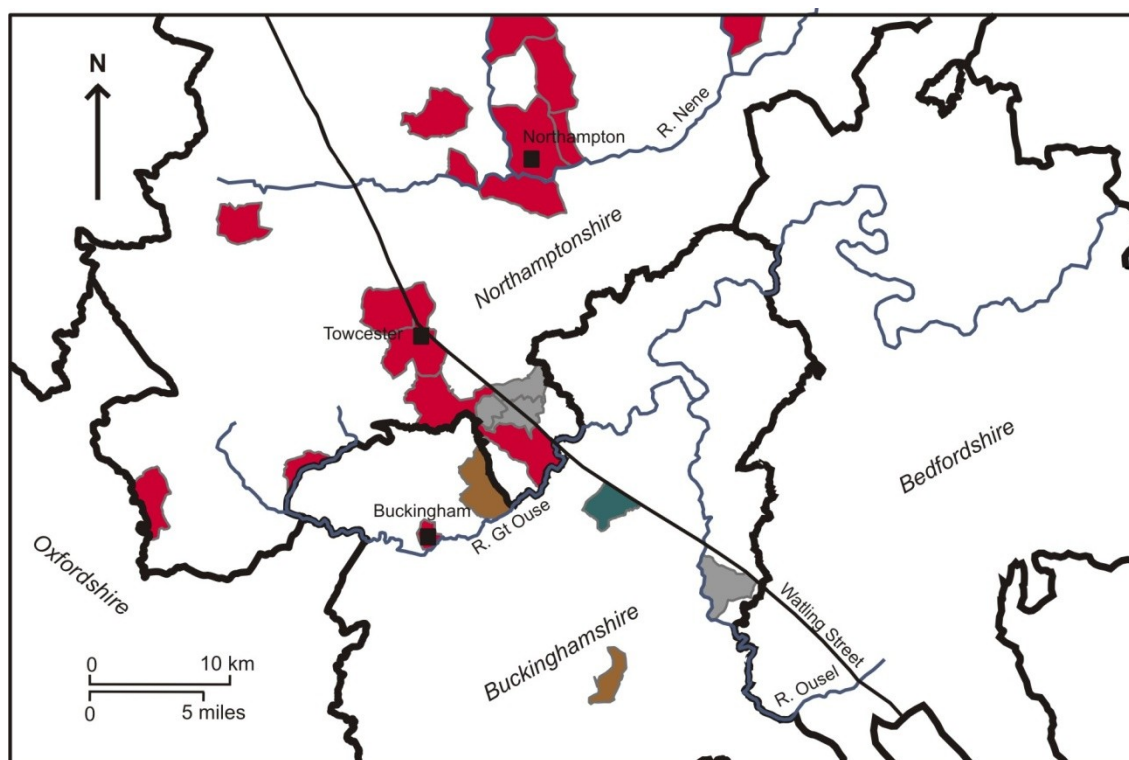
**Figure 4.1. Lands of the King, the Godwinesons and Leofricsons in
Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire, c.1066.**

Key

Land held wholly or partly by Burgred

Land held wholly or partly by Waltheof

Land held wholly or partly by Gytha

Land held wholly or partly by Haldane

Land held by more than one of the lords is represented by horizontal stripes in the above colours eg.

Land held wholly or partly by Burgred and Waltheof

County boundary

Northamptonshire

R. Ise

R. Nene

Northampton

Towcester

Olney

Bedfordshire

Buckingham

R. Gt Ouse

Oxfordshire

0   20 km

0   10 miles

Buckinghamshire

Watling Street

R. Ousel

N

Figure 4.2. Lands associated with the earldoms of Northampton and Huntingdon, c.1066.

220
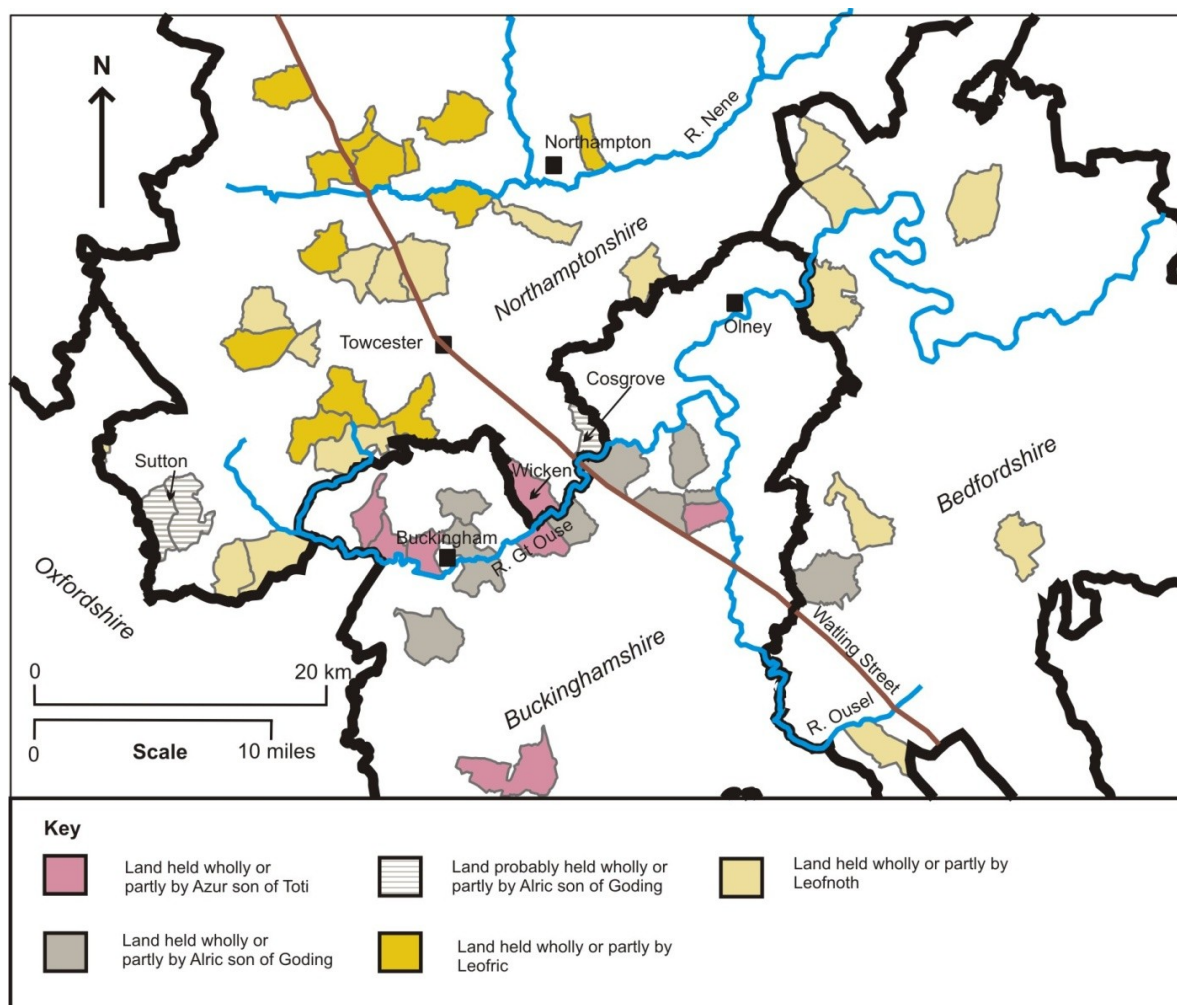
Figure 4.3. Lands of thegns with estates valued at £60 or more, c.1066.
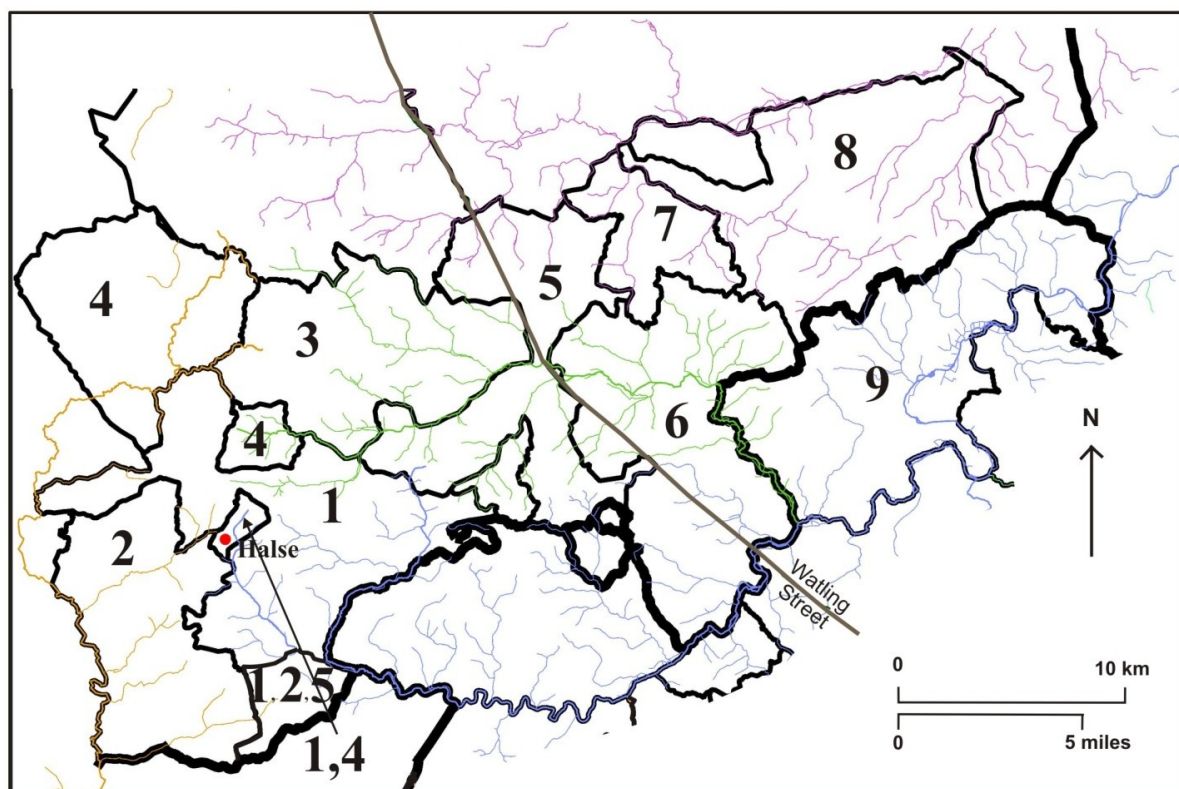
Key

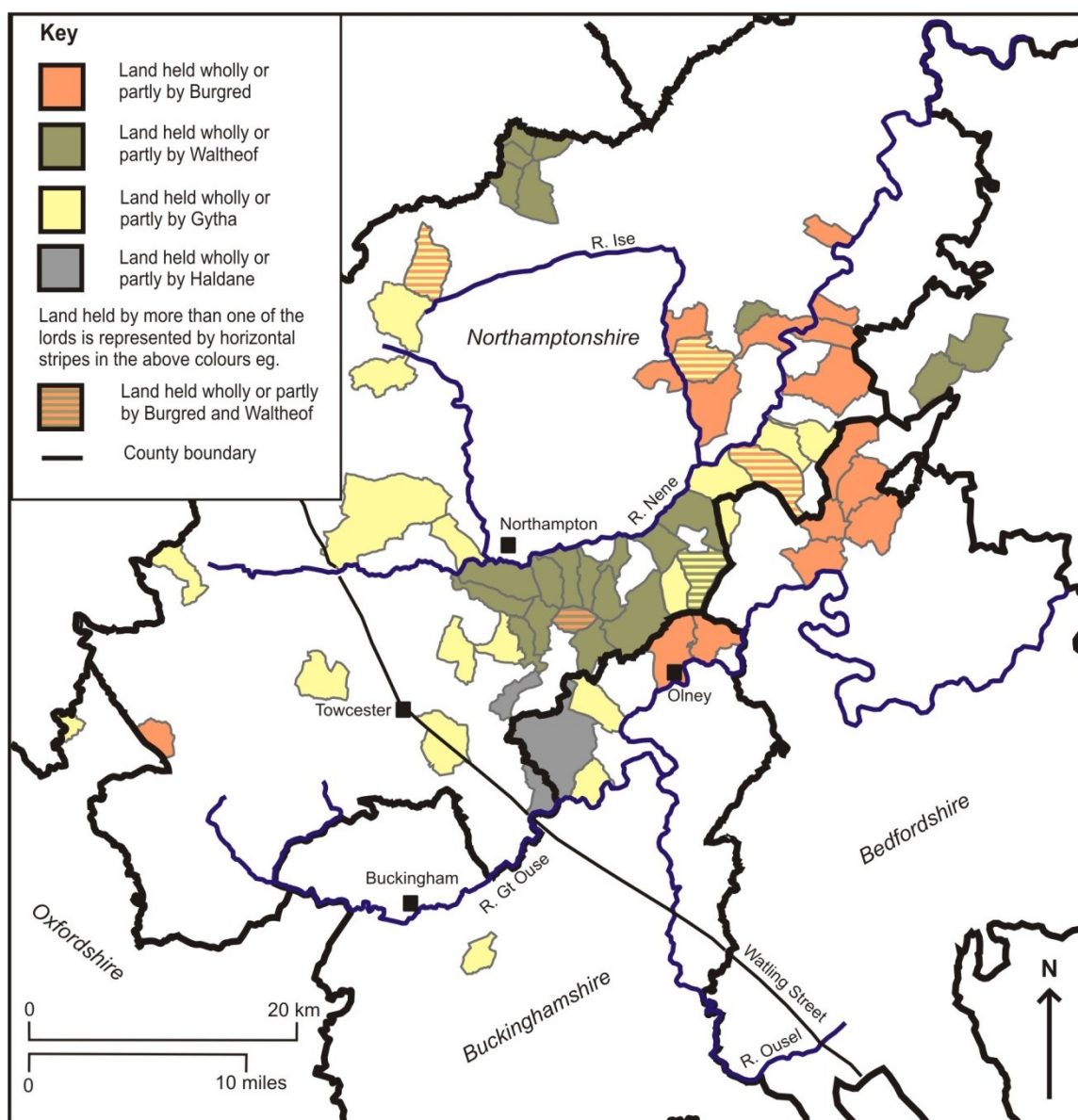|	
▬▬▬	County Boundary
▬▬▬	Hundredal Boundaries
～～～	R. Nene and tributaries
～～～	R. Tove and tributaries
～～～	R. Cherwell and tributaries
～～～	R. Gt Ouse and tributaries

