

## Chapter 9

### LANDS TO THE SOUTH: of valley, wood and heath

We have looked both generally (Chapter 2) and in selective detail (Chapters 3 to 8) at the northern downland of our study area. We have moved as far south as the Roman road which roughly bisects the two parishes respectively along the northern and southern sides of the Kennet valley. We now look at the whole area south of that road (Chaps. 9-12). The same division was made by Colt Hoare early in the nineteenth century (1821, II, Station X, Marlborough, map facing p. 3).

We cannot, however, examine this southern area in as much detail as in our study so far. Although our own air photographic cartography has been comprehensive and our documentary research reasonably thorough, our fieldwork has been almost entirely at the reconnaissance level and we have not excavated in this area. Nevertheless, the area is as important to any understanding of the workings of the landscape within the study area as is the downland. Furthermore, much about the northern downland can only be understood with reference to the valley and to the complementary range of resources both there and further south in the two parishes. It was, after all, in the valleys that power lay, certainly from Roman times onwards, a generalisation that medieval and later documentation demonstrates.

At this point, therefore, we change our presentation. We abandon the 'windows' methodology of Chapters 3 to 8, which is after all a device following the way in which the project accumulated data, and now turn, first (this Chapter), to a topographical overview of the whole of the southern part of the study area and, second (Chapters 10 to 12), to some local detail within the tenurial framework of the tithings (*VCH XI*, 104; fig. 1.0). These are the sub-divisions of the historic parishes, long, narrow strips of land arranged roughly north-west to south-east across the grain of the landscape since at least late Saxon times. There are exceptions to this pattern, notably with Shaw, and changes occurred within it during medieval and later times, such as in Lockeridge, but essentially that pattern of land-organisation has endured for at least a thousand years and, arguably, for much longer (Bonney 1976, fig. 9.0; *below*).

Much local proprietorial history and land-use has followed from this long-term stability, so in using such a tenurial framework, itself reflecting basic economic realities, we are playing to a major factor in the history of this countryside and in the creation of the landscape we see today. Precisely because that has been and is so, although our spatial focus shifts to the bottomlands and woodlands, explanation and interpretation based to the south of the river unavoidably includes affairs of the downs.

Chapters 10 to 12 work from west to east and deal with the five main estates of Shaw, West Overton, East Overton, Lockeridge and Fyfield separately, beginning with Shaw and West Overton (Chap. 10). East Overton is well-documented and is afforded a chapter (11) of its own. Lockeridge and Fyfield then follow in Chapter 12, though this arrangement is to help control the material, for historically both were subordinate to East Overton in important respects.

In each of the five estates different emphases have been selected to represent the whole of the southern part of our study area. To some extent this approach reflects an imbalance in the evidence available to us. The documents pertaining to the manor of West Overton in the Middle Ages, for example, are scarce compared to those of East Overton, so we afford a much weightier analysis of the latter. More importantly, however, this approach allows a succinct investigation of a particular topic within a particular tenurial and historical framework, something which is just not possible logistically in this report for each estate. Though we do not necessarily take up every topic in each tithing, the topics in chapters 10 to 12 include topography, boundaries, communications, field archaeology, the main and secondary settlements including the church if present and other relevant buildings, ownership and tenure, populations, social groups and some individuals and the principal land uses such as arable, meadow, pasture and woodland, as well as small-scale industry.

While people arranged their territories in the past in north-south strips across the grain of the landscape, locally south of the River Kennet the land divides itself into five zones west-east in conformity with the river valley (fig. 9.1). Along the northern fringe of this southern land bloc is the river and its narrow flood plain (here called 'bottomlands'). This is edged by the river terrace, with locally prominent bluffs, two respectively marked by the churches of Fyfield and West Overton. The third zone lies south of the villages, being essentially the broad, north-facing sides of the Kennet valley, Lower and Middle Chalk but tending to Clay-with Flint covering to east as well as south. Here lay large expanses of open fields, especially in West and East Overton (e.g. fig. 11.5), but in general probably, and in places certainly, they themselves succeeded earlier arable arrangements. The southern edges of the arable throughout time seem largely to have been remarkably consistent, stopping more or less along the same line at the northern fringe of the woodland which has permanently occupied a large area of Clay-with-Flints (fig. 9.3).

