Characterizing Rural Settlement and Landscape:

Whittlewood Forest in the Early Middle Ages, *Medieval Archaeology (2003)*

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  Many attempts have been made to classify the complex patterns of historic settlement and landscape in Britain and Europe, by archaeologists, geographers and historians. In some cases broad distinctions have been drawn, such as that which emphasized the influence of geology and the natural environment on settlement, or that which contrasted regions of nucleated villages and modern enclosure with those of dispersed settlement and old enclosure.[1] Other classifications have sought to take more account of local variation. The division of England into farming regions, for instance, revealed a patchwork of different land use and social structure, while a similar characterization divided the country into eight categories of countryside or *pays.*[2] Some of these ideas have been refined over the years. Thus, the areas of nucleated and dispersed settlement have been redefined, based on the character of rural settlement in the 19th century.[3] Another classification scheme has emphasized the cultural differences between regions divided by major river valleys and watersheds.[4]

  In dividing a country such as England into a number of distinct zones, regions, provinces or *pays*, lines of demarcation have to be drawn, both spatially and chronologically, on the basis of particular characteristics or criteria. This can be problematic. Clearly, the more limited the time period under review or the set of features being examined, the easier it will be to determine the geographical boundaries of different territories. By contrast, the more sophisticated the historical enquiry becomes, the more difficult will be the definition of specific areas of countryside. Boundaries will become blurred and the number of exceptions to the general rule increase. There is often an assumption, however, that particular areas of England have distinctive characteristics – such as the Feldon and Arden districts of Warwickshire – which can be classified and contrasted with those of others. But is this necessarily the case? What about those areas of the country which appear to possess no unifying features, which lie on the borders between one type of countryside and another, and fit neither very well? What is the explanation for the development of areas of settlement and landscape which combine features normally associated with markedly different regions, provinces and *pays*?

  This paper explores the difficulties of characterizing rural settlement and landscape at the local level by examining a sample area of countryside which for a number of reasons might be considered hybrid or anomalous. The area in question formed part of a royal forest in the Middle Ages, was heavily wooded, but lay within a region of Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire

usually characterized as champion. Some of the characteristics of champion country were certainly in evidence in the forest, such as common fields, strong lordship, and peasants holding customary tenements consisting of virgates and half-virgates. On the other hand, the dominance of nucleated settlement nearby, for instance immediately south of the forest within the Vale of Aylesbury, or north towards Daventry and Northampton, was not reflected in our area, which was characterized rather by a significant degree of dispersal. A number of the inhabitants, moreover, made their living not from agriculture but by exploiting the resources of the abundant woodland and pasture. The paper seeks to identify the forces which influenced the pattern of settlement and landscape in this area, and to explain why some of the characteristics usually associated with champion and woodland country were present while others cannot be discerned.

THE PROJECT AREA

The focus of this paper is the former royal forest of Whittlewood which, at its greatest extent in the late 12th and 13th centuries, occupied an area of north Buckinghamshire and south-west Northamptonshire which extended westwards from the encircling rivers of the Great Ouse and Tove almost to the border with Oxfordshire, close to the town of Banbury.[5] Particular attention will be paid to a contiguous group of 12 parishes covering about 100 km sq. of countryside close to the eastern edge of the forest on both sides of the county boundary.[6] Six of the parishes today lie in Buckinghamshire: Akeley, Leckhampstead, Lillingstone Dayrell, Lillingstone Lovell, Luffield Abbey and Stowe. The other six parishes lie in Northamptonshire: Deanshanger, Old Stratford, Potterspury, Silverstone, Whittlebury and Wicken. This area was chosen because it contains both nucleated and dispersed settlement forms, is extensive enough to set these settlements within their broader landscape context, and provides the opportunity for comparative study of neighbouring communities. The area includes medieval settlements whose subsequent history is diverse, ranging from surviving villages to shrunken and deserted settlements. Good evidence for the late prehistoric and Roman periods allows medieval settlement and landscape development to be set in a longer chronological framework.[7]

The project area lies to the north of the valley of the river Great Ouse, on the oolitic limestone formations which characterize much of central Northamptonshire. Within the study zone, these rocks are generally overlain with glacial boulder clay, producing soil which is fertile but heavy and difficult to work.[8] The limestone beds have, however, been revealed in places by the action of tributary streams of the Great Ouse and Tove which have carved narrow valleys through the boulder clay. This underlying stone provides ideal building material for the settlements close to the valley, such as Wicken, Lillingstone Lovell and Silverstone, where the stone is still used in building today. Indeed the Lillingstones (*Lytlinga-stan*) appear to have taken their name from 'the stone of the people of Lytel or Lytla'.[9] Away from these limestone beds, the materials used in vernacular buildings are more varied, although local limestone was the

predominant material used in the construction of the parish churches of the area. The alluvial flood plains of the two rivers provided light and fertile soils perfect for tilling, while within the principal valleys and along the secondary streams water meadows provided animal fodder. Finally, the woodlands occupied the claylands, although these appear largely to have been limited to the upper and mid-slopes of the Great Ouse/Tove watershed.

There is thus little to distinguish the physical environment of Whittlewood from large parts of Northamptonshire, Leicestershire and north Bedfordshire where boulder clays overlie Middle Lias and Cornbrash beds. The area shares much in common with the southern parts of the Northamptonshire Heights to the north and west, and Bromswold to the north-east. Indeed, it would be difficult to argue that Whittlewood Forest constitutes a unique physical *pays*, and certainly the 12 parishes under investigation cannot be characterized in this way. The southern extent of the forest does, however, follow the Great Ouse which marks the interface between the limestone beds to the north and Oxford clays to the south which dominate the Vale of Aylesbury.[10] While the forests of Whittlewood, Salcey and Rockingham all lie on the limestones and boulder clays north of the Great Ouse, the forests of Shotover and Bernwood lie on the Oxford clays to the south. Underlying geology, therefore, appears to have played little part in determining the location of these forest areas. That the settlements of the project area differ so markedly from those of other areas which share its physical characteristics suggests that factors other than the purely topographical shaped its development through the medieval and into the modern period.

LANDSCAPE EVOLUTION AND REVOLUTION

There are immense problems in trying to characterize rural landscape and settlement in the medieval period. These lie principally in the fact that the period saw significant innovation and change: new forms of settlement appeared, and different agricultural practices were introduced. The landscape across many parts of western Europe was very different in the 15th century compared with that of the 5th century. However, these changes were rarely made rapidly. Rather landscapes tended to evolve slowly over time as a result of varied human decision-making. Landscape elements were inherited and retained, while others were subtly metamorphosed to suit contemporary requirements. Only occasionally were new elements imposed with little regard for what had gone before and rarely did this totally obliterate more ancient features. The medieval period can be characterized as one of evolution, both in terms of landscape and settlement. But this evolution was neither simple nor linear, rather it was complex and multi-directional. Neighbouring blocks of countryside could develop along entirely different lines from one another, while two areas divided by great distance might develop in parallel, the realization which gave rise to the powerful concept of *pays*.

Within this evolutionary continuum, however, certain areas of Britain and Europe appear to have been subject to rapid and wholesale reorganization at critical moments in their history. Evidence points, for instance, to territorial reorganization in the Iron Age while later Roman centuriation on the continent profoundly affected large blocks of countryside. In England, Parliamentary enclosure in the late 18th and 19th centuries produced a new and regular landscape of geometric fields and straightened roads, imposed sometimes with little regard for antecedent arrangements. Finally, it has been argued that large parts of central and lowland England, the so-called Central Province, experienced a comparable, if not greater, settlement and landscape revolution during the medieval period. This has been variously labelled the 'great replanning' or the 'village moment'. Both specifically refer to the shift from a largely dispersed pattern of settlement towards nucleation, together with the associated adoption of a system of large, unenclosed fields farmed in common, replacing a mosaic of smaller fields farmed in severalty.

