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THE ISLE OF WIGHT IN THE ENGLISH LANDSCAPE:

Medieval and Post-Medieval Rural Settlement and Land Use

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Introduction

In the 1610 edition of *Britannia*, William Camden wrote of the Isle of Wight:

> *Through the mids thereof runs a long tract or chaine of hils, yeelding plentie of pasture and forage for sheepe. The wooll of which, next unto that of Lemster and Cotteswold, is esteemed best and in speciall request with clothiers, whereby there groweth unto the inhabitants much gaine and profit. The North part is all over greene with meddows, pastures and woods; the South side lieth wholly in maner, bedecked with corne fields enclosed, where at each end the sea on the North side doth so inbosome, encroatch within it self, that it make the almost two Ilands, and verily so the Ilanders call them, namely Fresh-water Isle, which looketh West, and Binbridge Isle, Eastward.*

The Island's landscape diversity, epitomised by Camden and partially revealed on John Speed's 1611 map (Fig. 1), is significant for such a relatively small area (380 km^2). However, this area also constitutes both a physical and administrative entity , having been a county from 1890 to 1995 and currently having the status of a unitary authority, although only equivalent in size to an average English local authority district. In this article I summarise research presented in my PhD thesis at Bournemouth University (Basford 2013), where I have aimed to place this distinctive island in a national context with reference to the works of Rackham (1986), Roberts and Wrathmell (2000; 2002) and other scholars. A central theme of the thesis is the patterning apparent in the English countryside and its settlements (Lambourne 2010). In my analysis of the Island's medieval and post-medieval landscape I have drawn on the Isle of Wight Historic Landscape Characterisation (Basford 2008), one of many county-based HLCs sponsored by English Heritage since 1994 (Rippon 2012, 69). Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) has been subjected to academic critique in my thesis and certain inadequacies of the technique for past-oriented research have been highlighted, both generally and with specific reference to the Isle of Wight HLC. The results of HLC have nevertheless been employed in the thesis and have helped to illuminate the Island's past landscape character. This has been achieved by the use of maps from the Isle of Wight HLC Final Report (Basford 2008), by the assessment of *HLC Areas* identified in that report and by the construction of new *1790s HLC Areas* (Figure 2) identified from the unpublished six-inch Ordnance Survey drawings of the Isle of Wight, surveyed in 1793–4 and now available online (British Library 2013). Another important source comprises royal surveys of the Island prepared in 1559–1560 and 1608 and manorial surveys dating from the medieval period to the 19th century in a transcription available at the Isle of Wight Record Office (Webster n.d.). Archaeological data from the Isle of Wight Historic Environment Record (HER) and the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) have also been employed in an exploration of the origins and evolution of settlement and in identifying cultural zones within the Isle of Wight. A key feature of the research has been the presentation and analysis of synoptic maps. Generalising models have been constructed from these maps, allowing the identification and exploration of local regions on the Island and the comparison of these local regions with others on the mainland.

'Islandness' and insularity

The Isle of Wight is England's largest offshore island (Berry 2009, table 1) and in studying its landscape history the effects of insularity must be taken into account. My thesis therefore considers various aspects of the Island's physical and cultural character and assesses the possible impact of 'islandness' (though this is a problematic concept: Rainbird 2007). Strong natural and historical influences have undoubtedly affected the development of the Isle of Wight's cultural landscape. Clear physiographic zones exist and a remarkable geological variety is compressed into a very small area including Cretaceous Greensand, Chalk Downland and Palaeogene clays, sands and limestones (Insole *et al*. 1998, 1–30). The Island's geographical location in relation to the British mainland (Fig. 2) has also played an important role in shaping development. However, far from being inward-looking and impoverished (as island-dwellers are sometimes thought to be), it appears the people of the Isle of Wight were involved in long-distance networks of of trade and exchange during the late Iron Age and Roman periods (Walton 2011).

In the post-Roman period the Island enjoyed a distinct political identity as a 'Jutish' kingdom (Yorke 1995, 36–39) and archaeological material has provided evidence for the close links of the Isle of Wight not only with Kent (Richardson 2011), but also with the Continent (Ulmschneider 1999, 25). By the 8th century AD the Island, now under West Saxon control, had 'productive sites' at Carisbrooke and Shalfleet, these being 'economic places represented by large quantities of coin and metalwork finds ... believed to be the remains of smaller markets and fairs' (Ulmschneider 2002, 334). Carisbrooke and Shalfleet are considered to be the two