Beyond to the south east, reflected primarily in place- and field-names, lay a small area of heathland, the fifth and perhaps most unexpected zone in a countryside too often regarded as 'merely' chalk downland. In fact, the area contains a greater diversity of resources than the supposedly favoured downs, a fact probably reflected by its

archaeology which, from Mesolithic to the twentieth century AD, is as consistent and varied as the better-known material on Fyfield and Overton Downs.

### **Archaeology**

The archaeological record for the area south of the Kennet is graphically displayed in fig. 9.2, a map derived from the County Sites and Monuments Record. The record is typical of many other places, comprising an assortment of miscellaneous observations, antiquarian record, chance finds and inexpert air photographic cartography and interpretation. The Fyfod project has added little to that record in terms of archaeological specifics, but it has produced, for the first time, reasonable plans from measured survey and/or air photographic cartography, of West Woods long barrow (fig. 9.0; SMR no. 000), Shaw deserted medieval village (fig. 10.1; 000) and Church Close medieval deserted settlement area, West Overton (fig. 11.2; 000), and the prehistoric field systems on Boreham Down and adjacent area (fig. 9.3). Air photographic inspection and new RCHM photography plus field reconnaissance have also added, especially during 1995-7, a number of ploughed-out barrows, including the new long barrow above Lockeridge Dene (Pl. ##; 000) with its nearby group of circular crop-marks and rectilinear enclosure (000, 000; Pl. ##). Another small rectilinear enclosure (000) is morphologically more akin to MBA ones elsewhere on the Marlborough Downs. Fragmentary air photographic traces of a larger, more circular enclosure on Lurkeley Hill suggest a site akin to Headlands and Overton Down XI, with traces of probably prehistoric fields to its north and east in the area subsequently cultivated in the furlongs identified in relation to Crooked Crab, Hollow Snap and Alton Way (fig. 11.5b).

### ***The River Kennet and its flood-plain*** (Pls. %, ++; fig. 9.1)

The history of the valley-bottom itself is undoubtedly complex. Some evidence of this below the present surface, and its scientific potential especially in geomorphological and palaeo-environmental terms, were provided in Evans' research and more recent pipe-line work (Evans *et al.* 1993; Powell *et al.* 1996), summarised in Chapter 13 *below*. The essential point is that, while many local variations can be expected, the flood plain as presently defined had largely infilled by the end of the Bronze Age, with very little further deposition to raise the ground surface significantly over the most recent two millennia. The earthworks which lay on that surface early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Pl. \$\$\$) had been formed, then, on only 2 to 4m of deposit, and could have been of any date from late prehistoric onwards. None are known to have been Roman or earlier and most are or were post-medieval. Most have now been destroyed, though some well-preserved earthworks survive apparently undamaged on the flood-plain north of St. Michael's church, East Overton (*below*).

Some of these earthworks represent attempts to regulate the river Kennet, and mostly date from Inclosure in the early nineteenth century. Some artificial arrangements for controlling the river flow may have existed as early as the tenth century, however, as a phrase in the charter of 939 AD (S449) indicates; *'juxta derivativus fluentium successibus ÆT CYNETAN in illo loco ubi ruricoli antiquo usu nomen indiderunt UFERAN TUN'*. This was translated by Bretnall as 'by a series of offtakes from the Kennet in the place known of old to the local inhabitants as *Bank Farm*' (1938, 119). Perhaps such 'offtakes' were early canalisation work to drain the valley bottom to increase the land available for pasture and to reduce the area of marshland around the early settlements (see Chap. 13).

