

# Field Systems in Surrey: an Introductory Survey

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The survival of open fields into the nineteenth century has ensured that Surrey local historians have long been aware that agriculture was not always based on enclosed farms. Despite this, the form and organisation of pre-enclosure field systems has not received due attention from academics or local researchers. This is partly because direct evidence is not immediately available. Fieldwork in Surrey has produced only a few examples of ridge-and-furrow remaining from pre-enclosure days, for these relics of earlier ploughing and drainage techniques have mostly been destroyed by subsequent cultivation or the spread of housing.

The clearest pictures of the old open field landscape, with fields subdivided into furlongs (often known as 'shotts' in Surrey) and again into strips, come from eighteenth and nineteenth-century estate, enclosure and tithe maps, if enclosure was delayed until this period. But it must be remembered that these show an open field system in decline. The enclosed area generally occupies more than half the parish and is growing at the expense of the open fields. As Parton has pointed out, one must examine the records of earlier periods if one is to gain a real understanding of the working of the system.<sup>1</sup> Court Rolls, extents and surveys, customals, inquisitions, accounts and other such records contain occasional but vital evidence. A few seventeenth-century manorial maps such as Nicholas Lane's 1636 plan of Putney<sup>2</sup> show the open fields in sufficient detail to be of great value.

A certain amount of material has been published as a result of the investigation of Surrey field systems, and this work usually draws heavily on parallels with the evolution of the 'Midland' or the 'Kentish' systems.<sup>3</sup> Briefly, in the former each man's holding was distributed nearly equally between two or three large fields. This equality was necessitated by the rotation of crops whereby once every two or three years each field in turn was allowed to lie fallow and was used for communal grazing. No crops could be grown in this field so that the landholder would keep a steady income from his crops only if he had a roughly equal area of land in each field. In some cases the number of fields was more than three, allowing a greater flexibility of rotations. In the Kentish case, on the other hand, field systems evolved by the splitting up of an original compact holding between sons, a process encouraged by the predominance of 'gavelkind' tenure involving partible inheritance. In the Middle Ages many Kent parishes had open fields containing furlongs and strips, but these were not organised into 'fields' in the same way as in the Midlands, and there was therefore no need for the equal distribution of a holding throughout the cultivated area.

Indeed the strips belonging to one man were frequently concentrated in a limited part of the field—that in which the original compact holding (*iugum*) had been located. The lack of grazing controls over the stubble and the early disappearance of fallowing in Kent were associated with the enclosure of all save a few downland parishes by the seventeenth century.<sup>4</sup> A third system has been identified from research in East Anglia, not unlike the Kentish system, but modified to allow the extensive grazing of sheep on the fallow and stubble by dividing the fields into 'fold courses'.

Work published on Surrey field systems includes a consideration of Holmesdale by Yates,<sup>5</sup> a suggestion by Baker that the Kentish system could possibly be extended to the same area<sup>6</sup> and research by Parton in Fetcham and Great Bookham, mainly concerned with the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries.<sup>7</sup> Most work has been of a more general nature and in this respect Gray's *English Field Systems* is by far the most comprehensive. Tate has produced a useful summary of the writings of the County Reporters, Marshall, Gray, the Orwins and others on the subject.<sup>8</sup>

From these works two views of the character of open fields in the county are apparent. The *General View* of 1794<sup>9</sup> states that 'the custom of each manor in the arable lands . . . was to lay them in three common fields' but that 'as mankind became more and more enlightened . . . they wisely made an agreement among themselves . . . and changed somewhat of the mode' of cultivation. Emphasis is placed on the barriers presented by open fields to improvements and the extent of common waste is lamented. This approach implies a strong link with the three-field Midland system but Gray took a very different view, suggesting that Surrey had always had more in common with the Kentish model. Virgates (the usual unit of land tenure) were distributed unevenly between many fields and furlongs in the examples he examined. This 'multifield system' permitted great individuality in cropping and the early introduction of improvements such as artificial grasses.

The presence of attributes of either the Midland or the Kentish system (or a combination of the two) in Surrey raises several questions:

1. Can one identify any form of two or three field system with virgates split roughly equally between the fields?
2. Was there any regulation of the crops grown in the fields?
3. If such regulation did exist, was it organised at a manorial or township level, or by agreement between individuals?
4. Were there common grazing rights over arable and meadow?
5. What form of land tenure was prevalent? If, for example, gavelkind prevailed, this would suggest Kentish attributes.
6. How important in the evolution of holdings was inheritance as opposed to the land market?
7. What effect did 6 have on the evolution of field systems?
8. When did most enclosure occur?
9. Can one explain 8 in terms of the importance or lack of cropping rules and common grazing rights or were other factors more relevant?
10. In conclusion, how do tillage and ownership patterns relate to the Kent, Midland or East Anglian system?