Hundreds

1   Alboldstow

2   Sutton

3   Norton

4   Warden

5   Towcester

6   Cleyley

7   Collingtree

8   Wymersley

9   Bunsty (Bucks.)

Figure 4.4. The Domesday hundreds of south-west Northamptonshire.
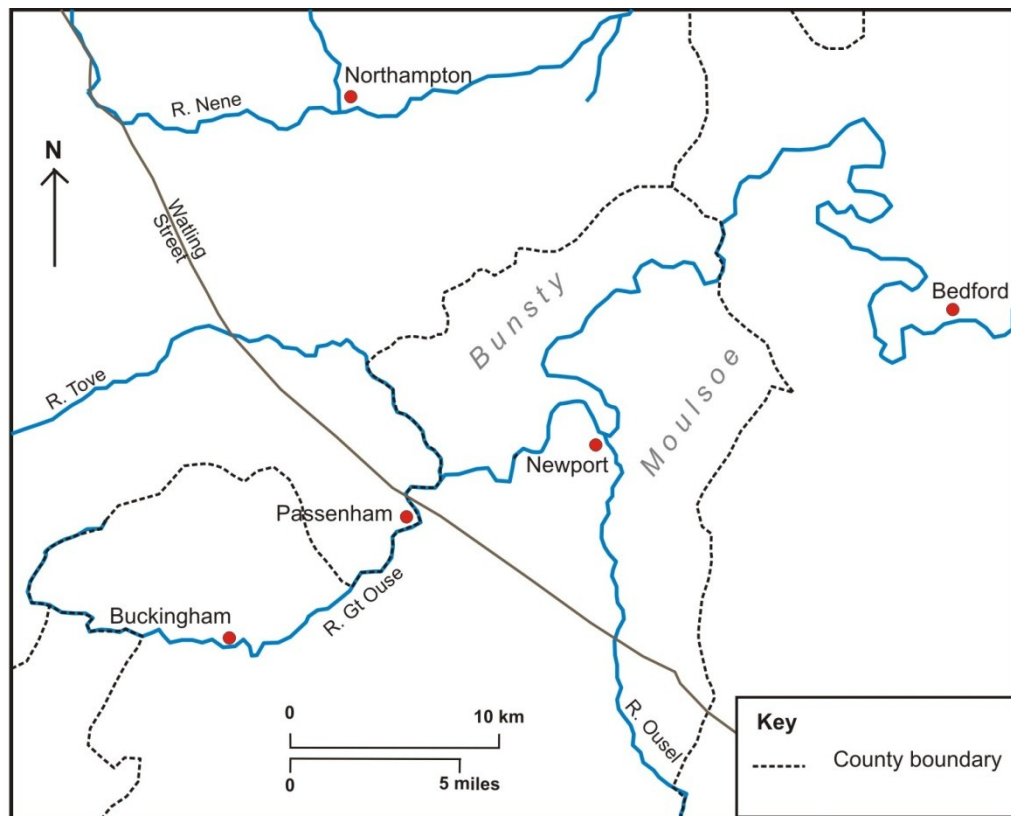
Figure 4.5. The Ouse valley to the west of Bedford

Key
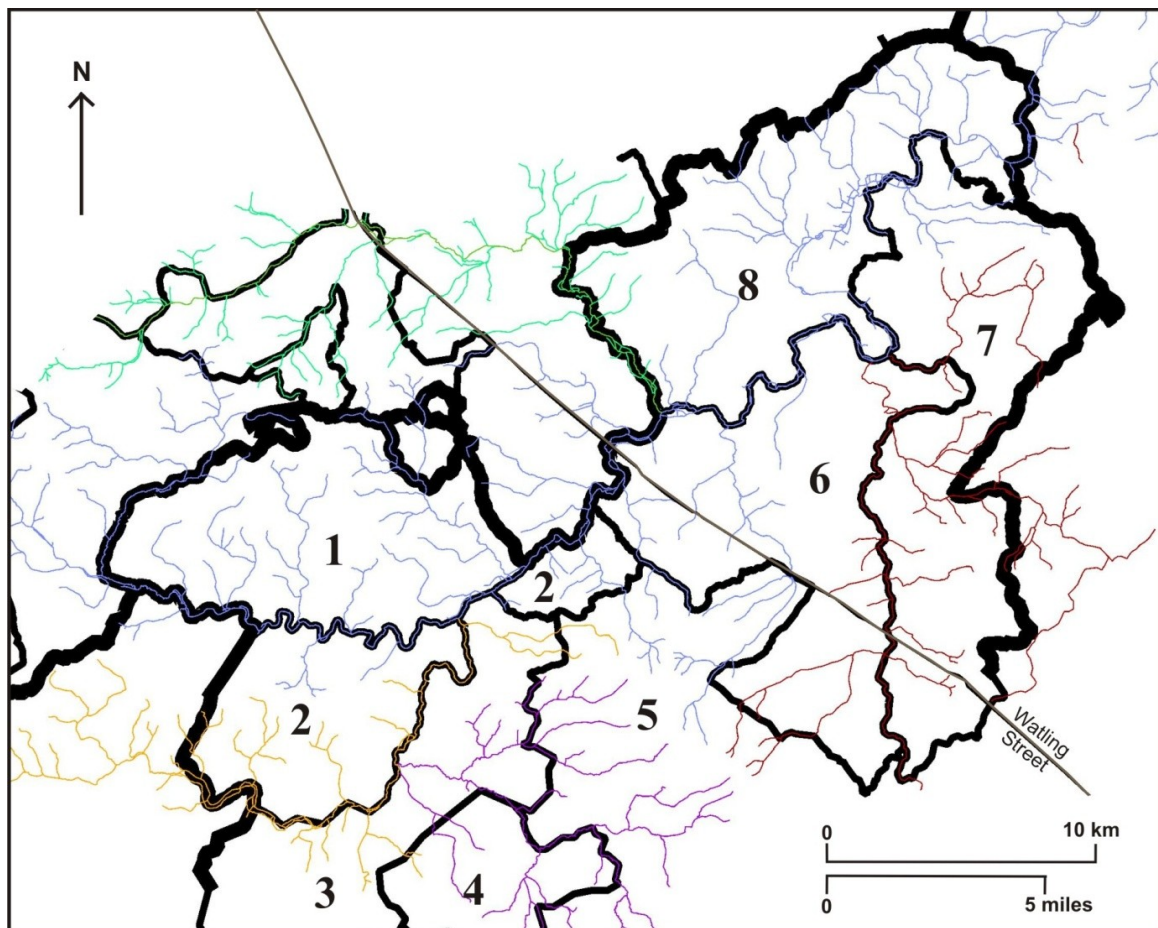
▬▬▬	County Boundary
───	Hundredal Boundaries
───	R. Ousel and tributaries
───	R. Tove and tributaries
───	Padbury Brook and tributaries
───	R. Gt Ouse and tributaries
───	Claydon Brook and tributaries

Hundreds

1 Stodfold
2 Rowley
3 Lamua
4 Waddesdon
5 Mursley
6 Seckloe
7 Moulsoe
8 Bunsty

Figure 4.6. The Domesday hundreds of the Buckinghamshire borderlands.
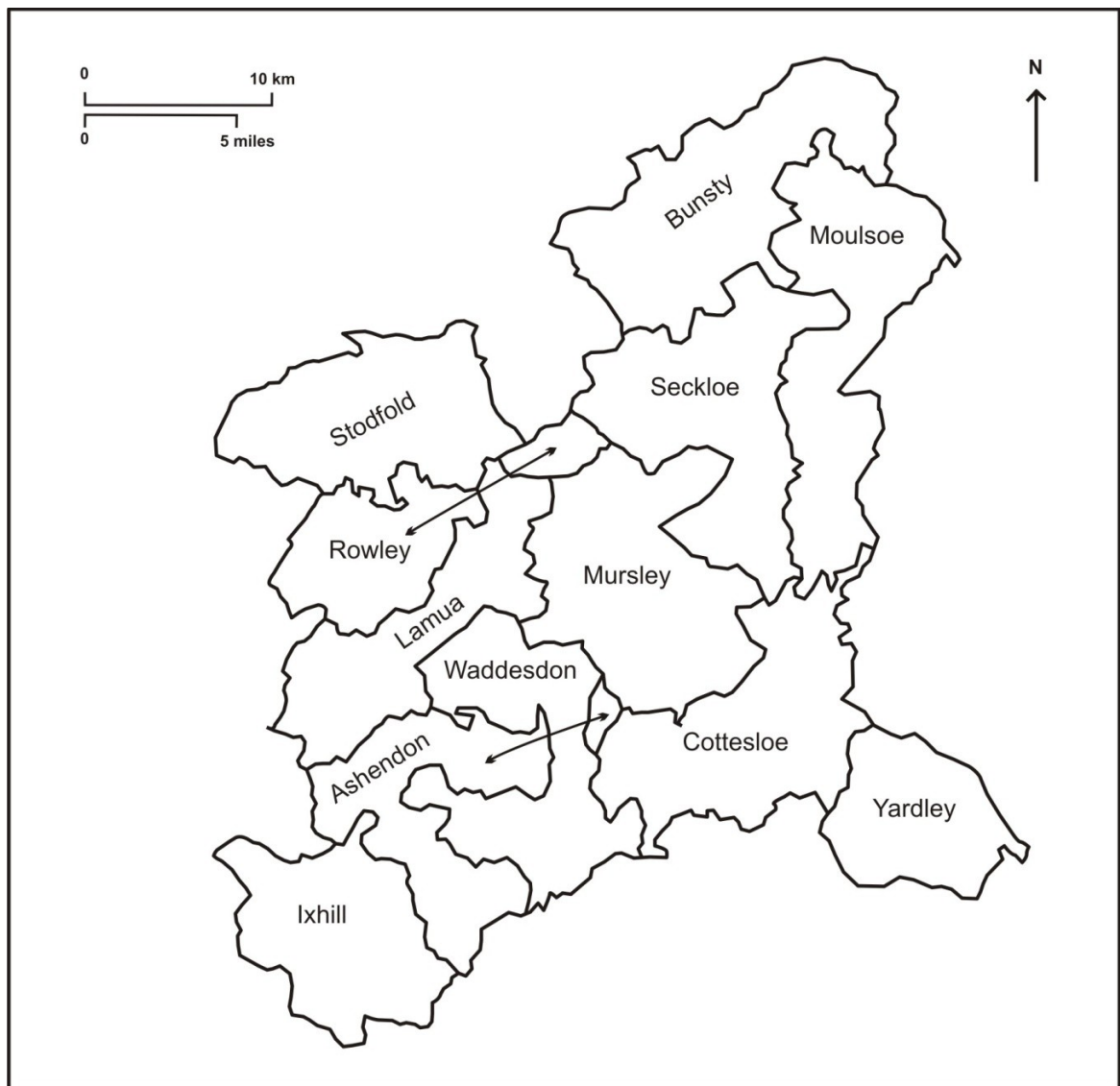
Figure 4.7. The pattern of hundreds in the northern part of Buckinghamshire.
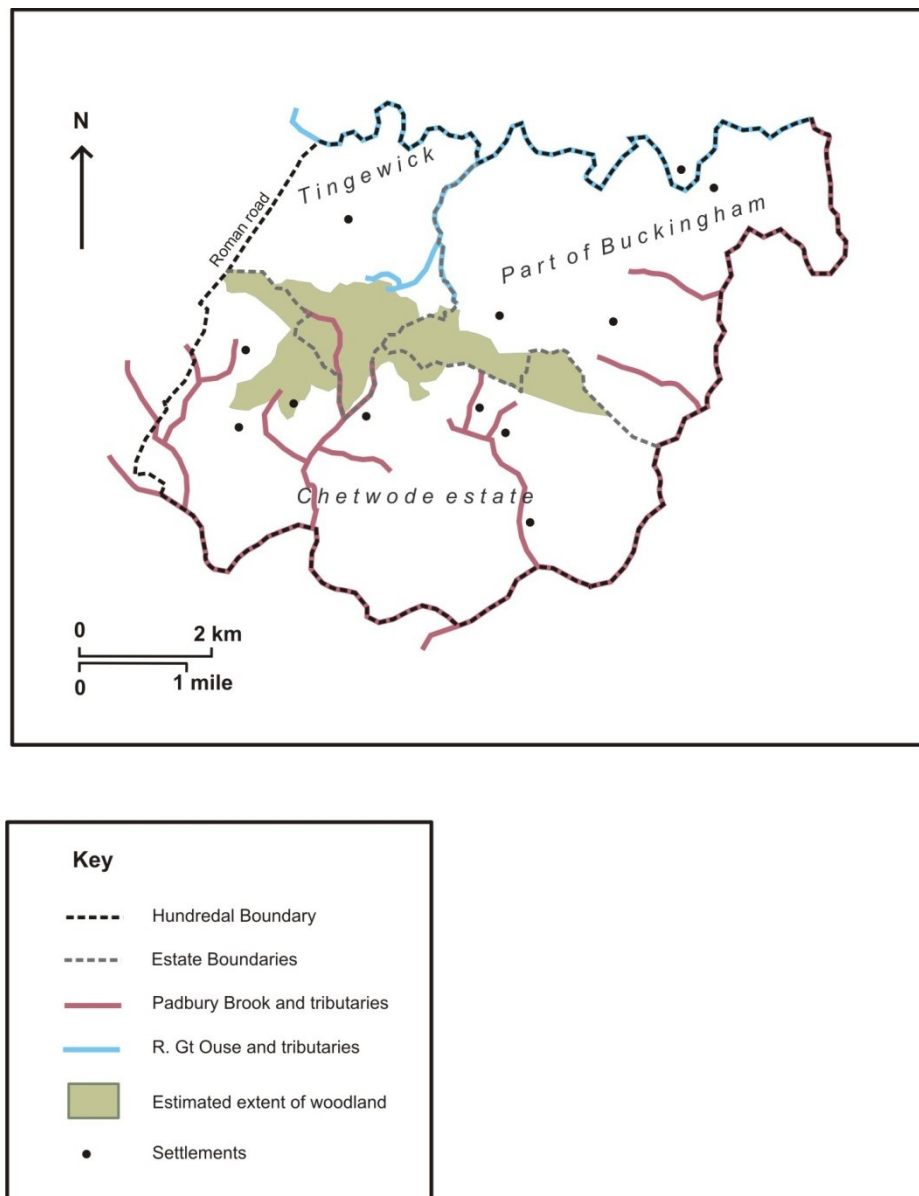
Figure 4.8. The main part of Rowley hundred.

