

<sup>37</sup> Honeybourne, *op. cit.* in note 29, 153–55, 157. The preceding provides a useful summary of the evidence.

<sup>38</sup> W. F. Grimes, *The Excavation of Roman and Medieval London* (London, 1968), 180–87.

<sup>39</sup> P. Ottaway, 'Jewbury', *Archaeology in York — Interim*, VIII, 3 (1982), 12. Further stages of the excavation failed to yield any evidence. See P. Turnbull, 'Sites Review — Jewbury', *Interim*, IX, 1 (1983), 5. N. Pearson, 'Sites Review — Jewbury', *Interim*, IX, 2 (1983), 5–9. N. Pearson, 'Site News — Jewbury', *Interim*, IX, 3 (1983), 3.

<sup>40</sup> L. E. Webster and J. Cherry, 'Medieval Britain in 1974', *Medieval Archaeol.*, XIX (1975), 244.

<sup>41</sup> Lipman, *op. cit.* in note 18, 13, believes that the Jews of Norwich were of German as well as of French origins.

<sup>42</sup> Roth, *op. cit.* in note 21, 12, 43, n. 67, cites three scholars as being resident in Northampton. Magister Aaron (a Magister or Master usually presided over talmudic learning in a particular Jewry, and was a scholar of particular erudition). He notes a lesser talmudic authority known only by his abbreviated name, Rabbi J... (son of?) R.B.... of Northampton. Also he cites the calenderist Moses ben Jacob of Oxford.

## CONTINUITY AND DISCONTINUITY IN THE LANDSCAPE: ROMAN TO MEDIEVAL IN SUTTON CHASE (Figs. 7, 8)

Two aspects of the historic development of the English landscape are stressed in recent literature.<sup>1</sup> First, an apparent lack of physical determinism in settlement and land use patterns, and second, the shifting nature of settlement, particularly from the Roman to medieval periods, with the major change occurring in the mid to late Saxon period. This note describes some results of research in a region of the English Midlands<sup>2</sup> which suggests that the pattern of land use in both the Roman and medieval periods was strongly influenced by physical factors and that, despite a lack of evidence for the intervening period, there was a major change in settlement location between the Roman and medieval periods, associated with the abandonment of former arable land.

The region considered here lies NE. of Birmingham, around the town of Sutton Coldfield, and includes parts of Staffordshire, Warwickshire and West Midlands (Fig. 7). It is bounded on the S. and E. by the River Tame, on the N. by the Bourne Brook, and on the W. by the Barr Beacon ridge. The region corresponds to the medieval Sutton Chase, a hunting reserve of the Earls of Warwick from 1126 to 1528. The region is divisible into two parts on the basis of its physical characteristics. The upland (over 400 ft.) in the N. and W. has sandy, pebbly acid brown soils and podzols developed on Bunter Pebble Beds and Hopwas Breccia, and little surface water. The lowland in the S., E. and NW. has gentler slopes, soils which are predominantly stagnogleyic clay loams developed on Keuper Marl, and much surface water.

Sutton Chase lies on the N. edge of the Forest of Arden, whose characteristic 'woodland' landscape consisting of hamlets and single farms, often moated, surrounded by small irregularly-shaped fields, has generally been attributed to medieval colonization, associated with assarting documented in the 12th and 13th centuries.<sup>3</sup> Although the documentary evidence for medieval Arden has been relatively well studied, archaeological research in the area has been largely restricted to the survey of medieval earthworks, particularly moated sites, and building recording. Little excavation, fieldwalking or aerial photography has been undertaken, and as a result little is known about the Roman period in the area, in contrast to the abundant evidence from the Avon and Severn valleys to the S.<sup>4</sup> and in and around Wall to the N.<sup>5</sup>

Four aspects of the medieval and post-medieval landscape of Sutton Chase were studied by the writer: unenclosed common waste, parks, hamlets and moated sites. Both archaeological and documentary evidence were employed. The principal archaeological method was fieldwalking, in and around the four features under consideration, where the land was in arable use at the time of walking. The centre, S. and SW. of the study area are built up. Fieldwalking produced quantities of Roman and medieval pottery, but no Saxon pottery has yet been recognized in the region. The evidence from fieldwalking was augmented by consideration of chance finds, which were mainly Roman coins from the built-up part of the study area.