The two hypotheses, however, propose very different mechanics behind these changes. For Brown, Foard and Hall, working on the Northamptonshire evidence, the 'great replanning' took place in the late Saxon period.[11] Increasing manorialization saw the abandonment of dependent, formerly independent, settlements of free tenants. This process was encouraged still further by the fragmentation of the great estates as new manors were created. Only where the great royal estates persisted, retaining secondary settlements of free tenants with specific estate functions, were the centralizing forces of manorialization resisted and the settlement pattern remained dispersed. Furthermore, the adoption of open fields over the whole territory of these new manors or townships acted as a barrier to new settlement creation and petrified the resultant nucleated settlement pattern. A process which began in the 9th century, they argue, was largely complete by the 10th.

For Lewis, Mitchell-Fox and Dyer, however, the 'village moment' should be seen as an evolutionary rather than revolutionary development, a process which took four centuries to reach maturity.[12] [The harrying questioned as a causal factor…D.M. Palliser 'Domesday book and the "Harrying of the North"' *Northern History 29 (1993), 5*.]
While the reasons for nucleation and the creation of open fields remain obscure – the lack of available land; soil exhaustion; disputes over land and access; the need to preserve pasture; increasing market opportunities with the growing urban centres; recession and population collapse – it is clear that the process was underway by the mid-9th century and continued into the 13th century. It is likely to have begun in those areas most suited to arable production and spread by imitation as the benefits of the new regime were recognized by neighbouring communities. For some communities, the process of nucleation may have taken many decades, the result of individual decision-making, as isolated farms were abandoned in favour of holdings nearer to others, or arrived at through a series of intermediate replannings. For other communities,

however, there remains the possibility that restructuring took place in a single year involving the total redesign of the landscape and the construction of new properties in the central settlement.

It is within the ambit of these two hypotheses, and the creation of *pays*, that the characterization of Whittlewood must begin. However, the changing face of landscape and settlement over the period in question poses its own problems. Characterizing the dynamic is far more difficult than characterizing the static. To overcome these difficulties it is proposed here not to characterize the whole period, but to break it down into its constituent parts, to characterize the landscape and its settlement at a number of chronological horizons, and by so doing, reveal the processes by which these changes took place.

IRON AGE AND ROMAN SETTLEMENT AND LANDSCAPE

Knowledge of the territorial arrangements of Iron Age Britain is far from definitive, but Whittlewood almost certainly lay at the north-western corner of the territory of the Catuvellauni. Remote from their civitas of St Albans, this isolation from the tribal powerbase was further exaggerated by the confederation of the Catuvellauni with the Trinovantes, the latter's territory centred on Colchester.[13] What limited archaeological evidence there is suggests that the area was quite densely populated despite its marginal location (Map XXX). In Whittlebury, for example, two small enclosures are known, together with a small early to mid-Iron Age settlement covering approximately 20 hectares.[14] In Deanshanger and Potterspury finds of Iron Age pottery are indicative of occupation.[15] All five sites are located in areas of later medieval woodland, implying that the landscape at this early period was very different from that which was to follow.[16]

By AD50, Whittlewood had been brought under Roman military control.[17] An early impact of the Roman occupation was the construction of Watling Street. More significantly, a post station was established at Towcester (Lactodorum). Towcester was fortified early in the 3rd century and appears to have prospered thereafter. Thus, extra-mural occupation and industrial activity has been found along Watling Street and the roads to Brackley and Alchester.[18] This last road ran through the middle of Whittlewood and was established by the last quarter of the 1st century.[19] The convergence of the Alchester road and Watling Street at Towcester formed the backbone of a more complex system of minor roads serving the numerous settlements within the project area.

Several villa sites lie in and around the Whittlewood area.[20] At the southern extent of the project area are the Great Ouse valley-based villas at Cosgrove, Deanshanger and Foscote, while in the central clayland zone, and close to Watling Street, villas have been excavated at The Gullet in Whittlebury and at Wakefield Lodge in Potterspury.[21] Numerous other settlements and large isolated Romanized farmsteads have been located across the whole of the area, in the parishes of Potterspury, Wicken, and Silverstone,[22] and to these may be added sites in Akeley and Leckhampstead.[23] Some of these sites, for example, east of Potterspury, Deanshanger villa, and Briary Wood in Deanshanger have produced both Iron Age and early Roman material

suggesting some continuity of occupation and settlement pattern.[24] However, it is clear that during the Roman period, settlement intensified and expanded. Native sites, identified as small concentrations of Romano-British pottery, are encountered across the whole area.[25] These occur approximately every 800m across the landscape, although dating of the pottery reveals that not all of these farms were occupied contemporaneously.

Nevertheless, the Whittlewood area apparently supported a large and hierarchical rural population, although it is far from clear how the extended estates associated with the high-status sites were arranged. Local topography was clearly of some relevance in their location. The villa sites, for instance, appear to have favoured the lighter soils, specifically selecting areas of limestone outcropping along the tributary streams, such as Cosgrove and Deanshanger, or areas of free draining glacial sand and gravel pockets, as at The Gullet and Wakefield Lodge. Some secondary sites occupy elevated positions, albeit on the claylands, as at Stockholt Farm in Akeley and in Leckhampstead, while the location of the smallest sites suggest that they were fitted within an ordered landholding framework, unable to select the best aspect, underlying geology, or close proximity to natural watercourses.

Evidence for the environment within which this dense but dispersed settlement pattern was set has been forthcoming from systematic fieldwalking. Of the 57 fields (5285 hectares) surveyed, only two have failed to produce Romano-British pottery. Most of these fields have produced small but well-spread assemblages indicative of manuring. These low-density pottery scatters are found on the clayland watershed and down onto the alluvial floodplains of the major rivers. All the archaeological indications are that the Whittlewood area was intensively cultivated and largely cleared of trees by the end of the Roman occupation, although no archaeological evidence can be put forward as to the nature of the field systems themselves. Further corroboration for this conclusion comes from the nature of the pottery scatters. Had the occupants of these isolated farmsteads been carving a living from small clearings within a largely wooded environment, discrete pottery concentrations marking the extent of clearance and cultivation, separated by zones where pottery was absent representing non-arable landuse, would be identifiable. But where large parts of contiguous countryside have been sampled, for example within the parishes of Akeley and Leckhampstead, the pottery spreads appear uninterrupted (Map XXX). Yet, the landscape cannot have been totally denuded of tree cover. Towcester would have required large quantities of wood while there is evidence from Potterpury, Stowe[26] and Syresham[27] of pottery production taking place within the project area, an activity which required large quantities of fuel. However, it would appear that woodland areas were restricted. Their location might tentatively be suggested by the few fields which have failed to produce any pottery.

Three characteristic features can therefore be defined for this period: extensive cultivation; restricted tree cover; and a hierarchical and dispersed settlement pattern. This

emerging picture of the Roman landscape of Whittlewood is by no means unique. Indeed, in other later wooded areas such as Wychwood in Oxfordshire,(27) Grovely Forest in Wiltshire, Micheldever Wood in Hampshire,[28] to a lesser extent Rockingham Forest in Northamptonshire (29) and in north-east Bedfordshire,[29] archaeological evidence also points towards extensive occupation and cultivation at this earlier period. However, Roman occupation in Whittlewood was not as intensive as in other parts of the Midlands, for instance in central and eastern Northamptonshire or Leicestershire.[30] This can be explained in part by the political and economic landscape in which the area lay. Just as Whittlewood had been marginal to the tribal arrangements of the Iron Age, so it remained in the Roman provincial system.[31] Moreover, Whittlewood remained remote from the centripetal economic forces of any major urban centre, although Watling Street provided a direct link to distant centres. Towcester, the only local centre, remained a small town throughout the period. Its hinterland is poorly understood but must have encompassed a large part of later Whittlewood. Yet its influence cannot have been as great, for instance, as the hinterlands around major centres such as St Albans.[32] The landscape and settlement arrangement of Roman Whittlewood thus appears to have shared characteristics with large parts of lowland south-east England. There is nothing in the Roman evidence to offer an explanation for the hybrid and anomalous patterns which were to appear during the centuries after 400.