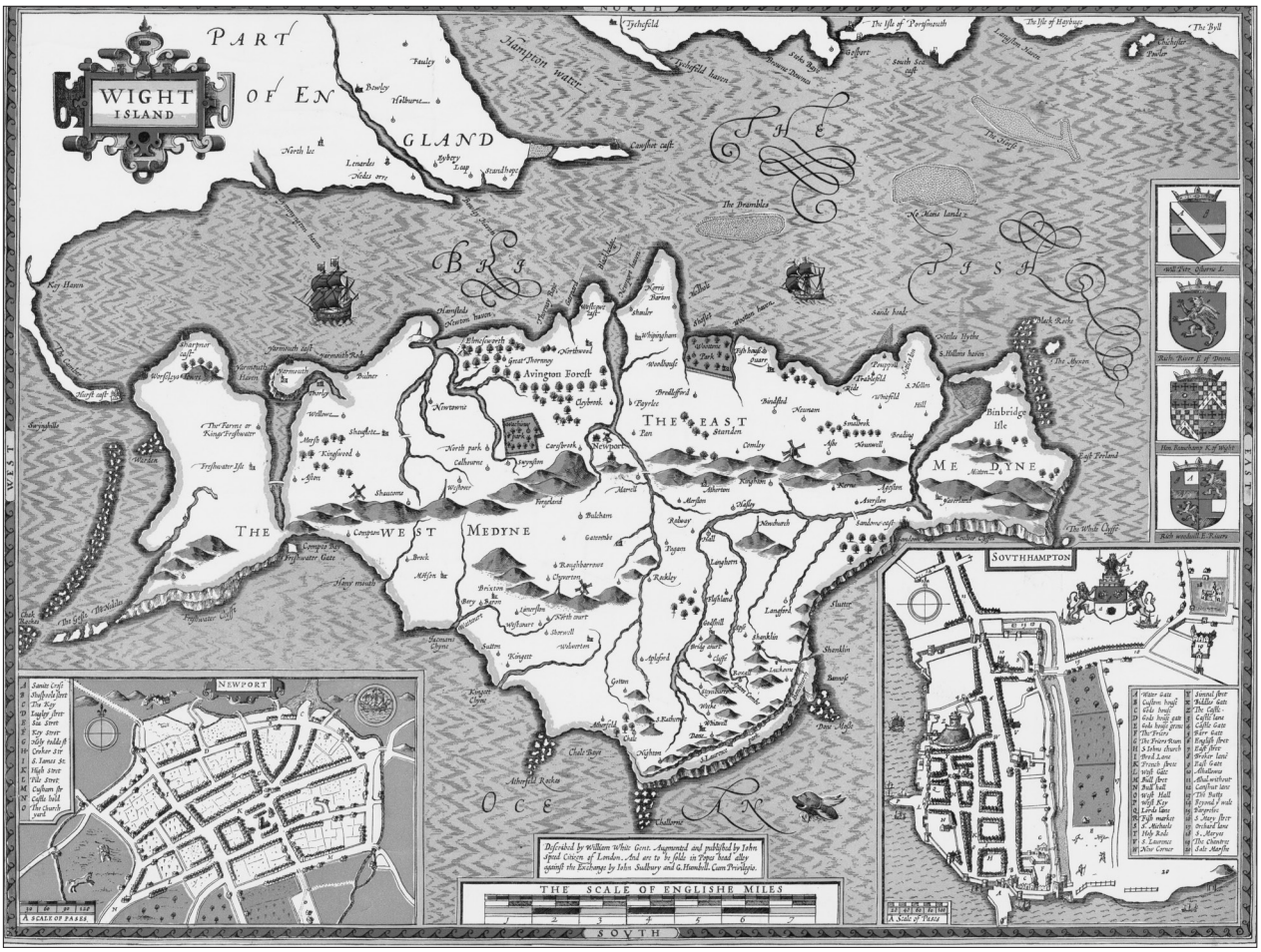

Figure 1 Map of Wight Island from John Speed's The Theatre of the Empire of Great Britaine, 1611. (Reproduced by kind permission of the Isle of Wight Council.)