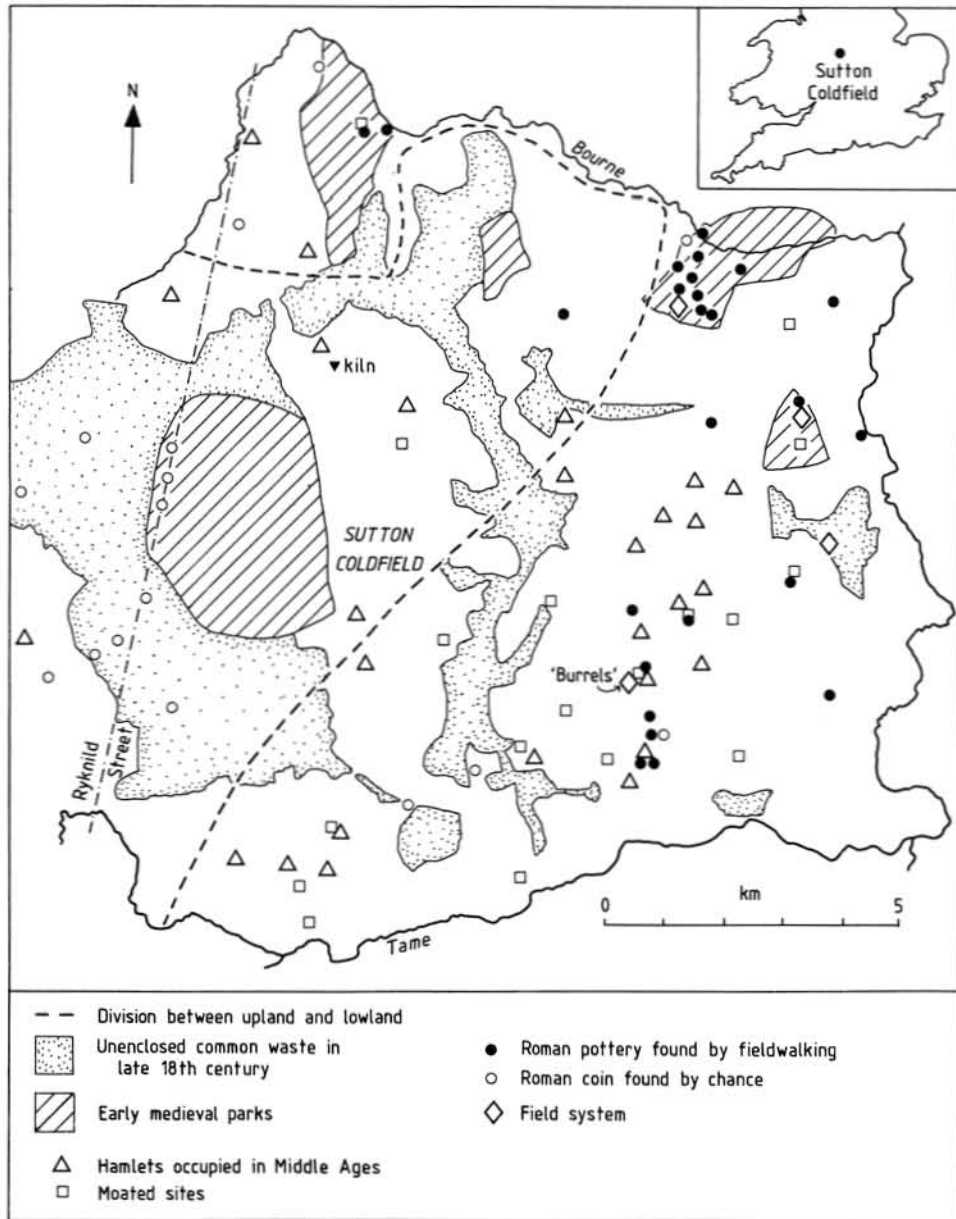


FIG. 7  
Location of Sutton Chase and features mentioned in the text

## THE MEDIEVAL LANDSCAPE

Extensive areas of unenclosed common waste survived in the region until the beginning of the 19th century.<sup>6</sup> The largest single area was in the upland part of the region, W. of Sutton Coldfield, and there was a strip of waste to the E. of the town. In the 18th century these waste areas were heathland, used mainly for sheep grazing.<sup>7</sup> There is no archaeological or documentary evidence for settlement on, or arable use of, these areas during the Middle Ages. It has been suggested that they were deliberately preserved for hunting because of their poor-quality soils.<sup>8</sup> Early medieval deer parks, created in the 12th and 13th centuries,<sup>9</sup> were situated in both the upland and lowland part of the region; some of those in the latter included what is now classified as grade 2 agricultural land. This implies that, rather than being the most economic use of otherwise poor land, as has been suggested for elsewhere in the country,<sup>10</sup> park creation in this region reflects land availability rather than land quality. The majority of the hamlets are in the lowland part of the region; their distribution is similar to that of moated sites, but with particular concentrations in the E. and S. Documentary and/or archaeological evidence indicates that most of them were occupied during the Middle Ages. As elsewhere in Arden, the distribution of moats is complementary to that of parks, and some of them are associated with documented assarting, reflecting differing land-use policies of different manorial lords.<sup>11</sup> Agreements on the making of assarts and the holding of assarted land to the E. of Sutton Coldfield, near the parish boundary with Wishaw, are recorded in 1240-41.<sup>12</sup> The locations of some of the assarts named then can be identified with field names on pre-Enclosure 19th-century maps (Fig. 8). One of them, *Burhale*, can be equated with a number of fields called *Burrels* on a map of 1825.