Fyfod master file Altch11 @29.vi. 97.: THIS IS THE TEXT TO EDIT: it includes J Hare's recensions but it has now been sent back to him for any further comment. Pjf.

Chapter 11
THE MANOR OF EAST OVERTON:
landscape with people

The tithing of East Overton south of the Roman road stretches from North Farm to Bayardo Farm in the south, a distance of 4.5km. It is mostly 1 to 1.5km. wide, narrowing to just over 100m in Hursley Bottom (fig. 9.4). Its successive north-south bands of land-use are similar to those in West Overton (*above*, end of Chap 10), including at the extreme south-east end where, beyond the woods at 210m above OD, 'Heath Grounds' and the currently-named Heath Plantation recall a different habitat and mark the late enclosure of rough pasture. The associated farm was formerly called Heath Barns, with Heath Cottages some 400m to the west; its present name, Bayardo Farm, is after the Derby winner of 19?? (memory is that it was c 1950 but **check**; presumably this might recall a triumph for the Manton Down stables/Mr Todd of Manton long barrow fame: CHECK; *PNWilts*, 307).

The Anglo-Saxon boundaries: southern East Overton

The Pagan Saxon period on this estate has been covered elsewhere (Chap 8, 00; Chap 9, 00). As with West Overton, we are fortunate enough to have a tenth century charter for East Overton (S449), so settlement pattern and land use can again be studied in some detail. In 939 AD King Æthelstan granted fifteen hides at *uferan tun* (East Overton) to Wulfswyth, a nun. Many features of the northern circuit of the East Overton Saxon charter, including its curious attachment, are discussed elsewhere (Windows 1, 2-8). Here, we concentrate on the area south of the Roman road.

Moving southwards across the downs and along *pyttel dene*, the boundary comes o*n hole weg* then *eft on cynetan*, to the hollow way and then back to the Kennet. The hollow way is possibly the Roman road which leaves the course of the A4 (SU 13856851) and crosses the valley bottom heading towards a ford or bridge, near Spring Cottage (SU 15086840). In the fields between the Kennet and the A4, it seems to be more of an *agger* than a hollow however (Pl. 00), though where it met the village of Fyfield it did indeed appear as a holloway in the 18th century. As the 'Old Road' or 'Piper's Lane' to the inhabitants (1819), it was a main thoroughfare through the village before Inclosure and its more recent destruction (Chap. 12, *below*). As the boundary between the Lockeridge and East Overton farms ran from Pickledean barn, along the ridge of Lockeridge Field and down along Old Road, and then south, along the present

footpath to the Kennet just east of Lockeridge House at the same date, it is possible the tenth century estate boundary did likewise.

From the earliest cartographic evidence, however, the boundary between Lockeridge and East Overton ran south from the *hlinc ufeweardne*, the upperside of the lynchet at southern edge of the arable at the end of Pickledean, to the Kennet, thus suggesting the *hole weg* was the Roman Road hereabouts (SU 141684) or a predecessor of the A4. Though here the exact divide is complicated by the very nature of the resource: this is valuable meadowland, and from the twelfth century onwards it was to experience numerous changes in ownership (Chap 12).

South of the *weg*, the boundary walker then crossed the river *cynetan* either, if the first hypothesis is correct, just east of Lockeridge House (SU 14786812) or, following the second, just east of 'Stony Dean' (1819 map) at the 90º bend in the river (SU 14556792). The walker then moved from the Kennet to a prominent *ellene*, an elder tree, and then to *on wodnes dene* (Lockeridge Dene), seemingly in a more or less straight line to the top of the spur of land just west of Lockeridge village, a prominent point now known to have been marked by a group of large-diameter round barrows (Pl. 00; *below* p. 00). From Dene we go *to wuda on mær wege*, to the wood on the boundary, pond or possibly horse way (*mearh* = mare; Gelling 1993, 26). A bridleway does indeed climb the hill from Lockeridge Dene into Wools Grove, the 'w*uda*', arguably as ‘a way along the balk of a ploughland' (Grundy 1919, 241 n.1; figs. 9.3, 15.1).

The boundary then proceeded to *hyrs leage up to wodens dic on titferthes geat*, to Hursley Bottom then up to Wansdyke and then to Titferthe's Gate (fig. 9.4). Of several possible routes, that eastwards around West Woods seems more likely, keeping Little Wood in East Overton as described in 1567 (Straton 1909, 262) and following the boundary of the nineteenth century maps. The boundary would then meet Wansdyke and run along or beside it for *c* 300m to *titferthes geat*, a proposal already approved by Brentnall (1938a, 127). The ‘gate’ was at the south corner of Wells' Copse and Little Wood and at the west corner of Barrow Copse where a tracks passes through Wansdyke (SU 15406570). Its exact course is shaped now by a modern cut, slightly diagonal to the bank, but the disturbance cannot totally disguise an original causeway between original ditch ends in a pattern strikingly similar to that already recorded at ‘Edgar’s gate’ (*above* p. 00). Here an outer hooked earthwork seems intended to deflect an approach from the north to the east, passing between the outwork and the stepped-back eastern ditch end (fig. 9. 00). It seems significant that, as modern maps still reflect, two of the major, long-distance ‘through-ways’ identified in the study area (*above* p. 00, 00; and *below* p. 00), converge on this point, both off the downs, with one

through the Overtons, the other through Fyfield and Lockeridge (fig. 15.1). They, and the boundary, continue south-east past the long barrow (G. 000; SU 157656; fig. 9.4).

From the gate, the boundary travelled to the east side of the hedge at 'willow pond', (*withigmeres hege*) and then s*uth on butan Aethelferthes setle on thone stanihtan weg*, south around Aethelferthe's dwelling to the stony way. The pond lies just beyond the long barrow at the south-east corner of Barrow Copse (SU 15736553; Brentnall 1938, 128; Chap. 12). Locational exactitude is important, for the following point in the charter holds out the rare promise of being able to identify the site of a Saxon house of a named person, a site moreover high among (former) woodland on Clay-with-Flints. The place may have been near the end of the track from the clay pits (SU 15126527), where a settlement, for which we have found no name, stood from the late eighteenth century until at least the 1930s or it may have been near Heath Cottages (SU 15586514), which, accoring to the SMR record was the home of Ralph atte Hethe (SMR466; PNWilts, 307). Aethelferthe's house, though, remains undiscovered. Is this the same Aethelferthe, down here at the SE corner of the Saxon estate, as the *Aethelferthes* who had a *stane* named after him at the northern end of East Overton? (*see* Window 1, p. 00). Or was the name iconographic, indicating to those who needed to know the further end of a land unit as perhaps some long barrows did four thousand years earlier?