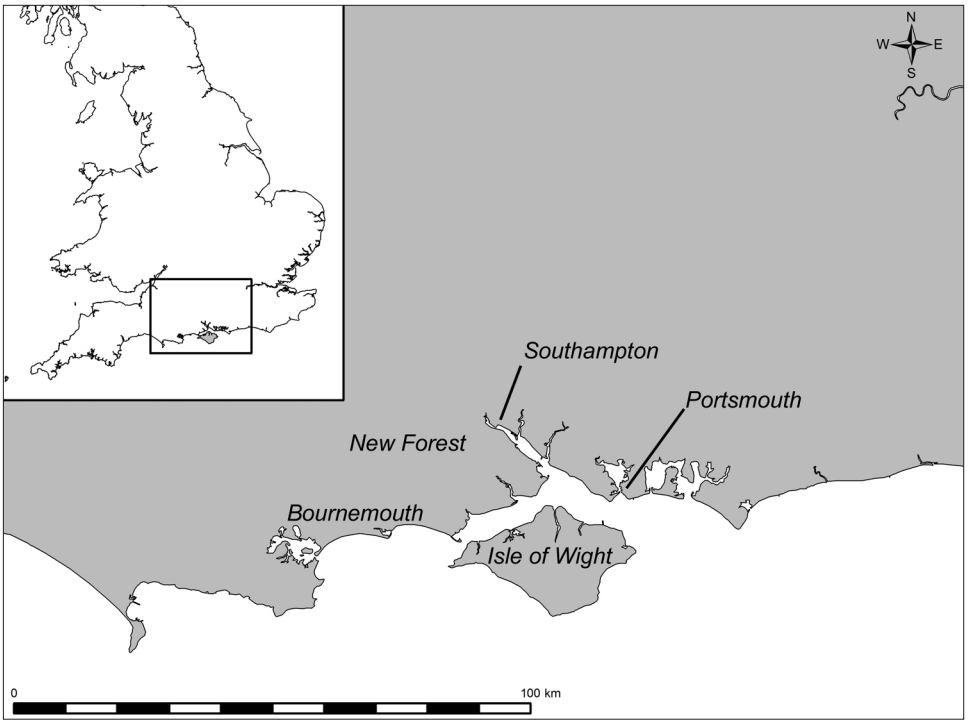

Figure 2 Isle of Wight: location map.

largest such productive sites identified in the southern region Ulmschneider (2010, 98). The Isle of Wight is recorded under Hampshire in Domesday Book and formed part of the 'County of Southampton' until 1889. However, the Island's military significance ensured that immediately after the Norman Conquest it became a quasi-independent fiefdom of King William's trusted supporter, William Fitz Osbern, as did other places of high strategic value such as the rapes of Sussex (Cahill 1980, 1–8; Jones and Jones 1987, 33). Subsequently, it was entrusted to another lordly family, the de Redvers, before being ruled by Captains and Governors on behalf of the Crown. These positions emphasised the Island's military value as did the official residence of the Island's lords, captains and governors at Carisbrooke Castle. The Domesday Book suggests that in 1086 parts of the Island may have been more populous and prosperous than rural Hampshire, a situation that continued into the 14th century. Towns were founded from the 11th to the 13th century at Newport, Yarmouth, Brading and Newtown. However, from the 14th century the Island's fortunes declined, possibly as a result of the insecurity and threat of invasion caused by wars with France. In the late 15th and 16th centuries 'Wight Island' could be considered the poor relation of mainland Hampshire, although it was a place in which the Crown still took great interest because of its strategic importance. For most of its recorded history the Isle of Wight has not enjoyed the same degree of political independence as the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man. However, its patterns of land use and settlement, whilst not strikingly different from those of the mainland, nevertheless exhibit distinctive characteristics.

Isle of Wight land use in national and regional contexts

A key distinction in the English landscape, recognised from the 16th century, is between 'champion' and 'woodland' landscapes, more recently characterised by Rackham (1986) as *Planned Countryside* and *Ancient Countryside*. Roberts and Wrathmell (2000; 2002) distinguish between a *Central Province*, a *South Eastern Province* and a *Northern & Western Province* on the basis of settlement characteristics. Their *Central Province* corresponds broadly with Rackham's *Planned Countryside* whilst their *South Eastern Province* and parts of their *Northern & Western Province* correspond to Rackham's *Ancient Countryside*. The Isle of Wight has been placed by Rackham within his *Ancient Countryside* and by Roberts & Wrathmell within their *South Eastern Province*. My research has involved local-scale analysis of the Island's historic landscape character in order to discuss how far the detailed local picture corresponds with these national-scale characterisations. According to Rackham (1986, table 1.2), one of the historic differences between *Ancient Countryside* and *Planned Countryside* was that in *Ancient Countryside* medieval open-field was 'either absent or of modest extent and abolished before *c*. 1700', whereas in *Planned Countryside* there was 'a strong tradition of open-field beginning early and lasting into the Enclosure Act period'. However, Roberts and Wrathmell (2002, 144–146 and figure 5.10) have modified this picture by demonstrating that open fields formerly existed in many parishes within their *South Eastern* and *Northern & Western* Provinces. Nevertheless, these core shared lands occupied relatively small parts of individual parishes within the two outer provinces whilst within the *Central Province* communal townfields were the dominant agricultural form. The extent of that domination within a Midlands county has now been graphically depicted in the *Atlas of Northamptonshire* (Partida *et al*. 2013).

My research demonstrated that most medieval tithings on the Isle of Wight contained some open-field but that this was generally enclosed at a relatively early date and by different methods than the open-field within Roberts and Wrathmell's *Central Province* (Basford