<sup>13</sup> These form part of a block of long rectangular fields, whose regular pattern is not like that of small, irregularly-shaped fields normally resulting from assarting. The regularity could have resulted from communal assarting activity, in which the whole block of land was cleared and subsequently divided in a regular manner, or alternatively it could have resulted from the re-clearance of land within an earlier field system which had gone out of use. The earlier field system would therefore be of prehistoric or Roman date; it can be compared with the extensive rectilinear Roman field systems located in areas such as Essex.<sup>14</sup>

## THE ROMAN LANDSCAPE

The only known structures of definite Roman date in the region are a road (Ryknild Street) which crosses its W. side, and a pottery kiln. The survival of a field system of possible Roman date has been noted above; other rectilinear field systems, again possibly of Roman date, are visible as cropmarks in two of the early medieval parks and on an area of unenclosed common waste to the E.

The distribution of Roman objects in the region shows a marked contrast between the upland and lowland parts. In the upland, most of the objects are coins found by chance, some of which are concentrated around the Ryknild Street. Despite extensive fieldwalking in the upland part of the region, no Roman pottery was found, implying an absence either of settlements or of arable land manured with domestic debris, thus suggesting that the upland was rough pasture in the Roman period. This is supported by a trench cut through the Ryknild Street in 1936 which showed that it sealed a podzol, indicating the presence of heath or woodland here at the time of its construction.<sup>15</sup> The Roman coins around Ryknild Street might be interpreted as travellers' losses, or might indicate the presence of roadside settlements. Some of the coins could be recent, rather than Roman, losses.

