

## STANMER: A RESTRUCTURED SETTLEMENT

by Heather Warne

*Stanmer village today is a single street of 20 flint and brick built dwellings in neat terraces, together with a combined village stores and cafe, and a tenant farm. It is owned in its entirety by Brighton Corporation, who allow free public access in the surrounding park land. The open parkscape, dotted with trees, and the Palladian mansion set against a magnificent backdrop of beech and yew, was designed in the 18th century by the Pelham family: but research into earlier sources shows that it was not the Pelhams, but their predecessors, the Michelbornes, who first prepared the ground that enabled this present landscape to take shape.*

### THE VILLAGE IN 1608, AND ITS ANTECEDENTS

It was the catch-all phrase 'Deserted Medieval Village' which inspired an investigation in 1986 of the evolution of settlement in Stanmer village.<sup>1</sup> This took place on two fronts. On the one hand the hummocky field rising gently to the west of the village street was surveyed and was found to contain an assemblage of house platforms and the indentation of a former road running east to west uphill from the village. On the other hand the settlement history of Stanmer Parish was investigated from documentary sources in order to propose an approximate time scale for the desertion. This paper sets forth that documentary evidence and shows that, unlike Hangleton which has been shown to have been subject to a gradual desertion throughout the medieval period,<sup>2</sup> Stanmer was still a viable community at the close of the Tudor period.<sup>3</sup> It is today a viable and cohesive community. It is, however, a restructured community, and this restructuring was achieved in the first half of the 17th century.

#### *Documentary Evidence: the 1608 Survey*

After the Dissolution of the Monasteries the

Stanmer Estate, which had been owned by the Canons of South Malling, came into crown hands. The demesnes, that is, the manor house and its accompanying farm land, were leased out almost straight away in 1545 to Sir Thomas Palmer along with extensive other possessions of the former canons. He in turn sub-let them in 1547 to John Michelborne of Westmeston and Richard Michelborne, his son, of Broadhurst in Horsted Keynes, for a term of 80 years.<sup>4</sup> The overall ownership of the estate remained with the crown, however, until 1615 when it was purchased by John Michelborne of London, acting on behalf of his brother Richard of Broadhurst, both of whom were great-grandsons of the original lessee John Michelborne.<sup>5</sup>

In 1608 a survey was made by Thomas Marshall, gent., Surveyor of the King's Possessions, in order to assess with accuracy the Crown assets at Stanmer. The resulting document, a written survey (not a map), provides the whole basis for the present study of the topographical and demographic changes at Stanmer in the 17th century. Of the various extant copies, only one is a full length original.<sup>6</sup> All the others were contemporary abstracts and are therefore not referred to separately in this paper.<sup>7</sup>