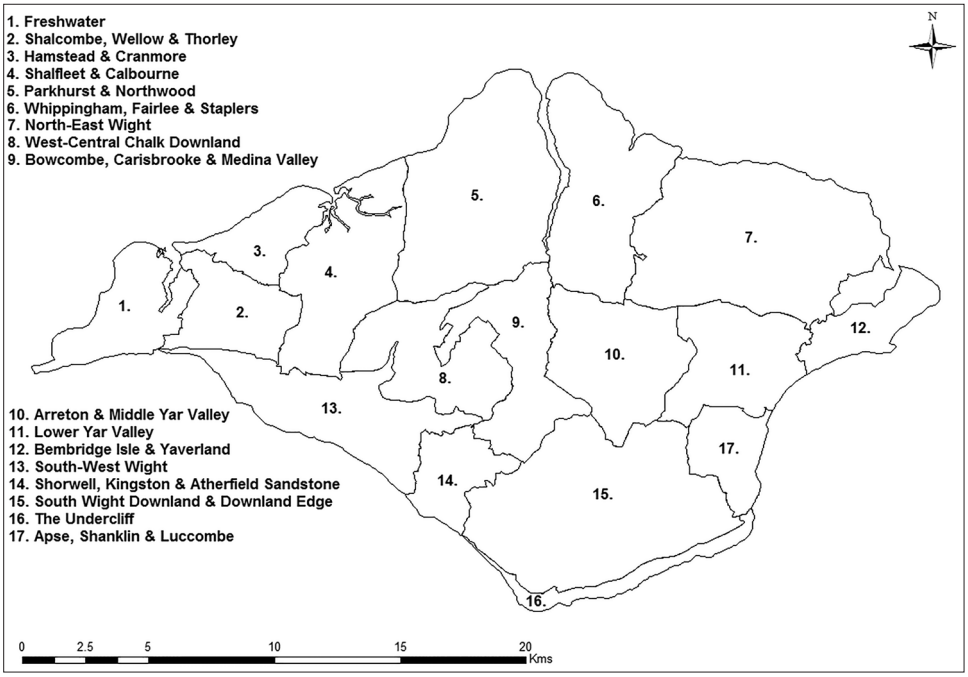

Figure 3 1790s Isle of Wight HLC Areas.

2013). The Isle of Wight experienced a very small amount of parliamentary enclosure (both of open-field and common pasture) in comparison with the southern counties of Dorset, Wiltshire and Hampshire and even less in comparison with Northamptonshire, a typical *Central Province* county. As well as comparing the Isle of Wight's enclosure history with that of other English counties my thesis explored variations in enclosure patterns *within* the Island. This was achieved by constructing a new model of *1790s HLC Areas* based on the 1790s Ordnance Survey drawings (Fig. 3) and defined by differences between field patterns and other land use types in various parts of the Island. The model provides some historic depth and confirms the historic diversity between HLC Areas identified in the original Isle of Wight Historic Landscape Characterisation despite some discrepancies in boundaries. Several of the *1790s HLC Areas* to the north of the central Chalk downs were much more wooded than the areas to the south, both historically and at the present day. The 1790s drawings have also been used to undertake detailed morphological analysis of field patterns.

In the original Isle of Wight HLC it proved difficult to correlate field patterns identified on the Island with the field pattern typology published in the Hampshire HLC (Lambrick and Bramhill 1999). The Devon HLC (Turner 2007, 27–79) has provided a more helpful morphological model although the system of medieval land use in Devon, with its emphasis on convertible husbandry, may have differed considerably from that on the Island. Drawing on the enclosure types defined in the Devon HLC, it has been possible to construct a new typology of Isle of Wight field patterns existing in the 1790s, particularly those relating to enclosed open-field where both strip-enclosures and block enclosures can be detected (Fig. 4). The morphology of field patterns derived from enclosed lowland waste varies according to the process and date of enclosure, embracing small irregular fields in the Undercliff, medium and large irregular fields to the south of Shanklin and medium to large semi-regular fields of 'herringbone' pattern between Whippingham and Newport (representing late 18th-century enclosure).

Most downland enclosure appears to be of post-medieval date, sometimes associated with farms named 'Newbarn', but ruler-straight boundaries within areas of enclosed downland occur almost exclusively within the *West Central Chalk Downland* Area. Medieval assarts can be detected around Parkhurst Forest although very regular field patterns nearby result from disafforestation in 1815. North-east Wight also contains examples of probable medieval assarts.The 'ancient enclosures' of Cornwall and Devon (mainly within the region identified by Rackham as the *Highland Zone*) and the fields within Rackham's *Ancient Countryside* have frequently been assumed to be fields enclosed directly from waste into individually-farmed fields. However, our understanding of these enclosures has now been changed by the work of Herring (1998; 2006) and Turner (2007, 32–56). They have demonstrated that for much of the medieval period most of the farmed land in medieval Cornwall and Devon was divided into strips which generally lay within common open fields, although these were organised and farmed in a different manner from open fields in *Planned Countryside*. Strip fields in the two counties were enclosed during the later Middle Ages (often in 'bundles' of several strips) to form the characteristic patterns of small irregular fields that can be observed today. The work in Cornwall and Devon has implications for our understanding of *Ancient Countryside* elsewhere in England. The Isle of Wight appears to have pursued a somewhat different trajectory of medieval and early post-medieval landscape change from that of south-west England but there are parallels, particularly with Devon. At the time of Domesday Book the Island may have possessed fairly extensive areas of lowland waste, common and open pasture, perhaps accounting for nearly 35% of total land use. The Island also possessed a significant area of common downland grazing in the medieval and early post-medieval periods, with individual manors having discrete blocks of downland, although the percentage of downland appears to have been considerably smaller than that of lowland waste. Substantial areas of waste, with some downland and woodland, appear to have been cleared and enclosed directly into individual fields both in the medieval and post-medieval periods. Nevertheless, open-field existed in most parts of the Island in the Middle Ages and dominated the landscape in a few areas.