THE EARLY MEDIEVAL LANDSCAPE

The seven centuries between the end of Roman occupation and the compilation of Domesday Book saw fundamental changes in the landscape and settlement pattern of England. In the Whittlewood area, the largely open arable landscape was replaced by one which was heavily wooded, and the dispersed settlement pattern began to coalesce to form the villages and hamlets of the later medieval and indeed modern landscape.

There is clear archaeological evidence to suggest that the end of Roman occupation marked a break in landuse and settlement. It is in the urban context of Towcester where this discontinuity is most visible. No early medieval finds have been made from the town, although this absence should be tempered by the fact that later occupation may have removed the vital evidence, just as it has destroyed large parts of the later Roman levels.[33] Nevertheless, it is clear that the town lost much of its importance and cannot have exerted the same influence over the Whittlewood area as it had done before. The evidence from the rural contexts is more mixed. While the town continued to flourish until the end of the occupation, in the countryside villas were in decline and were being abandoned during the early 4th century. The villas at Cosgrove and The Gullet seem to have been abandoned around 300 while parts of Deanshanger villa appear to have been converted to agricultural and light industrial usage by the 3rd century.[34] Conversely, many Romanized farmsteads seem to have survived through to the end of the occupation. The

building at Mount Mill Farm in Wicken has produced pottery of 3rd- and 4th-century date,[35] while the farmstead at Stockholt Farm in Akeley produced a range of coinage from the mid-3rd century to the early 5th (Arcadius 383-408).[36] The evidence points to a slow and gradual decline in the rural population from around 300 and marked decline at the end of the occupation.

None of these Roman sites has produced any material of early medieval date. Indeed, there is an almost total lack of settlement evidence of 5th- and 6th-century date for the whole of the Whittlewood area. That the area was populated and exploited at this period is substantiated by two early Saxon cemetery sites, the first at Passenham where 5th-century pottery was associated with many of the more than 50 burials,[37] and a second at Marston St Lawrence.[38] Both cemeteries, however, lie at the periphery of later Whittlewood and perhaps point to a shift of population away from the central boulder clay zone. Traces of activity on the clayland during the first four centuries following Roman occupation are restricted to the discovery from fieldwalking and test-pitting of a few sherds of early-middle Saxon handmade pottery (400-800) (Map XXX). Despite the paucity of evidence, there would appear to be a clear association of this early material with later settlement sites. Akeley, Lamport in Stowe, Lillingstone Dayrell and Leckhampstead have all produced sherds of this date. While it currently cannot be categorically proven, it is tempting to propose that this correlation is evidence for an underlying early-middle Saxon settlement pattern which dictated subsequent development.[39] This settlement stability is further suggested by the absence of archaeological evidence for other contemporary settlements lying outside the later occupied zones, despite extensive fieldwalking in these areas. Nor do later charters, which provide valuable furlong names, contain much evidence for lost settlement sites. In particular, there are very few cases of medieval furlong names with habitative elements such as *tun*, *cot*, *stead* and *thorpe*, which elsewhere have been shown to overlie earlier settlements.[40]

It is in the low, early medieval population base that the origins of the divergent development of Whittlewood's settlement pattern and landscape can be sought. Certainly Whittlewood appears in the early-middle Saxon period to have been significantly less populated than other areas of the lowland Midlands where lighter soils predominated. To the north-east, for instance, there is extensive evidence of a dense dispersed settlement pattern of early Saxon date. In Maidwell parish five separate sites have been identified, while in Brixworth parish eight settlement sites and two cemeteries have been found.[41] Further sites are located in the parishes of Spratton, Welford, Chapel Brampton, East Fardon and Harlestone.[42] Moreover, in central Northamptonshire 20 cemetery sites have been discovered in an area not much larger than Whittlewood Forest.[43] This model of population retreat in the post-Roman period from the claylands in favour of the lighter soils, proposed as a result of the examination of these more favourable areas, can now be corroborated from the alternative perspective by the lack of forthcoming archaeological evidence from extensive work on the claylands of Whittlewood. But perhaps more importantly, as a result of population retreat, the number of individual settlements

within Whittlewood remained small. Thus, the very reasons which gave rise to the conditions which necessitated nucleation during the 'great replanning', a movement to which Whittlewood must have been subject, were simply not applicable to Whittlewood. The landscape was not choked with small dispersed settlements, as at Brixworth or Maidwell, abandoned in favour of clustered settlement and the laying out of extensive open fields. Rather the dispersed settlement pattern could be retained since there was ample space for the creation of the new fields without reorganization of the principal dwelling areas. The result was thus hybrid: landscape elements of the replanning appear to have been adopted, yet older patterns of settlement were able to prevail.

Population retreat after 400 was to have an even greater effect on the landscape, providing the opportunity for woodland regeneration. That regeneration took place is clear from the finds of Romano-British pottery in areas that were later wooded, together with the large amounts of woodland recorded in Domesday Book. But the process by which this took place is as yet poorly understood. Did woodland colonize the Roman fields naturally from the small blocks of woodland preserved within the landscape? Or was the regeneration aided by human intervention? As unclear is the chronology of this regeneration. The partial dismantling of the rural social hierarchy, witnessed by the decline and abandonment of villas after 300, may have resulted in small-scale regeneration of woodland even before the Roman occupation was over. However, it is probable that this process only reached its height after the Roman period, following the general decline in population over large parts of Whittlewood. Clues to the progress of this woodland growth can be gleaned from the shape of the Whittlewood parishes, forming in the two or three centuries before the Norman Conquest. This was the time when the political, social and economic landscape of the Whittlewood area was also being transformed. This intangible landscape must be understood before tackling the issue of woodland in more depth.

In the 7th century the territories of individual groups of people in the east midlands were falling under the sway of the kingdom of Mercia, a process that was completed during the 8th and 9th centuries.[44] At the end of the 9th century, the Danish invasions reached Watling Street, as indicated by the treaty signed by King Alfred and Guthrum in 886x890. The border of the Danelaw ran along the course of the old Roman road in south Northamptonshire. However, place-name evidence suggests little, if any, Scandinavian influence in the Whittlewood area.[45] Indeed, the area was of strategic significance for the kings of Wessex. In 921, Edward the Elder, son of Alfred the Great, stationed his West Saxon army at Passenham, on the Great Ouse, while the stronghold at Towcester was being fortified.[46] According to one of his law-codes, Edward's son, Athelstan, held a council at Whittlebury in about 930.[47] Domesday Book suggests the presence of important royal manors close to Watling Street in 1086, in particular Passenham and Towcester, territories which may have been of a much greater extent in the 9th and early 10th centuries, when the struggles with the Danes were at their height.