TABLE 1  
The Stanmer Survey of 1608

Total arab. acres	Name of tenant	No. of virgates	Acres in Chisselden Laine	Acres in Middle Laine	Acres in West Laine	No. of sheep on the down	No. of beasts in pasture	House	Cottage	Barn	'Hortus' Garden	Croft	Ann. rent*	Ann. lease value	Freehold	Copyhold	
6	Thomas Austen (the same)	0.5	2	2	2	12	1						4d		/	/	
13	John Anstie	1	4	4	5	25	2	/		/	/	0.5r	2s 8d	30s	/	/	
0	Edward Atherall							/			/	0.5r	5s + g	75s	/	/	
0	William Atherall							/			/	10p	8d	13s 4d	/	/	
16	John Burtenshaw	16a						/			/		4d	10s	/	/	
(36)	Thomas Burtenshaw	3						?		/	/		7s 4d		/	/	
39.5	Richard Challoner	3	12a	13.5	14	75	6	/		/	/	1r	14s 8d	£10 8s	/	/	
1r			1r										+h +ch				
27.5	John Frend	2	9	9.5	9	50	4			/	/	0.5a	10s 8d	£7 3s	/	/	
27.5	John Godley	3	12	12	12.5	75	6			/	/	0.5r	16s	£9 12s	/	/	
0	William Grinier								/	/	/	1r	6d	10s	/	/	
13	Thomas Hawkins	1	4	5.5	3.5	30	2	/		/	/	1r	5s 4d	£3 18s	/	/	
45.5	Thomas Holmewood	3.5	15	15.5	15	87.5	7			/	/	1r	21s	£11 17s	/	/	
19	Nicholas Jackett	1.5	7	5.5	6.5	37.5	3			/			7s	£5 14s	/	/	
													+c +h				
1.5	John Jorden sen.		0.5		1			/		/	/	1a	11½d	£1 0 11	/	/	
19	John Jorden	1.5	6.5	6	6.5	37.5	3	/		2	/	(1)1a	7s 4d	£7 15s	/	/	
												(2)1r					
0	William Keate									/	/	0.5r	4d	10s	/	/	
(5)	Henry Lucas	#	3	2		9	1	/		/	/	1r	3s 9d	£5 13 4	/	/	
(48)	John Michelborne	4				(100)	(8)			/					/	/	
24	John Michelborne	2	/	/	/	50	4						10s	£6 2s	/	/	
12	Laurence Michelborne	1	/	/	/	25	2	/				/	5s	73s	/	/	
42	Sir Richard Michelborne	3.5	/	/	/	87.5	7	1.5		/	/	/	18s 4d	£11 11s	/	/	
													+c +h				
0	Richard Marten									/	/	0.5r	4d	10s	/	/	
6	John Martin	0.5	2	2	2	12	1						2s 6d	30s	/	/	
85#	Nicholas Prior	6.5	/	/	/	175	14	/		/	/	/	32s 3d	£31 10s	/	/	
		+7															
0	Nicholas Prior jun.									/	/	0.5a	4d	13s 4d	/	/	
25a	Richard Penticost/Pankhurst	2	9a	8	8	50	4	/		/	/	3r	10s + c	£7 5s	/	/	
1.5r			1.5r										+h +g				
6	John Smith	0.5	2	2	2	12	1	/	/	/	/	0.5a	4s 6d	£5 1 8	/	/	
													+0.5a	+c +h			
0	Thomas Tester							/		/	/	0.5a	8d	13s 4d	/	/	
67a	Richard Towner	5	24	19a	23a	125	10	2		2	2	4 cro.	£1 6 9	£17 8 4	/	/	
1r				3r	1.5r								=2r10p				
24	Stephen Tull	2	8	8	8	50	4	/		/	/	3r	10s + c	£7 19s	/	/	
													+h +g				
0	Henry Tulley							/		/	/		6d	14s	/	/	
0	Francis Walsh							/		/	/	1r	6d	14s	/	/	
13	Elizabeth Wood alias Dyne	1	4.5	4	4.5	25	2	1.5		/	2	2	1r + 0.5r	6s	£4 6 8	/	
631		50	Totals						22	5	20	19	25 <sup>n</sup>	32 crofts			
													= 10a 0r 20p				
													(inc. 4 unspecified acreages)				
													= 11a approx.				

\* Rents in kind: c = cock, ch = chicken, g = gander, h = hen.

# Henry Lucas' parcel of virgate is probably matched with Nicholas Prior the elder's loose parcel.

+ John Burtenshaw's 16 acres are reckoned as one virgate.

n The village houses and gardens reckoned as one acre. Total thus for all the village lands is 631 + 11 + 1 = 643 acres.

The survey lists each landholder and his property including a demesne farm of 93 acres and thereby comprehensively describes the entire parish, with the exception of the land of Hodshrove Farm (92 acres south of Coldean Lane) which was held of the Manor of Falmer. The essential information of the 1608 Survey is reproduced here in table form (Table 1). The demesne, or Manor, farm is not included in Table 1 but is discussed in 'Correlation with the modern topography' below. Those who wish to pursue further the early history of Stanmer should consult the original document themselves for it contains a certain amount of peripheral information which cannot be reproduced in table form. The social structure of the village, insofar as it can be judged, is discussed in 'The Restructuring of Stanmer' below.

The standard unit of land tenure in Sussex was usually termed a 'virgate' or 'yardland', words that were synonyms in effect. The actual acreage of a standard unit differed widely from area to area. In the downland it was usually small, as at Stanmer where it was an approximate 12 acres. 'Virgate' was the term favoured in the 1608 Survey and is therefore the term used in this paper. At the time of the survey the four freeholders and the thirty copyholders all held their land directly from the crown, to whom the rents detailed in Column 15 were payable. The demesnes owed a separate sum of £18 18s 8d to the Crown but this is not detailed in Table 1.