The present parish boundary follows the tenth century one here as it turns west at Heath Cottages (SU 15586514; Days Cottage in 1811), and heads south along the edge of Heath Grounds to join the track from Huish to Lockeridge (SU 14706514), the *stanihtan weg* of the charter. The 'stony way' suggests that this route was metalled, perhaps in a similar manner to the Ridgeway at the West Overton/ East Kennet ford (Chp 9), and therefore a busy one, an idea supported by our discussion on routes through this landscape (*above*; fig 00). The *weg* then intersects Wansdyke just after meeting the West Overton boundary at another 'gate', *Eadgardes gete* (S784; SU 14786548; above and fig. 00). This break in the ditch lay near *langan sceagan*, the long wood (S784) and *smalan leage*, the small or narrow lea. The boundary then continued east of Pickrudge and Pumphrey Wood, *thurh scyt hangran and lang thaes weges to them hlince*, through Chichangles (*PNWilts*, 306) along the path to the lynchet.

The w*ege* in question would seem to be the hollow which skirts the northern edge of Pumphrey Wood, now a public footpath and once the tithing boundary. Evidence of its later, continuing role as a boundary exists in the form of low, round-topped marker stones inscribed 'HM' (Henry Meux) along its SW side. The boundary now reaches open pasture (SU 143666) where in the tenth century there may have been arable. A thin strip of hedge, baulk and trees remains today, possibly the remnants of the Saxon

hlince along what became the northern edge of *Allen's Higher Ground* on the 1794 map. A 'Celtic' field system formerly existed on Boreham Down immediately to the NW, however, and the 'hlince' is more likely to have been an earthwork of that than evidence of 10th cultivation *(cf. below* on Lockeridge Down, p.00).

The estate boundary from here followed the existing hedge line *to west heafdon*, to west headlands, marked by two erect stones in 1784 (again echoing arrangements to the north on the downs, *above* p. 00). Being *western* headlands, they demarcated the western limits of the ploughland of East Overton in the C10. The boundary line then moved across downland, *north ofer dune*, and nort-west up the hill to a still very distinctive hedge in the modern landscape, *thaet riht gemaere*, the straight balk or boundary (SU 132668). It marks the tithing boundary and the northern edge of the strip called Lewis's Ground on the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century maps. This is the *scyfling dune* of the West Overton charter, echoed by the name *Schufly(g)don* in 1312 (Archive 00, Kempson Notes; Winchester archives, DM). The *scyfl* element refers to the gently sloping nature of this hill (Gelling 1993, 186-7).

The boundary then went down *to tune*, the forerunner of South Farm in modern West Overton, where, at the entrance to the settlement, a once stone (SU 13156782; 1938 map). It might have been, here at the south gate, the equivalent to the *dunnan stan with foran tham burg gete* of (Anglo-Saxon) West Overton which once marked the northern gate (S784; *above* p. 00); but it is conceivably the *burg gete* stone. If so, the nature of, and relationship between, the two Overtons in the C10 would be affected interpretatively (*ibid.*).

The landscape changed as the boundary crossed the bottomlands. From the farm it went *on cynetan on sealt ham*, to the Kennet and to the Salt House, basically north through the present village, across the main west-east street and into Frog Lane to the river crossing ('*Four bridges*', 1794). The Salt House would have been in the area called '*Home Mead*' (1794; around SU 130683). Presumably this Salt House - *sensu* a building in which to store food preserved in salt - was primarily to store fish caught in the Kennet; but salted meat could also have been kept in what was a proprietorial but communal facility. Salt would of course have had to be imported but whether it was sea salt from the Solent or the Bristol Channel, or mined salt from further afield, is unknown (there must be a study somewhere of salt in AS England: IWB: find it pl!).

By taking this route through the modern day village of West Overton, this western boundary of the C10 estate of East Overton illustrates how the village of East Overton must have lain to the east, undoubtedly around its church which is now so confusingly labelled as the parish church of West Overton (*above*, pp. 00, 00).

Domesday

The Bishop of Winchester held *Ovretone* in 1086 and it paid geld for fifteen hides. The land here was for the support of the monks at Winchester, so the land had been transferred from Wulfswyth, or her predecessors, to Winchester at some point in the preceding 150 years. There was land for seven ploughs, with eight and a half hides and two ploughs in demesne, thus leaving the villeins' five ploughs to farm the remaining six and a half hides. The demesne of East Overton was worth £8 in the time of Edward, but only £6 when the Bishop received it (*VCH* II, 120-1).

The estate contained 6ha (15ac) of meadow, the pasture was eight furlongs long by four broad and the woodland five furlongs long by two broad (*ibid*.). If a furlong can taken as *c* 200m (Coleman & Wood, 29), then the area of pasture would have been about 130ha (320ac), roughly three times that of the woodland. On topographical and metrical grounds, this large, rectangular area of pasture is most likely to have lain on the downs north of Down Barn, which we know was pasture in the tenth century (*above*). The woodland, again a narrow, rectangular strip, perhaps covering an area of about 40ha, reflects the size and shape of the woodland areas of Wools Grove, Wells' Copse and Little Wood as far as Wansdyke within the tithing of East Overton today. So in Domesday, as today, it appears fairly certain that the woodland lay in a long, fairly narrow area at the very southern tip of the East Overton estate, with the meadow along the banks of the Kennet and the pasture on what is now Overton Down. This leaves space for the arable on the Fore Hill (north of the Bath Road) and south of the village on Bitham Barrow Hill.

Agriculture and land-use on the Manor of Overton

J. N. Hare

Overton manor 1248 - 1400

Overton manor had belonged to the bishop and cathedral of Winchester from before the Norman conquest and had initially comprised of two separate units, (East) Overton and Fyfield, both visible in Domesday Book. They were physically divided by a sub-manor, also in Domesday, which later became the manor(s) of Lockeridge (Chapt. 11), but this rarely appears in the surviving manorial documentation of the priory of St. Swithun other than in the court rolls.

For about two hundred years after Domesday the manors of East Overton and Fyfield remained economically independent, being valued in 1210 at £16 and £8 respectively, with both possessing their own manorial *curia* (the manor house or farm). The merger of the two manors had begun to take place early in the C13, when the prior of St. Swithun's withdrew his manors of East Overton and Fyfield from the Selkley Hundred and included them in his own hundred of Elstub; indeed, the prior was laying claim to the manor of Fyfield in 1243 (*VCH* XI, 192, 194). By 1248, the two had been combined and were called Overton. In 1284 St Swithun's gave up any right to the advowson of Overton (including Fyfield) in favour of the Bishop of Winchester and in return the Bishop acknowledged the priory's lordship over the manors of East Overton, Fyfield and Alton (*ibid*., 199). By 1309 the process was certainly complete and the manors were interdependent, being valued together at £116 (*ibid*., 194). Overton, though, remained the larger element of the two estates, as reflected in the payment of *cert* to the manorial courts and by the fact that by 1280 the *curia* at Fyfield had become a vacant croft, leased out to rent.