There is a general belief that before the 10th century the countryside was dominated by large holdings of land, known to historians as 'multiple estates' or 'great estates'. These were held by the king and aristocracy, and by bishops and monasteries, who expected from them regular supplies of food and rent. After about 850 these great estates began to be broken up and the pieces granted to followers and family.[48] These smaller holdings of land often became the parishes of the post-Conquest period, as lords sought to augment their status by building churches close to their place of residence. This process of fragmentation is evident in the Whittlewood area (Map XXX). The Lillingstones, formerly a single estate of 10 hides, were divided along a stream. Lillingstone Lovell was originally called Great (*Magna*) Lillingstone, its western neighbour Little (*Parva*) Lillingstone. It is likely that Leckhampstead and Akeley were also at one time a single estate. In the 12th century the chapel at Akeley was still dependent on the mother church at Leckhampstead, to which it owed the sum of 2*s.* a year.[49] Silverstone and Whittlebury, both chapelries of the royal manor of Greens Norton and in a detached part of Greens Norton hundred, were almost certainly one estate, and may not have been divided until after the Norman Conquest. Whittlebury is not recorded in Domesday Book and in the 12th century part of it, at least, was held of the fee of Silverstone.[50]

In the eastern part of the project area the situation is more complex. In 1086 the jurisdiction ('soke') of part of Cosgrove was vested in the manor of Passenham, a sign that Passenham was once the centre of a larger territory. Cosgrove, in turn, shared its field system with Furtho, a small parish of less than 700 acres. The men of Potterspury had rights of common in both Furtho and Cosgrove. The parishes of Potterspury and Yardley Gobion were originally one, and it seems likely that Potterspury (formerly East Perry) and Paulerspury (formerly West Perry) formed a single estate in the early middle ages. The whole of this area may, therefore, have been in the possession of a single lord, possibly the king, in the 9th century which was subsequently broken up into a variety of territories of different sizes. The boundaries of these smaller estates were designed to ensure that each part was given its fair share of the available resources, particularly woodland. Thus Cosgrove, which lay close to the confluence of Great Ouse and Tove, held detached portions of land in what is now Potterspury parish, in order to gain access to the woods of the later Whittlewood Forest. [footnote Foard 1985 and Brown & Foard]

An invisible landscape of property boundaries and rights was thus being established in the two or three centuries prior to the Norman Conquest. It is doubtful whether any of these dated back to the Roman era or earlier. Many of the parish boundaries of the study area seem to have been designed to ensure that each community had access to woodland, which mostly regenerated during the early Middle Ages. Thus the parishes of Leckhampstead, Passenham and Wicken all converge in the heart of the later forest. As well as the detached portions of Cosgrove, the wooded north-eastern part of Lillingstone Lovell belonged to Lillingstone Dayrell in the Middle Ages. Lovell itself was a detached part of Oxfordshire, perhaps as the result of a dependency

upon the important royal manor of Kirtlington. The association of Silverstone and Whittlebury with Greens Norton was also probably the result of the king wishing to have access to hunting areas and resources of timber within the woods. The boundaries of Foscote parish too reach northwards from the River Great Ouse to the outskirts of Akeley to secure access to the woodland growing there. A similar morphology can be seen to the west of the project area, to secure a share of the woodland around Syresham (Map XXX).

The morphology of the parishes of the Whittlewood area indicates that the amount of woodland available was not unlimited and that individual territories had to converge in order to secure their share. The heart of the later forest was not only the point at which the boundaries of four parishes met, but was also where those of three counties and four hundreds converged. Thus, the county boundary between Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire follows the Great Ouse for a short way before abruptly turning northwards into the woodland. A detached portion of Oxfordshire also lies in this area, as well as the hundreds of Stodfold (Bucks) and Cleyley (Northants) and the detached portions of Greens Norton (Northants) and Ploughley hundreds (Oxon). This raises the question whether the regeneration of the woodland had reached its greatest extent by the time these boundaries were formed, perhaps in the early 10th century, or whether the woodland recorded in Domesday Book was the result of further regeneration in the late Anglo-Saxon period. If there was additional regeneration in the 10th and 11th centuries, it is likely that it was occurring alongside the clearance of pockets of woodland to create additional arable fields.

THE COLONIZATION OF THE WOODLAND

The regeneration of woodland in the Whittlewood area during the early Middle Ages is by no means a unique or unusual development. In other parts of England, such as Oxfordshire and Worcestershire, areas of medieval woodland can be shown to have been occupied with fields of corn during the centuries of Roman rule.[51] The clearance of woodland in order to extend arable cultivation was a well-known feature of the 11th to 13th centuries. It was in this period that the anomalous features of the Whittlewood area appear most clearly, in terms of the pattern of medieval settlement and landscape. The area appears to be hybrid because it does not conform to the models of settlement and landscape evolution outlined by historians for other areas of England. Instead it displays characteristics common to a number of different types of countryside or *pays*. This emphasizes the difficulties of classifying a large area such as England in terms of a few broad categories. Whittlewood is not a large enough area to be classified as a *pays* in its own right, even if future research finds that it shares common characteristics with other parts of the country. It is rather an area on the boundary between two common types of countryside in England – those of woodland and champion – the characteristics of which were combined

together in Whittlewood because of the decisions made by the inhabitants of the area during the Middle Ages.

The contrasts between these two supposedly very different types of *pays* – woodland and champion – have often been drawn. In the champion countryside of the 13th and 14th centuries, nucleated villages were the norm, surrounded by open fields farmed by peasants holding standard tenements who made their living primarily from corn-growing. In the woodlands, by contrast, a more dispersed pattern of settlement prevailed. The arable fields were more irregular and often enclosed, lying scattered among areas of woodland and pasture. The size of landholdings was more unequal, the inhabitants enjoyed more freedom, and they practised a greater variety of occupations than would be found in the champion areas.[52] Nevertheless, it has been recognized that these contrasts can be exaggerated and that particular areas of countryside might develop characteristics associated with both champion and woodland *pays*. At Hanbury in Worcestershire, for example, a dispersed pattern of settlement in a woodland environment developed alongside open fields farmed by customary half-virgate holders owing relatively heavy labour services.[53]

Whittlewood is similar to Hanbury only in that it developed characteristics associated with both champion and woodland. The mix of those characteristics, however, was different in each case. Similarly, the evolution of the Whittlewood area may be compared with the colonization of the woodlands in the wold areas of England, such as those in Kent or the Bromswold area of eastern Northamptonshire. The utilization of the resources of woodland or wold is usually considered to have taken place from mainly arable settlements which had acquired rights over an area of wood or wood-pasture. The links between vale and woodland or vale and wold are not hard to find in medieval England. [footnote Fox and Everitt] In the Whittlewood area, it appears that the woods of Deanshanger and Puxley were exploited from Passenham, those of Silverstone and Whittlebury from Greens Norton, those of Akeley from Leckhampstead, and those of Lillingstone Dayrell (*Parva*) from Lillingstone Lovell (*Magna*). In each case the secondary settlement was initially dependent on the mother settlement, before it gained a sufficient population to be able to function independently in its own right. The signs of dependency nevertheless persisted, in ecclesiastical organization in the case of Passenham, Leckhampstead and Greens Norton, and in the evidence of place-names in the case of the Lillingstones.

In the case of the Kentish wolds, the woodland was cleared by 1086 and was worked by pastoral farmers living in dispersed settlements.[54] In the Bromswold area of Northamptonshire, parts of the woodland were similarly cleared by 1086 but, unlike Kent, were incorporated into the open arable fields of nucleated villages, such as Clopton.[55] In other parts of Bromswold, the woodland was not cleared until the thirteenth century, when that too was added to the open fields of villages such as Barnwell.[56] This is typical of 'wold' country, which today is usually open, windswept upland.[57] The contrasts between the Kentish wold and Bromswold reflect the different

types of farming and settlement pattern prevailing in areas which otherwise share a common evolution. Similarly, in the case of the settlements in the Whittlewood area, though less nucleated than in other areas of Northamptonshire, they were not as dispersed as those in Kent. Likewise, although some land cleared from the woodland was enclosed and farmed in severalty, most of the newly colonized arable was incorporated into one of the three open fields which were a feature of most of the parishes of the study area.

The chronology of the creation of the open fields of the project area is as yet unclear. Some were probably in existence before the Norman Conquest. It is tempting to suggest that even a potentially secondary settlement such as Akeley already possessed in 1086 the three open fields that can be shown to have been present in the later Middle Ages. The three hides of the manor's assessment in Domesday Book appear to correspond with the three fields of roughly 120 acres each (Map XXX), which were ploughed by the half plough-team of the lord and his two slaves, together with the 2½ ploughs of the two villeins and four bordars.[58] By contrast, the open fields of Deanshanger and Puxley, settlements dependent upon Passenham, were probably created during the centuries following the Norman Conquest as a result of assarting. Deanshanger is not named in Domesday Book and Puxley consisted of two small tenancies in 1086 with a single plough between them. A charter of 1384 reveals that open-field agriculture was practised at Puxley at this time. Of the 3 acres 1½ roods granted, 'lying separately in the various fields', four selions lay in Barnevill croft, one acre lay in the field of Puxley at Hanggynook, half a rood lay in the field of Deanshanger abutting Chyrchewey, three roods lay in 'le Nethercumylton inlond', and half an acre lay in 'le Overcumylton inlond'.[59]

While it is possible that both in Whittlewood and Bromswold, clearance of woodland began at an early date, say from the 7th or 8th century onwards, it did not continue in Whittlewood until all the wood was gone. Thus, it was more like the western part of the Kentish wold, which remained wooded, while Bromswold was like the eastern part, which was cleared. Was this because the soil was poor in Whittlewood, as in the western part of the Kentish wold?[60] This is unlikely, because it was farmed in the Roman period, as we have already established. Other factors must have been at work.