Copyholds, freeholds and leases of demesnes or other large estates were the three forms of land tenure that usually enjoyed a written acknowledgement of title. Further subletting both of demesnes and of freeholds and copyholds did take place, however, but they were either by undocumented agreement made in front of witnesses or they were marked by ephemeral documents that have generally not survived. It is implicit from the parish register analysis and from the analysis of Sir Richard Michelborne's later activities at Stanmer (see below) that he was not in fact resident there as demesne farmer in 1608. It is equally implicit

from the parish register that many of the copyholders had sublet their properties. No mention whatsoever is made of these sub-lets, demesnes or otherwise, in the Stanmer Survey. They carried no weight of law and were of no interest to the King's Surveyor. They may have been noted in the contemporary court book of the Manor, but unfortunately this has not survived.

In Table 1 the precise acreages of arable land and crofts is reproduced if it is contained in the survey. However, the survey often simply states 'x acres dispersed in Chisselden, Middle and West Laines'. In these cases the presence of arable in each Laine is indicated by a tick, as is the presence of crofts where their acreage is not given. The term 'barn' (*horreum* in the original) may be misleading. Where land holdings were small, as at Stanmer, the village barns may have been little more than large sheds, or maybe the granary stores set on staddle stones which have now all but disappeared from the countryside.

The Stanmer Survey is in Latin but presents no difficulty with translation except in the term *hortus* which I have therefore left untranslated in Table 1. *Messuagium* and *domus mancionalis* are translated as house, and *cottagium* as cottage. *Hortus* and *gardinium* might have been synonymous but for the fact that in several entries in the survey they are clearly separate entities. After 1733, when deeds were drafted in English the term 'backside' is often used for what may be *hortus* here. 'Barnyard' is a possible interpretation, and is the one favoured in this discussion. Alternatively, our modern usage of the word 'garden' may be misleading. In 1608 the *hortus* at Stanmer may have been the traditional cottage garden, while *gardinium* may have been a walled or otherwise guarded area for vegetables. An apple orchard might also be considered—a fairly common adjunct to the rural cottage in Sussex in former centuries where cider-making was prevalent. At all events, we should keep an open mind to the various possibilities until a proper interpretation can be established.

In the case of Thomas Burtenshaw's

freehold no messuage or dwelling house as such was enumerated with his three virgates, but the simple term 'tenementum'—a holding—was used instead. Freeholds were often defined rather loosely, however, and, as Burtenshaw's residency in the village is implied by parish register analysis (see Table 2), this may well mean one more village house bringing the total up to 28.

Although the nature of manorial tenure needs to be grasped in order to interpret the documentary source, it is not intended in this paper to cling to the old terminology. The essential point to be learnt from the 1608 survey is that the virgates enumerated at Stanmer were at that date in the hands of the Stanmer villagers, for them to use and enjoy, whether they were freeholders, copyholders or unnamed sub-tenants. The land involved will generally therefore be referred to as the village or the villagers' lands. By the same token the demesnes are referred to as the Manor Farm, or similar.

The 1608 Survey shows therefore that Stanmer was a small but viable community supported by the sheep/corn husbandry typical of the locality at that time. The village contained 27 (or 28) dwellings, 25 gardens, 20 barns, 19 backyards (or ?barnyards), and 32 crofts totalling 11 acres, at that date. The arable lands of 50 virgates totalling 631 acres, the cattle pastures of 80 acres, and the sheep pastures of 120 acres were held by 21 of the 32 villagers. The remaining 11 land owners were 'cottagers', with little or no arable land and no pasturage rights. The village also contained a Manor House whose farm land of 93 acres was held physically separate from the village lands. The topographical analysis (see below), shows that this lay on the south side of the parish, together with its sheep down of 300 acres.<sup>8</sup> The survey makes no mention of glebe and it is not clear whether the glebe as shown on the 1839 Tithe Map, and the parsonage house, were included in the above statistics or not.<sup>9</sup> In view of the fact that Stanmer had come into crown hands as an erstwhile monastic estate it seems likely that the 1608 survey did in fact cover the later glebe.

#### *Documentary evidence: the Parish Register*

The small size and the compact nature of the estate meant that it was worthwhile taking evidence from the contemporary parish register in support of the survey.<sup>10</sup> This has been analysed fully and tabulated.<sup>11</sup> It shows that of the 32 persons listed in 1608 as holding land in Stanmer village, one was the tenant of the Manor farm, approximately 20 were members of families living in the village, and 11 lived elsewhere. Ten houses belonging to non-residents were potentially available to let (see Table 2), and parish register analysis shows that there were at least 14 resident families in the village who were not landowners there and who therefore needed houses to rent.