The combined manor of Overton formed part of one of the richest estates in medieval Wessex. Poorer and less well documented than that of the bishopric of Winchester, it nevertheless offers an important range of surviving documentation, above all on a group of twelve manorial accounts from 1248 to 1318 (WCL. The accounts ran from Michaelmas to Michaelmas and have been dated by the end of the accounting year). This group of composite accounts collect together the accounts for each manor of St Swithun's priory in an individual year.

The following detailed study of the manor of Overton is based on this documentary evidence, though it should be borne in mind that such sources were designed to record the accountability of the local reeve or official to his lord, and not to provide a source for the C20 landscape historian. It is therefore dangerous and invalid to assume that the absence of documentary reference to a place or activity means that they did not

exist or occur. Moreover, these accounts, in so far as they are concerned with agriculture, are concerned with that of the lord and not that of the peasantry. They therefore provide a crucially important but incomplete source for the study of landscape and land-use in medieval Overton.

The documents nevertheless allow us a picture of the manor of Overton, much of which would be familiar elsewhere in the chalklands, amidst rural economies dominated by grain production and sheep farming (Scott 1959; Hare 1981, 1994). On the other hand, Overton manor also shows its own peculiarities particularly in the exceptionally large scale of its pastoral farming. In this respect, Overton was one of the pre-eminent manors within a major pastoral estate.

Geographically, the manor of Overton consisted of three main elements in the thirteenth century as it had done in the tenth. Around the settlement, concentrated in the river valley, lay the open fields. To the south lay an area of woodland, the most likely place for the woods mentioned in the documents; the references to timber being cut and sold from Boreham in 1225 (*VCH* IV, 418) would reinforce this. To the north lay the chalk downs - as ever, the immemorial and basic resource in the land-use divisions here. The downs, like the woods, offered scope for arable expansion, a potential partially exploited in the thirteenth century, but above all they, an acculturated and not a natural landscape, were **the** resource which allowed large flocks of sheep to become such a distinctive element in the economy of the manor.

Most of the demesne agriculture was carried out in the open fields which lay around the settlements and which was shared with the peasantry. Here, as was usual in the chalklands, the fields were divided into two with half the land remaining fallow each year (Scott 1959; Hare 1976, 1981; Harrison 1995). Such apparently wasteful use of fallow made sense given the importance of large-scale sheep farming in the chalklands and the use that could be made of the fallow by the large sheep flocks, both for feed and as a recipient of dung. It was extensive rather then intensive land-use, but it also provided an agriculture appropriate to the soils and agricultural needs.

From 1280 sowing took place sowing took place in the eastfield or westfield of Overton and Fyfield. It is not clear whether any linking of the two field systems had occurred, although by the sixteenth century the farm of East Overton included land in the fields of Fyfield (*VCH* XI, 194). In general all the crops (wheat, barley, bere, drage, oats and a small amount of vetch) were sown in alternate years in a single field, although this was carried out with flexibility. Thus in 1283, for example, it was the turn of the east fields for sowing, a common occurrence, but the barley was shared between this and the westfield and the oats were sown in the westfield and elsewhere. The two field rotation

seems to have been at its most obvious in the sowing of wheat, which always alternated between the two fields in strict sequence.

Other fields also appeared. In 1267 all the demesne sowing had been described as in the north field, but it is not clear whether this represents a change of nomenclature or whether there had been some reform of field patterns then and 1280. From 1311 a southfield appears, although this was not comparable in size to the others, producing a maximum sowing of 39 acres of demesne, and a small northfield (at scrufeleput) also appears in 1312. Southfield, eastfield and westfield all included land at Schflyn(g)don (1312, 1316), presuambly on Bitham Barrow hill (the *scyfling dune* of the AD939 charter; *above*) perhaps representing further expansion of arable to the south of the river. On the late eighteenth century map, this area is divided into Bittam, Hatch Yatt, Long and White Barrow Fields.

In its cropping regimes, Overton was typical of the chalklands around. Table I compares it with the nearby demesnes of Great and Little Ogbourne and Clatford, as well as three other manors of the cathedral priory: Enford, a similar chalkland manor; Wroughton, to the north, and Alton Priors to the south, two near-adjacent manors possessing both heavier and more fertile soils, as well as portions of downland. On these chalk manors, wheat occupied about a third of the sown land, although it was more widespread on the vale manors of Alton and Wroughton. The rest was covered mainly with oats and barley; barley was higher at Overton compared with its neighbouring manors, although on a comparable scale and oats occupied about 30% of the sown area on these chalk manors and was substantially more important than on the vale manors.

At Overton, the accounts allow us a rare opportunity to compare the cropping of the lord's demesne with that of the tenantry as the priory also received the tithes, thus some of the accounts record what came from the demesne and what came from the rest of the parish (Table III; *cf*. Harrison 1995, Tables 6 and 10). This enables us to see the relative scale of demesne and tenant agriculture, which would have included sub-manors as well as peasantry, on three of the cathedral manors. In addition, such accounts allow us to compare the types of crops being cultivated by the lord and his tenants. At Overton in 1311, for example, the rest of the parish produced about two and a half times the grain of the demesne, substantially less than on the priory's manor of Enford, but substantially more than at Alton Priors, where the rest of the parish produced only about a quarter more than the demesne. This indicates that the demesne, whilst being a large-scale producer of wheat and barley, placed less emphasis on these than did the rest of the parish. By contrast oats production was relatively insignificant amongst the tenantry; in the extreme year of 1307 all the oats produced came from the demesne, perhaps reflecting the cultivation of large areas of

downland by the lord. Such figures, albeit crude, provide us with a reminder that however large the demesne agriculture which figures so prominently in the account rolls, there was a more extensive arable sector that has left little documentary mark.