(Extent of woodland estimated from field-names and the following maps: 1. Survey of Beggars Barton, 1739. (Bucks C.R.O., Ma/12/1.T.); 2. Survey of Chetwode, 1638. (Bucks C.R.O., Ma/283/T); 3.Plan of the Lordship of Tingewick, 1773. (Bucks C.R.O., Ma R/5/11); 4. Estate map of Hillesden, 1763. (Bucks C.R.O., Ma R/3/1.T.); Tithe map of Buckingham (Lenborough), 1849. (Bucks C.R.O., PR 29/27/22))
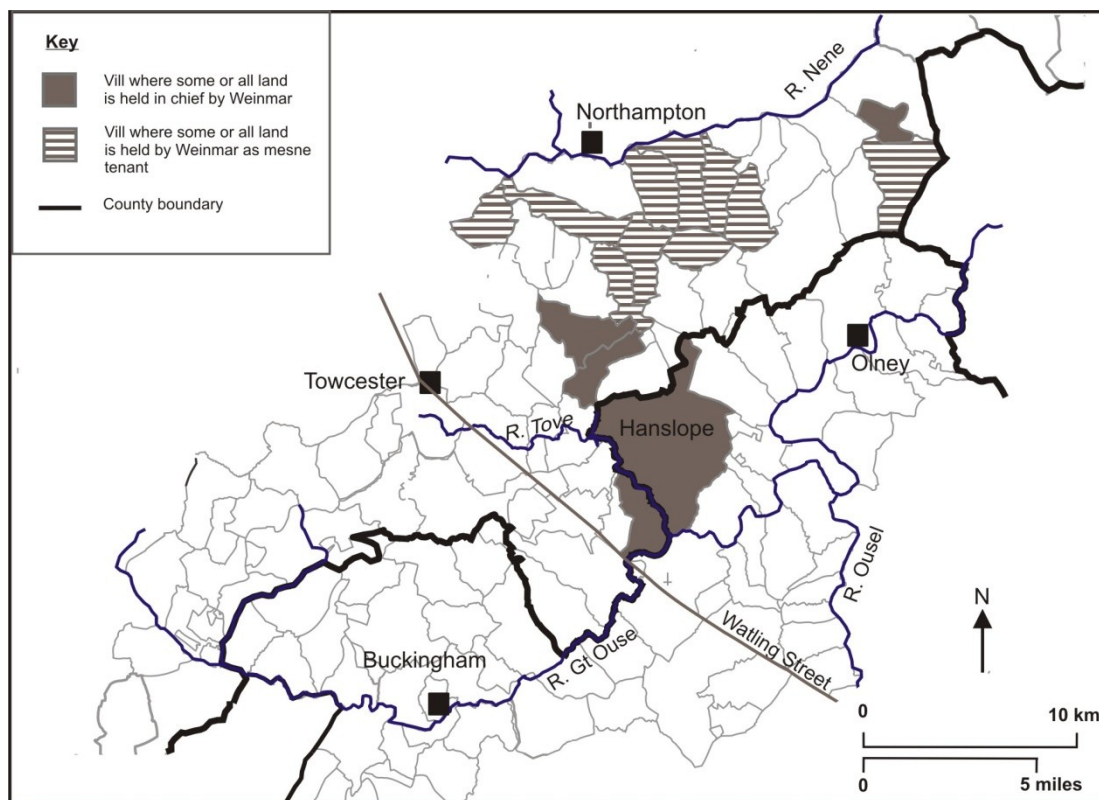
Figure 5.1. The estate of Winemar the Fleming c.1066
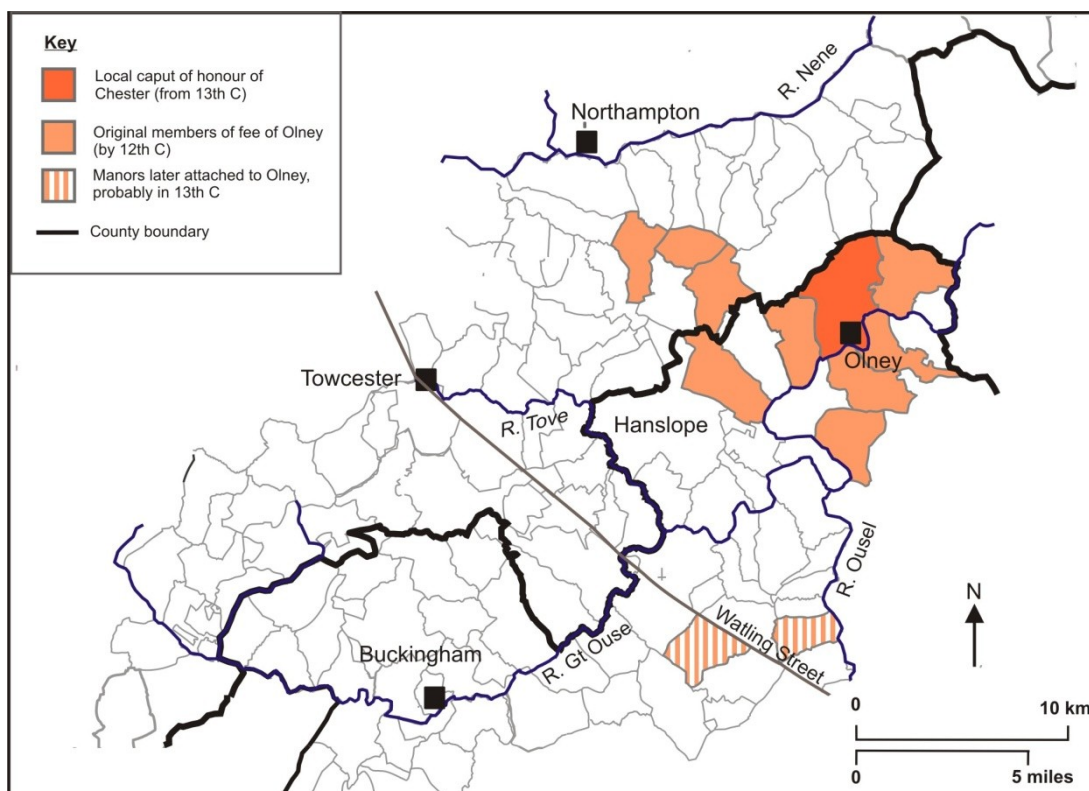
Figure 5.2. The fee of Olney c.1207

227
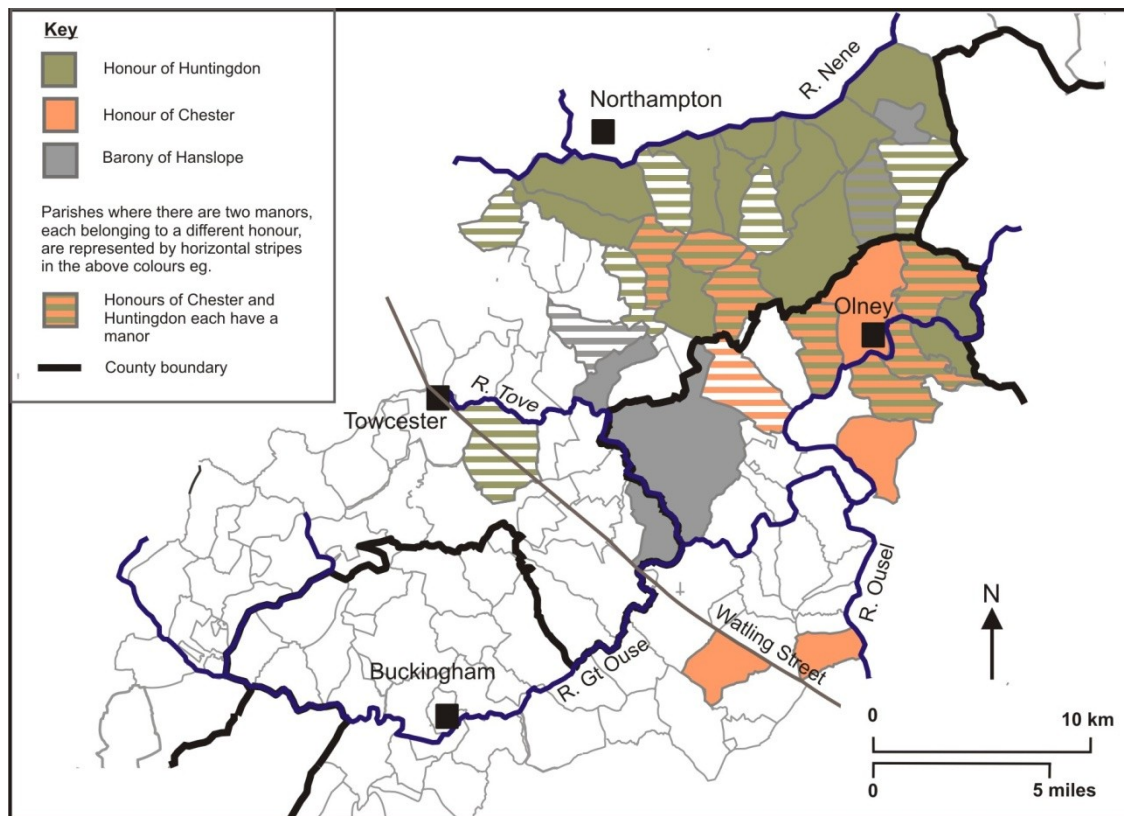
Figure 5.3. The honours of Huntingdon, Hanslope and Chester c.1208
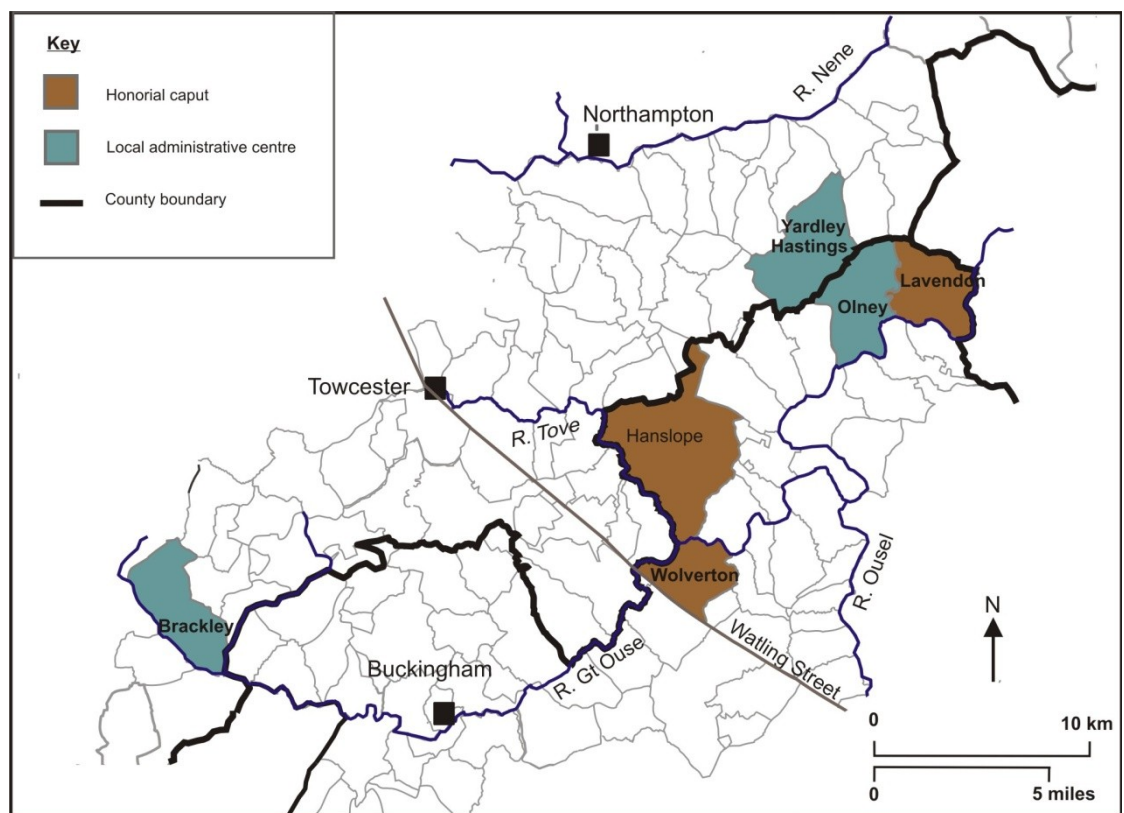
Figure 5.4. Honorial caputs and local administrative centres along the border

228
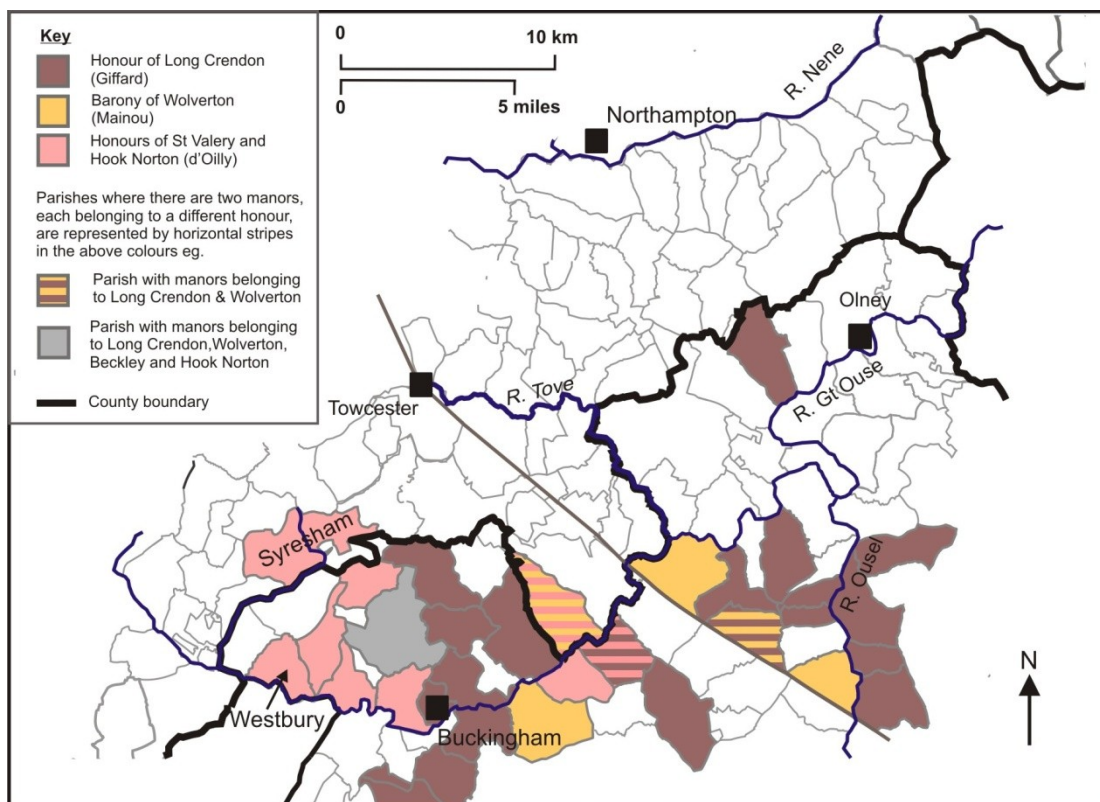
Figure 5.5. Long Crendon, Wolverton, St Valery, and Hook Norton honours c.1190
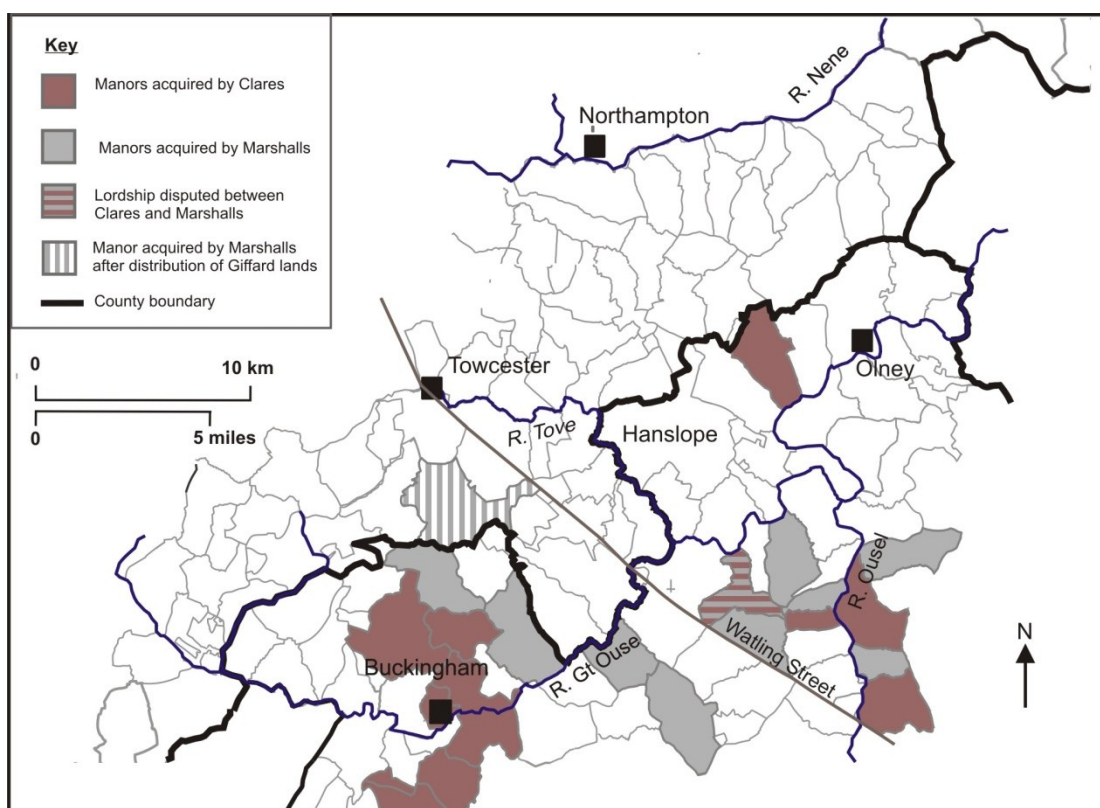
Figure 5.6. Distribution of the Giffard lands c.1191