Further schemes to manage the river were undertaken along the Kennet valley in the medieval period and certainly in the Early Modern period (Brentnall 1950, 304; Kerridge 55, 111-2; A&D map). The purpose of these ventures, apart from at the West Overton mill, was, presumably, to continue the work begun in the Saxon period and drain land for pasture and hay. A system to 'float' the water-meadows appears to have already been in existence by June 1814 when the Inclosure Commissioners ordered 'that the several brooks, streams, ditches, watercourses, funnels and bridges ...shall at all times from henceforth be sufficiently deepened, widened, cleansed, scoured and kept in repair by and at the expense of the respective owners or occupiers' (WRO 79a/1).

The creation of the substantial water-meadows, the remains of which are so evident in the fields south of the Kennet today, is due to this 'Act for Inclosing Canals in the Tythings of East Overton and Lockeridge', a document as vivid now in its evocation of a valley-bottom landscape as it was then in its specification for the better management of a vital resource. The valley bottom was divided into seven stems, each a small area of meadow in its own right with its own sluices and channels, each of which could be flooded separately and independently off the main float when necessary. The main float south of the Kennet was eight foot wide and dug to three foot in depth. Starting at the dam 60 yards above West Overton mill, the water was regulated by a series of culverts, an aqueduct and sluices as far as Lockeridge village (SU 14556794), before the water fell back into the Kennet. These channels were still coloured blue on the 1961 OS 1:25 000 map.

The regulation of the water meadows was of the utmost importance to ensure the exact amount of water spilled from the culverts into the meadows at the right time, not only of the year, but the right time of each day and indeed night. Here in the Kennet valley, the first stem was floated for four days and four nights, with the third to seventh for two days and two nights from the December 1<sup>st</sup> to April 4<sup>th</sup> and from May 5<sup>th</sup> to July 1<sup>st</sup> for each stem in regular succession. The significance of the dates was that they gave the owners control of, respectively, the first grass growth and 'early bite' so

crucial to the welfare of over-wintered sheep and, secondly, the hay crop (Kerridge 1953, 105-118; Atwood 1963, 403-13). By 1819 much of this canalisation work had been completed, and at Parliamentary Inclosure in 1821 arrangements were made to pay the owner of West Overton mill, Edward Pumphrey, £27 at Michaelmas yearly for turning out of the mill dam to irrigate the water-meadows along the valley floor (WRO 79a/1).

Another use of the valley bottom was to grow willows. An osier bed belonging to the Duke of Marlborough lay by the ford on the Overtons' boundary at the north end of what used to be called 'Watery Lane' (now Frog Street). Another, belonging to the Priory of St Swithuns (*VCH* IV, 419), lay to the east, possibly at Stanley Mead (SU 141681). Both areas, according to the A&D map, had had courses dug to them from the Kennet to divert water to feed the water-hungry willows which would have been managed to produce a steady supply of supple, thin withies which would be worked into baskets, hurdles, *etc.*, while other managed willows lay along the banks of the river.

Just across from the Duke's osier beds stood a salt house in the mid-tenth century (S449). Though nothing is known about the fabric of the building itself, it was almost certainly used to store the manorial fish and other foodstuffs. It lay on a busy route across the downs which, heading south, travels to the head of the Avon and eventually, either by road or river, to the sea. A further use of the river was as a power source for the mill, part of the landscape here from the eleventh until the mid-nineteenth century (*VCH* XI, 198). Its abandonment, because of the dam there, presumably also led to the cessation of the regular flooding of the meadows.

#### **The flood-plain settlement zone** (fig. 9.1)

First, a word about the villages (*sensu* nucleated settlements) seems appropriate since, both extant and deserted, they only occur in this southern area of the two parishes (if we ignore the Romano-British settlement Overton Down South, *above* p. 00). The point is easily missed in dealing with each settlement inside its tithing. Conversely, each tithing contains only one nucleated settlement at a time from the post-Roman period to the present day, though outlying settlements are present, for example the small twelfth century settlement of Upper Lockeridge (*below* p. 00).