The thirteenth century is familiar as one of demographic growth here as elsewhere (Scott 1959, Hare 1995), though the accounts give us little indication of how this pressure of population could be coped with. Essentially there seem to have been three possible areas for further expansion: on *Shuflyndon* and White Hill, around and in the woodlands to the south (*see* Fosbury, Chpt. 11) and on the thin chalkland soils to the north. The widespread production of oats on the demesne may have reflected its expansion on poor quality chalk downland and some of the areas of land involved may well be reflected in the blocks of ridge and furrow recorded by air photography (fig. 2.00). Here agriculture seems to have been extensive rather than intensive, with Overton generally at the lower end of yields from the Wiltshire manors of the cathedral priory (Harrison 1995, 13-15). This was despite the livestock figures for the manor which were generally amongst the highest of the priory manors in Wiltshire (*ibid*., 16). An explanation would seem to lie in the growth of demesne cultivation on poor downland soils (such as Raddon), where even large quantities of dung did not make up for the poverty of the soil itself, and the enormous concentration of sheep at one end of the parish, where much of the dung may have been expended on some of the poorest of the soils. The rising demand for land was also reflected in the growing rent totals, particularly between 1267 and 1280.

Overton was one of the most important sheep farming manors of the cathedral priory estate. In a tax assessment of 1210, Fyfield was stated as having 100 and Overton 300 sheep, the two townships still being treated as distinct manors (*VCH* XI, 194). This places the two flocks among the smaller ones in Wiltshire on this estate. A transformation in the scale of sheep farming soon occurred, however, which far exceeded growth on any of the other priory properties (Table IV). By 1248, the manor had 2,256 sheep, a five-fold increase from 1210, but a figure that it may never have reached again. As such, Overton, along with Enford, were to remain the most important sheep farming manors on the estate, exploiting the extensive thin downlands for this lucrative cash crop.

Though limited, the documentation allows some trends to appear. The 1248 account shows the demesne flock at its greatest, whereas the accounts from 1267 show decline that continued into the 1280s when it reached the lowest levels in our accounting period, perhaps reflecting the rising rents and the increase in the acreage of downland under plough. By the end of the thirteenth century through to 1318, there was a new stability at a higher level of about 1,650 to 1,700 sheep. By 1318 it had reached 1,882, though it is not clear whether this was the start of a period of growth or

a short-term fluctuation. That this early fourteenth century peak coincides with the abandonment of the settlement at Raddon (see Chpt 5), may indicate that land on Overton Down, no longer cultivable due to the cropping demands made on it over the previous decades and the poor weather conditions of the 1310s, was being returned solely to sheep pasture.

At the same time close links with the rest of the Winchester estate had developed, whether with the visit of the stockman or with the movement of sheep from one manor to another, largely between Overton and the other nearby manors of Wroughton, Alton and Hinton and, to a lesser extent, Enford and Stockton. Sheep provided wool that was sent to a central wool store, initially at Barton Priors outside Winchester, where all the estate wool would be sold in one large contract. The sheep also produced meat, some of the stock for slaughter being sent to the cathedral priory, with others being fattened and sold in the area. Sheep-milk was also provided to make cheese and finally sheep not only produced manure, they spread it as well.

During the winter months sheep were normally kept in enclosed shelters from which they could be let out as appropriate (Ochinsky 1971, 337-9; Hare 1994, 161-2; Dyer 0000). At Overton, the sheep were kept in three different sheep-houses from 1248 (although they are not then named individually). Subsequently these were described at Attley (Audley's Cottage/ Hillside Farm), at Raddon (Wroughton Mead) and at Hackpen (Down Barn?). In 1280 they were exceptionally described as at the wood in Fyfield and in Overton, suggesting they were all south of the river on 'Tenants Down' and 'Atlas Dene Grounds' (late C18 century map).

There were three main elements to sheep-houses: an enclosed yard, the sheep house itself and appropriate accommodation or shelter for the shepherd. Something of these elements can be seen from the manorial accounts and, of course, from the excavations at Raddon. Inside the compound were thatched buildings, whose roofs were regularly being repaired, with the sheep house itself a substantial timber-framed structure. At Attley apparently major works in 1282 involved three crucks being used to repair or extend one building, followed by repairs to the ditching around the sheep-house and hedge-planting. The sheep house at Hackpen had three doors and was completely rebuilt in 1318, at a cost of £3 4s 3½d, with a mason being paid 3s 8d to construct the stone foundations. The timber frame of eight couples of forks or crucks, which cost 26s 8d, suggests a seven bay structure perhaps between 21m to 34m in length, a similar length to the late fifteenth century grange excavated within Wroughton Mead (Chapt. 5, Building 10). At the same date, rafters and laths were purchased and 36ac of straw were reaped to provide the thatch, an investment which demonstrates the importance of such buildings in the profitability of the estate. Such buildings would have been subdivided with internal partitions, as rebuilt at Hackpen and Raddon in

1282, and stored hay and winter feed. Various features in this description can be recognised in the archaeological evidence at Raddon (chap. 5) to the extent that it seems legitimate to ponder whether the rebuilding of Building 2 is not actually dated to 1282 (*above*, 00).

The accommodation might vary from one sheephouse to another. Attley was closer to the main settlements than the others and could have been run by one of the local tenants, shown by the reference in 1309 to one of the shepherds receiving an allowance against his rent for his work as keeper there. However, Raddon and Hackpen were much further away. The shepherd at Raddon, as one of the lord's servants or *famuli*, received an allowance of flour which he would have collected on certain occasions from the manorial *curia*, but being so far from the curia he was allowed to collect it as a fixed allowance. As such, he would have required a farmstead at the sheep-house from which he could look after the sheep and carry out his other tasks. The archaeology of that farmstead is discussed in Chapter 5.

Though sheep were the most common form of demesne livestock, they were only one of many (Table V). Cows and pigs were of course essential but so were the animals, oxen and to a lesser extent horses, needed to work the estate (*cf*. Chpt 12). As with sheep numbers, the first account for 1248 shows some contrasts with later ones, although a single account should be used with caution. It shows a herd of cows over twice the size of any known later example here and a herd of swine half the size of any later average. The twenty-two cows provided a large herd by comparison with other farms in the area during the Middle Ages. Oxen showed a fairly constant number of about thirty though, as with numbers of other livestock, it fell in the 1260s and 1280s. Pigs increased in number in the late C13 and early C14, with large herds of over fifty comparable in size to those at the priory manor of Enford though not reaching the exceptionally large figure of eighty-one at nearby Great Ogbourne in 1294 (WCL 1311, 1316; PRO E106/2/3). The presence of pigs in such numbers would have had a marked effect on the landscape if they were daily herded on the manorial feeding grounds, presumably mainly in and around the edges of the southern woodlands; and that same presence reinforces our view of those woodlands as a resource important for the local economy. The high numbers of pigs found on some chalkland manors, perhaps less well-endowed with woods than East Overton, suggests that swine herds may also have been run on the downs.