The enclosure of the open fields started relatively early although later than in Devon. It was underway by the 16th century and had been largely completed by the late 18th century. Crucially, however, much of this enclosure appears to have been piecemeal or the result of fairly small-scale agreements or amalgamations of land. Field pattern morphology suggests that substantial areas of lowland waste remained unenclosed until the18th century. The enclosure that took place after that date is mostly undocumented but by the 1790s rough land away from the downs accounted for only about 4% of total land use, excluding Parkhurst Forest. Blocks of open downland remained in the 1790s but accounted for less than 6% of total land use, suffering further attrition in the 19th century and even more in the 20th. By the late 18th century enclosed fields accounted for nearly 72% of total land use. The Isle of Wight landscape in the late 18th century would therefore have looked very different from the Anglo-Saxon and medieval landscape.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, *ad hoc* removal and straightening of field boundaries altered the landscape still further. Nevertheless, the present landscape as a whole is the result of evolutionary change rather than large-scale planning imposed from above. Whilst much of the Island's farmed landscape today lacks the 'ancient' appearance of Devon and Cornwall, it still possesses several of the characteristics of *Ancient Countryside* defined by Rackham (1986, 4–5), for example many roads and footpaths (often sunken) and numerous small areas of woodland. Historically, other characteristics of *Ancient Countryside* were also present, including open-field enclosure predating 1700 and much heathland. Furthermore, the boundaries of historic landholdings on the Island have often survived and generally exhibit greater time-depth than field boundaries (Basford 2008, 44, 61).

Figure 4 Strip and block enclosures from open-field: (a) south-west Wight; (b) Bembridge Isle and Yaverland. (© The British Library Board, OSD 67 and OSD 69.)

The Isle of Wight settlement pattern in national and regional contexts

The local-scale assessment of Isle of Wight settlement presented in my thesis is based on a classification of all settlements shown on the 1790s Ordnance Survey drawings. This analysis suggests that the Isle of Wight has a relatively low density of nucleated settlements in comparison with the rest of Roberts and Wrathmell's *South Eastern Province* and particularly in comparison with their 'sub-province' of *East Wessex* (including mainland Hampshire). Levels of dispersed settlement are notably higher on the Island than in *East Wessex*. Roberts and Wrathmell do not recognise 'Wessex' as a

unified entity (Aston and Lewis 1994), but define a *West Wessex Sub-Province* within their *Central Province* and an *East Wessex Sub-Province* within their *South Eastern Province* (Roberts and Wrathmell 2000). Splitting Wessex in this way has been criticized (Hinton 2012, 131–133), as has Hampshire's assignment to the *South Eastern Province* (Dyer 2001; 2003; Hinton 2005, 71). Nevertheless, Roberts and Wrathmell's *Atlas of Rural Settlement* clearly depicts a higher density of nucleation in *West Wessex* than in *East Wessex* which does tend to support the location of *East Wessex* in the *South Eastern Province*. The Isle of Wight certainly does not fit within the *Central Province*, either in terms of settlement patterns or enclosure history. Instead, certain aspects of the Island's medieval and post-medieval landscape history seem to have more in common with south-west England.

The origins and evolution of Isle of Wight settlements

Study of English settlements has focussed mainly on the *Central Province*. In the medieval period this was typically a landscape of nucleated villages, often planned, surrounded by extensive open fields. There has been much debate about the origins of villages and open fields (e.g. Taylor 1988, 9; Lewis *et al*. 2001, 191). Village formation may have occurred in two stages in some areas with a 'great replanning' in the 9th and 10th centuries when Middle Saxon nucleated settlements were substantially reconfigured and common fields laid out (Brown and Foard 1998, 90–2). Despite the emphasis on villages in medieval landscape studies, Rippon (2007, 105) has followed Taylor (1983, 125) in suggesting that they are an aberration not just in their limited spatial distribution but in their relatively late appearance in the British countryside. However, until recently less attention had been paid to the origins of the medieval dispersed settlement patterns which dominated the *Northern & Western Province* and (to some extent) the *South Eastern Province*. This has been remedied in south-west England through a number of recent studies (Herring 2006; Rippon *et al*. 2006; Rippon 2008; 2010). In particular, Rippon has asked, 'if landscapes characterised by villages and open fields are an aberration, are the landscapes of dispersed settlement in areas such as the South West what the 'Central Province' would have looked like if villages had not been created?' (2007, 106).