Questions such as these lead on to more general considerations of the importance of social customs or environmental conditions, and to the place Surrey should occupy in a broad taxonomy of field systems. It is particularly important to consider whether the open field found before enclosure was also common field as in the Midland system. Mrs Thirsk has defined a common field system in terms of the following essential elements:<sup>10</sup>

- A. The arable and meadow should be held in scattered strips.
- B. They should be thrown open for common pasturing in the fallow year and after harvest.
- C. There should be common pasture and waste.
- D. The ordering of crops should be regulated by a manor court or village meeting.

There is a pressing need for the compilation of a body of data relating to the questions outlined above and to Mrs Thirsk's criteria. To this end a notice was placed in the Society's Bulletin appealing for cooperation from members in this matter, for it is very likely that this sort of information may be found by local historians with varying interests as a by-product of their research.<sup>11</sup> The response has been limited and this article is therefore being published to underline the need for further work in this subject. It asks many questions which are as yet unanswered.

The second and third parts of this paper are devoted to an examination of some of the research which has been carried out on selected Surrey parishes. More particularly it will be concerned to provide some preliminary answers to the questions listed above about the form and functions of field systems. The main examples will be drawn from the Epsom and Putney areas which have been the subject of recent dissertations.<sup>12</sup> They offer a contrast both in terms of geology and in their proximity to London, with its impact on local land and food markets. In order to point the way for further research into field systems and agricultural history in Surrey, brief mention will also be made of facts which have emerged from other parts of the county in the course of our own researches.

In the parishes of Ashted, Epsom and Ewell, which extend from the chalk to the London clay, open field survived relatively late: Ashted was enclosed by authority of a Court Baron in 1840,<sup>13</sup> Epsom under the General Enclosure Act (1845) in 1869 and Ewell by Act of Parliament in 1803.<sup>14</sup> One must first ask whether the open fields were common fields in terms of Mrs Thirsk's criteria.

The third and fourth of these criteria may be dismissed briefly. There is no evidence anywhere in the many surviving manorial documents of any control over the ordering of crops. Common pasture and waste, however, were subject to strong manorial control despite their abundance. As late as 1838 for example, 500 of Ashted's 2,500 acres were common land, most of this being on the clay.<sup>15</sup> At an earlier date there is also evidence of common land on the downs, three Ashted tenants being fined for ploughing and sowing twelve acres of 'the common downes' in 1634, for example.<sup>16</sup>

The first of Mrs Thirsk's points may be easily answered but it raises issues of greater complexity. A pattern of strips may be seen in the 1802 map of Ashtead<sup>17</sup> or in maps of Epsom compiled in about 1720.<sup>18</sup> Documents testify to a similar pattern in Ewell, and this would seem to have existed in all three parishes throughout the period before Enclosure for which we have records. Strips consisted of meadow as well as arable land: at Epsom in 1720, Town Mead Shot was divided into 123 minute 'swathes'. In Ewell in 1577, Charman Meade was held by the Churchwardens 'to the use of the parish'.<sup>19</sup> The Church took the first crop and the meadow was then 'used as common'. An undated extent of the demesne land describes a 'piece of meadow in Pokemedede as the lot falls'.<sup>20</sup> In Ashtead a common meadow is mentioned in 1656, holdings in it being only two perches in area.<sup>21</sup>

An examination of the distribution of holdings in the arable fields is possible in all three parishes, and surviving extents and surveys from different periods clearly rule out the operation of a two or three field system. There were two 'fields' in Epsom, Smiths Hatch in the east and Woodcote Common Field in the west, but in surveys dating from 1679<sup>22</sup> and 1756<sup>23</sup> the furlong is clearly a more important unit and the distribution of holdings between the fields is uneven. The same lack of clear pattern is seen in a 1496 rental<sup>24</sup> and it would seem that the two fields had no functional significance, the names merely being used to describe areas to the east and west of the Bittoms (an area of rough grazing in a steep dry valley). In Ashtead, Northfield, Southfield and Westfield are mentioned at different times, but the nomenclature appears vague, and descriptive rather than functional. A reconstruction of Ewell open fields in 1408<sup>25</sup> shows Southfield considerably larger than other fields near the village and any suggestion that these were once of roughly equal size remains purely speculative. Holdings, in so far as they can be reconstructed, appear to follow a random distribution.