229
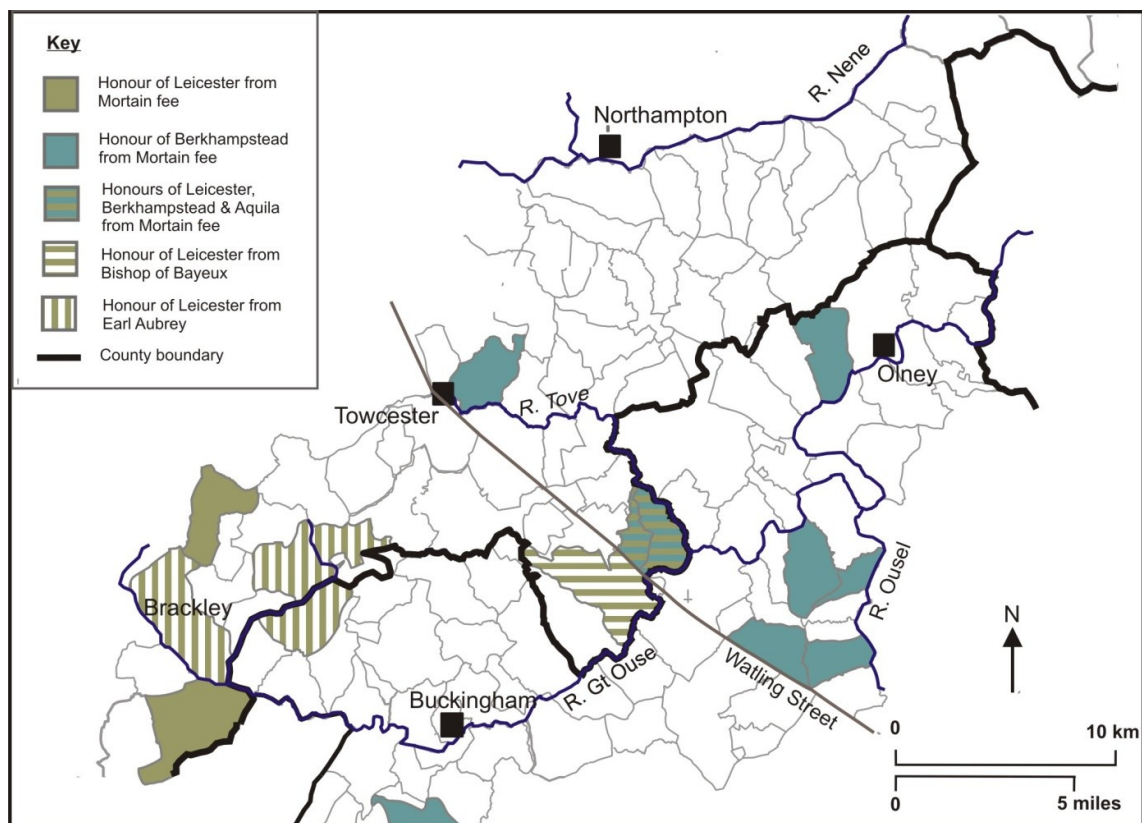
Figure 5.7. The honours of Leicester and Berkhampstead c.1106
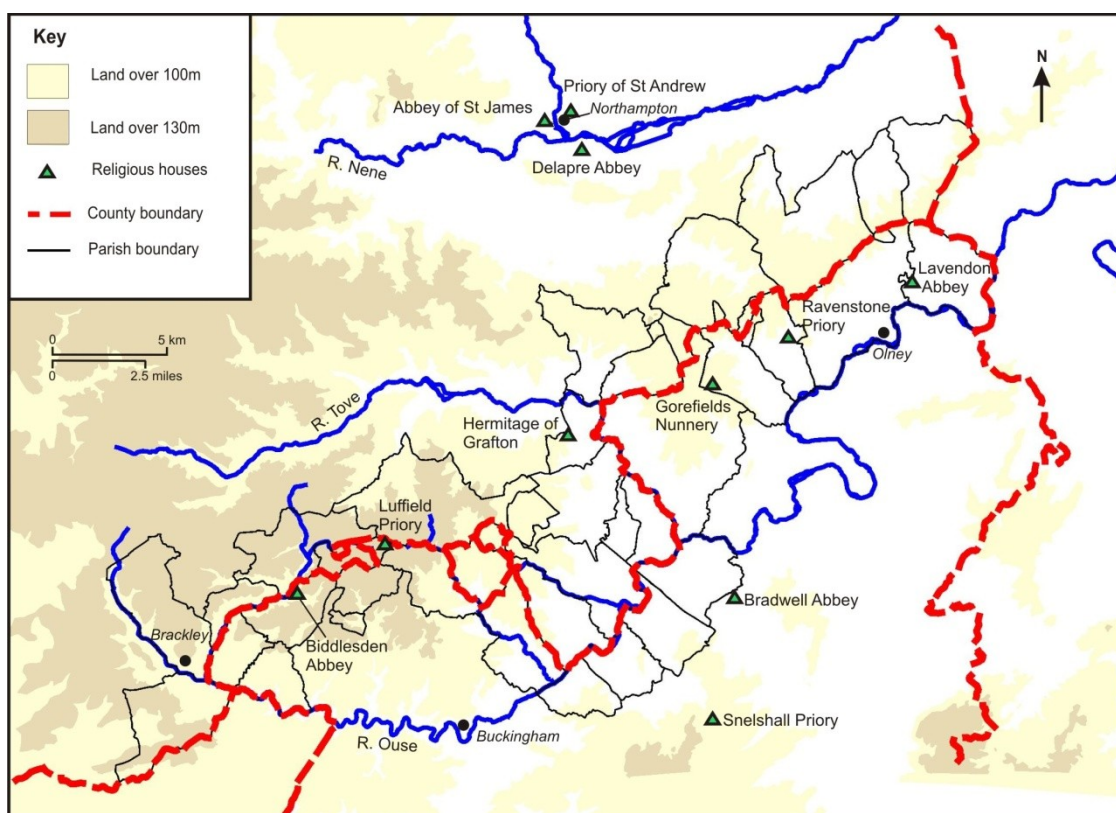
Figure 5.8. Religious houses along the border

230
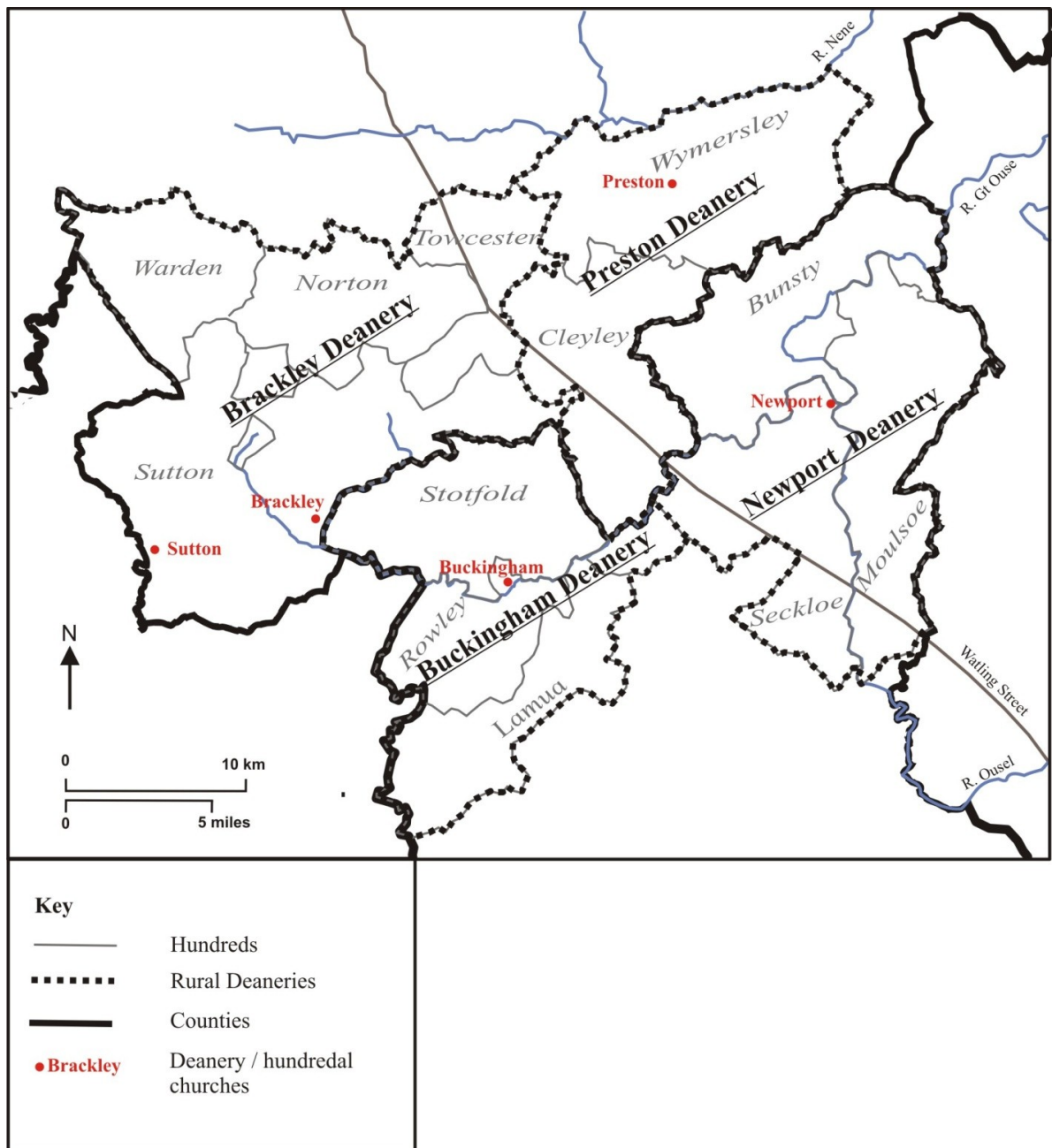
Figure 6.1. Rural deaneries in the borderlands
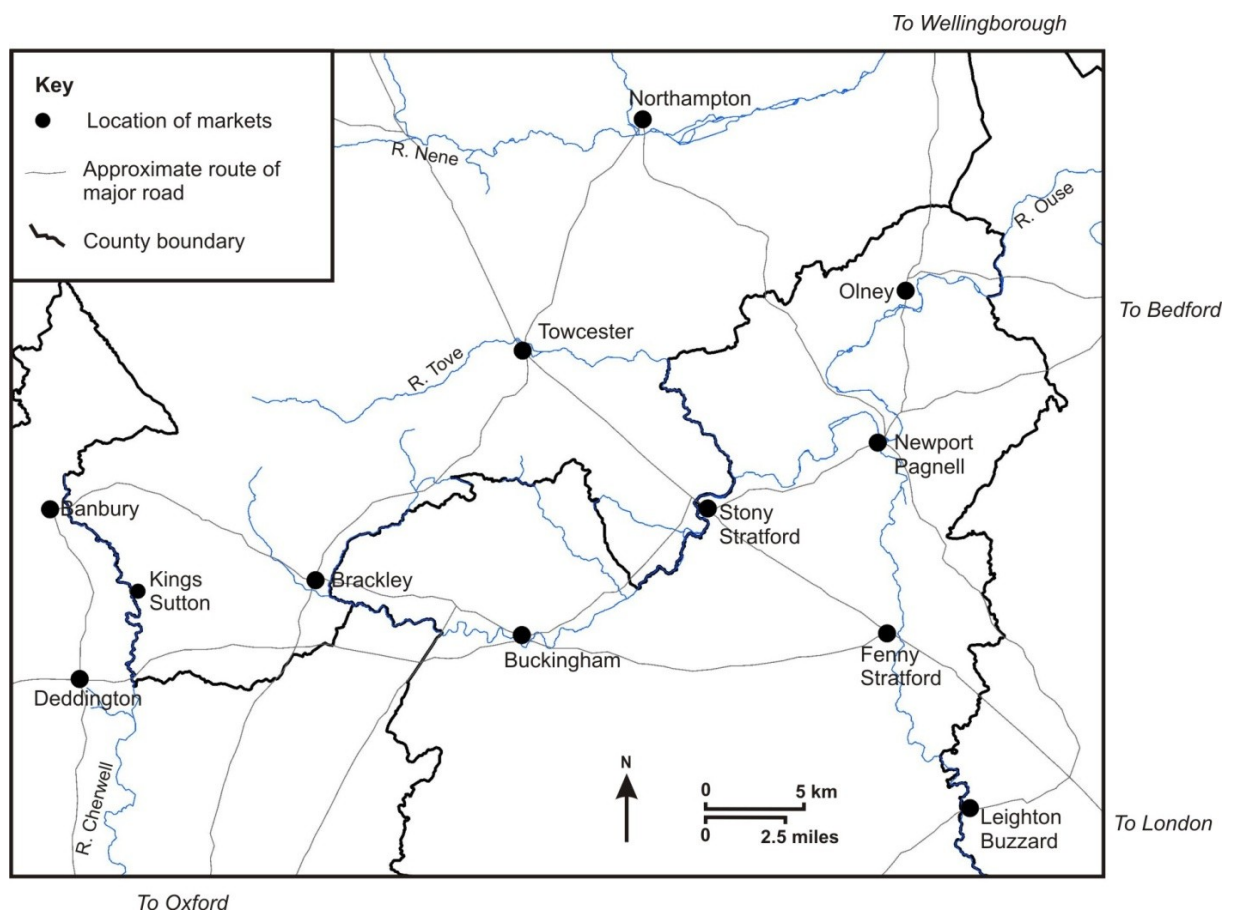
Figure 7.1. Markets in the border area c.1200
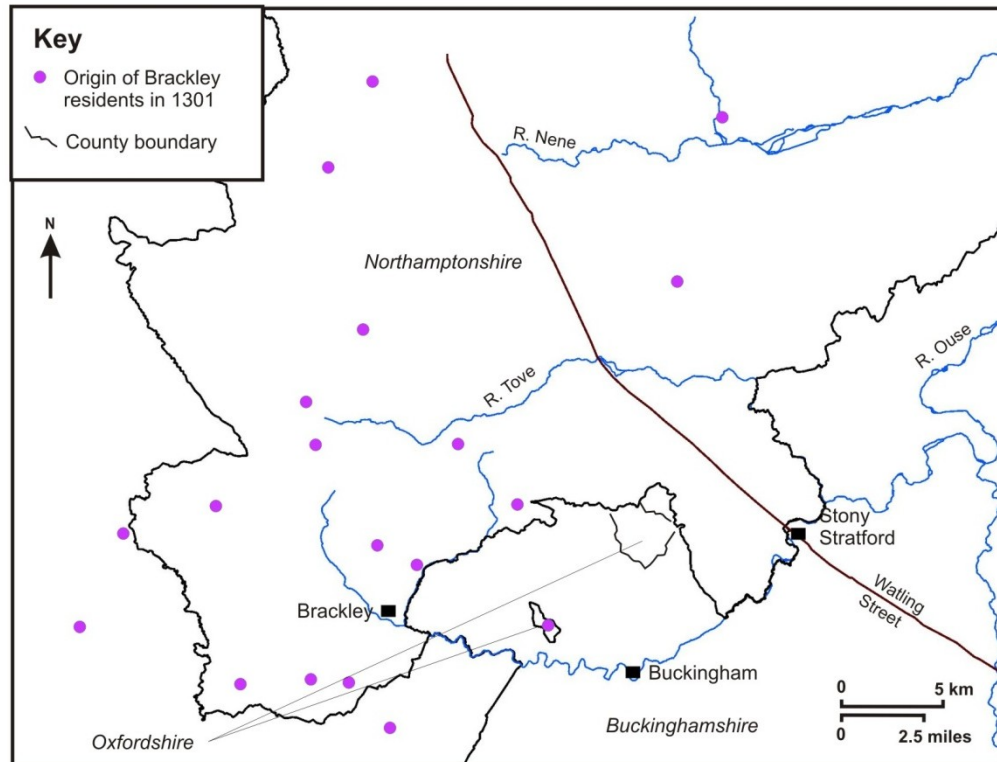
Figure 7.2. The origins of Brackley residents in 1301
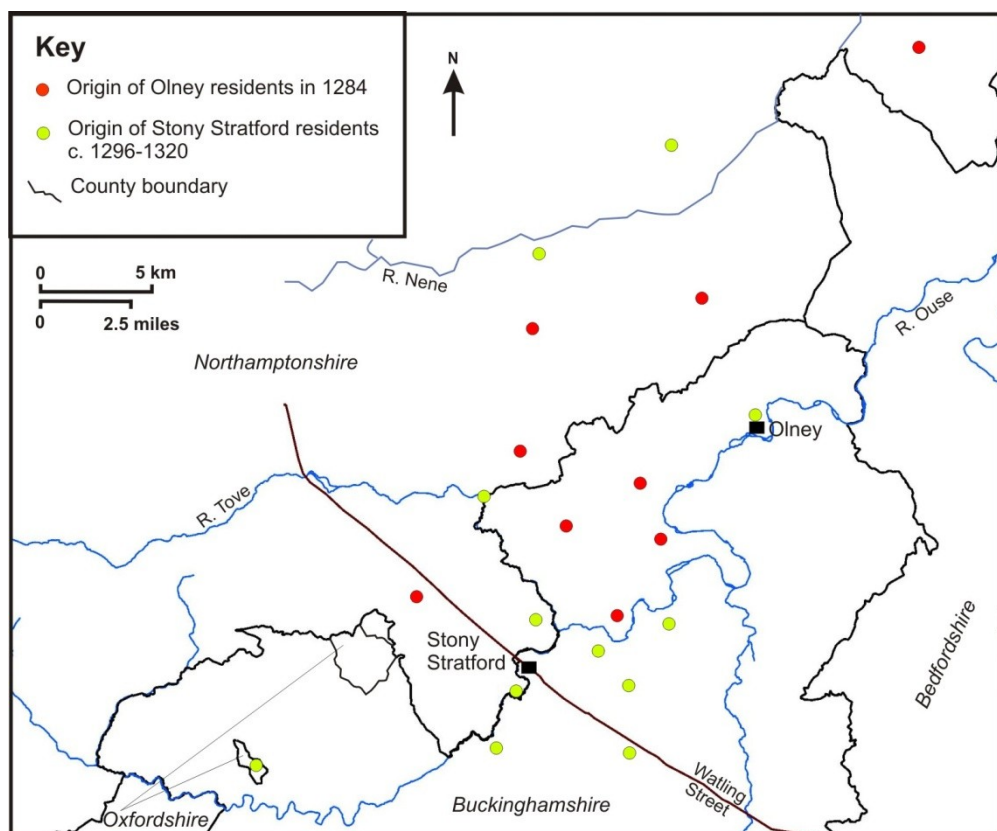
Figure 7.3. The origins of Olney and Stony Stratford residents