As a result of detailed work in north Devon and Somerset, Rippon and his colleagues have convincingly argued that the historic landscape of south-west England does not represent a continuum from the late prehistoric and Romano-British periods. On the contrary, the small enclosed settlements and limited field systems of these periods were replaced around the 7th to 8th centuries AD by small unenclosed hamlets and isolated farmsteads with a farming system based on convertible husbandry. This model is not necessarily relevant to the Isle of Wight since convertible husbandry may be associated specifically with south-west England at this early date. However, it does challenge the 'implicit assumption' that areas of England outside the *Central Province* failed to develop the 'classic form' of high-medieval landscape 'as they had low populations, were colonised late, or were simply peripheral to the centre of gravity of this late 1st millennium landscape reorganisation' (Rippon *et al*. 2006, 32). Rippon's model demonstrates that areas outside the *Central Province* could follow their own regionally distinctive trajectories of change within different antecedent landscapes. It provides a context for exploring the Isle of Wight's complex and distinctive settlement pattern.

Isle of Wight settlement needs to be viewed within the context of territorial and administrative organisation. At least five putative mother parishes have been identified on the Island (Margham 2012, 14–15). These ancient divisions, stretching across the Island from the Solent to the English Channel, may relate to Middle Saxon estates or even earlier land units. Certain other estates predating the Norman Conquest can also be identified, some possessing churches in 1086. Daughter parishes were gradually established, many dating from the 11th and 12th centuries. They are characterised by irregularity of shape and size in contrast with the Island's possible Anglo-Saxon mother parishes, which have regular 'bacon rasher' forms. Many Island parishes, particularly the older ones, contain more than one settlement and several manors (Fig. 5). A multiplicity of settlements and manors is typical of parishes in Roberts and Wrathmell's *Outer Provinces*. This characteristic is possibly connected with relatively *ad hoc* development of settlements and field systems, which differentiates the *Outer Provinces* from the *Central Province*. Civil administrative divisions known as tithings also existed on the Island in the medieval and post-medieval periods; their dates of origin are not known but they generally respect parish boundaries. Isle of Wight tithings may not represent the basic units of settlement and community that townships do in northern England (Winchester 2008, 21) but there appears to be some relationship between tithings and medieval open fields.

Lewis (1995; 1996; 1997) has constructed a database of medieval settlement in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight and has discussed settlement patterns in both areas. The nature of settlement on the Island may have differed from that of Hampshire by the time of Domesday since there were proportionately more manors, each with a smaller number of inhabitants. My separate analysis of Isle of Wight settlement has been based on a database constructed from the 1790s Ordnance Survey drawings in which settlements have been classified by form, utilising the typology developed by Roberts (1987, 26–27). Different functional categories of settlement have also been identified and examined, starting with parish *foci*. This analysis has demonstrated that the development of parish *foci* on the Island was 'evolutionary' and that the settlement 'revolution' which occurred in central England between the 9th and the 12th centuries (Taylor 1988, 9) appears not to have been taken place locally. Instead, small nucleations may have evolved gradually in the later Anglo-Saxon and medieval periods. Estate centres in the Middle Saxon period possibly consisted simply of magnate farmsteads controlling large estates. Churches serving the *parochiae* associated with these estates may have been located centrally, ministering initially to a scattered population but gradually attracting settlement. As large estates fragmented from the 9th to the 11th centuries more churches were built and these attracted settlement as did the earliest churches, becoming parish

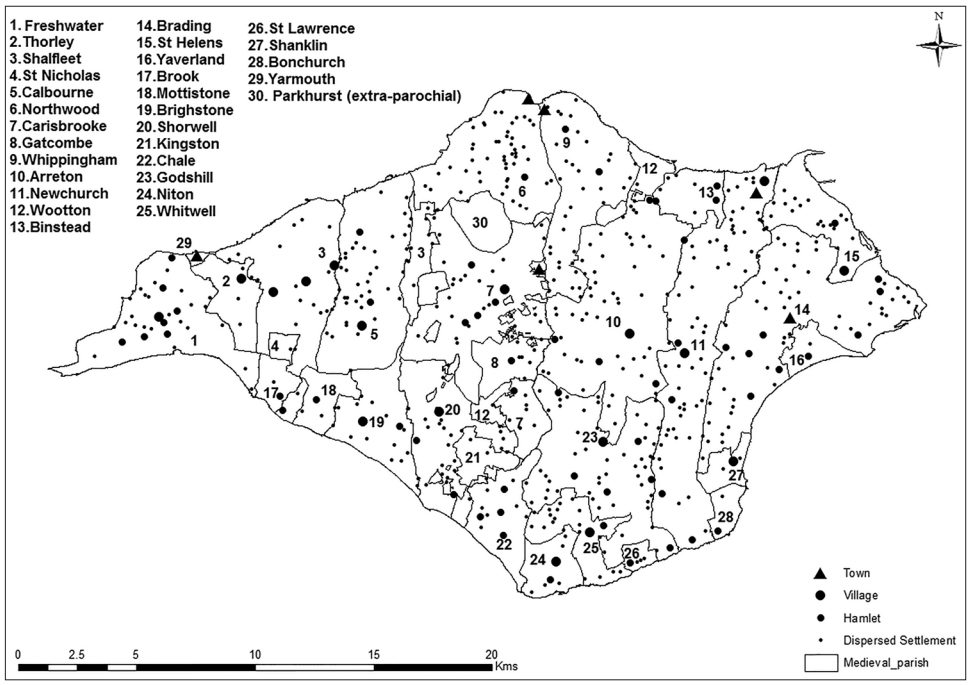

Figure 5 Isle of Wight: parishes and settlements.