An examination of field patterns and the distribution of holdings in these parishes suggests a 'multifield' system not dissimilar to that described at Deal in East Kent.<sup>26</sup> The suggestion is supported by the lack of cropping regulations grouping the arable land into three large fields. The statement by James and Malcolm that 'the custom of each manor in the arable lands... was to lay them in three common fields' pursuing 'a course of wheat, barley or oats, and the third remained in fallow' is contradicted by evidence dating back to the early thirteenth century.

This brings us to the second of Mrs Thirsk's criteria for the recognition of common field: common pasturing on the arable. In the multifield system of the Kentish downs this custom was sometimes found in the Middle Ages but was of negligible importance by the sixteenth century. An early example of such rights in Ewell appears in 1255 when William de Butailles claimed 'right of common after the hay and corn harvest' in 80 acres of William de Bradmere's land.<sup>27</sup> This would appear to support Thirsk's suggestion that as in Bracton's *Laws and Customs of England* the word 'common' then had a restricted meaning, grants of common rights being made between two parties rather than concerning a whole township. References to common

rights over the arable increase over the years however. By the fifteenth century these clearly concerned the whole community and it is evident from the minor changes in the rules from year to year that they kept their importance into the eighteenth century and were not merely a manorial tradition. The identification of such rights over the stubble does not seem to be easily reconciled with the multifield system and the freedom of cropping associated with this. Evidence would support the ideas of Baker and Roden<sup>28</sup> drawn from an examination of the Chilterns where strong individualism in cropping was combined with common grazing as early as the thirteenth century by the use of careful folding and tethering. A system similar to the East Anglian fold course would also seem to be a possibility, for here as in Surrey sheep raising was important and great attention was paid to maintaining the fertility of the fields with manure. But no firm references to such a system have been found and the hypothesis would seem to founder because there was no concentration of a tenant's parcels in one portion of the township's arable as was the case in East Anglia. It would seem that a looser system of tethering and folding operated: for example in Ashted in 1575 it was decreed that 'no tennante of this Manor shall from hensforth putt any cattell into the corne fieldes of the same manor untill such tyme that the corne be clean carried away', but men could keep their own animals on their own land if it was cleared before their neighbours' 'in such sorte that they hurte not their neighbours corne'.<sup>29</sup> Special rules concerned the grazing of the large numbers of sheep on the stubble and these animals appear to have been allowed to graze their way northwards across the open field in stages. For example, in Ashted in 1603 it was ordered that

noe flock of shepe nor any shepe shall rome beneth Long Hedge nor beneath Personadge Busshe or the upper end of Stageley until ten days after the fielde is void of corne and then to come to the Highwaye and no further untill Michaelmas daye except itt be to drive to the fouldre to penn . . .'<sup>3</sup>

Stinting was also enforced.

An examination of evidence, albeit sometimes ambiguous, concerning Mrs Thirsk's definition of a common field system has gone some way towards answering the ten questions put forward as a guideline to research, though space does not permit a more detailed consideration here. Having briefly looked at the form and function of the field system in the Epsom area we may conclude this section with a mention of land tenure, remembering the significance of this in the evolution of the Kentish system.

In this respect a thirteenth-century Ewell *custumal*<sup>31</sup> is of particular interest as it provides an exception to the general medieval practice in these parishes of rating land in *virgates*. Instead it lists land in *iuga*, while a Register of 1408<sup>32</sup> uses *tenementa*. The two are clearly related. For example, taking the *dimidia acra quam tenet Thomas Wagmore de tenemento Wowards* in 1408, we see that in the *custumal* one Roger Woward held a half *iugum*. Gray comments that

in the interim between the drawing up of the two documents the *iuga* had

come to be called *tenementa* and the constituent parcels of each *iugum* had fallen into the hands of divers new tenants. The latter change is precisely that which thirteenth-century *tenementa* in Norfolk underwent, and the Ewell field-book in its attribution of parcels to *tenementa* is like a fifteenth-century Norfolk fieldbook.