There can be no doubt that population was lower in the Whittlewood area than in the river valleys and wolds of Kent. Domesday Book shows that parts of Kent and East Anglia were among the most heavily populated parts of the country in 1086.[61] Similarly, the Bromswold area was more densely populated than Whittlewood at the same time.[62] Thus, there was not the same degree of pressure of people on resources driving the extension of farming into the woodland areas of Whittlewood. It seems unlikely that the introduction of open field farming, which has been dated to the 9th century in parts of Northamptonshire, restricted the colonization of woodland. Certainly, in Clopton and Barnwell the remaining areas of woodland were cleared and turned over to arable. However, it is probable that there was a larger amount of woodland in the Whittlewood

area which supported a more balanced mix of arable and livestock farming. Domesday Book suggests that the peasantry of these manors held large numbers of pigs which were fed on the acorns and beech mast of the woodlands. Other livestock too would have found plentiful pasture in the woods of the area.

As population grew, however, in the centuries leading up to *c.* 1300, the pressure to clear woodland in order to extend the arable became intense. In Whittlewood large areas were assarted, some of which were enclosed, while other parts were added to the open fields. This clearance continued almost to the eve of the Black Death in 1348-9, suggesting that the demand for land did not slacken as in some parts of the country after about 1300 and that population remained at a high level. It is impossible to say whether the inhabitants of Whittlewood would have cleared all the woodland before the mid-14th century, had they been given a free choice. However, their freedom of action was to some extent curtailed after the Norman Conquest by the imposition of forest law. This regulated the colonization of the woodland by instituting regular inspections of assarting, for which fines were levied. Whittlewood was a popular hunting ground of the English king in the 12th, 13th and 14th centuries, as the development of the forest lodge at Silverstone and later the castle at Moor End indicates.[63] It is likely that assarting was prohibited in those parts of the forest which were considered vital for the king's chase, and was licensed only in areas where the activities of the assarters would not interfere with the grazing of the deer.

The clearance of woodland and waste for the purpose of extending the arable was common to many parts of England in the 12th and 13th centuries. However, the pattern of landscape and settlement which resulted from this colonizing movement varied from one area of the country to another. In Whittlewood, the records of the forest regard from the early 13th century onwards show that assarting was mostly conducted on a relatively small scale, by lords and peasants who fined for plots of land ranging in size from a fraction of an acre to 10 acres or more, although occasionally much larger areas were cleared. At Silverstone tenants might plough the cleared land, such as the acre assarted by Ralph de Trubbevill which was sown with oats in the mid-13th century, or they might build cottages on the land, as John Mariot did on 2¼ acres in the early 14th century.[64] Many of the assarts at Silverstone were said to have been enclosed with a ditch and hedge. They are presumably the precursors of the numerous closes to the south of the village with '-sart' names, such as the Grindons Sart, Cunies Sart and Duncomb's Sart, shown on the forest map of *c.*1608.[65] These smallholding tenants, with little or no arable land, made their living by exploiting the resources of the woodland. Their way of life was characteristic of other woodland societies in England.[66]

However, the inhabitants of Silverstone were not entirely typical of freeholding woodland communities. As at Hanbury, there was a significant number of customary tenants who in the late 13th century owed relatively heavy labour services to the king, lord of one of the two manors in the parish. Nineteen virgate holders and 38 half-virgate holders were listed in a survey of 1288

who were obliged to perform labour services weeding, haymaking, carting, ploughing and reaping for specified lengths of time on the lord's demesne.[67] Nor were those tenants who only held cotlands entirely exempt from labour services, as they were obliged to attend the great boon-work at harvest time. It is clear though that not all of the assarts which existed in the mid-13th century were recorded in this survey. The lands of the customary tenants lay in strips in large open fields to the north of Silverstone village. There may have been just two fields in the early 13th century, when a grant to Luffield Priory was made of seven acres of land and meadow, of which five acres lay in one field and two acres (six selions of arable and one acre of meadow) in another.[68] By the 16th century, a more complicated arrangement of fields had arisen, perhaps as a result of some of the assarted land having been incorporated into the open fields.

A similar development seems to have occurred at Deanshanger in Passenham parish. The records of assarts of the early 14th century show that small plots of land were cleared by individual tenants, such as the purpresture measuring one perch long by 12 feet wide which Richard Morris made out of the king's ground below the hay of Shrob, part of Whittlewood Forest. The regarders reported that Richard had drawn in and appropriated this purpresture to his own land and sown it with both winter and spring grain. Although there is no explicit indication that Richard enclosed this land, the implication is that he did so. The offence of purpresture meant the construction of unauthorized buildings or enclosures in the forest.[69] Nevertheless, this land eventually found its way into the open fields of Deanshanger. The field book of 1566 shows that Deanshanger's fields reached to the edge of Shrob Walk, by the pale, and this is shown too on the map of *c.*1608.[70] The furlong names recorded in the field book demonstrate that some land in the open fields was assarted from the forest, such as Little Stocking and Overbreche. There is also very little evidence that tenants were holding consolidated groups of strips in Deanshanger in the mid-16th century. If tenants such as Richard Morris had carved out discrete plots of land for themselves in the 14th century, these were later dispersed. Perhaps it is more likely that they were incorporated into the open fields from the beginning.

There can be no doubt that the open fields of Deanshanger were laid out by the late thirteenth century. Grants of land to Snelshall Priory show that land was held in strips in fields at that time.[71] Furthermore, as at Silverstone, there were customary tenants at Deanshanger holding virgates. In 1278 an inquest recorded that the forester in fee of Wakefield Walk was entitled to take 'in his time from the township of Denshanger for every virgate of land one quarter of wheat in return for their having paling for their corn and for collecting dead wood for their fuel in the demesne wood of the lord king'.[72] The presence of virgate holders at Deanshanger is perhaps more surprising than finding them at Silverstone. Deanshanger was not named in Domesday Book and was carved out of the royal manor of Passenham, perhaps as late as the 12th century. Certainly there are no explicit references to a manor at Deanshanger until the 13th century. These customary tenements, therefore, must have been created after the Conquest, perhaps

following a pattern adopted at Passenham. At Puxley too there is evidence of open fields and virgate holders, despite the large number of assarts made and cottages built on the manor in the 13th and 14th centuries.

Whittlewood thus shares characteristics common to both woodland and champion *pays*. The loosely nucleated settlements of the study area, together with the open fields and customary tenements, may have been created as a result of both lords and peasants being influenced by the champion countryside surrounding them. Both to the north and south of Whittlewood strongly nucleated villages existed surrounded by two or three open fields which occupied most of the area of the parish, farmed by customary tenants holding virgates and half-virgates. Nevertheless, in Whittlewood this type of countryside formed alongside patterns of settlement and landscape more commonly associated with woodland societies. There was a significant amount of woodland clearance in the later Middle Ages, the building of cottages and the creation of enclosed fields and closes, the inhabitants of which owed fewer obligations to their lord than the customary tenants and who made their living from occupations other than corn-growing. The ability to expand into the woodland meant that the settlement pattern of the area became complex, as additional settlements grew up with associated territories separate from the open fields of the villages. Thus, places such as Dagnall and Elm Green in Wicken developed, as did Lords Fields Farm in Whittlebury.