After 1318 the account rolls cease to survive and the evidence is fragmentary, though it can be complemented by that from villages and manors elsewhere. The Black Death of 1348-9 probably killed over 40% of the population nationally and locally, and in Wiltshire, as elsewhere, the plague and other factors resulted in a low population until about the end of the 1400s (*VCH* IV, 38-42, 295; Hatcher 1977; Hare 1994, 163-4). In

the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, individual tenants were accumulating holdings, opening up gaps in the fabric of existing villages and occasionally, as at Shaw, producing village desertion itself (Crowley 1975, 10-11; Hare 1994, 165-8). What evidence we have for Overton is largely about development of demesne farming rather than about the peasantry and reflects both elements of continuity and of change.

While no manorial accounts have yet been found to compare with those of the earlier period, some indications as to the scale of the demesne agriculture can be found from the stockbook of St Swithun's priory from 1389-1392 (WCL Stockbook). It provides us with a snapshot of the pastoral farming of a great estate at the peak of its activity, reflecting the continued demand for wool and food both from the priory itself and from the increased prosperity of much of the chalklands based upon the growth of the cloth industry in south and west Wiltshire (Hare 1976). The stock book tells us nothing directly about arable production, but this would seem to have continued on a similar scale as before since there was no significant fall in the number of horses and oxen compared with the earlier figures. Any decline in the area of arable cultivation, as at Enford (BL Harl. R1. X/7), would not have been great. The cattle herds also remained comparable to those of the early C14, but both pigs and sheep showed signs of substantial growth of demesne production. Thus by 1390, the number of pigs had more than doubled from an average of 48 to 133, and Overton then possessed the second largest herd on the cathedral estates, exceeded only by the great home farm of Barton Priors with 4 more (WCL Stockbook, f.16).

While sheep flocks did not reach their exceptional levels of 1248, they nevertheless showed a substantial growth (12%) from the high levels of the early fourteenth century. It may not be clear when such growth occurred and it could already have been happening at the end of the previous period when the flock grew to 1,882 in 1318, but what is apparent, as elsewhere on the estate, is that sheep farming continued on a very large scale. With the exception of Barton Priors, Overton possessed the largest sheep flock on the priory's estates in 1390, no mean achievement on an estate whose flocked totalled 20, 357 sheep.

Another earlier indication of the continued importance to the manorial econmy to wool may be seen from the Receiver's Account for the priory for 1334/5. At Overton 83% of the receipts of the manor came from wool sales. Such a figure exaggerates the importance of wool as it would underestimate the full value of the manor by excluding the grain and livestock sent to the priory for its consumption (although some of this would have been the product of the sheep flocks). Nevertheless, it provides us with an indication of the importance of wool and sheep on this estate. Of the other Wiltshire manors wool generated 46% of the manorial receipts of Enford, 26% at Alton, 12% at Stockton and 10% at Wroughton. Such variations reflected the differing size of the

tenant rental, as well as the scale of the sheep farming and of liveries of food to Winchester. In 1340, Overton, with 80 sheep, was one of the largest providers of kebb sheep, which were fattened and sent for meat to the cathedral priory (Hanna 1954, 48). The evident large-scale activity of such sheep farming at Overton in the middle and late fourteenth century would have continued to ensure an important role for Raddon.

Overton manor 1400 - 1600

The stock book suggests that, as in most other ecclesiastical manors of the chalklands of Wiltshire at the end of the fourteenth century, demesne agriculture continued with little change. Thereafter, evidence is even more fragmentary as the extensive range of later manorial accounts for individual manors does not include Overton. In 1419, the Wroughton accounts show hay being taken from the manor to the lord's ewe flocks at Overton (WCL. Box 53 Wroughton). At some point the lord leased out the demesne of Overton, and a likely date, based upon the chronology of similar but better documented manors, would be in the second quarter of the fifteenth century. Here, as elsewhere on such large chalkland estates in Wessex, sheep flocks frequently continued to be run and financed by the lord (Hare 1985, 85-6). Here this final stage of the process of retreat from direct farming occurred at some time after 1453 when Overton still maintained a breeding flock and lambs were sent to Barton Priors (Greatrex 1972, E1:xxxv).

By 1496 the process of retreat by Winchester was complete, as a copy of the lease of the manor to Robert Wroughton included in the priory register concurs (Greatrex 1978, 189-90). It was a stock and land lease. In it the tenant was provided with a substantial contribution of manor's requirements for livestock, grain and farm equipment, to be returned at the end of the lease. The lease itself illustrates two aspects of the landscape: the combination of arable and pastoral economy typical of the sheep/corn husbandry of this area, and the continuation of large-scale demesne agriculture. The breakdown of the grain provided (fifteen quarters of wheat, forty quarters of barley and ten quarters of oats) may reflect a longer term trend in which decline of population and shrinkage of arable led to a particularly sharp fall in the production of oats. The lease also included 819 sheep and ten cartloads of hay in the lord's sheep-house in the grange at Raddon (Building 10), showing that the site of the thirteenth century farmstead remained an important centre for sheep production. The terms of the lease also suggest that some of the manorial buildings had followed a trend found elsewhere in the area and shifted from thatch roofs to slate, or more likely here, tiles (Hare 1991).

The lease of his successor, Thomas Goddard, was enrolled in 1512 (WCL Register D&C. f. **?JH to CHECK**). He also gives an idea of the large scale agriculture that was continuing. The Goddard family leased various manors in the Marlborough area in the

fifteenth century, above all the large manors of Aldbourne for most of the later 1400s and those of Ogbourne in 1460 and again at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Their wealth was reflected in their high tax assessments in 1524. Farmers' wills referred only to those sheep which formed part of specific bequests: John Goddard of Ogbourne referred to 1,100 sheep in three flocks, giving us a minimum figure for the scale of his sheep farming overall. The Goddards were, then, wealthy farmers who could have continued the large-scale farming of Overton, despite the retreat of the cathedral priory, the old ecclesiastical landlords, from direct involvement in agriculture (Hare 1981, 9-13).

In 1541, Winchester chapter received a royal grant of the manor of East Overton, which it reconveyed to the Crown in 1547 which subsequently granted it to Sir William Herbert, First Earl of Pembroke (*VCH* XI, 188), with the manor itself coming via Thomas Wroughton and Thomas Goddard to Richard Kingsmill by the mid-sixteenth century (Straton 1909, 257-60). In 1567 the First Earl carried out a survey of his lands, and under *Estoverton et Phipheld* we see that the medieval large-scale, capitalist estate economy established by the priors of St. Swithun in the thirteenth century had emerged seemingly unaffected by the Dissolution.