He concluded that what we see at Ewell are

thirteenth-century *tenementa*, very much like those of Norfolk, bearing the name of contemporary Kentish units. As in Kent, too, the subdivisions of the rood at Ewell were known as 'day works'. Thus the Ewell field arrangements, reproduced probably in many Surrey townships, became a connecting link between the East Anglian and Kentish systems.<sup>33</sup>

These suggestions are worthy of further study and some preliminary conclusions have been drawn from a further study of the evidence. Firstly it is clear that though the word *tenementum* was used in both Ewell and East Anglia as the unit for service and rent collection the *form* of the unit was different. In Ewell there is no suggestion of the 'compact area or a group of not widely separated parcels' Gray found at Wymondham, Norfolk. He further suggests that the East Anglian *tenementum* was 'a derivative of the Kentish *iugum*, the result of an arrest in its disintegration and the making permanent for a time of the stage of decline then reached'. In Ewell however, the use of the word *tenementum* to describe a feudal holding seems to ante-date as well as post-date the reference to *iuga*, as it is found in deeds from the opening years of the thirteenth century.<sup>34</sup> Moreover if the thirteenth-century Ewell *iugum* took the same form as the fifteenth-century *tenementum*, as seems likely, it was not the compact fiscal unit seen at Gillingham but was more like the fragmented *iugum* of Wye.<sup>35</sup>

However, similarities with Kent are to be expected in east Surrey. A compact virgate very similar to the Kentish *iugum* has been identified on the downs between Reigate and Croydon.<sup>36</sup> Partible inheritance though surviving in Kent after this period seems to have been the general rule in Anglo-Saxon England.<sup>37</sup> In Ewell joint ploughing is mentioned in the thirteenth-century *custumal*<sup>38</sup> and it was probably a common result of the Borough English tenure (*ultimogeniture*) also found in Ashted and Epsom. Strips could therefore be explained in terms of the partitioning of a joint holding in the Anglo-Saxon period and co-aration later, though if such a process had operated one would have expected to see parcels clustered in one part of the field, at any rate in the thirteenth century. In any case, it is easy to over-estimate the importance of inheritance, even at this early period. The survival of Fitznell's Cartulary enables us to note the mobility of land ownership in the thirteenth century. Between 1220 and 1315 the Fitznell family acquired some 500 acres, almost entirely in Ewell, by 'quasi-inheritance, marriage, purchase and perhaps a foreclosed mortgage or two'.<sup>39</sup> Deeds show how frequently land had changed hands before it was

purchased by the family and the estate itself lacked stability; when in 1476 John Iwardeby compiled a new extent and rental he had little success in his attempt to annotate the 1315 description of the estate.

The agrarian importance of the feudal holding was decreased by the active role of the land market. In addition one must remember that the holders of land were not necessarily its workers and that the true agrarian units may not be recorded for us in the surviving lists of tenants. For example, in 1315 Ewell most of the Fitznell land was held in demesne but 148 acres were split between some 50 sub-tenants. As the feudal system with its emphasis on services and works was being replaced by a greater emphasis on money rents and as villeinage made way for copyhold tenure the flexibility of the system increased and the land-holding units, whether *iuga*, *tenementa* or *virgates* lost their significance. It therefore becomes increasingly apparent that a full understanding of field systems in Surrey involves an investigation of twelfth and thirteenth-century documents as well as the more plentiful terriers, rentals and accounts from later periods.

The next part of the paper is concerned with evidence from Putney and adjacent parishes in the north-eastern part of the county. Unlike Epsom, Ewell and Ashtead, detailed information about field systems in Putney and the associated hamlet of Roehampton is not available before the mid-fifteenth century. Court Rolls of the Manor of Wimbledon exist from 1461,<sup>40</sup> but the most important early item is a Terrier of 1497-8,<sup>41</sup> which gives full details of the fields, furlongs, strips and tenants.