The study area contains three extant villages called West Overton, Lockeridge and Fyfield. They were previously called, respectively, East Overton, *Ovretone* (DB) and, earlier still, *Uferan tun* (S449); *Locherige* (DB) or *Lokeruga* (1142 AD); and *Fifhide* (DB). A fourth settlement lies in the modern parish of West Overton. It was called *Vuertune* by the *Cynetan* in 972 AD (S784), *Overtone Abbatisse* in 1332 and later West Overton (PNWilts, 305-6).

As the two settlements of East and West Overton were at the centre of separate estates until fairly recently, they are treated individually here. So, in this account **West Overton** means the manor and former Anglo-Saxon estate of that name, not the present civil parish nor the present village of that name. This estate, naturally enough, lay in the west of the study area. **East Overton** is used for the settlement and estate which lay to the east around St. Michael and All Angels church, an estate which dominates the history of the area throughout the Middle Ages and Modern period. In the thirteenth century, East Overton and Fyfield formed a combined manor called Overton (Chapter 11). **Overton** in this study thus refers to this large medieval estate.

Confusingly, both of the major settlements of East and West Overton came to lie side by side on either side of a common boundary, though they remained ardently distinct communities until the major changes of the early 1800s. The reallocation of land over the last 150 years has also had the effect of removing such tenurial complexities, leaving the modern inhabitant in a single village which is today called West Overton. To have given the name West Overton to the new civil parish and also to the main village in it is, of course, historical foolishness, topographically misleading and grossly unfair to the memory of the major manor hereabouts, East Overton. It is a great pity that the present civil parish and village were not simply called Overton.

All three present-day villages, West Overton, Lockeridge and Fyfield, lie in the valley of the River Kennet, their buildings now just above and back from the flood plain on the river terrace. Overton and Lockeridge, like East Kennet to the west and Clatford to the east, are on the south bank, with the newly-recognised Upper Lockeridge further south still. Fyfield, like West Kennet to the west, is on the northern side. This locational distinction is conceivably significant, perhaps hinting that their positions are remnants of a pre-Saxon settlement pattern, for both lie close to the main east-west Roman road and contemporary settlement (Fyfield, fig. 9.00; West Kennet, Powell *et al.* 1996, fig 5).

Though none were on the flood-plain, at least four other smaller medieval settlements formerly existed in the study area: Shaw, the pre-tenth century settlement of West Overton, Lockeridge Dene and Upper Lockeridge. To this can be added the outlying farmsteads of *Aethelferthes setle*, Walter of Thanet's *demesne*, *Raddon*, *Attele* and *Hacan penne*, Heath and Park Farms, Fosbury Cottage and Spye Park, the Delling and a settlement near Boreham Wood. Of these only Dene is located by the old 500 ft. contour which so accurately picks out the sites of the four certain village settlements of the Anglo-Saxon period, the three Overtons and Fyfield. Each, plus Lockeridge, is discussed on some detail at the proper place in the following chapters, but some general points are raised here.

All the valley-bottom villages have 'shuffled' a little in their positioning (fig. 9.00). One, the first West Overton, moved across its estate, leaving a church and an apparently vacant site behind it, now represented by a few modern cottages strung along the Ridge Way and the parish boundary. The 'new' West Overton in existence by at least the tenth century subsequently spread westwards to the manor and then the new manor farm of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Early East Overton, if correctly argued, is likely to have been formed on the knoll on which the later church was built (Hase 1994, 58), and spread south as well as west, bumping up against the boundary of West Overton. It then either shrank or shuffled north, leaving Church Field full of the earthworks of abandoned settlement. In another little protected place, shielded from the south west winds, Dene was superseded in the 12<sup>th</sup> century by a new Templar planned settlement of Lockeridge stretching some 300 m. northwards almost on to the floodplain of the Kennet towards, presumably, a ford. Much later, the new Lockeridge imploded to an extent with some large houses around its original core at the Dene cross-roads, before again stretching northwards with a new estate village of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Fyfield, although lying near the same 500 ft. contour and below, is centred topographically on a local high point, well above the floodplain; but, of all the settlements, it has shifted around the most, including down on to the floodplain. Its complex *pas de deux* around its church is discussed in chapter 12.