233
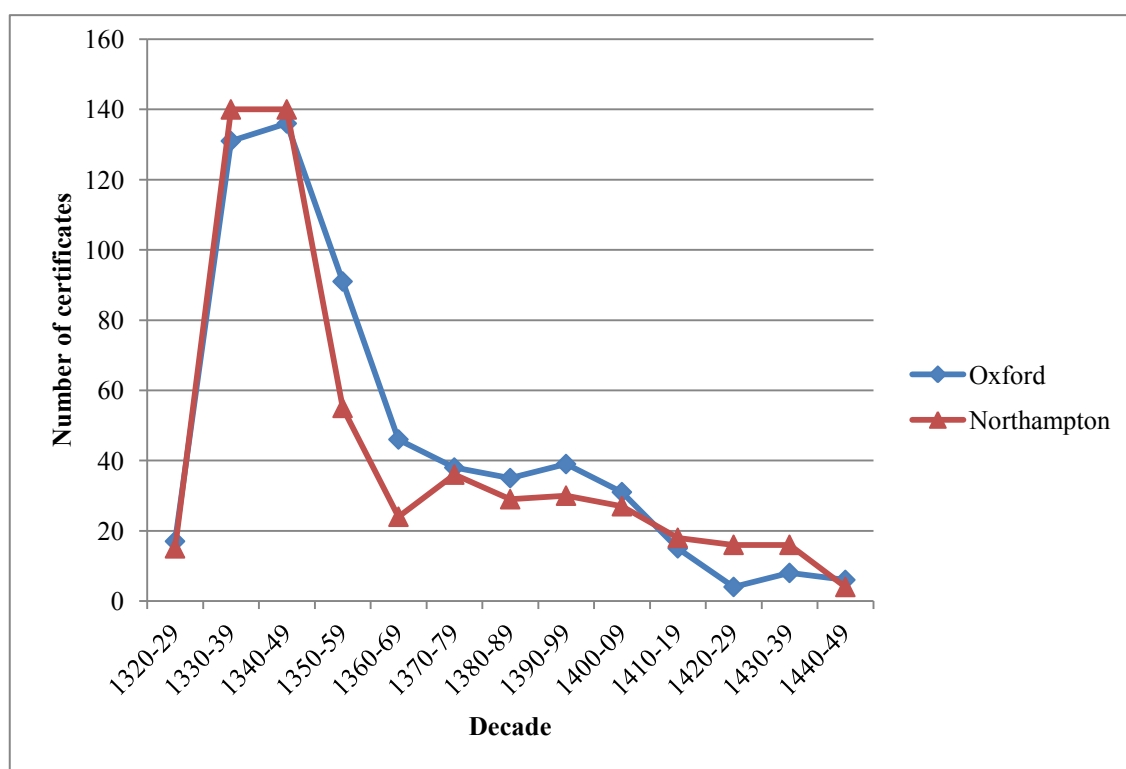
Figure 7.4. Certificates of debt issued at Northampton and Oxford
(Source TNA: PRO catalogue for class C 241)
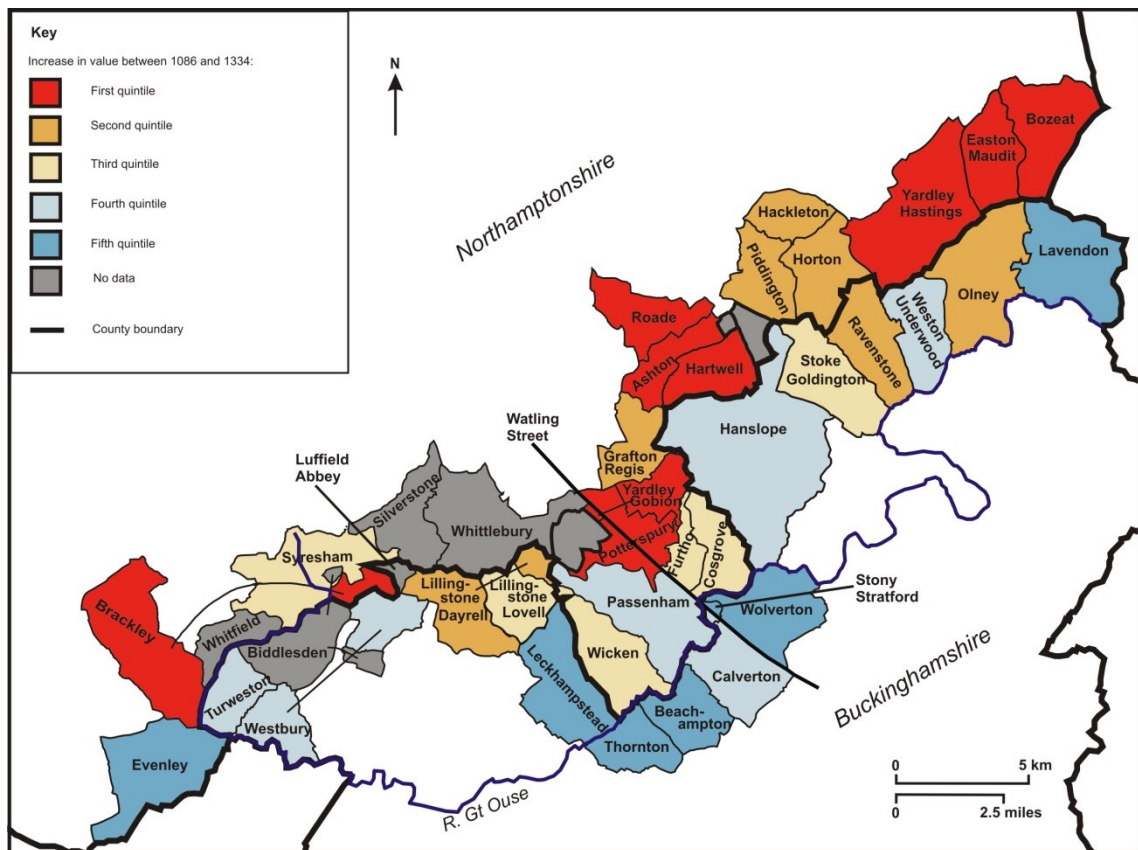
Figure 8.1. Percentage increase in value of border vills between 1086 and 1334, by quintile
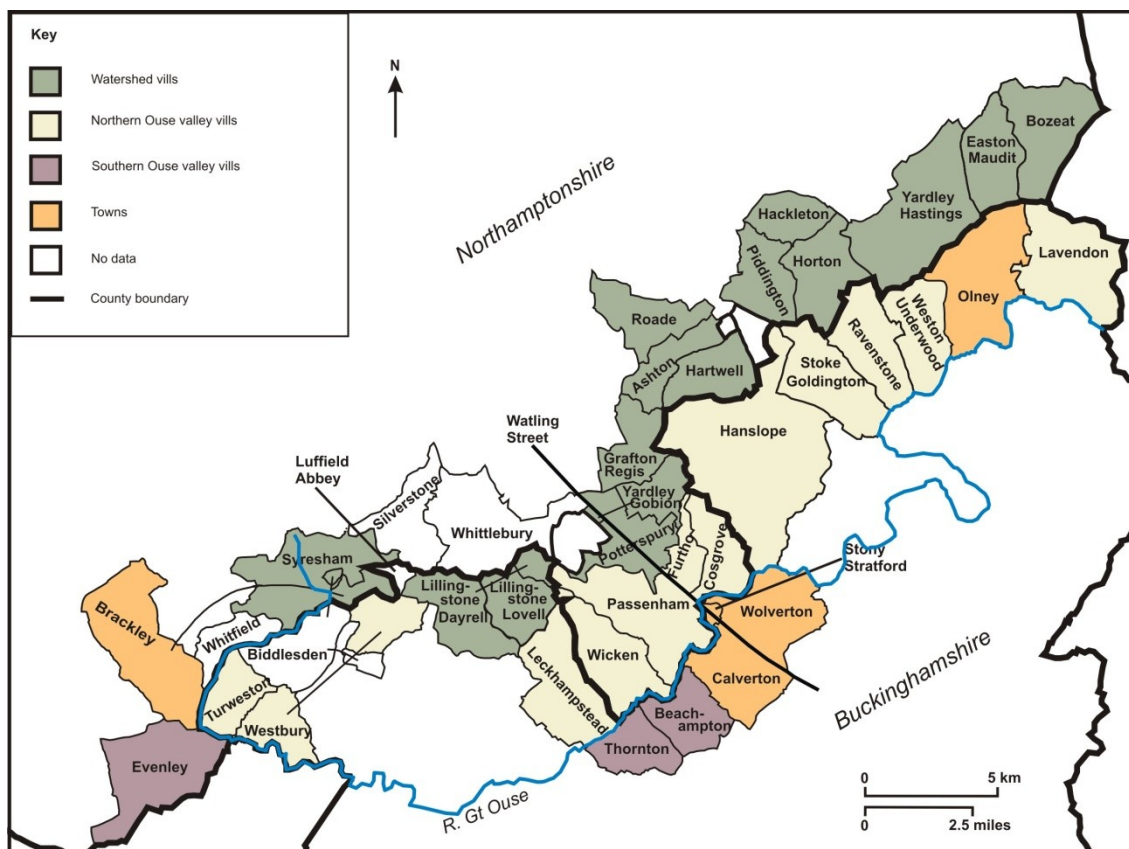
Figure 8.2. Border vills by geographical group
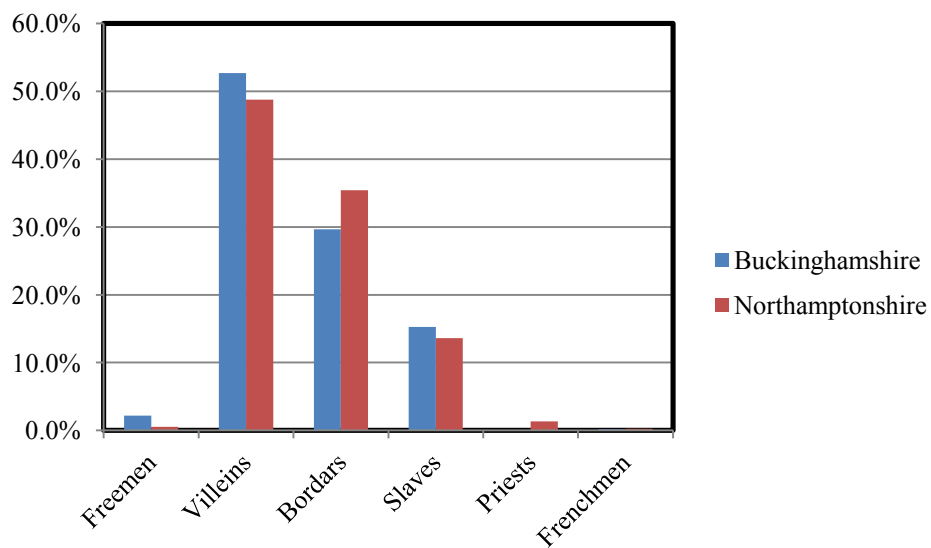
Figure 9.1. The population of the border vills in 1086, analysed by county.
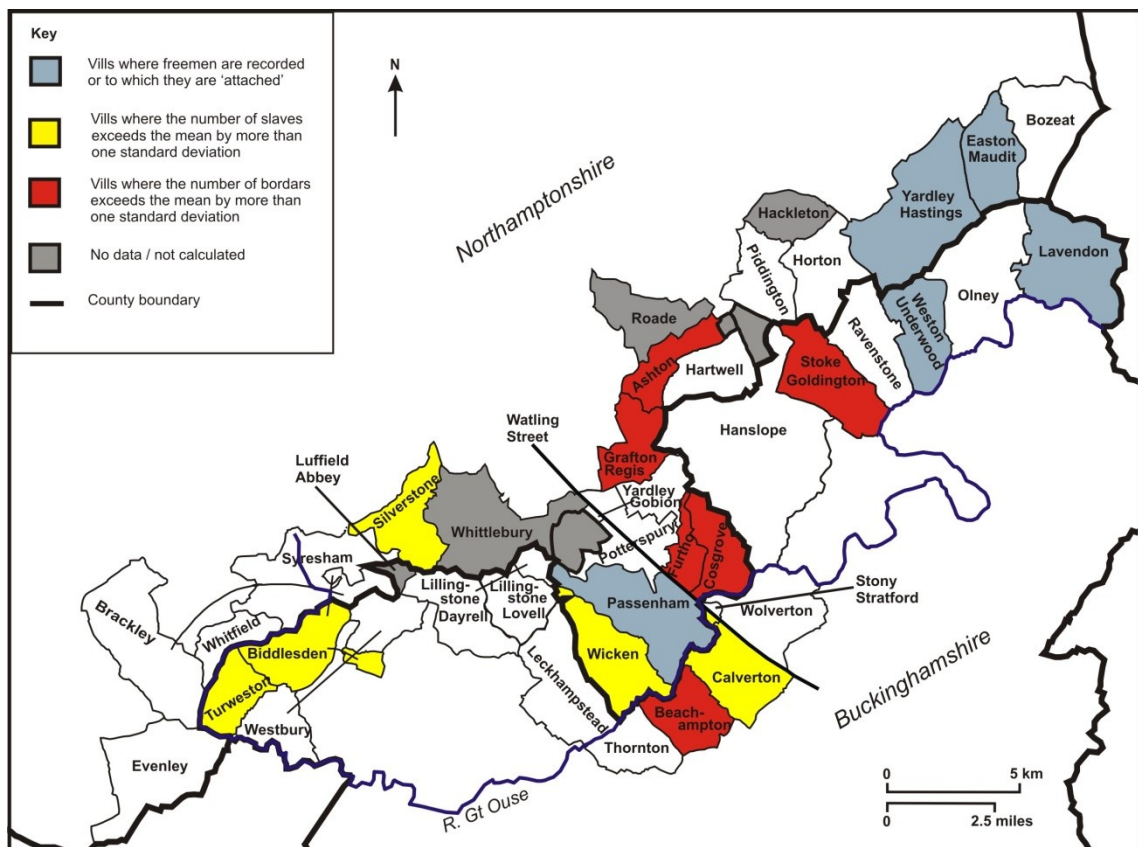
Figure 9.2. The distribution of freemen and high proportions of bordars and slaves in the border vills, in 1086