Some of each group, both the resident owners and the resident occupiers had elderly relatives still alive in 1608. The community also contained a handful of miscellaneous single persons—servants, itinerant workers etc, whose presence in Stanmer is indicated by entries in the burial register 1608–1630. Some of the resident landowners were themselves elderly in 1608, and two of the houses were described as 'in a state of decay'. All in all, however, the parish register shows that the number of separate households in the village was slightly higher than the number of houses available. This indicates that there were instances of multiple occupation and relatives living in, proving beyond doubt that the 27 dwellings enumerated in the 1608 survey represented a viable and living village.

#### *The earlier perspective*

Analysis of the total land resource of the parish and of the units of tenure indicates that there was a probable Domesday population in Stanmer of 27–34 families. This statement relies upon a correlation of the Saxon land grant of c. 765 AD with the later bounds of Stanmer parish, and with the wealden land of Stanmer Manor, which was known later as the Manor of South Malling Lindfield. The textual critiques and the field work already carried out on the Anglo-Saxon boundaries of Stanmer by E. E.

TABLE 2  
Parish Register Information Re. 1608 Landholders

Landholder 1608	No. of virgates	House	Cottage	Partner's name	Date of Mar.	Entered as parent	Burial		Residency in 1608				
							Husb.	Wife	N	Y	P	H	
Thos. Austen	0.5					1599-1602	1610		/				
John Anstie	1	/		Joan Winckefeld, wid. (2 entries)	1583 1616		1627	1630	/				
Edw. Atherall			/	Marg. Berricke	1602		1626		/				
Wm. Atherall		/		Alice		1605-1621		1624	/				
Jn. Burtenshaw	1	/							/				/
Thos. Burtenshaw	3			Joan		1607-1620			/				/
Ric. Challoner	3	/							/				/
John Frend	2								/				/
John Godley	3								/				/
Wm. Grinier	—		/	Joan Jurden	1597	1599-1615	1661	1621	/				/
Thos. Hawkins	1	/		Kath. Martin	1611		1612		/				/
Thos. Holmewood	3.5			Joan			1610	1609	/				/
Nic. Jackett	1.5								/				/
Jn. Jorden the elder	1.5 acres*	/		Joan		1582-1590	1626	1619	/				/
Jn. Jorden	1.5	/		Alice Gower	1599	1600-1621	1630		/				/
Wm. Keate	—		/						/				/
Hen. Lucas	#	/					1616	1616	/				/
Jn. Michelborne	6								/				/
La. Michelborne	1	/							/				/
Ri. Michelborne	3.5	1.5				1618-1622			/				1.5
Ric. Martin	—		/	Kath. Pegden	1568	1569,1587	1612		/				/
Jn. Martin	0.5								/				/
Nic. Prior	7	/		?Agnes		1564-1576	1618	?1610	/				/
Nic. Prior jun.	—		/	Ann		1588-1607	1612	1607	/				/
Ric. Penticost or Pankhurst	2	/							/				/
Jn. Smith	0.5	/	/	Mary Bradford	1602	1603-1606	1617		/				/
Thos. Tester	—		/	Margaret		1595-1604	1623	1621	/				/
Ric. Towner	5	2		Elizabeth		1593-1605			/				/
Ste. Tull	2	/							/				/
Hen. Tulley	—	/		Joan Humphrey	1619		1621		/				/
Fra. Walsh			/			1589-1591	1617		/				/
Eliz. Wood									/				/
al. Dyne	1	1.5		William		1579,1597	1608	1620	/				0.5
									Totals	12	14	6	10

N = No, Y = Yes, P = Probable, H = House to let

\* John Jorden the elder owns only 1.5 acres (not 1.5 virgates).