All the other, smaller settlements are by definition on higher ground and secondary. The exception is Shaw which, although up at around 750 ft. above OD, could well be primary to the Saxon settlement pattern and even a medieval repetition or continuation of an earlier place of habitation. The generality of these higher places is that they represent colonisation outwards as well as upwards from the valley settlement pattern from Roman times onwards. Some seem to originate in the late Saxon period, other appear in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. All are now wholly or partially deserted.

### ***Fields, Downland, Tracks and Forest***

Such is the close relationship between these topographic and man-managed resources south of the river that it is difficult, and to an extent misleading, to attempt to separate them. Yet downland and forest are separate spatially, with the fields largely confined to the former. The tracks link all three elements (fig. 15.1), here and right through the two parishes, and are discussed in general for the whole of the study area in chapter 15.

South of the river, the earliest fields are prehistoric. Their incidence, pattern and form, as recoverable largely from air photographs, are displayed on fig. 9.3. This map in fact also shows a striking relationship between these ways and the woodland; and indeed between them and the early fields fringing the northern side of the woods. They all respect one another. The ways, all without exception elements in the great north-south route, feed into the same entrances to and nodal points in the woodland. They pass

through the woodland along lines in part still in use today and suggestively already old when they were in part picked up in the C10 charters. An implication of this is, of course, that the woods were themselves already spatially structured as this relationship developed, by late Saxon times certainly, in Roman times probably. We may use 'probably' because these ways and tracks also respect the 'Celtic' fields: with one exception, they go round the areas of enclosed fields. And the exception rather reinforces the observation, for the line through the broadest part of the central area of fields is clearly a holloway on 1946 air photographs on the line of the common C10 boundary between West and East Overton. This particular relationship both indicates that these 'Celtic' fields were no longer in use, for the track just cuts straight across them; and suggests that in general the lines of the tracks and the field areas are broadly contemporary components of a cohesive landscape. This latter point is further emphasised by the line of another track-cum-holloway which, formerly existing as earthworks and soil-marks on 1946 AP, loops around the NE edge of the same field group (fig. 14.00) but joining the through track at both its ends. This would appear to be the original track, physically and archaeologically an integral part of the 'Celtic' field group, subsequently made redundant by a more direct way across the by then abandoned fields. This original track, and its fields, are likely to have been in use in the landscape of the early centuries AD and may indeed have originated then as part of the specifically 'Roman' landscape (*above* p.00); though their origins may well lie much earlier in the later 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC. In either case, they carry with them a strong suggestion that the pattern of lines on the landscape probably is an old pattern, with elements in it certainly going back to early medieval and Roman times and, perhaps, even earlier.

Of two local consequences of this argument, one concerns Wansdyke. Two of the breaks through it have personal names in the 10<sup>th</sup> century (*above* p. 00). Both 'gates' are on tracks forming part of this great N-S route. Our argument would suggest that these throughways were not only already there when Wansdyke was built but that they were sufficiently important to have to have been accommodated by this new construction (fig. 9.4). The significance of these named gates could therefore be that they were not only original gaps rather than later breaks but that they were also furnished with contemporary structure and were possibly manned. Indeed, taking a wider view and accepting East Wansdyke as a distinct and quite short length of bank and ditch (only c 20 kms. long, following Yorke 1995, 00) centred on our study area, we may have stumbled on the reason for its construction:

An expansion (or reclamation?) of arable is likely to have occurred after the establishment of the early Saxon settlements just up from the valley flood plains in the seventh or eighth century. Initially, for West Overton, this would have been just north of the road between the two settlements of Overton (now the road from East Kennet to West Overton) and probably at the site of Headlands. North of the river, for East



Overton, Lockeridge and Fyfield, cultivation had long been carried out on The Fore Hill, where the land had been divided into furlongs by the early tenth century AD (S449; fig.8.00), and on Lockeridge and Fifield Fields as far as the Valley of Stones (Pl. 00). Further north, cultivation of the downs certainly occurred in the tenth, thirteenth and sixteenth centuries (see 00, 00). These excursions on to under-productive soils, it is believed, were made possible, or perhaps unavoidable, by population pressure and environmental conditions. By the late eighteenth century the land was no longer cultivated, however, and was for grazing only.