It is perhaps not be expected that a particular area of countryside, which developed according to decisions taken by many hundreds of lords and peasants over several centuries, would evolve according to the precise criteria drawn up by historians in the 20th century. Thus, medieval Whittlewood was neither champion, woodland or wold, but shared characteristics with all three.

SETTLEMENT DEVELOPMENT

One of the critical criteria in the choice of study area was the coincidence of settlement plans of varied morphology.[73] More importantly, although located within the Central Province, the zone dominated by nucleated villages, Whittlewood contains many settlements of dispersed form.[74] The dispersed nature of many of these settlements is still visible today. Leckhampstead, for instance, is made up of a number of separate 'ends', as is Silverstone, although here modern infilling has begun to obscure its original plan. First-edition Ordnance Survey maps help to identify earlier settlement morphologies, but archaeological investigation has shown that even these may mask earlier, more complex arrangements. Further understanding of early village plans can, however, be gleaned from earlier cartographic sources dating to the 17th and 18th centuries. From these maps, it is also possible to identify lost elements of the general settlement pattern. The deserted hamlets of Lady Nether End in Whittlebury and Elm Green in Wicken can be identified as areas of small, irregular enclosure. Yet the piecemeal coverage of these earlier

maps, and the lack of earthwork survey prior to Ordnance surveys of the 1930s, means that not all the settlements have been mapped.

More than 30 settlements of medieval origin are known within the 12 parishes of the study area and others probably remain to be discovered. In terms of scale, these settlements range through the whole spectrum of medieval settlement, from fully-fledged villages, to hamlets, individual farmsteads, moated sites, ecclesiastical houses and granges, manors and forest lodges. Typologically, the villages in particular exhibit a wide variety of forms. The area contains settlements such as Passenham, Furtho and Lillingstone Dayrell which appear to be nucleated around the parish church and manor, but also dispersed settlements such as Akeley and Deanshanger which appear to have formed around small greens. There are settlements such as Whittlebury and Lillingstone Lovell which seem to have grown organically around a single focus to which additional planned elements were later added, polyfocal settlements such as Leckhampstead, Potterspury and Silverstone, and there is a single example of a double settlement, Wicken (formerly Wick Hamon and Wick Dyve), forming a single settled area, divided by a small brook and served by two parish churches. This typological diversity is mirrored by their later fortunes. Most of the principal parochial villages have survived, but in the cases of Lillingstone Dayrell and Furtho, the villages are totally deserted, while the village of Stowe was displaced to Dadford to make way for the designed gardens and parkland of the 18th-century house. Many of those that have survived exhibit clear signs of shrinkage. Earthworks at Lillingstone Lovell, Whittlebury and Passenham mark the former extent of these villages. The fate of the dependent vills was even more precarious. In the cases of Puxley in Deanshanger (formerly Passenham), Lamport and Boycott in Stowe, and Elm Green and Dagnall in Wicken, these have all been totally deserted.

Four of the principal settlements – Akeley, Lillingstone Dayrell, Leckhampstead and Whittlebury – have been subject to archaeological investigation. Common trends have been observed at all four sites which allows a chronological development of these sites to be tentatively proposed. The results from fieldwalking at Lillingstone Dayrell have been particularly important. Since a large part of this deserted village site is now under the plough, it has been possible to reconstruct not only the chronology of village development but also its changing morphology. Spreads of later medieval pottery, particularly local Potterspury wares (1250-1600), show the village at its greatest extent. The village appears to have been based along a single street running east-west just south of the parish church. In addition, it would appear that houses formerly fronted onto the main Buckingham-Towcester road 400m west of the church (Map XXX). Pottery indicates significant growth from *c.* 1100 and accords well with the threefold population increase recorded from Domesday Book to the Hundred Rolls of 1279.[75] Critically, pottery was recovered which indicated a probable foundation date *c.* 1000. 200m west of the church a well-defined concentration of later Saxon wares was found, including imported wares such as St

Neots Wares, types 1 (850-1100), type 2 (1000-1200), and Cotswold-type Oolitic ware (975-1100). A single sherd of Ipswich ware (*c*. 725-850), found in the same location might suggest some activity on the site prior to village creation. Again the archaeological evidence accords well with the fact that Lillingstone Dayrell was in existence by Domesday Book. Interestingly, the late village appears to have developed out from this core, but not to have overlain the original nucleus, the area being free of later medieval material. While a few cottages survived into the 17th century, to be depicted on an estate map drawn up in 1611,[76] the fieldwalking reveals that the settlement was in decline by *c*. 1400 if not before. It is tempting, therefore, to associate the failure of the village with the crises of the 14th century. Several points of interest emerge from the evidence from Lillingstone Dayrell. First, the suggested late foundation date around *c*. 1000. This fits the model for the splitting of the earlier 10 hide estate around this time and reinforces the idea that Lillingstone Lovell was the primary site from which colonization took place. Secondly, it would appear that at some point, perhaps around 1250, the village was replanned and laid out on a different street plan. Nevertheless, both in the late Saxon and medieval periods, Lillingstone Dayrell appears to have been a nucleated settlement. Thirdly, it can be seen that this village was subject to the same growth and decline which was to affect many midland villages.

Fieldwalking has also been possible around some of the southern parts of Leckhampstead (Map XXX). In Middle End, Barrett's End and Limes End, it is clear that settlement spread over a larger area than is now inhabited. At Limes End, east of Weatherhead Farm, a linear development can be defined by pottery spreads. Here occupation appears to front a holloway leading from the county boundary immediately to the east. Earthworks to the south suggest additional occupation here. The sum of the Leckhampstead evidence reveals distinct settlement elements, which while remaining separate, were much larger than they appear today. Again the archaeological evidence is consistent with the historical. Leckhampstead was one of the more populous villages within the area throughout the medieval period and this is mirrored by the scale of settlement.[77] Just as at Lillingstone Dayrell, evidence has been forthcoming to suggest a possible foundation date for these dispersed parts of the village. Middle End, Barrett's End and Limes End have all produced St Neots Wares in addition to early-middle Saxon handmade wares (400-800). It would appear, therefore, that these separate ends have their origin in the early-middle Saxon period, the classic period of dispersed settlement. Far from coalescing to form a single nucleated settlement, this earlier pattern was retained throughout the later Saxon period and into the medieval, with growth out from their initial cores. The suggested early date for all the parts of Leckhampstead might help to explain its dispersed morphology, very different from later foundations such as Lillingstone Dayrell. Again it supports the idea that Leckhampstead held primacy over Akeley and may well have been one of the important nodes, like Passenham, from which the interior of Whittlewood was later colonized. As with Lillingstone Dayrell, no evidence of

Roman occupation can be associated with the Saxon settlement patterns, although in both instances numerous Romano-British sites are known within the parishes.

At Akeley, by contrast, there is some evidence to suggest that the medieval settlement formed around a pre-medieval enclosure.[78] Roman pottery from test pits located on the edge of the churchyard points to pre-parochial church origins. The church was clearly an important focus for settlement, however, far from being tightly clustered, negative evidence from test pits have shown that large parts of the central area of the village remained unoccupied throughout the medieval period. Additional occupation sites, however, in the form of an interrupted row, can be shown to have developed to the south. In form, therefore, medieval Akeley appears to share characteristics in common with green-side settlements, its modern nucleated appearance only produced by post-medieval infilling. Late Saxon wares found close to the church indicate a foundation date no earlier than the 9th or 10th century, in line with the proposed expansion and colonization from Leckhampstead.