# Windmill only

Barker and Mary Holgate have been reappraised by further field work.<sup>12</sup> As a result, it appears that of the 49 villeins and 10 cottagers enumerated at Domesday under the Manor of Stanmer, no more than a maximum of 29 villeins and 5 cottagers may justifiably be ascribed to Stanmer village itself in 1086. The rest were

mainly in the Weald. We should probably also deduct at least two further villeins who, it appears, were elsewhere in the downland but who belonged to the Stanmer estate at Domesday, bringing the Stanmer total down to 27. These arguments, together with the evidence for the medieval period at Stanmer, will be

presented later in a separate paper.<sup>13</sup>

Anglo-Norman occupation of the wealden element of Domesday Stanmer, that is, of the Manor of South Malling Lindfield, was assessed by a study of the nature and the location of all the tenements of that manor.<sup>14</sup> Those that owed work-days to the downland part of the manor, at Stanmer, were generally seen to be an integral part of the Domesday estate and of an earlier origin than those that simply owed a money rent alone. As a result it appears that at least 19, possibly 20, Stanmer villeins were living in the parishes of Wivelsfield, Lindfield, Ardingly, West Hoathly and Worth in 1086. E. W. Holden was looking for a 'sizeable' Domesday population of 44 households at Hangleton and was perplexed when his excavations failed to find it.<sup>15</sup> A study of settlement and land tenure in the wealden parts of the Hangleton estate (if sufficient documents have survived to allow this), may well conclude that the downland part was by no means populous at Domesday.

In the early medieval period, although direct evidence is lacking, it is likely that the population increased somewhat from the Domesday figure. A critical factor which could have allowed this expansion was that the 'parent' village of Stanmer still had regular use not only of pasture land but also of meadow/brookland in the Weald. Both these facilities were in the parish of Wivelsfield. The gradual loss of this land, not least because of the assertiveness of the Wivelsfield residents in claiming it as their own, was a real blow to the land resource of Stanmer.<sup>16</sup> The loss of such wealden pastures should be regarded as a key factor in the subsequent impoverishment, depopulation, and re-structuring not only of Stanmer, but of many other downland communities.

The main lesson to be learnt, therefore, from the Saxon, Domesday and medieval evidence is that Stanmer's capacity to sustain a community was never very great. The 1608 village with 27 dwellings was similar in size to the Domesday village 500 years before. A rise in local population in the early medieval period may

have occurred, and may have left its mark on the ground, but only excavation could provide us with firm evidence.

#### *The location of the 1608 community*

The former arable land of Stanmer Manor House on the one hand (now the Brighton Corporation Nurseries), and the village street on the other, occupy two small combes opening east and south respectively onto the broadish valley which now forms the centre of the park (Fig. 1). The Manor Farm claimed the best protected site of the locality, but the village street is also well placed, protected by steep hills to the east and west. The church and the village pond stand at the juncture of the two combes, Stanmer House on the one side, the village on the other. Although rebuilt by the Pelham family in 1838, the church still occupies its ancient site.<sup>17</sup> The wording and format of the 1608 survey indicate that Stanmer was a nucleated settlement whose houses were located together, with no outlying habitation sites. A windmill had recently been erected, presumably near modern 'Millbank Wood'. Its land had been allocated out of the village arable laines, but it had no accompanying house, and the miller appears to have lived in the village.

The geography of the Parish, therefore, together with the evidence of the 1608 survey imply that the village has been firmly located in its present valley, and that the abandoned area of settlement west of the village street does indeed represent a large part of the former community as surveyed in 1608. A reference in 1662 to a village croft lying between 'the street and le weststreet' would seem to be in the area in question, if 'weststreet' was the road running westwards uphill from the village, the line of which has been confirmed by field survey.<sup>18</sup> The pasture field above the street, through which the old road used to run and in which the recent archaeological survey work has been carried out, was measured in 1839 as 8 acres 2 roods 6 perches. The sum of the two areas, the present street and the old field is therefore 9 acres 2