Though some cultivation of the land is likely to have taken place immediately south of the villages in the early medieval period, for example at Rylands in Lockeridge, the expansion of arable on to the large areas of downland south of the villages, that is to say on *scyfling dune* (S449) and White Hill, is likely to be predominantly a thirteenth century phenomenon, though large-scale reorganisation of the landscape into open-fields divided into strips may have taken place before Domesday (*cf.* Hall 1988, 99-122; Costen 1994, 100-1), indeed perhaps at the same time as the insertion of the two planned villages (below, p. 00). From the thirteenth century onwards, this area was the limit of cultivated land south of the settlements, until, that is, the later 1950s when the land on Audley and Boreham Downs, which had until then remained as rough pasture downland, was ploughed up.

The two parishes are well-endowed with documentary evidence of their field-names. The names are in themselves a roll-call of activities and land-use, and of different landscapes, at various times. In many ways, they are not exceptional: many of the names are prosaic and other places can easily supply the same or their equivalents. On the other hand, some names are unusual or particularly eloquent with some speaking of particular activities, others of functions specific to a particular spot in the landscape. Collectively they indicate the range of busyness in a working agricultural landscape; they also spell out a perception of a landscape familiar to its inhabitants but perhaps invisible to the passer-by. Overall, they are very much of this place, and of its history and personality quite as much as the pragmatics of tenure and farming.

Examples of named fields in the manors of Overton and Fyfield in the records of the Bishop of Winchester are: Munkfield (1280), Northfield (1287), Southfield (1311 and 1312, Westfield and Eastfield (*passim*)), Northfield at Scrufeleput (1312; *scropes pyt* of S449), La inlonde and above the church (1312), Curtelynch and La Worglound at Fyfield (1312), and Gravelesputte (1312). Among a plethora of names in the 1567 Survey are Whithill, Baresfeld and Connyfelde with meadows called Horsemeade, Pittneymeade and Brodemeade. It also notes Coteclose, Uphouseclose, Overhouseclose, Deaneeclose, Mylhayes close, Roddons close, Pykkeldean close, Puthay, Temple Hays, Bourdland, Stonydeane, a pasture called Sheldford and a Cotagium called Mawdyes. There was also pasture at Lyphams, Hackpen, Rodden

Cowedowne and Dyllinge, with the *communis pastura*, used by the manorial tenants all year round, at Priors Ball, Full Ridge and Hurseley, all presumably on what was called Tenants Down in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. The sheep downs were on North, Brode, Little and Atleis Downs (Straton 1909, 251-64).

The 1671 Terrier of Glebe Lands repeats many of the names, sometimes in variant form. Included are Bittom, Blacksmith, Whiteway, White Field, Whitslade Field, Redhill, Pound Field, Gibstone, Temple Downe, Cattenbarrow, Paddle Drove, Vickaers Bush and Bum Furlong. In 1704-5 new names or variants include Comon Pread (?Mead), Broad Mead, Stanley, Bittons, Hatchets Gate, Barrows Fields, Pound Field, Candle Acre, Barrow Acre, Long Hedge, Pan Furlong and Red Hill. The field called Catton Barow contained at least 22 acres of arable.

Windmills were a feature of the southern half of the parishes. West Overton had one on Windmill Hill (fig 00), whilst Lockeridge's stood on the spur to the west of Dene (Pl.00).

### **Woodland**

The most striking feature of the woodland in this study area is the stability and consistency of its position and size across the centuries. Here, at the southern edge of the two parishes, is where trees have demonstrably grown since the early Saxon period and very probably since Roman and prehistoric times. Moreover, though the area of the woodland has been reduced since its severance from Savernake, especially along its edges, the acreage covered by trees appears to have been stable since the late eleventh century. That this area was for trees was no doubt reinforced by the construction of high boundary banks, believed to be medieval but not yet sufficiently well-dated, which not only demarcated the limits of the arable and pasture with the woodland, but also regulated the flow of animals to and away from the trees.