In Whittlebury, fieldwork and test pitting have revealed the staged development of the village. Its early focus appears to have been a large oval enclosure, now occupied by the church to the north-east of its centre. No date has been established for its construction but it is possibly the *burh* from which the settlement takes its name and may have been the location of the witan held in 930. To the east of this enclosure, settlement appears to have grown organically. Occuaption here can be proven in the 11th and 12th centuries, although the discovery of a single pre-Christian burial here may point to even earlier origins. The southern extension of the village along the main street can be dated from pottery evidence to no earlier than the mid- to late-13th century and may be seen as a planned expansion. In addition to the principal settlement, two dispersed medieval settlement elements are known. The first, a small hamlet north-west of the village at Lady Nether End and the second a moated site at Lords Field Farm to the north. The chronology of their creation and desertion, however, cannot presently be fitted within the developmental stages proposed for the village with any precision. The history of Whittlebury perfectly demonstrates the complexity of development exhibited by many of the settlements within the project area, and warns against their typological classification from modern or 19th-century forms. The observable nucleated nature of both Akeley and Whittlebury, obscures their origins as dispersed settlements.

CONCLUSIONS

Studies of settlement form in the 19th century have pinpointed Whittlewood as an anomalous area, one in which both nucleated and dispersed settlements existed side by side. Thus, the maps prepared by Roberts and Wrathmell show Whittlewood to have been an island of relatively dispersed settlement in a sea of nucleated villages.[79] The reverse perspective is offered by the authors of *Village, Hamlet and Field*, who have observed that 'dispersed settlement is

generally common in woodland, although again Whittlewood is somewhat an exception, as its settlements were, in fact, quite mixed in form'.[80] In the 19th century, therefore, considerable numbers of regular row settlements and even one or two small clusters were found alongside more dispersed forms of settlement in the Whittlewood area.[81] This study shows why Whittlewood is neither typical of the champion area surrounding it or of other woodland areas in England. Its landscape and settlement pattern was forged in the Middle Ages as a result of a combination of factors.

In the early Middle Ages, the Whittlewood area was lightly populated as a result of the post-Roman retreat from the claylands to the lighter soils, in places such as Brixworth to the north and the Vale of Aylesbury to the south. This low level of population is reflected in Domesday Book, where it is combined with large amounts of woodland and limited areas of arable, compared with the surrounding areas of Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire. There is too more evidence of a pastoral economy, such as the large numbers of pigs which the Domesday woodland in Buckinghamshire could support, and of industry, such as the smiths of Greens Norton who probably exploited the woodlands of Silverstone and Whittlebury. All this suggests a woodland *pays*, as can be found in other parts of England.

However, in the 12th and 13th centuries, evidence becomes available of open fields and virgate holders living in these woodland areas. This champion countryside may have developed later than the 'great replanning' of the 9th and 10th centuries, but was almost certainly influenced by it. There is little evidence for the abandonment of an earlier dispersed settlement pattern in the parishes of the project area during the process of nucleation. Instead the rather loose nucleations of the Whittlewood area are likely to reflect an original pattern of settlement which has evolved over time according to the size of the population to be accommodated but which has not been subject to any great replanning. This is because there was ample space within the territories of these settlements for there to be a replanning of the landscape without any concomitant replanning of settlement. Thus open fields may well have been laid out in imitation of those created in more populous districts of the midlands. The availability of space in this woodland environment is further indicated by the creation of secondary settlements, such as Puxley and Elm Green, when population reached its height.

Whittlewood thus becomes a hybrid or anomalous area at the time of the 'village moment', in the period between about 850 and 1200. The lords of the project area, whose manors were created in the 10th and 11th centuries from the break-up of 'multiple estates', like their counterparts elsewhere in the midlands, were able to impose labour services on the peasantry of the area and create standard customary tenements of virgates and half-virgates. These were spread across open fields which were laid out, in some cases at least, before the Norman Conquest, perhaps at the time of, or a little later than, the 'great replanning'. But there was no concomitant replanning of settlement because there was not the same pressure on space

experienced further north or south. Whittlewood remained a largely pastoral region, with limited arable resources, and with the potential for colonization of the woodland, the creation of smallholdings, and the resources to support a range of non-agricultural occupations. Many of these tenants held their land for relatively light services and were the ancestors of the independently minded forest folk of a later age.

The concept of *pays* has proved to be a useful and influential means of characterizing the historic landscape and settlement pattern of England. It takes into account a variety of social, economic and topographical features and thus comes close to representing the complexity of the landscape at different points in time. Moreover, it may be applied both to very large areas of the countryside as well as to relatively small blocks of land. Nevertheless, there remain substantial parts of the country which do not fit easily into one of the broad categories of *pays*. Much of the midlands is characterized as champion with smaller areas of woodland and wold. In this paper the medieval forest of Whittlewood has been considered in relation to these three types of *pays* and has been shown to possess features common to all, particularly champion and woodland. The explanation for this hybrid character lies in the fact that this was a heavily wooded region but one influenced by the settlements nearby which underwent a transformation in the period 850-1200 as nucleated villages formed and open fields were laid out over areas of previously dense, dispersed settlement. Whittlewood followed a similar path while at the same time preserving a more balanced mix of land use and farming practice. The result was not a unique *pays* but a mix of others which, in one form or another, was probably replicated in other parts of Britain and even further afield.

NOTES

[1] C. Fox, *The Personality of Britain* (XXX, 1952); O. Rackham, *The History of the Countryside* (XXX, 1986).

[2] J. Thirsk, 'The Farming Regions of England', in J. Thirsk (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, IV, 1500-1640* (Cambridge, 1967), 1-112; A. Everitt, 'Country, County and Town: Patterns of Regional Evolution in England', *Trans. of the Royal Historical Soc.*, 5th ser., 29 (1979), 84-5.

[3] B. K. Roberts and S. Wrathmell, *An Atlas of Rural Settlement in England* (English Heritage, 2000).

[4] C. Phythian-Adams, 'Introduction: An Agenda for English Local History', in C. Phythian-Adams (ed.), *Societies, Cultures and Kinship: 1580-1850. Cultural Provinces in English Local History* (Leicester, 1993), 1-23.

[5] See the map, opposite p. 160, in M. L. Bazeley, 'The Extent of the English Forest in the Thirteenth Century', *Trans. of the Royal Historical Soc.*, 4th ser., 4 (1921), 140-72.

[6] C. Dyer, 'The Whittlewood Project', *Medieval Settlement Research Group Annual Report* 14 (1999), 16-17; M. Page and R. Jones, 'The Whittlewood Project Interim Report 2000-1', *Medieval Settlement Research Group Annual Report* 15 (2000), 10-18.

[7] C. Lewis and P. Mitchell-Fox, 'The Leverhulme Medieval Settlement and Landscapes Project: Report on Site Selection for Future Fieldwork in the East Midlands', *Medieval Settlement Research Group Annual Report* 8 (1993), 27-35.

[8] C. Lewis, P. Mitchell-Fox and C. Dyer, *Village, Hamlet and Field: Changing Settlements in Central England* (2nd edn., Macclesfield, 2001), 39-40.

[9] A. Mawer and F. M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Buckinghamshire* (Cambridge, 1925), 44.

[10] Lewis, Mitchell-Fox and Dyer, op. cit. in note 8, 33-42.

[11] T. Brown and G. Foard, 'The Saxon Landscape: A Regional Perspective', in P. Everson and T. Williamson (eds.), *The Archaeology of Landscape: Studies Presented to Christopher Taylor* (Manchester, 1998), 91-2; D. Hall, *The Open Fields of Northamptonshire* (Northamptonshire Record Soc., 38, 1995), 130-1.

[12] Lewis, Mitchell-Fox and Dyer, op. cit. in note 8, 191-204.

[13] B. Jones and D. Mattingly, *An Atlas of Roman Britain* (London, 1990), XXX.

[14] R.C.H.M.(E.), *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the County of Northampton 4, Archaeological Sites in South-West Northamptonshire* (London: H.M.S.O., 1982), 168.

[15] R.C.H.M.(E.), op. cit. in note 14, 41, 118.

[16] Finds of low-density scatters of worked flint of Neolithic and Bronze Age date on many of the fields within the project area might suggest that the landscape of Whittlewood had been cleared of large areas of woodland well before the Iron Age.