Overton Manor 1600 - present

The demesne of East Overton eventually passed from the Lords Pembroke to the Duke of Marlborough in 1726 and thereafter it descended with this title to John Spencer-Churchill (*WAM* 45, clv, 461-4; *VCH* XI, 188), continuing the long tradition of absentee landlords. About 1800 some re-organisation of the manorial estate took place and it was divided into North and South Farms on either side of the Bath road. At Inclosure in 1821, the lord of East Overton was allotted some 800ac in the East Overton tithing, 500 in the Fyfield chapelry and 218 from the manor there (*VCH* XI, 195). Fifty years later, much of the land of the historic manor was acquired by the Meux estate, which also included Lockeridge, Fyfield, Glebe and Clatford Park Farms and West Woods. In the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries both Overton and Fyfield Downs were exploited, as part of the Meux estates in north Wilts, for sporting purposes (*ibid.*, 188, 195). The estate was sold in the 1920s to Olympia Agricultural Co. Ltd and since 1971 has been farmed in partnership between R.G.F. and R. Swanton, local residents for a change. West Woods, however, was bought by the Forestry Commission (*ibid.*, 188-9).

The Tenants

A contrasting element between the two estates of Fyfield and East Overton in the thirteenth century was that most of the tenant virgators, it appears, were in Fyfield. The custumal of the priory drawn up before 1248 shows the presence of ten virgators, yet

according to the 1248 accounts there were seven virgators in Fyfield alone, leaving three in Overton. In addition to these virgators there were also twenty half-virgators, although there is no direct indication as to where they were to be found, though it seems likely that, just as the virgators were pre-eminently in Fyfield, their smaller brethren were concentrated in Overton, a development which would have resulted from the conscious policy of creating extra smaller holdings in order to concentrate the growing population, and thus labour force, at the main centre of *demesne* activity. Perhaps Fyfield was the more traditional settlement, and Overton the one that had seen the greater recent change with the creation of new small-holdings or the division of the existing virgates.

In 1332 there were 29 tax payers paying a total of 75s 8½d in *Overtone* and *Fifhyde*, including Lucy atte Dene, Alice atte Toumbe and Avice (*sic*) atte Asshe, as well as Philip and Henry atte Watere and Peter le Nyweman (Crowley 1989, 59). From the *Nona Inquisitions* of 1342 a Philip Atwater is mentioned amongst the parishioners of the church at Overton. This attempt by the King's agents to extract a ninth of corn, wool and lambs from each parish to help finance the war with France, shows a none too enthusiastic group of parishoners: East Overtonians claimed they could give nothing 'because they all live by agriculture' and those at Alton Priors were in difficulty because 'many sheep and lambs died there by the severity of the winter last past'.

Assessed separately from Fyfield, there were 63 poll-tax payers in East Overton in 1377 (*VCH* IV, 310), though this increase is more likely to reflect the nature of the new tax which recorded men and women rather than a two-fold increase in the adult population (**REF!!**). The survey of 1567 names at least twenty-one tenants (Straton 1909, 251-62). These records indicate a normal adult population of about sixty, about the same order of numbers as that discussed *below* (p. 00) for Fyfield and Lockeridge, which, in this instance, could be interpreted as also indicating a long-term demographic recovery by the local community from the mid-fourteenth century crisis.

Village morphology

The village is superficially a street village oriented west-east along the terrace bordering the south side of the flood plain of the River Kennet. The village's main road apparently has no specific name but is here called the 'Street' purely for identification purposes. It leads up to the church on a slight, but locally prominent, eminence at its east end. About half-way along the street of the present village, a geometrically awkward cross-roads gives off what were in the 1960s minor lanes to north (Frog Lane) and south to South Farm. This was the boundary between West and East Overton in the C10. The morphology of the village quite as much in its existing lineaments as in its visible archaeology of earthworks and buildings is historically quite complicated and different from both Lockeridge and Fyfield (chap. 11).

Modern development has replaced much that existed 35 years ago, though its control through Town and Country Planning has reinforced the village morphology, even where new housing has filled in what were spaces. The south side of the west end of the village street has been replaced by such development; and the lane running south from the apparently minor cross-roads in the village centre has now become the major road, leading to a new housing estate on what used to be the space occupied by South Farm. A splendid range of timber buildings enclosing a farmyard opposite South Farm was already seriously dilapidated in 1960 (Pl. 00) and has since been destroyed. Its lands were sold in 1995, including the field across the lane on its east. That this lane might possibly be of some antiquity is hinted at by the fact that it continues northwards from the cross-roads, passing two houses of C19 or earlier date aligned along this now little used and apparent *cul de sac.* It in fact leads down to the river, past two houses, the earthworks of the C19 road to the west, the water leats, a splendid stone 'clapper' bridge (Pl. 00). The modern foot bridge across the river's main course remains on the C10 boundary, presumably above a former ford; though the path on the north side moves to the east of the house by the A4 whereas the old boundary goes on up the hedge to its west on its way towards 'Headlands' (*above* p. 00).

A 'Withy Bed' (Pl. 00) also grows here. It seems to be a surviving fragment of pre-improvement bottomland, with a thick vegetation of willow and other water-loving plants flourishing on a swampy patch. The Prior of St. Swithun's osier bed, however, was described as being at Lockeridge (*VCH* IV, 419), and cannot, therefore, be situated here. That particular bed is more likely to have been where tress, called 'Stanley-meade' in 1562 (Straton 1909, 252-3) and Slandly Copse in 1819, still grow thick amongst a cluster of sarsens by the Kennet (SU 142682). This area, judging by the earliest cartographic evidence, as well as being a disputed area between the East Overton and Lockeridge estates, was liable to be wet, considering the copse lay just north of a strip of land called 'Slandly Dry Mead'. A Roman coin was found here by C. E. Ponting in 1925 (*WAM* 43, cxlii, 140) at a time when sarsen extraction in the Copse lead to a light railway line being built to transport out the stones (King 1968, 92).

Opposite and eastwards across the lane from the site of South Farm is a grass field, called Ring Close in 1819. This field slopes ENE uphill to the Church of St. Michael. It is full of earthworks (fig. 11.2; Pl. ##). They represent a totally deserted part of East Overton and with the Church form the most important part of the historical village. The earthworks contain hollow-ways of former roads or tracks, the sites of former buildings, the banks around closes or gardens. Some deeper, larger hollows and other superficial features almost certainly represent disturbance after desertion, probably quarrying and robber pits for the sarsen stones of former walls and foundations.

A possibly more significant pattern appears to be present: a distinction between the earthworks to east and west respectively of the north-south hollow-way which runs into the field to continue southwards the hollow-way already noted as climbing up from the river into the village. East of it is another hollow-way. In the area between those two hollow-ways and the Church, the earthworks are slight and mainly of a cluster of ten or so apparent building sites, bounded on the east by a low bank. To the south, across the east-west hollow-way, is a 'blank' area. The inference is that the east-west hollow-way formed the southern boundary of this part of the settlement.