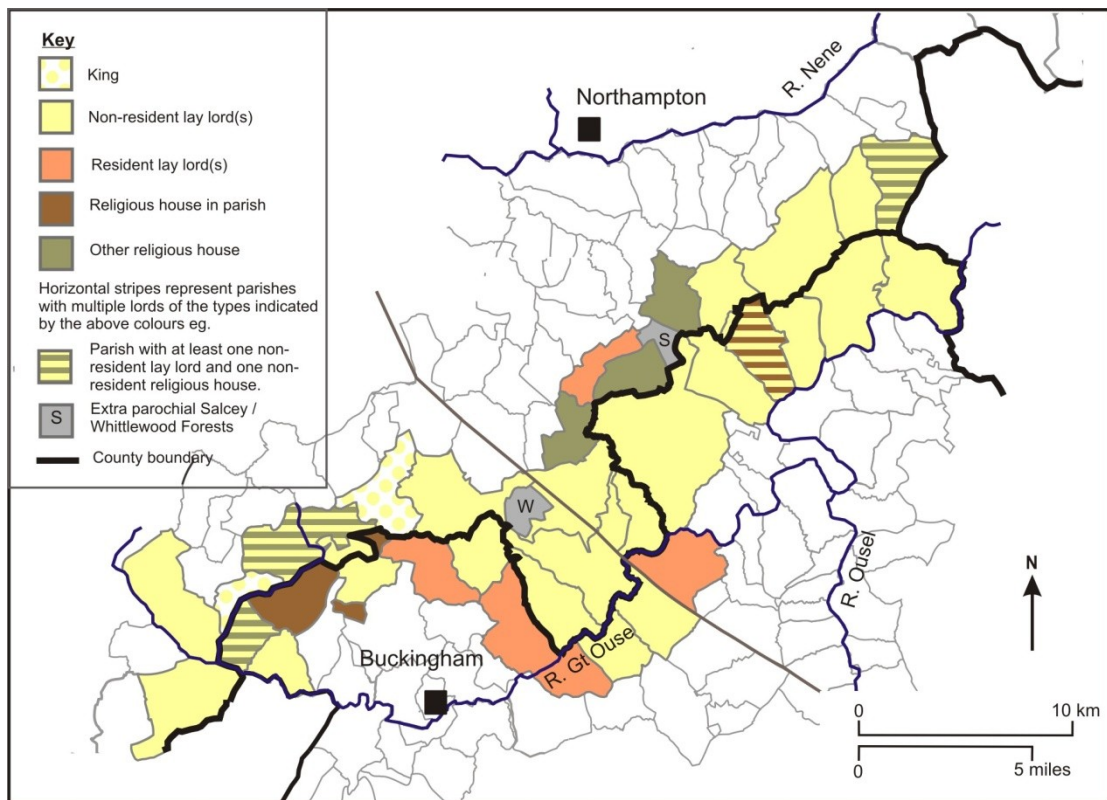
Figure 9.3. The lords of border vills in 1316
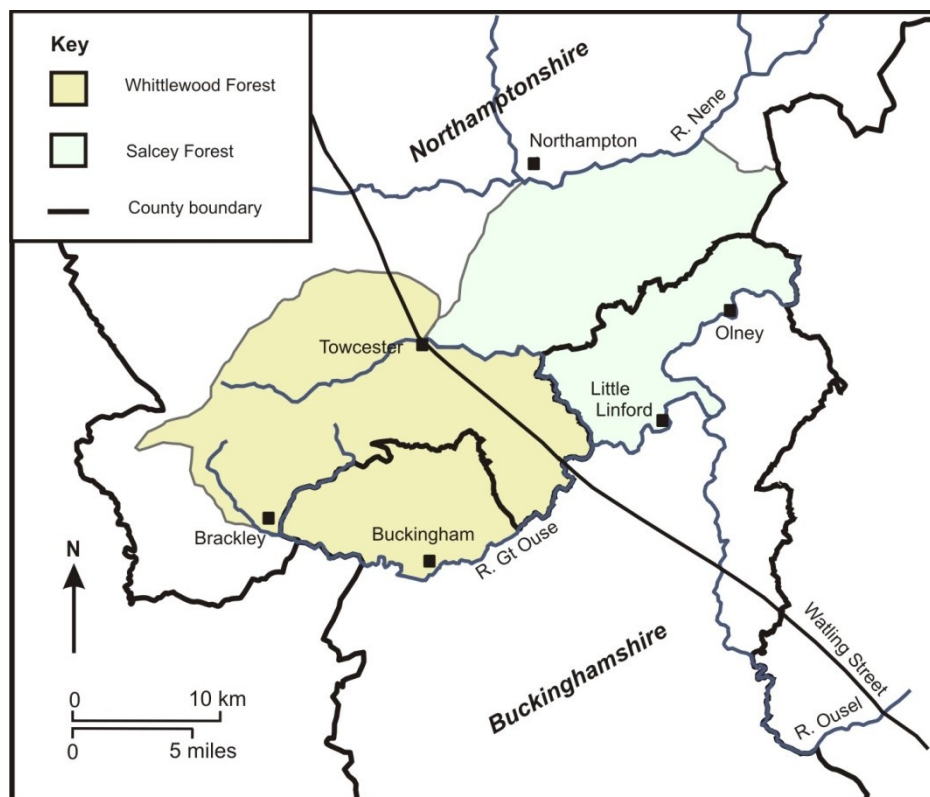
Figure 9.4. The approximate extent of Salcey and Whittlewood Forests c.1184
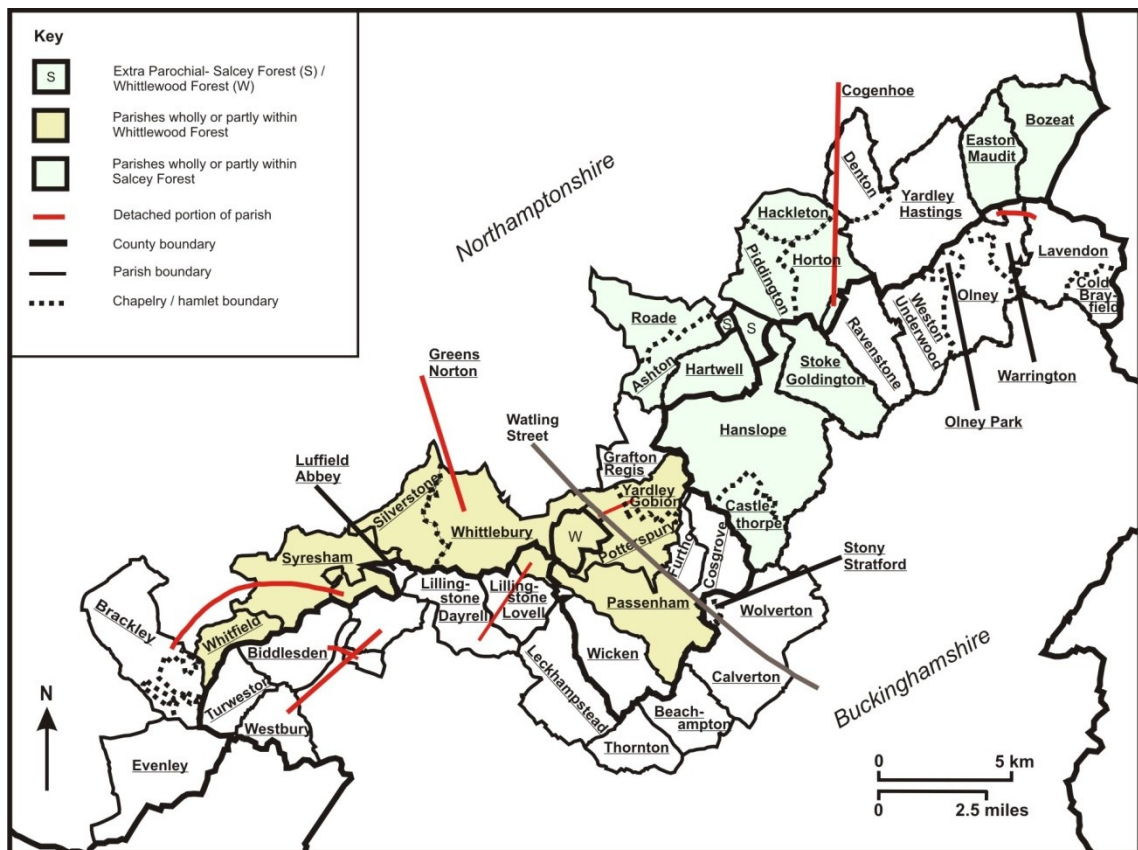
Figure 9.5. Border parishes falling wholly or partly within Salcey or Whittlewood Forests c.1300
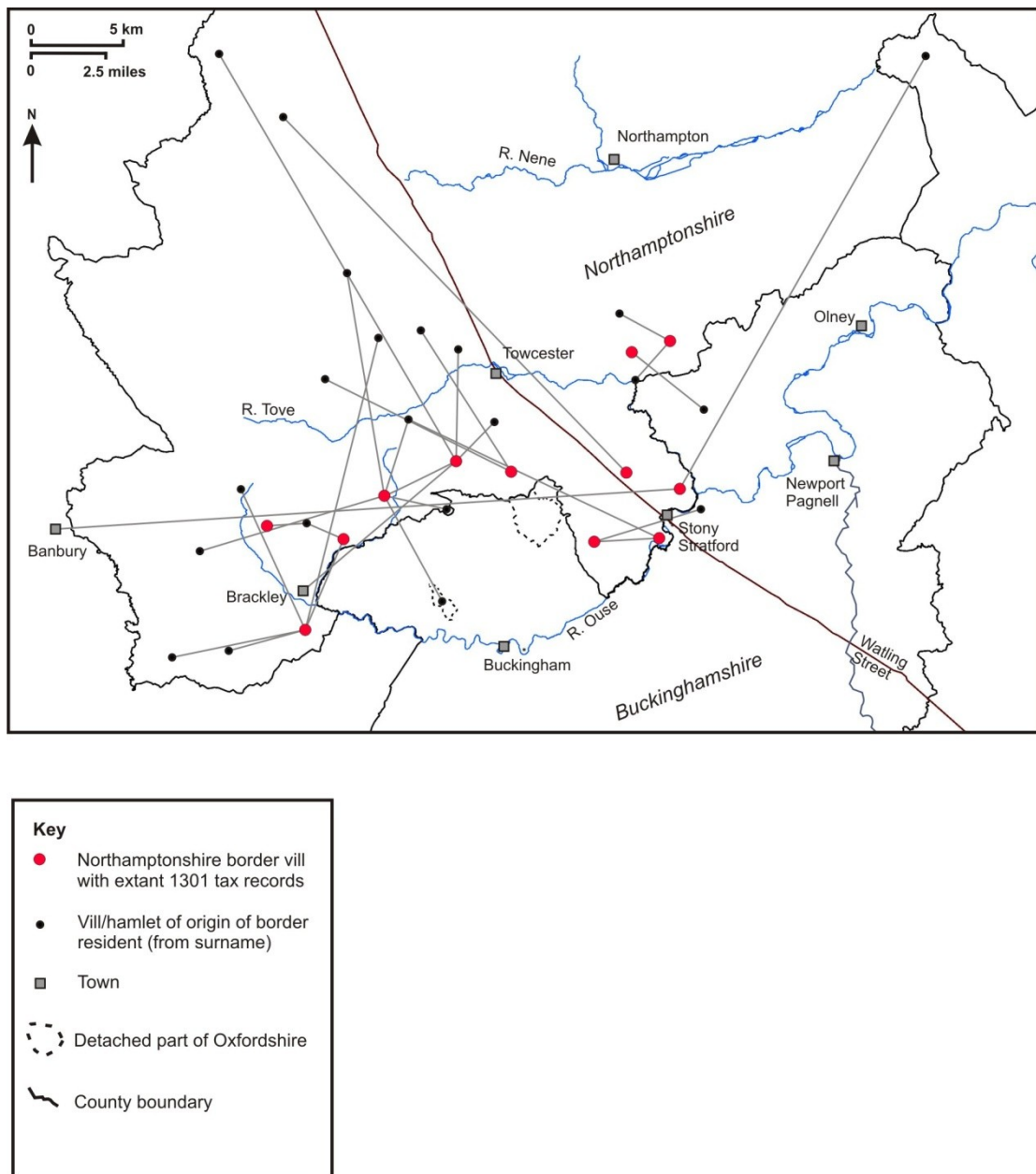
Figure 9.6. The origins of Northamptonshire border residents in 1301, from names
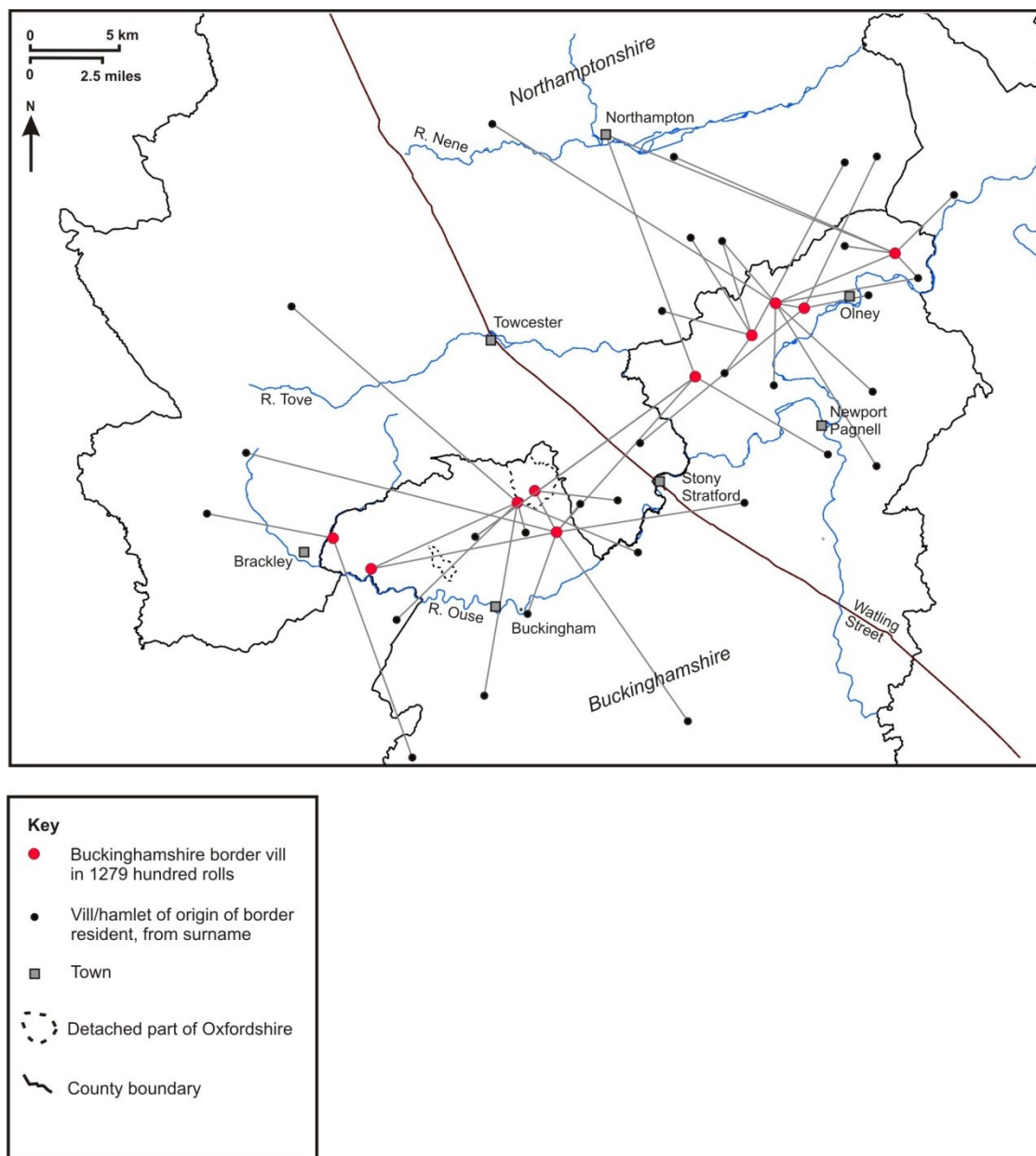
Figure 9.7. The origins of Buckinghamshire border residents in 1279, from names