This Terrier shows that there were six 'fields', but only three are actually named—Baston, Coalecroft and Smallthorn and Waddon—the others being referred to merely as the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth fields. This suggests that the 'fields' were groupings of contiguous furlongs for administrative purposes, as in the parishes already discussed above, and that the real unit of farming may well have been the furlong. The wide disparity of field size, ranging from 42<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> acres for Smallthorn and Waddon to 217<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> acres for the Sixth Field, also supports such a view. If they are re-grouped into three units, however, these fields do present an apparent regularity of size such as is required by the Midland system of three-field rotations. Thus, Baston with Coalecroft is 164<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> acres; Smallthorn and Waddon with Fourth and Fifth is 217<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> acres and the Sixth by itself is 217<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> acres. These also form sensible units in relation to routeways and commons. When one examines the holdings, however, in no case do they fit the Midland model of roughly equal division between the fields. In many cases the smaller tenants had no land in one or more of the fields. For example, 95% of the Latton holding lay in Baston or Coalecroft, and there was none in three of the fields. The evidence from the later fifteenth century is therefore that the fields of Putney were formal rather than functional units. It is possible, of course, that there had been a three-field system in earlier times, changed by the operation of inheritance, exchange and the land market into the form seen in 1498, but there is no evidence available at present to confirm or refute such a view.

There is no reference in the Court Rolls to communal regulation of cropping or pasture, which makes it likely that the use to which any furlong was put was agreed on an *ad hoc* basis by those tenants directly concerned, having regard to such factors as soil fertility and the previous year's use. There is an item from the Black Book of Canterbury, recopied in the early seventeenth century<sup>42</sup> which states that

... all arable lands within every village of the said lordship shall be *yearly* divided and some shall be ploughed and sowed, and some to be laid to ley and pasture, so that (which) is laid to be ploughed may be for every man's part ploughed and none to be reserved for pasture, that which is laid for pasture is only to be used for pasture.

It also states that those lands that are not sown or enclosed are to be common pasture from Michaelmas to 2 February. This does imply communal control, but does not specifically refer to Wimbledon or Putney and may be regarded as a relict feature in the records of the manor. There may, however, have been regulation of *furlong* cropping on an annual basis, which is not precluded by the wording above.

The Court Rolls also contain references to virgate (or yardland) holdings of fifteen acres, as implied by Gray, but virtually none of these existed on the ground in the various terriers and rentals. In 1617 Matthias Smith held 14½ acres and John Starkey 15½ acres<sup>43</sup>, but these are exceptional, holdings either being much larger or small, cottage lands.

The wording of the Black Book quoted above on common grazing fulfils Thirsk's criterion (see above p. 75).

In addition to the common lands lying to the south-west of the village, meadows lay by the Thames in Putney, by Beverley Brook in Roehampton, and in a detached portion of the parish facing Chiswick<sup>44</sup>. The latter was called Westmead and a survey dated 10 July 1582<sup>45</sup> shows that it was minutely subdivided, with lots ranging from ¾ to 9 perches.

Inheritance in the manor of Wimbledon was Borough English<sup>46</sup>, but there is little evidence of its operation in the surviving documents. It is not clear for example whether the Matthias Smith mentioned above was the younger or the elder son of Stephen Smith, yeoman, who died in 1608<sup>47</sup>, although the former seems more likely.

The most common form of tenure in Putney from the second half of the fifteenth century until at least 1650 was copyhold. During this period there was virtually no demesne land at Putney (merely a few scattered strips of church property), and a more extensive area at Roehampton (for example 121 acres in 1498). The copyhold system combined with a steady supply of London merchants and others seeking nearby country estates<sup>48</sup> led to a rapid turnover in land, and also to the speedy build-up and fragmentation of

holdings. For instance, the three largest units in Putney in 1498, 1617 and 1649<sup>49</sup> were:

1498		1617	
William Welbeck	229 $\frac{1}{2}$ ac.	Lady Lusher	191 ac.
Richard Twygge	100 $\frac{3}{4}$	Roger Gwynne	149 $\frac{1}{2}$
Edmund Sager	82 $\frac{1}{2}$	Sir Rowland Lacy	109
	<hr/>		<hr/>
	412 $\frac{1}{4}$		449 $\frac{1}{2}$
	<hr/>		<hr/>
% of total	69		63
1649			
Wm. Wymondsold	225 $\frac{3}{4}$ ac.		
John Dawes	126		
Edmund Powell	90		
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	441 $\frac{3}{4}$		
	<hr/>		
% of total	75		

Before the seventeenth century there is little known connexion between the large tenants, other than that the Twygges and Welbecks seem to have been related by marriage in the 1480's<sup>50</sup>. After 1620, however, there was a good deal of inter-marriage between the Wymondsold, Dawes, White and Pettiward families, which tended to stabilise the tenurial situation, in many cases until the present century, with the onset of suburban housing development.