This woodland was, of course, a precious resource, giving to the landowners and communities of Fyfield and Overton something absent from many downland estates. Such a resource adds to the economic viability of communities, providing wood for buildings, fences and fires, food in the form of hunted animals, fruit and fungi, grazing areas for livestock and, today more than ever before, a place for recreation (*cf.* Bond 1994).

Hunting was often, and to some extent remains, the *raison d'être* for the creation, management and, ultimately, the survival of much of the woodland in the study area today. In the parishes of West Overton and Fyfield hunting has been a constant feature from prehistoric times (WAM 00, 00) through the medieval period (WAM 53, 194-5) to the present day. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries deer were hunted (p. 00), though by the late nineteenth century the presence of numerous aviaries in West

Woods, mostly managed by the Meux Estate, indicate the game was then predominantly pheasant, though rabbits, foxes and deer were also hunted, as they are today.

The other main crop derived from woodland is, of course, the wood itself. All the woodland in the study area has experienced felling, management (coppicing, pollarding, *etc.*) and replanting at some time in the past two millennia, if not for longer. Some clearances, such as Hursley Bottom, appear to have been unwooded from at least the mid-tenth century (cf. Saxon charters), whilst other documentary sources indicate further woodland felling to create permanent clearances was carried out from the twelfth to fourteenth centuries (cf. Fosbury, Boreham and Breach Cottage). The owner in the Tudor period planted hazel, oak, willow and maple on the estate to supply the demands of sixteenth century England, while modern demands have created a woodland landscape which is above all of beech and fir, with pockets of mixed broad leaved. Names such as Priest Down Common and Tenants Down in and around the woodland, demonstrate that the grazing and feeding of animals were also an important part of forest activity: cows and sheep grazed the clearings, while pigs foraged under the tree canopy for fungi and acorns.

The following detail exemplifies both our sources and a fragment of woodland landscape. In the late C18 Wools Grove was a coppice on the 'Tenants Down', a down which included Hursley Bottom. According to the Pembroke Survey, Lytle Wood, 16ac, was planted with oaks and hazel in 1555, and Wools Grove, 40ac, similarly planted in 1561. This appears to represent the replanting of old woodland as an earlier wood grew in the same area, namely Woveseyegrove in the 14<sup>th</sup> century (*PNWilts*, 306). Indeed, Wools Grove and Little Wood may well be remnant woodland from Domesday Savernake. What is today simply Wells' Copse (SU 151661) was 'J Wells Coppice' in 1800, indicating it was named after a local owner, perhaps the 'Farmer Wells' noted in the Terrier of 1704-5 (Archive 00).

Withigmeres hege (S449, Willowpond Hedge) was in all probability a fairly sizeable hedge in the 10<sup>th</sup> century given that it was chosen as a boundary marker. Hursley Bottom (1816 and modern OS maps), was called *ers lege* (S784) and *hurs leage* (S449) in the 10th century and Hurseley in 1567. It seems to be a feature of the Anglo-Saxon woodland landscape which has persisted (fig. 9.00). It cuts Wools Grove and Wells Coppice and, being a lea and still an open area, may not have been wooded for a millennium. Though trees have spilt over the banks today, much of the woodland in the nineteenth century, and no doubt earlier, followed the banks, shown as black lines on the modern 1:25000 map, which remain visible today (fig. 9.5; Pl. 00).

## **Heathland**

The agricultural viability of the units was enhanced by having an area of rough grazing, usually held in common, at the very southern edges of each estate. At first these areas were wooded or scrub, though felling, grazing and cultivation over the centuries has created land fertile enough today to support three farms in this area. West Overton's common lay c. 1.5km east of the south-east corner of the tithing and was called Abbess Wood in the Middle Ages, though after the insertion of Clatford Park the common, it seems, was displaced a little south and became known as Savernake Park.