'Leah' vill	Villeins 1066 (s)	Bordars	Slaves	Priests	Total Population	Rank in Northants border vills
Brackley with Halse & outlier in Syresham	30	18	12	1	61	1/20
Yardley Hastings & nine outliers	18	32	0	0	50 (+37 Freemen)	3/20
Evenley & Astwick with 1 outlier	27	22	3	0	52	2/20
Yardley Gobion, Potterspury & Wakefield	23	8	3	0	34	4/20
Passenham & Puxley	8	10	0	0	18 (+2 Freemen)	7/20
Kings Sutton & Whitfield	16	24	4	0	44	
Greens Norton, Blakesley, Adstone & Whittlebury	19	5	5	0	29 (+15 Freemen)	

Table 3.1. The populations of 'leah' vills in 1086

'Leah' vill	Value in 1066 (s)	Rank in Northants border vills	Value in 1086 (s)	Rank in Northants border vills
Brackley with Halse & outlier in Syresham	340	1/20	260	2/20
Yardley Hastings & 9 outliers	240	2/20	300	1/20
Evenley & Astwick with 1 outlier	180	3/20	196	4/20
Yardley Gobion, Potterspury & Wakefield	125	5/20	130	6/20
Passenham & Puxley	170	4/20	210	3/20
Kings Sutton & Whitfield	393		688	
Greens Norton, Blakesley, Adstone & Whittlebury	240		400	

Table 3.2. The value of 'leah' vills in 1066 and 1086

Landholder	Number of holdings	Value of border estate in 1086 (s)	Adjustment for Bishop of Bayeux' estate (s)	Adjusted total (s)	Border estates by value
1. Winemar the Fleming	5	576		576	14.0%
2. Bishop of Coutances	8	500		500	12.1%
3. Countess Judith	11	466		466	11.3%
4. Mainou the Breton	2	440		440	10.7%
5. Walter Giffard	5	295		295	7.2%
6. D'Oilly and d'Ivry	3	230	60	290	7.0%
7. Count of Mortain	12	285	4	289	7.0%
8. Hugh of Bolbec	1	200		200	4.9%
9. Earl Aubrey	4	192		192	4.7%
10. Walter the Fleming	4	190		190	4.6%
11. Bishop of Lisieux	2		190	190	4.6%
Bishop of Bayeux		254	(254)		
12. Henry of Ferrers	1	120		120	2.9%
13. William Peverel	3	90		90	2.2%
Other	8	285		285	6.8%
Total	73	4123		4123	

Table 5.1. The value of border estates in 1086

House	Order	Date founded	Founder	Ref.
Biddlesden Abbey	Cistercian	1147	Ernald de Bosco/ Earl of Leicester	*TBT*, pp.198-9
Gorefields (Stoke Goldington)	Benedictine (or Cluniac) nunnery	12th C	Not known – may have originated as a daughter house of Delapre Abbey, Northampton	D.C. Mynard and R.J. Ivens, 'The excavation of Gorefields: a medieval nunnery and grange at Stoke Goldington, Buckinghamshire', *ROB*, 42 (2002), pp. 19-101
Grafton Hermitage	Augustinian eremitic community	12th C	Woodville family. (Probably belonged to the Abbey of St James, Northampton)	G. Parker, 'The medieval hermitage of Grafton Regis, *NPP*, 6 (1981-2), pp. 247-52
Lavendon Abbey	Premonstratensian	12th C	John de Bidun, lord of the honor of Lavendon	*VCHB* 1, pp. 384-6
Luffield Priory	Benedictine	Before 1133	Earl of Leicester	*LPC I, p. vii; LPC II*, p. xiii
Ravenstone Priory	Augustinian	c.1255	Peter Chaceporc, keeper of the royal wardrobe	*VCHB* 1, pp. 381-2

Table 5.2. Religious houses along the border

Northampton Registry Number of certificates = 21			Oxford Registry Number of certificates = 18		
Origin of parties	**Debtors**	**Creditors**	**Origin of parties**	**Debtors**	**Creditors**
Northampton	1	13	Oxford	1	4
Northamptonshire	24	5	Oxfordshire	12	9
London		3	Berkshire	7	3
Leicestershire	3		Buckinghamshire	1	1
Warwickshire	2	1	Worcestershire	1	
Suffolk	1		Wiltshire	1	
Lincolnshire	1		Devon		1
			Bristol		1
			Unknown		1
Total	**32**	**22**	**Total**	**23**	**20**

Table 7.1. Analysis of certificates of debt for 1343

Manor Year	Hanslope 1297	Leckhampstead 1280	Olney 1301	Wolverton 1247
Arable				
Acreage *Value per acre*	1000 *6d*	331 *6d (assarts 8d)*	368 *4d (assarts 6d)*	222 *6d*
Total value	**500s**	**169s**	**130s 8d**	**111s**
Meadow				
Acreage *Value per acre*	54 *2s*	6 *2s 6d*	24 *2s*	34 *2s*
Total value	**108s**	**15s**	**48s**	**68s**
Pasture				
Acreage (where given) *Value per acre*	- -	- -	- -	- -
Total value	**44s 2d**	**5s**	**8s**	**-**
% split, by value:				
- arable land	77%	89%	70%	62%
- meadowland	16%	8%	28%	38%
- pastureland	7%	3%	2%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 8.1a. Data from IPM extents – Buckinghamshire demesnes
(Sources: TNA:PRO, C 133/86/1, C 133/106/2, C 132/7/3; *WWP*, 'Inquisitions post mortem', no. 13)

Manor	Halse	Passenham	Potterspury	Yardley Hastings
Year	1295	1327	1301	1324
Arable				
Acreage	425	321	200	180
Value per acre	*12d*	*4d*	*6d*	*4d/0d*
Total value	**425s**	**107s**	**100s**	**40s**
Meadow				
Acreage	100	70	8	18
Value per acre	*2s*	*2s/1s 6d*	*2s*	*2s*
Total value	**200s**	**120s**	**16s**	**36s**
Pasture				
Acreage (where given)	-	-	-	31
Value per acre	-	-	-	*4d/3d*
Total value	**48s 2d**	**12s**	**1s 6d**	**9s**
% split, by value:				
- arable land	63%	45%	85%	47%
- meadowland	30%	50%	14%	42%
- pastureland	7%	5%	1%	11%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 8.1b. Data from IPM extents – Northamptonshire demesnes
(Sources: TNA:PRO, C 133/76/3, C 134/91/1; *WWP*, 'Inquisitions post mortem', nos 17, 22)

Vill	Grain				Livestock (ex. horses) & fodder				Horses, carts and other goods				Total			
	Value			*%*	Value			*%*	Value			*%*	Value			*%*
	£	s	d		£	s	d		£	s	d		£	s	d	
Buckinghamshire - 1332 lay subsidy assessments																
Beachampton	10	7	6	*34*	14	10	6	*47*	5	14	7	*19*	30	12	7	*100*
Leckhampstead	11	1	8	*35*	17	19	11	*56*	2	19	6	*9*	32	1	1	*100*
Ravenstone	19	11	0	*38*	24	7	7	*47*	7	17	8	*15*	51	16	3	*100*
Turweston	9	15	5	*54*	5	17	8	*33*	2	7	11	*13*	18	1	0	*100*
Westbury	11	12	8	*37*	16	10	10	*52*	3	8	10	*11*	31	12	4	*100*
Weston Underwood	16	16	2	*40*	21	4	6	*50*	4	5	8	*10*	42	6	4	*100*
Northamptonshire – 13th C inventory)																
Hackleton	9	7	10	*34*	14	15	9	*53*	3	10	2	*13*	27	13	9	*100*

Table 8.2a. Lay subsidy data – proportions of grain and livestock by value in some border vills

Vill	Wheat		Dredge		Oats		Barley		Peas & Beans		Total	
	Vol. (qts)	%	Vol. (qts)	%	Vol. (qts)	%	Vol. (qts)	%	Vol. (qts)	%	Vol. (qts)	%
Buckinghamshire - 1332 lay subsidy assessments												
Beachampton	23	*33*	22	*32*	9	*13*	8	*11*	8	*11*	70	*100*
Leckhampstead	29	*36*	19	*24*	32	*40*	0	*0*	0	*0*	80	*100*
Ravenstone	38	*32*	49	*42*	0	*0*	0	*0*	31	*26*	118	*100*
Turweston	20	*32*	29	*48*	6	*10*	0	*0*	6	*10*	61	*100*
Westbury	27	*35*	23	*29*	20	*26*	0	*0*	8	*10*	78	*100*
Weston Underwood	28	*28*	52	*51*	4	*4*	0	*0*	17	*17*	101	*100*
	Wheat		**Maslin**		**Oats**		**Barley**		**Peas & Beans**			
Northamptonshire – 13th C inventory												
Hackleton	29	*43*	22	*33*	0	*0*	1	*2*	15	*22*	67	*100*

Table 8.2b. Lay subsidy data – proportions of grains by volume in some border vills

Vill	Cattle		Sheep		Pigs	
	no.	Ave. no. per person	no.	Ave. no. per person	no.	Ave. no. per person
Buckinghamshire - 1332 lay subsidy assessments						
Beachampton	23	1.4	74	4.6	7	0.4
Leckhampstead	34	1.6	72	3.4	0	0
Ravenstone	45	1.1	142	3.6	3	0.1
Turweston	16	1.0	20	1.2	0	0
Westbury	24	1.7	134	9.6	5	0.4
Weston Underwood	39	1.3	136	4.5	6	0.2
Northamptonshire – 13th C inventory						
Hackleton	93	3.1	76	2.5	38	1.3

Table 8.2c. Lay subsidy data – number of animals taxed in some border vills

Vill	Date 2 fields first recorded	Date 3 fields first recorded	Date >3 fields first recorded	Source
Beachampton	1250	1333		*CSP*, nos 108, 119,120; TNA/PRO SC 11/800
Brackley	13th C	18th C		*OFN*, p.205
Dagnall		1717		*IHMN* IV, p. 172
Deanshanger		1336		Gray, *English Field Systems,* p. 484
Evenley	1225	1550		*OFN*, p.262
Leckhampstead		1280		*WWP*, 'Parish Survey – Leckhampstead'
Lillingstone Dayrell		1289		*LPC II*, no. 765
Lillingstone Lovell		13th C		*WWP*, 'Parish Survey – Lillingstone Lovell'
Passenham		1566		*WWP*, 'Parish Survey – Deanshanger and Passenham'
Silverstone	1231	1289	1676	*OFN*, p.342
Syresham		18th C		Pettit, *Syresham*, p.116
Turweston		1634		M. Reed (ed.), *Buckinghamshire Glebe Terriers 1578-1640*, BRS, 30 (1997), pp. 210-3
Westbury	1220	17th C		*LPC II*, no. 397; *TBL*, p.89
Whitfield		1633		D. Hall, 'The woodland landscapes of southern Northamptonshire', *NPP*, 54 (2001), p.40
Whittlebury	1231	18th C		*OFN*, p.364
Wick Dive		1717		*IHMN* IV, p. 172
Wick Hamon			1717	*IHMN* IV, p. 172

No records found for Biddlesden, Calverton, Halse or Thornton. Luffield's fields were laid to grass before 1292 (*LPC I*, p. xiv).