In the lowland part of the region, small quantities of Roman pottery were found at several locations by fieldwalking, implying the presence of arable land which was manured with domestic debris, and hence the settlements from which this land was farmed. In only two cases, however, was there sufficient Roman pottery to suggest an actual settlement site. Roman pottery was found by fieldwalking within areas which were to become medieval parks, at hamlets occupied in the Middle Ages, and at moated sites. The presence of cropmarks of earlier field systems within the medieval parks has been noted above; the

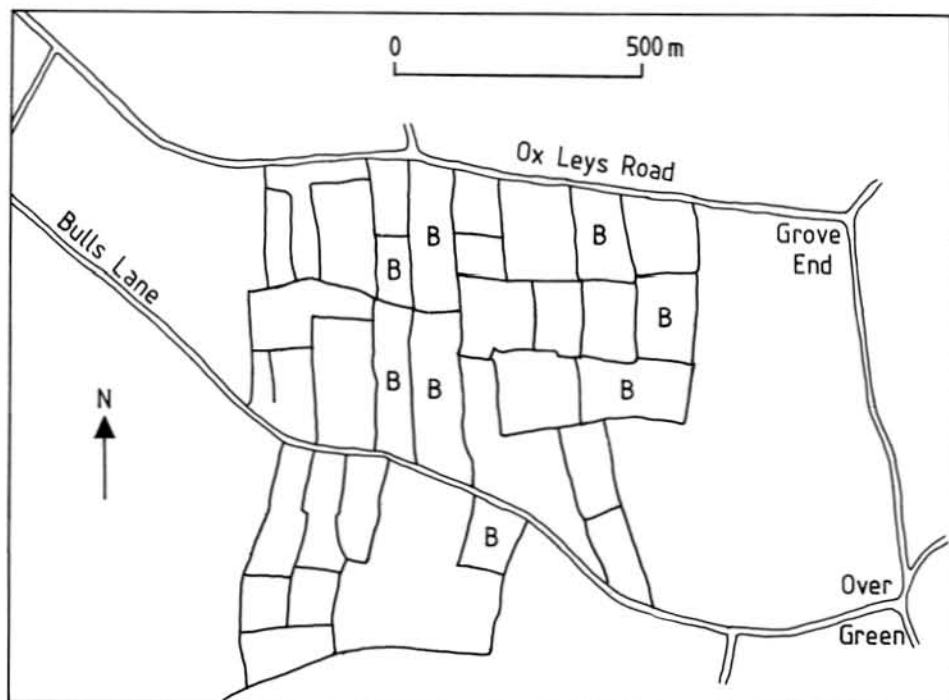


FIG. 8

Field system as outlined on 1825 map (SP 159 947). Fields named 'Burrel' are indicated by B

Roman pottery found in some areas gives some support to the Roman date suggested for the field systems.

#### DISCUSSION

In both the Roman and medieval periods the general pattern of land use exhibits a dichotomy which corresponds to the physical division of the region into upland and lowland parts. There is no evidence for either settlements or arable land on the upland in either period, suggesting that, due to its physical characteristics, it was then used for rough grazing, as was also the case in more recent times. In the lowland there is evidence for both arable land and settlements at both periods but the details differ. The occurrence of Roman pottery and field systems of possible Roman date in areas which were emparked in the Middle Ages, together with the possibility of re-clearance by assarting of former enclosed fields, suggests some abandonment of agricultural land in the post-Roman period. The lack of coincidence of Roman and medieval settlement sites similarly suggests the abandonment of the settlements with which this agricultural land was associated. The Roman and medieval land use patterns in Sutton Chase can be compared with those in Hanbury, a 'woodland' parish in north Worcestershire.<sup>16</sup> Here too, the distribution and quantity of Roman pottery found in fieldwalking suggests that areas cultivated in the Middle Ages, including woodland and a park, were under the plough in the Roman period and that the medieval assarters were recolonizing abandoned former arable. In very few cases did concentrations of Roman pottery, sufficient to suggest settlements, coincide with medieval settlement sites.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> For example, C. Taylor, *Village and Farmstead* (London, 1984), and M. Aston, *Interpreting the Landscape* (London, 1985).

<sup>2</sup> M. A. Hodder, 'The Development of Some Aspects of Settlement and Land Use in Sutton Chase', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Birmingham, 1988.

<sup>3</sup> B. K. Roberts, *Rural Settlement in Britain* (London, 1977), 169f.; id., 'The Historical Geography of Moated Homesteads: The Forest of Arden, Warwickshire', *Trans. Birmingham and Warwickshire Archaeol. Soc.* 88 (1978), 61-70; J. Gould, 'Settlement and Farming in the Parish of Aldridge (West Midlands) prior to 1650', *Trans. South Staffordshire Archaeol. Hist. Soc.* 20 (1980), 41-56.