So far as one can discern from the existing sources, enclosure on a large scale did not commence at Putney until after 1465, or at Roehampton before 1580. By 1498, only about 20% (111 $\frac{1}{4}$  ac.) of Putney's fields were enclosed, and nearly three-quarters of this lay in two compact blocks. The first, called the Pightle<sup>51</sup> was enclosed in 1469-73 and comprised forty acres formerly part of Putney Lower Common. This was probably an enclosure for sheep, a common event at that time<sup>52</sup>. The land was enclosed by the Twygge family, some of whom were mercers and haberdashers in London and connected with the Staple at Calais<sup>53</sup>. The fact that it had previously been common land used for grazing would support such a view. The second major enclosure, at Farne Hills, was 29 $\frac{1}{4}$  acres, and resulted from a request at a Court in 1473 by all the virgate-holders of Putney<sup>54</sup>. The land had at one time been arable, but by then lay wild and uncultivated, possibly the result of contracting arable after the Black Death and subsequent plagues in the preceding century.

By 1617, over 40% of the Putney fields had been enclosed, ranging from 65% in Baston Field to 32% in Thamesfield<sup>55</sup>. Soon after, in 1633, Abraham

Dawes secured the whole of Coalecroft Field by purchase and exchange, from four other tenants<sup>56</sup>. By 1636 the former pattern of shotts and strips had been completely obliterated by new, rectangular fields ranging from one to twelve acres in size<sup>57</sup>.

Enclosure at Roehampton took place by agreement of the tenants some time between *c.* 1585, when a terrier lists open fields and furlongs<sup>58</sup>, and *c.* 1600. The whole area was dealt with at the same time<sup>59</sup>. It appears that during the course of the sixteenth century there was little or no increase in the amount of arable land at Roehampton, but that the amount of pasture and meadow increased rapidly, so that by 1617 only 26% of the land was under the plough.<sup>60</sup> This may be attributed to such factors as the increasing market for meat and animal products in London, commercialisation of local farming by newcomers to the area and to the nature of the soil, often clayey and ill-drained.

The relatively smooth progress of enclosure (fines by the Court seem to have been licences to enclose given retrospectively rather than actual penalties) and its often rapid accomplishment suggests that most tenants favoured it and that the agrarian system within which they operated imposed no great restraints upon enclosure. Any rigid framework of cropping and grazing regulations would have slowed down the rate of enclosure. Piece-meal enclosure at Putney went on well into the eighteenth century, and evidence of the layout of the open fields often survives in the present street plan.

While it is impossible to present here all the evidence on Putney fields, the general conclusions which can be drawn suggest that Gray's Midland system was not found there, at least not after 1450. On the other hand, several features of his Thames Basin area appear, and it may be that a form of 'folding' was practised on the fallow on an annually agreed basis. It may also be that the concentration of many smaller holdings in the areas near the village is a relic of Kentish-style *iuga* or *tenementa* dating from the earlier medieval period. Certainly the customs mentioned above do not preclude this<sup>61</sup>.

Evidence from nearby places lends support to the general views expressed above about Putney, namely that the furlong appears to be the basic unit of cultivation and that the open field form is not to be confused with the presence of a three-field system as many local historians have done. Certainly at Battersea there was only *one* Common Field, composed of many variously-sized furlongs lying to the east of the village<sup>62</sup>. Gray admitted that this did not fit any of his models, and merely mentions a half-virgate holding of  $7\frac{3}{4}$  acres lying irregularly in seven different areas<sup>63</sup>. Wandsworth did have three fields, North, South and Bridge Fields, but the second of these was much larger than the others<sup>64</sup>, a pattern which is repeated at Wimbledon and Mortlake<sup>65</sup> and one which renders the operation of the 'classical' three-field system impossible. It may be that at all these places, and also in the case of Thamesfield at Putney, the largest of the fields represents the earliest area of cultivation adjacent to the settlements. This must of course

remain a pure conjecture at this stage of research. However, this pattern of one predominant field also appears in south-western Middlesex in the mid-eighteenth century<sup>66</sup>. Nearby examples include Fulham, where the open field survived in part as market gardens until the 1880's<sup>67</sup>, Chiswick and Teddington.

The main difference in the Putney area lay in the rate of enclosure. Wimbledon was enclosed by agreement of the tenants in *c.* 1610<sup>68</sup>, but Mortlake like Putney was only half-enclosed by that time. It may be that the riverside parishes, with the possibility of mixed fishing- or industrial-agricultural activities led to more smallholdings which resisted enclosure more readily. Most of the smallest units at Putney lay close to the Thames in Baston or Thames Fields.