[17] Jones and Mattingly, op. cit. in note 13, XXX.

[18] A. Brown, C. Woodfield and D. Mynard, 'Excavations at Towcester, Northamptonshire: The Alchester Road Suburb', *Northamptonshire Archaeology* 18 (1983), 43-140; R.C.H.M.(E.), op. cit. in note 14, 154-6.

[19] R.C.H.M.(E.), op. cit. in note 14, 151.

[20] In the following discussion site labels follow those proposed in J. Hunn, *Reconstruction and Measurement of Landscape Change: A Study of Six Parishes in the St Albans Area* (B.A.R., British ser., 236, 1994), 44. Thus, Romanized farmsteads are identified by the presence of building materials such as tiles and mortar as well as large quantities of Romano-British pottery, while native sites are those which produce pottery only.

[21] R.C.H.M.(E.), op. cit. in note 14, 34, 41, 118, 168-9.

[22] R.C.H.M.(E.), op. cit. in note 14, 118, 132, 171.

[23] R. Jones, *Medieval Settlements and Landscapes in the Whittlewood Area: A Pilot. Fieldwalking Report 2000-2002* (unpublished report, 2002).

[24] R.C.H.M.(E.), op. cit. in note 14, 41, 118.

[25] R. Jones, op. cit. in note 23; P. Lawrence, *A Summary of the Archaeological Fieldwork Conducted in the Parishes of Deanshanger, Furtho and Potterspury by Students of Birkbeck College, University of London, Between 1994-1998* (unpublished report, n.d.).

[26] A. Wainwright, 'Fallow Deer Park: Excavation of a Pottery Kiln North of Stowe School Sports Ground', *Stowe Archaeological Report* 45 (1990), XXX.

[27] R.C.H.M.(E.), op. cit. in note 14, 141.

[28] B. Schumer, *The Evolution of Wychwood to 1400: Pioneers, Frontiers and Forests* (University of Leicester Department of English Local History, Occasional Papers, 3rd ser., 6, 1984); O. Rackham, *Trees and Woodland in the British Landscape* (London, 1990), 41.

[29] A. Brown and C. Taylor 'The Origins of Dispersed Settlement: Some Results from Fieldwork in Bedfordshire', *Landscape History* 11 (1989), 61-81.

[30] XXX

[31] Jones and Mattingly, op. cit. in note 13, XXX.

[32] Hunn, op. cit. in note 20, 49-50. Some idea of the size of urban hinterlands can be gauged by the location of villas with mosaics, generally within a 25 mile radius of any town (Jones and Mattingly, op. cit. in note 13, 221, Map 6.39).

[33] R.C.H.M.(E.), op. cit. in note 14, 151.

[34] R.C.H.M.(E.), op. cit. in note 14, 34, 41, 169.

[35] R.C.H.M.(E.), op. cit. in note 14, 171.

[36] The coins, found by a metal detectorist, have been retained by the farmer, but seen by one of the present authors.

[37] R.C.H.M.(E.), op. cit. in note 14, 109-10.

[38] R.C.H.M.(E.), op. cit. in note 14, 100.

[39] Early-middle Saxon pottery is very friable and likely to deteriorate quickly through the attrition of the medieval and modern plough. Sealed below later settlement, and thus not subject to the same disturbance, it is possible that the recovered sherds had a greater chance of survival than those in ploughsoil. The distribution might not therefore accurately reflect a genuine spatial zoning. Evidence for settlement sites taken into the later medieval field systems might have been totally destroyed.

[40] Brown and Foard, op. cit. in note 11, 76.

[41] R.C.H.M.(E.), op. cit. in note 14, 30, 136.

[42] R.C.H.M.(E.), op. cit. in note 14, xxxviii.

[43] R.C.H.M.(E.), op. cit. in note 14, *passim*.

[44] Lewis, Mitchell-Fox and Dyer, op. cit. in note 8, 44.

[45] Lewis, Mitchell-Fox and Dyer, op. cit. in note 8, 43, 45.

[46] *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, M. J. Swanton (ed.) (London, 1996), 102.

[47] *English Historical Documents, I, c.500-1042*, D. Whitelock (ed.) (2nd edn., London, 1979), 427.

[48] C. Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages: The People of Britain 850-1520* (New Haven and London, 2002), 26-31.

[49] *Newington Longeville Charters*, H. E. Salter (ed.) (Oxfordshire Record Soc., 3, 1921), no. 16.

[50] *Victoria County History of Northamptonshire*, I, 373.

[51] C. Dyer, *Hanbury: Settlement and Society in a Woodland Landscape* (University of Leicester Department of English Local History, Occasional Papers, 4th ser., 4, 1991), 2, 27.

[52] Dyer, op. cit. in note 51, 1-2.

[53] Dyer, op. cit. in note 51, 61.

[54] A. Everitt, 'River and Wold: Reflections on the Historical Origin of Regions and *Pays*', *Journal of Historical Geography* 3 (1977), reprinted in A. Everitt, *Landscape and Community in England* (London, 1985), 55.

[55] Hall, op. cit. in note 11, 105, 235-7.

[56] Hall, op. cit. in note 11, 105, 190-1.

[57] Everitt, op. cit. in note 54, 51; H. S. A. Fox, 'The People of the Wolds in English Settlement History', in M. Aston, D. Austin and C. Dyer (eds.), *The Rural Settlements of Medieval England: Studies Dedicated to Maurice Beresford and John Hurst* (Oxford, 1989), 78-85.

[58] R. Jones and M. Page, 'Medieval Settlements and Landscapes in the Whittlewood Area: Interim Report 2001-2', *Medieval Settlement Research Group Annual Report* 16 (2001, forthcoming).

[59] Public Record Office (henceforth P.R.O.), E210/2449.

[60] Everitt, op. cit. in note 54, 52-3.

[61] Lewis, Mitchell-Fox and Dyer, op. cit. in note 8, 135.

[62] Lewis, Mitchell-Fox and Dyer, op. cit. in note 8, 136.

[63] R. Allen Brown, H. M. Colvin and A. J. Taylor, *The History of the King's Works* (2 vols, London, 1963), II, 742-5, 1002-3.

[64] P.R.O., E32/66, m. 4; E32/114, m. 4d.

[65] Northamptonshire Record Office (henceforth N.R.O.), Map 4210. See also Map IV in P. A. J. Pettit, *The Royal Forests of Northamptonshire: A Study in their Economy 1558-1714* (Northamptonshire Record Soc., 23, 1968).

[66] Dyer, op. cit. in note 51, 48-9.

[67] Westminster Abbey Muniments, 27783.

[68] *Luffield Priory Charters*, G. R. Elvey (ed.) (2 vols, Northamptonshire Record Soc., 22, 26, 1968-75), I, no. 96.

[69] R. Grant, *The Royal Forests of England* (Stroud, 1991), 44.

[70] P.R.O., DL43/8/6A, fo. 19; N.R.O., Map 4210.

[71] *The Cartulary of Snelshall Priory*, J. G. Jenkins (ed.) (Buckinghamshire Record Soc., 9, 1945), nos. 156-7.

[72] *Select Pleas of the Forest*, G. J. Turner (ed.) (Selden Soc., 13, 1899), 123.

[73] Lewis and Mitchell-Fox, op. cit. in note 7, 27-35.

[74] Roberts and Wrathmell, op. cit. in note 3.

[75] The recorded population rose from 11 in 1086 to 33 in 1279.

[76] Buckinghamshire Record Office, D22/22/5.

[77] The recorded population in 1086 was over 30 and in 1279 was 82.

[78] For a fuller account of the evidence from Akeley and Whittlebury, see Jones and Page, op. cit. in note 58.

[79] Roberts and Wrathmell, op. cit. in note 3, XXX.

[80] Lewis, Mitchell-Fox and Dyer, op. cit. in note 8, 57.

[81] Lewis, Mitchell-Fox and Dyer, op. cit. in note 8, 60.