<sup>4</sup> G. Webster, 'Prehistoric Settlement and Land Use in the West Midlands and the Impact of Rome', in T. R. Slater and P. J. Jarvis (eds.), *Field and Forest, an Historical Geography of Warwickshire and Worcestershire* (Norwich, 1982), 31-58.

<sup>5</sup> J. Gould, 'Romano-British Farming near Letocetum (Wall, Staffs.)', *Trans. South Staffordshire Archaeol. Hist. Soc.* 13 (1972), 1-8.

<sup>6</sup> They are shown in detail on William Yates's maps of Staffordshire (1775) and Warwickshire (1793): copies in Birmingham Reference Library.

<sup>7</sup> For example, W. Pitt, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Stafford* (London, 1794), 51-56, 61, 72.

<sup>8</sup> M. W. Beresford, 'Lot Acres', *Economic History Review*, Series 1, 13 (1943), 74-79.

<sup>9</sup> M. A. Hodder, 'Medieval Parks in Drayton Bassett, Shenstone and Weeford (Staffordshire)', *Trans. South Staffordshire Archaeol. Hist. Soc.* 30 (1990), 39-52.

<sup>10</sup> H. Prince, *Parks in England* (Shalfleet Manor, 1967), 12-13.

<sup>11</sup> B. K. Roberts, 'The Historical Geography of Moated Homesteads', op. cit. in note 3.

<sup>12</sup> E. Mason (ed.), 'The Beauchamp Cartulary Charters 1100-1268', *Pipe Roll Soc. Publications New Series* 43 (1980). The documents referred to here are on pp. 171-73.

<sup>13</sup> Sutton Coldfield Corn Rent Map. In Sutton Coldfield Library.

<sup>14</sup> W. Rodwell, 'Relict Landscapes in Essex', in H. C. Bowen and P. J. Fowler (eds.), *Early Land Allotment* (British Archaeol. Reports, British Series 48, 1978), 89-98.

<sup>15</sup> B. Walker, 'The Rycknield Street in the Neighbourhood of Birmingham', *Trans. Birmingham Archaeol. Soc.* 60 (1940), 42-55, section drawing on p. 54.

<sup>16</sup> C. Dyer, *Hambury: Settlement and Society in a Woodland Landscape* (Leicester, Department of Local History, Occasional Papers, Fourth Series Number 4, 1991).

## THE LONDON CONFERENCE 1991

A joint conference of the Society for Medieval Archaeology and the Vernacular Architecture Group was held in London from 14-15 December 1991 on the theme 'Medieval Buildings: New Approaches'.

The opening session, following an introduction by the presidents of the two societies, consisted of papers by Stuart Wrathmell ('Peasant Houses: A View from the North'), Michael Laithwaite ('The Devon Survey: Its Implications and Results') and David Austin ('Peasant Houses in the South West'). After dinner and the society's AGM there were smaller contributions from members of both societies, including those by Richard Newman (Cosmeston, Gwent) and Evelyn Baker (Stratton, Bedfordshire).

The Sunday morning session started with a paper by Christopher Dyer in which he drew out the historical significance of recent dendrochronological dates obtained by the Cruck project. Chris Currie followed with a paper which presented evidence for 13th- and 14th-century dendrochronologically dated buildings in the Thames valley. After lunch there was a paper by Bob Meeson on the archaeological traces left by timber-framed building and one by Sarah Pearson on dendrochronologically dated Wealden Houses in Kent.

The conference afforded a useful opportunity for medieval archaeologists and vernacular architects to meet and compare approaches to two similar lines of enquiry which often use the same data. Organization of the conference was undertaken by the Vernacular Architecture Group with J. G. Hurst representing the Society for Medieval Archaeology. Thanks are due to all involved for a successful event.

ALAN VINCE