foci. After 1066 the new Norman lords of certain manors built chapels beside their manor houses which gradually obtained parochial status and acted as additional *foci* for settlement. Most parish *foci* exhibited some degree of nucleation in the 1790s but some were hamlet-sized rather than village-sized. Moreover, only a minority show signs of deliberate planning or re-planning and definite historical contexts can be suggested for these planning 'events' only at Carisbrooke, Brading, Yarmouth and St Helens. In addition to nucleated parish *foci* the Island also possesses a variety of settlements without parish churches which display some degree of nucleation. These are generally hamlets rather than villages and nearly all of irregular form. They include interrupted rows and 'streets', clusters and green-edge/common-edge hamlets which often appear to be later in origin than the parish *foci*. The nucleation of settlements appears to have happened gradually and only in a few cases is there specific evidence that individual settlements may have been nucleated by 1086. Villages and hamlets formed important components of the Island's medieval settlement pattern but only a small proportion of settlements appear to have been planned and most have a different character from nucleated settlements in the *Central Province*. Research to date suggests that the Island's medieval open fields were generally associated with villages and hamlets (rather than with the smallest dispersed settlements) but not necessarily with villages having a formal plan, nor do most Island parishes exhibit the typical form of the *Central Province* where one central village is surrounded by a consolidated block of open field. This may indicate that seigniorial or community impetus for the planning or re-planning of villages was present in only a minority of the Island's settlements and that the development of settlements elsewhere was a more informal process, influenced by antecedent settlement and land use, as for instance in Freshwater Parish which has a polyfocal settlement pattern of green-edge hamlets (Margham 1992). The Island's settlement pattern in the 1790s can be characterised as comprising scattered nucleations surrounded by dispersed settlements.

Distinctive combinations of settlement types occur within different parts of the Island. Nucleations, generally small in scale, are located mainly on the better soils in the south of the Island. In contrast, dispersed settlement occurs across all physiographic zones and the pattern of dispersion is clearly not dictated simply by terrain. This may suggest that dispersion forms the oldest 'layer' in the Island's settlement pattern, perhaps dating from the post-Roman period or even earlier, although the actual settlement sites may not be the same. In the northern part of the Island, on the heavy Hamstead clays, dispersion was the normal form of settlement and villages were generally absent. Dispersion seems to have been a feature of Domesday settlement, judging by the small sizes of manors recorded on the Island. The work of Beresford and Hurst (1989, 189–190) suggests an unexpectedly high level of medieval settlement desertion on the Isle of Wight, a phenomenon generally associated with the *Central Province*, but it is likely that their data represents declining population levels within tithings rather than the complete desertion of individual settlements. Nonetheless, depopulation was perceived to be a problem from at least the late 15th century and the very first act against depopulation in 1489 dealt specifically with the Isle of Wight (4 Henry, cap. 16). The royal surveys of 1559 and 1560 record many 'void tenements'. Further research may reveal whether these references relate to the permanent desertion of isolated farmsteads or to the decline of medieval hamlets into smaller dispersed settlements or isolated farmsteads, as occurred in Devon (Overton 2006, 113) and Cornwall (Herring 2006, 47–51). The fact that there was a net increase in the total number of settlements during the post-medieval period suggests this process may have been common (from 513 existing by 1540 (Lewis 1996) to at least 666 identified in the 1790s drawings).

Approximately 100 of the 561 dispersed settlements shown on the 1790s drawings were cottages and private houses rather than farmsteads, and these are likely to be of post-medieval origin.

Unfortunately, a lack of relevant archaeological data and research means that it is usually impossible to show whether individual settlements were occupied continuously from the late prehistoric, Romano-British or early post-Roman periods. Some *areas* of the Island were certainly settled continuously but only in a very few cases are specific *sites* known to have been occupied in both the Roman and medieval periods (e.g. at Bowcombe and Carisbrooke); even then such occupation was not necessarily continuous. Nevertheless, over 50 of the 126 Island manors recorded in Domesday Book bear the same names as dispersed settlements of 1–5 dwellings shown on the 1790s drawings and many more dispersed settlements whose names are not recorded in Domesday Book probably also date from the Anglo-Saxon period (as suggested by their place-names). Many small, dispersed settlements were established as a result of more systematic exploitation of waste or clearance of woodland in the later Anglo-Saxon, medieval and post-medieval periods. Examples include green-edge and common-edge settlements throughout the Island and various farmsteads with names such as 'Heathfield Farm' and 'Newbarn Farm', the latter associated with downland clearance. Occasionally, hamlets and individual farmsteads of late-medieval or post-medieval origin can be dated fairly accurately, such as Week Farm (established *c*.1580) and Newbarn Farm, Calbourne (established *c*.1630), but mostly it is only possible to suggest a broad date-range for the origins of such settlements, based on the evidence of place-names and nearby field patterns. Settlements were still being established or greatly expanded in the 19th century, including rural villages and hamlets at Newbridge, Porchfield and Marks Corner, seaside villages at Bembridge, Seaview, Totland and Gurnard, and larger seaside resorts at Ryde, Sandown, Shanklin and Ventnor.