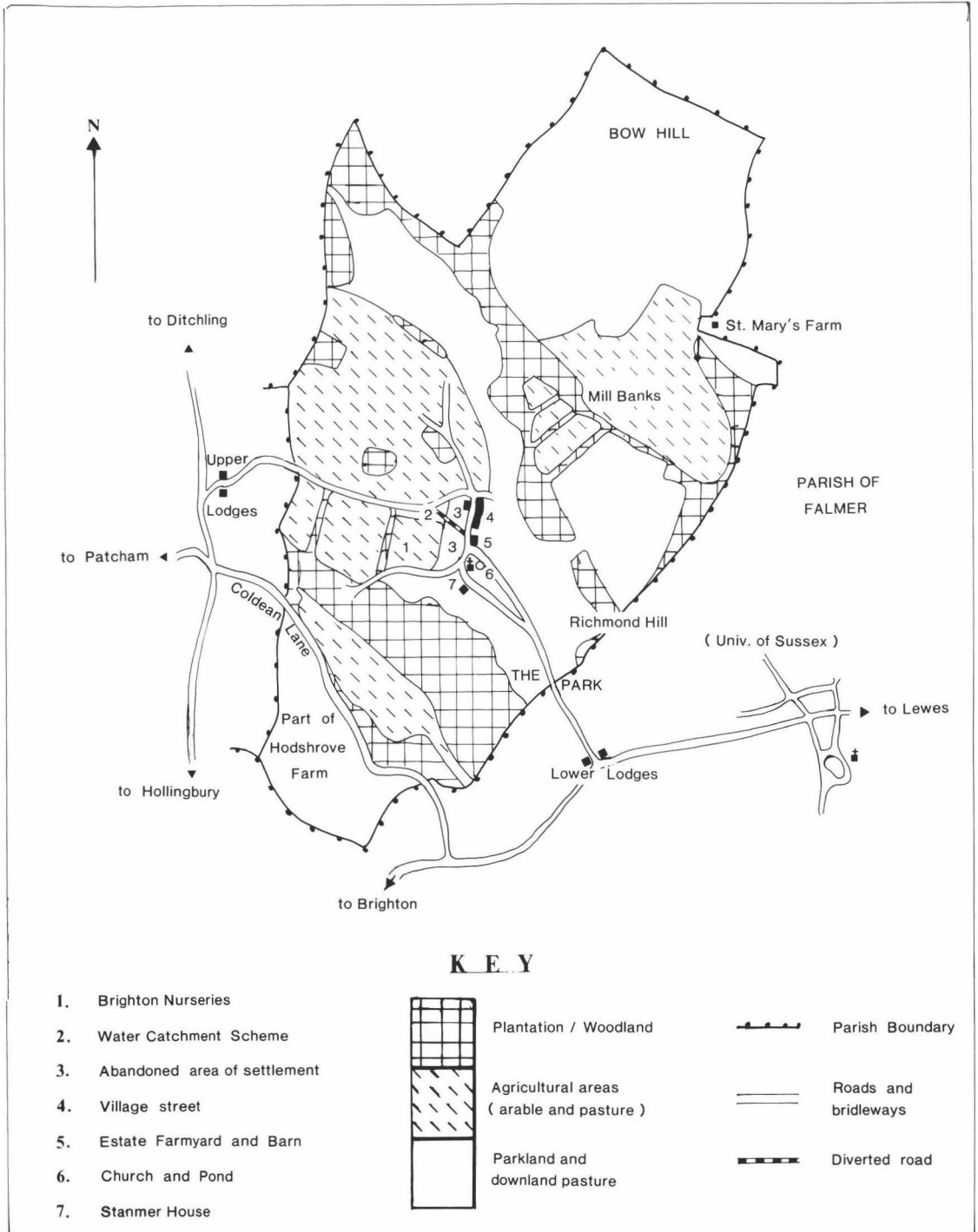


Fig. 1 Stanmer in the 18th and 19th centuries. The distribution of arable, pasture and woodland based on the 1st edition O.S. 25-inch map 1879, but it was essentially the same at the time of the 1839 Tithe survey, and is essentially the same today.

roods, 6 perches. This is not far short of the approximate 11 acres ascribed in 1608 to village crofts and is further indication that the core of the old village was indeed located here. One should also bear in mind, however, that there may have been further village settlement south-east of the pond, any signs of which would long since have been landscaped out of existence with the creation of the park.

## THE RESTRUCTURING OF STANMER

### *Stanmer in 1608, and the Michelborne family background*

The evidence so far assessed shows that in 1608 the villagers of Stanmer still retained for their own use the three large open arable fields in which they cultivated their virgates. Each virgate was made up of strips of approximately 1 acre or less apiece, lying in various places throughout the three fields. These arable lands, together with their sheep down and their cattle pastures comprised approximately two-thirds of the entire estate/parish, leaving the lord of the Manor the remaining one-third. Little had changed, therefore, in the basic structure of the parish since Saxon times, or earlier. However, the forces which were soon to terminate this primitive state of affairs were already endemic.