Table 8.3a. Field systems – vills to the west of Watling Street

Vill	Date 2 fields *first recorded*	Date 3 fields *first recorded*	Date >3 fields *first recorded*	Source
Ashton			18th C	*VCHN* 5, pp. 59-76
Bozeat		1441		*OFN*, p.203
Cosgrove & Furtho		16th C		*VCHN* 5, pp. 127-42
Easton Maudit			1343	*OFN*, p.257
Grafton Regis		1315		*VCHN* 5, pp. 142-76
Hanslope			1599	HDHS, '1599 Terrier', <www.mkheritage.co.uk/hdhs/>
Hartwell			1605	Hall, 'The woodland landscapes', p.40
Horton		1458		*OFN*, p.298
Lavendon	12th C	1607	16th C	A. Brown and P. Everson, 'Earthworks at Lavendon', *ROB*, 45 (2005), p. 61
Olney			1653	SRO, D 742/G/1 -1,3
Potterspury		18th C		*VCHN* 5, pp. 289-345
Roade			1727	*VCHN* 5, pp. 345-74
Stoke Goldington	1427			*CIPM*, 22, no.741, *CIPM*, 23, no.39
Wolverton	c.1200	17th C		*CSP*, no. 129; *TBL*, p.89
Yardley Gobion		18th C		*VCHN* 5, pp. 289-345
Yardley Hastings			1565	*OFN*, p.367

No records found for Hackleton, Piddington or Weston Underwood.

Table 8.3b. Field systems – vills to the east of Watling Street

	1333/4 Extent			Domesday Book
	acres		**Value £ - s – d**	
Arable land:				
Demesne land	57.750			**Ploughs**
Snelshall Priory's land	96.000			
Rectory land	31.625			
John le Wolf's land	<u>23.250</u>			in demesne - 2
	208.625			
Tenanted land (see below)	293.000			other - <u>3</u>
	<u>501.625</u>		18 – 0 –4.25	<u>5</u>
Convert to hides (Note 1)		**5 hides**		**5 hides**
Meadow (Note 2)	c. 60		9 – 18 - 8	'for 2 ploughs'
Pasture (not measured)			0 – 16 - 6	
Mills (Note 3)			6 – 0 - 0	10s
Tenants:		<u>No.</u>		
Free		9		Villeins 5
Villeins		16		Bordars 9
Serfs		<u>12</u>		Slaves <u>1</u>
		<u>37</u>		<u>15</u>

Notes

1. Snelshall and Luffield charters describe a half-virgate as being twelve or thirteen acres suggesting that a hide consisted of 100 acres. (See, for example, *LPC II,* no. 728; *CSP*, no. 209).

2. The meadow consisted of 58.5 acres and two small unmeasured parcels.

3. DB lists only one mill but the extent includes two. (See Table 8.5, note 3)

Table 8.4. Beachampton I – entries from the 1333/4 extent and Domesday Book
(*Source: TNA:PRO, SC 11/800*)

	1252 Extent			Domesday Book
	virgates		**Value** **£ - s – d**	
Land In demesne		1 hide	0 – 40 - 0	1 hide (2 ploughs)
In villeinage Free tenants (Note 1) Other (Note 2) Convert to hides	9.5 2.0? <u>0.5</u> <u>12.0</u>	 3 hides	4 – 16 - 0 0 – 8 - 6	 3 hides (2 ploughs)
Mill (Note 3)			0 – 24 - 0	10s
Tenants: Free (Note 1) Villeins Other		<u>No.</u> 3? 13 <u>6</u> <u>22</u>		 Villeins 5 Bordars 6 Slaves <u>2</u> <u>13</u>

Notes

1. Neither the number of free tenants nor the acreage they held is given in the extent. However, the details of one virgate paying 4s p.a. is included in the Luffield charters. Other holdings seem to have been held in ½ virgate plots paying 2s each. (See, for example, *LPC II,* nos. 725, 728).
2. The villeins listed in a case before the Eyre of 1286 seem to consist of a group who held 9.5 virgates between them and a further group with much smaller holdings, totalling 13 acres. The latter group do not appear to be included in the extent of 1252. (*TBE,* no. 22)
3. The mills of both Beachampton manors had been acquired by Elias de Tingewick of Deanshanger in 1285. (A. Travers (ed.), *A Calendar of the Feet of Fines for Buckinghamshire 1259-1307,* BRS, 25 (1984), p. 52, no. 320)

Table 8.5. Beachampton II – entries from the 1252 extent and Domesday Book
(*Source: TNA:PRO,* C 132/13/2)

Appendix

Detached areas of Oxfordshire

The detached parts of counties visible in Domesday Book often arose from attempts to include the estates of a county's religious houses within that county.[1] This appendix considers whether such links might explain why Lillingstone Lovell, a parish located geographically in Buckinghamshire, formed a detached part of Oxfordshire

Lillingstone Lovell and its neighbour Lillingstone Dayrell had clearly once formed a single ten hide estate but, by 1086, this had been divided into three manors: one of 5 hides in Lillingstone Dayrell and two, of 2½ hides each, in Lillingstone Lovell.[2] In the medieval period Lillingstone Lovell was known as Great Lillingstone, suggesting its supremacy over Lillingstone Dayrell, or Lillingstone Parva.[3] It is not clear, however, to which county the original estate had belonged since, in Domesday Book, Lillingstone Lovell was included in Oxfordshire and Lillingstone Dayrell in Buckinghamshire. It is possible that Lillingstone had always been a detached part of the royal estate of Kirtlington, in Oxfordshire, as has often previously been suggested,[4] but that seems somewhat unlikely, given the distance between them (over 30 kilometres) and the proximity of the former to other royal estates. It is difficult to imagine what resource Lillingstone could have provided that was not available much closer to Kirtlington, and why these links had persisted when others had dissolved. It would be sensible, therefore, to look for evidence of ecclesiastical links which could explain Lillingstone's attachment to Oxfordshire.

In 1086 Lillingstone Dayrell was held by Walter Giffard whose honour was Buckinghamshire based and whose descendants later became Dukes of Buckingham. This suggests a context for this part of the estate being moved to Buckinghamshire.[5] Neither Walter Giffard nor the Northamptonshire based Richard Engaine, who held a half of Lillingstone Lovell, were churchmen or had any known connections to

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[1] *ALEC*, p. 65.
[2] DB ff. 147c; 160b,c.
[3] *VCHB* 4, pp.187, 191.
[4] *VCHO* 6, pp.1-6; *MVEL*, p. 62.
[5] I.J. Sanders, *English Baronies: A study of their origin and descent 1086-1327* (Oxford, 1960), pp. 62-3.
J.A. Green, *The Aristocracy of Norman England* (1997, Cambridge, 2002 edn)*,* pp. 182-3.

Oxfordshire.[6] However, the remaining part of Lillingstone Lovell was in the hands of Benzelin, the archdeacon of Wells, although it is not known whether he held it in his own right or as an officer of Wells.[7] Nevertheless, given that there is evidence to suggest that land granted to archdeacons after the Conquest had often previously been church land, the link is worth exploring.[8]

Before the Conquest at least a half, and probably all, of Lillingstone Lovell was held by Azur, almost certainly the son of Thored, who held land in Oxfordshire (Iffley and probably Minster Lovell); Buckinghamshire (Biddlesden) and Northamptonshire (Syresham, Brackley and Halse). His most valuable estates, however, were in Wiltshire and Somerset.[9] Azur is almost certainly to be identified with the thegn of that name, who is described successively in charters and writs as the steward and bursar of King Edward, and who belonged to a group of west-country thegns who were closely attached to the royal household, particularly Queen Edith, and who regularly witnessed charters together. He survived the Conquest and, although most of his lands passed, briefly, to Earl Aubrey, he seems to have retained some himself - for example, in 1072 he sold Combe St. Nicholas in Somerset to Giso the Bishop of Wells. It has been suggested that this was in some way related to Giso's campaign to re-acquire lands that had previously belonged to Wells but which had been mis-appropriated by Earl Harold and others.[10] The link to Wells is suggestive and Lillingstone Lovell possibly had a similar history to that of Combe, given that it does not seem to have passed to Earl Aubrey.

Most of Azur's estates outside the heartlands in the south west seem to have contained early or important churches and it has recently been suggested that the church of Lillingstone Lovell, too, may have originated in the late pre-Conquest period and have been 'of a status above that of a simple manorial chapel or an early parish church'.[11]

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[6] J.H. Round, *Feudal England: Historical Studies on the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (1895, London, 1964 edn), pp. 129-30.

[7] J. Palmer, 'Names database', in J. Palmer, M. Palmer and G. Slater (eds), *Domesday Explorer, 2008,* <http://edocs.hull.ac.uk> (30/03/2009).

[8] See, for example: Geoffrey in Norfolk (LDB f. 193), Ansketil in Kent (DB i f. 1). See also the appendix in: C. Brooke, 'The archdeacon and the Norman Conquest', in D. Greenway, C. Holdsworth and J. Sayers (eds), *Tradition and Change: Essays in Honour of Marjorie Chibnall,* (Cambridge, 2002).

[9] P.A. Clarke, *The English Nobility Under Edward the Confessor* (Oxford, 1994), p. 253; S. Keynes, 'Giso, Bishop of Wells', *ANS,* 19 (1997), pp. 244 n.228.

[10] Keynes, 'Giso', pp. 236-7, 244.

[11] P. Barnwell, 'Notes on the Medieval Churches - Lillingstone Lovell: St Mary', *WWP*.

(There was also a chapel in Lillingstone Lovell but little is known about it and its dependence on the church there was disputed.)[12] Azur had probably been granted his estates by Queen Edith, as the late Saxon monarchs were particularly avid acquirers of minsters and their lands, which were then often broken up and granted to royal servants, to provide for their maintenance. The pattern of tenure in Domesday Book suggests that such a fate had befallen Lillingstone.[13] Both halves of the divided estate were held by royal servants and men of Queen Edith. Lillingstone Lovell was held by Azur and Lillingstone Dayrell by Seric, who held land in Wiltshire and in Oxfordshire by serjeanty of serving as an usher of the king's hall.[14] Further, several of Azur's churches had associations with Mercian saints, which were keenly promoted by Queen Edith - for example, St Rumbold was venerated at Brackley and Minster Lovell was dedicated to St Kenelm.[15] Edith, a renowned church builder, had also assisted Giso in his effort to re-acquire the estates belonging to Wells and had given some additional land herself.[16] There is no evidence that Wells ever held any land in Oxfordshire but it should be noted that no early cartulary survives and the archives contain only 'survivors of a much larger corpus of documents'. There are some indications that land may have been held in other counties, as included in the archives are three tenth century charters relating to land in Sussex, Worcestershire and Herefordshire, places with no known association with Wells.[17]

It is plausible then that Lillingstone had been the *parochia* of a minster which had been acquired by Queen Edith. However, in order to explain the link to Oxfordshire, it would be necessary to identify an early 'mother' minster situated there, preferably with links to the west country, which may have once held Lillingstone Lovell. One possibility is Eynsham, which in the ninth century seems to have held an estate of at least 300 hides and which is postulated to have lain at the centre of a Mercian sub-kingdom. By 1005, when the house there was refounded, its estate had shrunk to thirty hides but it appears to have preserved some rights over the land it had lost. The location of only two of its

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[12] *VCHB* 4, p.197.
[13] *CASS*, p. 323.
[14] S. Baxter and J. Blair, 'Land tenure and royal patronage in the early English kingdom: a model and a case study', ANS, 28 (2006), pp. 42-3.
[15] *ASO*, pp. 55,66, 74-5, 163.
[16] Keynes, 'Giso', pp.238-9.
[17] S.E. Kelly (ed.), *Charters of Bath and Wells* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 167, 171, 179, 206-20.

original landholdings are known but both lay within 5 miles of Kirtlington.[18] Furthermore, the archives of Bath Abbey contain two seventh century charters granting, to an otherwise unknown abbess, land along the Cherwell and in Islip, in the same Oxfordshire hundred as Lillingstone Lovell. The latest editor of the Bath and Wells charters suggests that they may relate to an early minster at Eynsham, not Bath, and that their presence in the Bath archives is explained by the possibility that 'both houses [Bath and Eynsham] formed part of a wider association, perhaps because Bath was founded from Eynsham or because they were both daughter-houses of another minster'.[19] This raises the possibility of early ecclesiastical connections between Somerset and Oxfordshire, perhaps related to the eighth century southwards expansion of Mercia from the Thames to the Avon. It should perhaps be added that, although little is known of the pre-Conquest holdings of Eynsham Abbey, it is clear that several, at least, had fallen into the hands of Earl Harold and Queen Edith before 1066.[20]

There were certainly post-Conquest links between the Lillingstone area and Eynsham, as monks from Eynsham had settled at Luffield, a small hamlet in the far north-western corner of Lillingstone Dayrell, before c.1116 when they were given royal protection. Their settlement formed the basis of the Benedictine abbey later established there.[21]

Conclusion

The inclusion of Lillingstone Lovell in Oxfordshire is generally explained in terms of its origin as a detached area of woodland attached to the royal centre of Kirtlington. However, the evidence, meagre as it is, perhaps points instead to ecclesiastical links.

The post-Conquest tenure of part of Lillingstone Lovell by the archdeacon of Wells and the possible existence of an important Anglo-Saxon church there both suggest that Lillingstone Lovell had been in the hands of the church before the Conquest, possibly being held by an Oxfordshire based religious house. The origins, connections and landholdings of many such houses remain largely unknown as they seem to have

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[18] J. Blair, 'Saint Frideswide reconsidered', *Oxoniensia*, 52 (1987), pp. 71-127; E. Gordon, *Eynsham Abbey, 1005-1228: A Small Window into a Large Room* (Chichester, 1990), pp. 31-2.
[19] Kelly, *Charters,* pp.5, 28, 65-7.
[20] H.E. Salter (ed.), *The Cartulary of the Abbey of Eynsham*, Oxfordshire Historical Society, 49 (Oxford, 1907), p. x.
[21] *LPC II,* p.xiii.

suffered from early decay and, probably, plunder by the Godwine family. One candidate, however, is the early minster at Eynsham, which seemingly held land in the same hundred as Lillingstone Lovell, which probably had links to Somerset houses and which certainly had later connections with the area.

Whatever the origin of the connection between Lillingstone Lovell and Oxfordshire, however, there is a clear context for the possible transfer of Lillingstone Dayrell from Oxfordshire to Buckinghamshire. This would almost certainly have arisen from the post-Conquest tenure of Walter Giffard, a lord with strong Buckinghamshire links.

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Hartwell	1727 Grafton estate map	Map 360

	(Hartwell, Ashton, Roade)	
	1768 Grafton estate map	Map 440
	(Hartwell, Ashton, Roade)	
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