In 1814, Wandsworth still had 474 acres of open field, with 1659 acres of enclosures<sup>69</sup>. Most of the former survived until after 1850, when it was gradually built over. Battersea Tithe Map (1839) reveals that enclosure was by no means complete there at that date, since there were 26 named furlongs or shotts in existence.

The explanation for this differential onset and progress of enclosure lies in many different aspects of local history, for example, the land tenure system, inheritance, manorial customs and attitudes, the presence of outsiders with commercial interests and so on. For example, ease of land exchange combined with a demand for grain from London may have acted as a spur to enclosure, while market gardening of vegetables and flowers, with small plots of high value, may have tended to fossilise the pattern of strips, even though they passed into several ownership. Enclosure is just the sort of area where local historians throughout Surrey can pool their specialist knowledge on manorial and agrarian history in order to yield information which taken as a whole is more valuable than any single component.

The final section of this paper draws some preliminary conclusions from the preceding examples and looks at ways in which research into these aspects of the history of Surrey can be further advanced.

It is clear that field systems in Surrey share many of their features with other parts of the country, and that they are too heterogeneous to fall into one neat category in a taxonomy such as that of H.L. Gray. Gray himself found many problems in trying to fit the Lower Thames Basin area into his essentially ethnic framework of explanations<sup>70</sup>. Apart from the recurrence of *virgates* as units of tenure, with the exception of the *igum* at Ewell, he found little other than references to open field on which to base a separate system in this area.

From the work already done on Ashted, Epsom, Ewell and Putney, and the preliminary examination of other parts of north-east Surrey, it would appear that elements of the Kentish, East Anglian and Midland systems are all to be found in the country, but that they have been altered by local circumstances such as geology, tenure and the proximity of the London land and food markets to form an agrarian system which is basically similar but locally diversified.

As has already been said, the problem of enclosure is one obvious example of how initially similar patterns of fields and farming can be completely altered. The contrast between the different Tithe Maps of the 1830's and 1840's shows the culmination of this process and poses many questions. Another important result of early research is that customs and regulations of manors as laid out in the documents are often redundant in practice. For instance, the references to virgate holders and their obligations in Wimbledon in the period after 1490, and the operation of Borough English in those areas where it applied<sup>71</sup>.

In view of the early stage reached by field systems research in Surrey, no model of any 'Surrey system' may yet be erected, analogous to those of the 'Midland' and other previously-defined systems. Rather, model-building must await more fundamental problem-oriented research into the form and functioning of fields in different parts of Surrey during the period from the earliest surviving documents until final enclosure.

Many local historians will already have come across suitable material in their own work. This needs to be collated in such a way as to highlight any similarities or differences between the various settlements. The most important aspects of this work are the listing of references to the existence of open fields (an extension of Gray's pioneer work), to customs governing agricultural activities and to the onset and pace of enclosure. An early objective should be the compilation of a field-system bibliography, in which references to documents and maps/plans can be assembled as an aid to longer term research. Since the whole of the historic county of Surrey is well endowed with local history organisations, it is proper that most of the necessary basic research be done by those people most interested in and familiar with a given area or place. In this event it will be necessary to have some central clearing-house for data and problems so that the work does not remain fragmented in small pockets, with possible duplication of effort. Finally, it is necessary to look for information on field systems and agriculture from adjacent areas such as south Middlesex, west Kent, Sussex and north-east Hampshire, since administrative boundaries rarely coincide with agrarian systems.

## REFERENCES

<b>Abbreviations:</b>	<i>A.H.R.</i>	<i>Agricultural History Review</i>
	<i>Arch. Cant.</i>	<i>Archaeologia Cantiana</i>
	B.M.	British Museum
	<i>C.R.W.</i>	Printed extracts from the Court Rolls of the Manor of Wimbledon
	G.M.R.	Guildford Muniment Room
	<i>Lea.Proc.</i>	<i>Proceedings of the Leatherhead and District Local History Society</i>
	P.C.C.	Prerogative Court of Canterbury Wills, Public Record Office

S.R.O. Surrey Record Office  
Surrey A.C. Surrey Archaeological Collections  
Surrey A.S. Surrey Archaeological Society  
Surrey R.S. Surrey Record Society

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32. *Ibid.*, 1-134.
33. Gray, *op. cit.*, 399.
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