In contrast, west of the main north-south hollow-way, the earthworks are more upstanding, more rectilinear and apparently enclose somewhat larger spaces. Their almost planned appearance is emphasised by the presence on their south side of 25m of non-symmetrical hollow-way, almost certainly a relic from an earlier phase. The earthworks themselves, including perhaps six sites of potential buildings, relate to another east-west hollow-way, debouching into the area of the now-destroyed barns of South Farm. They also relate to, 60m north, a parallel bank. That bank and its parallel hollow-way form the axes of the western part of this earthwork complex. Neither continues east into the area south of the Church; but both are parallel to the eastern end of the present village street now leading up to the Church (*see above* p. 00).

This complex of settlement earthworks certainly comprises an extremely good set of well-preserved earthworks of what would be called, if they existed in isolation, a 'deserted medieval village'. They present a particularly good Wiltshire example of an apparently 'complete DMV' existing, not out in isolation on the downs or alone along a river valley, but actually in a village. Whether they represent a whole medieval village which then shuffled sideways and northwards to its present alignment along the street; or whether they represent just part of a village which became partly deserted, that is, which shrank as distinct from moving sideways, is uncertain. The earthworks may also be the remains of a late addition to an existing village, an expansion perhaps in the C12-13 when population growth burst out of its essentially Anglo-Saxon village shape and size. So far, no documentary evidence has come to light bearing on this desertion, whether it be the result of shuffle, shrinkage or expansion.

A more complex model potentially takes the village story back to its beginnings as a village (in the absence of any pre-Anglo-Saxon evidence from the site *cf.* Fyfield *below* p. 00). We suggest that the hollow-way coming off the flood-plain round the NW side of the 'ancient' church site continued southwards as the north-south hollow-way dividing the earthwork remains as distinguished above (fig. 3.00). Presumably it then climbed southwards to the local resources of arable land, pasture and woodland beyond, as the 1793 map shows, whilst its east branch south of the Church led SE to Lockeridge. These north-south and west-east tracks, we suggest, bounded at least the south part

of an early settlement, perhaps a nucleated village, centred on the Church. Potentially this little knoll and its slight slopes above the flood plain is the site of the Anglo-Saxon settlement of 'Uferan tune', and probably of the earliest occupation of this locality whatever the date.

The rest of the earthworks, west of that north-south hollow-way, can be interpreted in conjunction with the eastern part of the present village street as forming a characteristic rectilinear planned village added to an existing nucleated one (as well-demonstrated in south Somerset over twenty years ago, Ellison 1973; Lewis 1994, 188-89, a recent discussion of medieval planned settlements in Wiltshire which does not assemble similar evidence). Such a development might generally be best envisaged as of C12-13, though no specific evidence for such an event has so far emerged in this case. The earliest reference to *Westovertone* is 1275 (*PNWilts*, 305), which may be telling us that it was by then necessary to distinguish it (*above)* from this *East* Overton. Planned or otherwise, the point seems to be that the village expanded in a reasonably logical way to the west of its nucleus as far as - but no further than - South Farm and the western boundary of the manor of *Overton Abbatisse* (1291; *ibid*.). The boundary - and perhaps with it the village and also the Farm? - was still basically where it had been in the C10 i.e. along Frog Lane leading from the ford to the cross-roads in the middle of present-day Overton and then bending westwards around South Farm.

A possible planned village could therefore have existed some 200m², that is 200m from the 'old' north-south hollow-way on the east to the probably equally 'old' north-south lane along the east side of (or through?) South Farm to the west; and about 200m from the back of the properties along the north side of the northern street to a similar position at the back of the properties on the south side of the southern street (the present road along the south side of the earthworks). This rectangular plan is divided exactly in half, at 100m from both property boundaries as envisaged *above*, by the west-east bank running through the centre of the earthworks.

At some later date, the southern half, and eventually the southern strip of the northern half, of this rectangular village was deserted or possibly even cleared. Six buildings appear to be depicted in these fields on the late C18 manorial map; their positions re-inforce the 'early' pattern of the north-south hollow-way and the settlement core to its east. Only one building is shown in the area of the 'planned' earthworks and that had disappeared some 25 years later. Then, only one building, perhaps a shed or barn set up in the hollow-way, is shown in the two fields on the Enclosure Award Map (1815). Only some hachures mark its site on C19 OS maps. The houses on the north side of the approach to the Church have then enjoyed an effectively clear view southwards across a green and pleasant field for at least 200 years.

Whether we are looking at the earthworks of abandonment, slow desertion, 'village shuffle' or manorial clearance, a fairly safe inference is that the change from habitation to grass took place long before 1800. A guess would place it in the C14-15?, though not forgetting the dozen or so householders present in the sixteenth century (Straton 1909;). If the equally unprovable (at the moment) guess be right that a village was laid out either in the later tenth century, at the same time as the layout of the new West Overton (p00) and the Æthelredian defences of the Marlborough mound and Silbutry (*WAM* 74/75, 59), or the mid-twelfth century, then 'new' East Overton lasted between 350 and 500 years. They may be irrelevant to consideration of a valley-bottom village because of their marginal location and special status, but two local downland settlements, Raddun (*below* p. 00) and Shaw (*below* p. oo) were deserted around 1300 and 1400 respectively. More generally, following Hare (1994, 167-8) and trends of demographic and economic decline balanced by local stability (Lewis 1994, 177-83), recent discussion points, albeit for different reasons, to the same period; but the best evidence, short of excavation, is most likely to come from an as yet unnoted documentary source. On such a long-established ecclesiastical estate as East Overton, where other records indicate a sensitivity to annual returns and rents, did not anyone notice that the medieval village, or at least a large part of it, was not there any more?

The Church and some village houses

North of the field of earthworks, the village street rises as it approaches the Church. Clearly we are entering the 'old' part of the village in as far as this is indicated by standing houses. On the north side of the road is a group of C19 buildings with older origins; then there is the Vicarage or Rectory, now West Overton House (Pl. 00). It looks the part for an upwardly mobile cleric of the late C18: of sarsen and faced with rendered brickwork, its three bays and two storeys plus attics rival West Farmhouse. Then, in contrast, is a range of low, thatched cottages, acutely perched on a sharp corner as the road dives down to the north. In fact, it is a hollow-way still in use, it being as much as 3m deep below ground level as it then curves around to the north-east. The cottages are C17/18, of sarsen with brick dressings, windows now replacing their end doors.