East Overton and Fyfield also had areas of heathland, both of which were called Heath Grounds in the late eighteenth century. The origins of these two areas are obscure, though heathland certainly existed hereabouts in the late medieval period (*PNWilt*s, 307; Straton 1909, 264), possibly even in the first century AD (*WAM* 61, 98). As some heathland in this area appears to have belonged to Lockeridge manor before the early nineteenth century (1794 map), it appears that each estate had access to this beneficial resource.

### **Parks**

The creation of deer parks in the study area south of the Kennet appears to be confined to the late sixteenth century. Clatford Park, sitting in the south-east corner of Fyfield parish, was carved out of Clatford (hence its name), West Overton's Abbess Wood and Oare. The Park was created after the Dissolution by Sir Thomas Wroughton sometime in the early 1580s. It used a 1.4km stretch of Wansdyke as its northern boundary, while to the south its other edge ran in a long, sweeping, semi-circular curve to rejoin Wansdyke east of Short Oak Copse (SU 16896643; fig. 9.00). The park was disemparked about 1631. The appearance of Savernake Park (*above*) may well refer to a second park here, hence the presence of two 'Park Farms' (fig. 00).

### **Brick-making and clay extraction**

The wooded area between Heath Plantation and Strawberry Ground was called Brickkiln Copse in 1925. The place-name reflects an important though small-scale industry in the area: brick-making. Production sites, including kilns, were situated on top of the red clay both here at the southern end of the parish and at the far northern limits (c.SU 12907218). Wagon routes were created to transport the fired bricks to the major roads and towns. The clay was simply extracted by digging pits, and as deposits are so close to the surface, the pits were seldom very deep. It also appears that, at the SE corner of Brickkiln Copse at least (e.g. SU 15576507), the bricks were also fired in pits, presumably ones created by clay extraction. There, a large pit dug into the ditch of Wansdyke is surrounded by fired waste, with indications to its north of the site of one or two buildings shown on ??????map. This process implied here would have involved placing the raw bricks on planks and building up the layers with the addition of bracken

or sawdust, until the pit was full. A clay capping was then built, leaving a flue on one side, and the whole fired (REFS needed!!).

### **Sarsen stones**

The Kennet valley sarsen industry enjoys two substantial studies (Free 1948, King 1968). The breaking and carrying off of sarsen stones (in modern times) was at its peak from the late nineteenth century to the 1930s, when the demand for kerbs, road-metal and setts for tramways was at its highest. Most of the sarsens from West Woods were broken by explosives and crushed to produce chippings for the new surface for the A4 road between the wars, though this surface did not last long (*WAM* 52, 338-9). This highly labour-intensive industry did not recover after the Second World War. Before this diversification, sarsens, worked or roughly cut, were of course one of the main local building materials, along with wood, chalk, clunch and flint (Pl. 00) and, as the excavation of the *polissoir* showed (*above* Chap. 3, site ODII), sarsen breakers were active on the northern downs in the medieval period. Stones were also used as boundary markers, especially on the downland areas where an erect stone would be an distinct feature (*cf.* Saxon charters), and many assumed names, such as *Sadlestone*, *Trippingstoone* and *three cornered stone* (Straton 1909, 147, 264). River gravel was also extracted in the Middle Ages (gravelsputte) and three stone quarries are noted in the Inclosure documents of 1817 (WRO ???).

This overview of the lands south of the Kennet may well suggest, despite its sketched and brief nature, a landscape under intense exploitation, responding to community need yet simultaneously influencing the sorts of society acquiring its livelihood in Overton and Fyfield. Natural resource and technology were, however, only part of the dynamic driving - some would say inhibiting, - the sorts of lives people lived hereabouts for, from early medieval times onwards, we see two other major factors at work. We see them in documents and maps, previously not available to us as evidence; but it is a fair guess that such factors applied earlier. In considering the southern reaches of our five tythings, we run straight into landlords and tenure in the landscape.