Identifying cultural zones in the Isle of Wight

Although settlement types can be discussed relative to the Island as a whole, discrete settlement landscapes can also be recognised *within* the Island. In many cases differences in settlement patterns correspond at least to some extent with '1790s HLC Areas' although these areas were defined on the basis of post-medieval variations in enclosure patterns. My research has demonstrated that the Island contains a great diversity of cultural landscapes within a very small space, closely linked to differences in terrain but also influenced by antecedent patterns and changing land uses, with internal variety possibly being intensified by insularity. These cultural zones have particular patterns of settlement and combinations of historic landscape components, many of ancient origin. Some 'preferred settlement areas' appear to have remained constant over a long period from later prehistory into the early medieval period, including the *Bowcombe, Carisbrooke & Medina Valley* zone, the fringes of the *Shalcombe, Wellow & Thorley* zone and the Brading area. The existence of other cultural zones by the time of Domesday or earlier can be demonstrated, for instance the *Parkhurst & Northwood* zone, including the wood pasture and heathland of Parkhurst Forest, and the *Whippingham, Fairlee & Staplers* zone embracing several extensive, unsettled and conjoined commons.

Conclusions

The research described above has demonstrated that Camden's assessment of the Island's diversity at the end of the 16th century was undoubtedly correct. It is clear that the Isle of Wight possesses idiosyncratic features which may derive not so much from 'islandness' *per se* as from 'peripherality', an attribute shared by islands and peninsulas which generally appear to have more distinctive *pays* than central and inland areas. Peripherality may be one reason why the 'great replanning' of settlements in the late Anglo-Saxon period identified in the Midlands by Brown and Foard (1998) did not occur on the Isle of Wight. Some of the settlement characteristics which the Island shares with Devon and East Anglia may be indicators of 'peripherality', such as the 'linked farmsteads' which are common in Devon and the 'streets' and green-edge settlements which can be found in East Anglia. Although the lack of a 'great replanning' in areas outside the *Central Province* could be perceived as reflecting a social conservatism associated with insular and peripheral localities, these areas may have developed different but equally valid responses to the economic and social challenges of the middle and late Saxon periods (Rippon 2007, 120–1). A specific factor affecting the evolution of the landscape on the Isle of Wight after the Norman Conquest and into the post-medieval period may have been different patterns of lordship and land ownership. During the medieval period the proportion of land devoted to arable agriculture on the Island appears to have been less than in the Midlands and there was much rough downland and heathland grazing although open field arable agriculture was practised. In this respect the Island was not dissimilar to Hampshire (Lewis 1995, 10) but enclosure processes affecting both open fields and common pasture were different to those in Hampshire, with more early piecemeal enclosure and very little parliamentary enclosure. These different processes, as well as underlying differences in topography, have resulted in a landscape character which is distinct from that of the adjacent mainland. The short stretch of the Solent which separated the Island from the mainland may have had an influence greatly in excess of the actual distance, forming a cultural boundary equivalent to that of the Blackdown-Quantock Hills in the West Country and the Gipping-Lark valleys in East Anglia, these being two natural boundaries which had profound effects on local cultural landscapes (Rippon 2008, 267).

My research has contributed to the limited number of studies dealing with local regions outside the *Central Province* and emphasises the variety that can result from the interplay of political, economic, antecedent and geographical factors. The research has shown that distinct cultural zones or *pays* can exist within a very small area and that study of a local region can pick up subtle differentiation in cultural responses which would not register at provincial or sub-provincial level. It has also contributed to a clearer understanding of the extent and distribution of medieval open field on the

Island and of processes affecting the enclosure of fields and grazing lands in the medieval and post-medieval periods. More work remains to be done on the changing settlement pattern, but it is clear that the Isle of Wight does not simply echo the regional pattern on the adjacent mainland. Distinctive features include the variety of its cultural landscapes, enclosure patterns which bear more similarity to Devon than to neighbouring Hampshire and a settlement pattern composed of diverse elements. Physical factors have helped to shape the Island's diverse settlement landscapes but antecedent patterns and cultural influences have nearly always been of equal or greater importance. In summary, detailed study of the Island's historic landscape contributes to a more nuanced understanding of Rackham's *Ancient Countryside*, and reinforces Rippon's (2012, 3–5) conclusion that historic landscape characterisation can be a valuable tool for past-oriented landscape analysis.

References

Abbreviations

PIWNHAS	Proceedings of the Isle of Wight Natural History & Archaeological Society
RCHME	Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, England

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