Across the top of the hollow-way and again up-slope is 'The Old Manor House' (SU 13366812), visibly one of the oldest houses in the village. This is the site of the original manor house from where part of the estate was farmed (*VCH* XI, 189). It is now a private residence. In the thirteenth century, however, the *curia*, or manor house, at Overton included a hall, chamber and kitchen, together with the agricultural buildings; the great gate, the great barn and tithe barn, the oxshed, stables, granary and a mill. In the late fifteenth the manor had its own courtyard, which included stables and other

farm buildings, some of which were tiled or slated (Greatrex 1978, 190). Indeed, sixty years later, a sketch of the manor house (reproduced in : **get ref**) clearly shows a slated or tiled roof. By then, too, the manor house had undergone substantial changes: main east and west wings had been added, though the central part of the house remains visibly of the proportion of a medieval hall. The 1567 sketch and external appraisal of the standing building today (Pl. ££), allow a metrical reconstruction of its Elizabethan form and appearance as if, we hope, it had been possible to record it in 1567 in modern idiom (fig. 11.4).

Despite the many later additions and alterations, today the house has evident sixteenth century features and is basically of sarsen build with a timber-framed and tile-hung upper floor and, south centre, a canopied porch which appears eighteenth century, though Pevsner (1963, 505) dated the door to the sixteenth. Those late medieval wings are not evident on the early nineteenth century maps, though a new, longer eastern one was built in the mid-nineteenth century and a little later the house was given over to the village Reading Room as part of the welfare provision of the Meux estate. Its subsequent modifications, not least to give it its present rusticated Art and Crafts appearance, may well have taken place just after the First World War.

Down the path from the Old Manor House towards the modern village lies another old dwelling, the Old Vicarage (SU 13276808), believed to be, at its core, the rectory mentioned in 1496 (Greatrex 1978, 190; *VCH* XI, 200). In 1567, when the seventy year old Thomas Apjean was vicar, the benefice of Overton was worth £18 per annum, though no rent was due to the Lord (Straton 1909, 261). Twenty years later the *Vicaridge Howse* comprised of 'one Dwelling House with an Orchard, a Garden, and Court or Barton, a Barne, a Stable and several Closes of Pasture or Mead' and in 1671 we learn that the 'Vicridge house' had 'a Parlor Hall and Kitching, one Barne of fower Bayes and a Stable' (Archive 00, 1588 and 1671 Terriers). The Rectory, or Old Vicarage, was rebuilt in the late eighteenth century with further alterations in 1860 and 1982.

The impression of oldness is maintained by the two remaining, secular buildings at this east end of the village. To the north, tucked into the slope downhill of the Church, is Church Hill Cottage (SU 13366818), seventeenth century or earlier, with colour-washed brick and thatch, remains of a probable cruck and a sarsen rear wall. Immediately east of the Church are nos. 74/75 Church Hill, two cottages but actually a former cottage, probably C17 at latest, to which the Verger's Cottage was added in 1746 (date-stone). Both are thatched and seemingly crowd into the churchyard, adding their contribution to the antique effect at this east end of the village. On the other side, their east, they seem to be roadside cottages, for the road they front was there in 1815 (**which ones?**). Along the A4, south of North Farm, stood The George Inn (SU

13296844), first mentioned in 1736 and for the last time in 1827. This inn was one of five roadside buildings which stood here until the late 1920s or early 1930s when, perhaps at the same time as those to the east in Fyfield, they were demolished during road widening (Chap. 12).

South of the village and across Rings Close, the road north of Bittam and Long Fields, was constructed between 1816 and 1819. Prior to its construction, however, the line of this 'New Road' was partly a back lane, though on the whole it was a completely new venture. Roads through what is now a grass field SW of the church are discernible on the late C18 maps, though by the 1810s they appear to have gone out of use. The eastern end of the lane south of the Old Manor was lengthened to incorporate part of the churchyard *c.*1877 (*VCH* XI, 184), presumably during Ponting's building work (*see below*). South Farm, destroyed in the 1960s, had a south range dating from the C17, with major extensions of *c.*1800, with barns at North Farm beginning in 1801 (*ibid.*, 185; Pl. %%), though the House itself was built, judging by the architectural and cartographic evidence, in the 1820s (Pl. !!). Its significance is, however, sociological rather than architectural, for it well-represents the availability of new money and the out-reaching of habitation beyond the confines of the medieval village as a consequence of Enclosure.

So much for some details about the fabric of the village as visible today and as recoverable from documentary sources: they do not amount to much. To appreciate the significance of the evidence about the former village of East Overton, now embraced within the larger village of West Overton, we need to stand back and look at the various shapes of the settlement and its components overall, not just individual buildings. The following analysis and hypothesis give a somewhat longer and deeper perspective than is afforded by the sort of post-medieval references quoted *above.*

The Church of St. Michael and All Angels dominates the village and, because of its impressive tower, is a prominent landmark both along the Kennet valley (pl. 00) and looking south from Overton Down. Undoubtedly its site is ancient, though not the present building (Pl. 00; Pevsner 1963, 504-5; Anon, *Church of St Michael*, undated). The tower is indeed of 1883, an addition to an almost complete rebuild of 1878-79 to the design of C. E. Ponting (*WAM* 45, 615). This was occasioned by the dire state of the then standing church, apparently a C14 chancel with a C15 nave. Though the Victorian nave followed the plan of that church, most of the building shown before rebuilding on fig. 00 was removed. Parts, however, remain: the chancel arch, for example, was moved to its present position in the side aisle next the organ chamber and the seventeenth century bells (*WAM* 2, no. vi, 342) were retained, one of which is dedicated to St. Margaret (see Chap. 12). During the work, fragments of an earlier church still were found, and two early consecration crosses that were unearthed were

built into the external east chancel wall where they can still be seen (Pl. 00). The present somewhat dramatic church is, therefore, the third known church on the site, taking stone construction certainly back to the C13 and possibly Norman, and perhaps earlier still. If such an earlier church there were, it would be interesting to inspect its remains for Roman material.

It is legitimate to surmise that, with East Overton a manor of Winchester from before Domesday (*below* p. 00), an Anglo-Saxon church, in stone or otherwise, is highly likely at least by the C10. It is a guess, but plausibly so, that all this occurred at East Overton because the locally prominent spot was first chosen for Christian worship in earlier times, perhaps in the seventh century (*below* p. 00). Something similar may have happened at Avebury, though there, unlike Overton, the shape and some of the fabric of the Anglo-Saxon church survives on a site just outside the great henge. Less dramatically at Overton, the site of the church lay less than 100 m. south west of a round barrow and perhaps originally aligned on it.