The pressure of overpopulation and the loss of extra pasture land in the Weald had reduced the virgates to 12 acres and had seriously overstocked the sheep down and cattle pastures. Farming can only have been at subsistence level for the average Stanmer family. As a result, conflation of single virgates into larger holdings was already well in hand by 1608. This had introduced landholders to Stanmer who were not resident and whose main use for a land stake in the parish was to diversify or expand a farming concern that was centred elsewhere. Among their number was the lord of the manor himself, Sir Richard Michelborne and other members of his family. By 1608 they were establishing a toe-hold in the village lands, while the Prior family who, it

is suggested below were the actual occupants of the manor farm at that date, also claimed a large slice of the village lands. Moreover, if common-field regulations had lapsed, it is likely that contiguous strips of arable were being let in blocks. Pockets of the Stanmer 'open' fields may well have begun to be cultivated separately as embryonic modern rectangular fields. Unfortunately, there is no documentary evidence to provide us with such details.

Stanmer was by no means unique in accommodating these trends. Colin Brent's demographic study of the downland region from 1540 to 1640 has shown that the inelasticity of the sheep/corn husbandry to which the region was tied, was, almost everywhere, leading to population decline and the conflation of virgates into block holdings. This in turn enabled progressive farmers to buy up whole neighbourhoods and run them as one farm, just as was happening at Stanmer.<sup>19</sup>

Sir Richard Michelborne, the man who set the modernisation of Stanmer in motion, was no newcomer to the doctrine of agricultural improvement. He was already the 4th generation of the foremost 'improving' family in central Sussex. John, his great-grandfather, Richard, his grandfather, and Richard his father, had all concentrated their efforts on the untilled 'assart' lands taken from former demesne estates in the Ditchling area: Court Garden Farm, Fragbarrow Farm and Shortfrith Chase among them. At the same time they acquired several manors in the High Weald of central Sussex, while the lease of the Stanmer estate with its sheep/corn bias must have provided a balance to complement their wealden concerns.<sup>20</sup> At Ditchling, Sir Richard's father had found himself in trouble with the guardians of a local charity for paying scant regard to their dues in his eagerness to improve the land.<sup>21</sup> Sir Richard himself, at the same time as buying up the Stanmer estate, managed by degrees to acquire seven-eighths of the Manor of Keymer, a vast tract of Sussex stretching right up to the Surrey border, and containing much unenclosed land.



Michelborne immediately set about a scheme for enclosure to encompass the modern Burgess Hill area, part of Haywards Heath and Copthorne Common in Worth, but died before anything came of the scheme.<sup>22</sup> Had he achieved his aims, the modern landscape in those parts of Sussex would have been very different.

The chief residence of the Michelborne family was Broadhurst in Horsted Keynes, even after they had acquired Stanmer. From Broadhurst Sir Richard conducted his affairs, playing a prominent role in the County, and becoming Sheriff of Sussex in 1620. He was an ardent Puritan, as evidenced by the long preamble of his will. His son William continued in the faith, taking an active part in the Parliamentary cause in local politics.<sup>23</sup> Sir Richard's residency at Broadhurst in 1608, rather than at Stanmer is confirmed by parish register analysis. His ten children born before 1614 were baptised and/or buried at Horsted Keynes.<sup>24</sup> After he had purchased Stanmer Manor in 1616, however, three further children were born to him and his wife Cordelia. These were all baptised at Stanmer between 1618 and 1622.<sup>25</sup> If not a permanent resident, he was clearly by then a frequent visitor with a close interest in the parish. The presentation of Stephen Goffe, a strong Puritan, as minister at Stanmer during this period is further indication of Michelborne's local involvement.

#### *The Michelborne purchases, 1615–1640*

The 1608 Survey indicates that a regular Court Baron was held at Stanmer at that date. The records of this court would have allowed us to trace Sir Richard Michelborne's part in the land deals there, but unfortunately they are not extant. The crucial period of Michelborne's activities was likely to have been the few years following his absolute purchase of the Manor in 1616. For whereas in 1608 he had only acquired 3½ virgates (42 acres) of village arable land, by 1635 he was able to pass on to his son an astonishing total of 374 arable acres (34½ virgates). As Lord of the Manor he *owned* them

all from the moment he purchased the estate, but to be able to *use* them as he wished it was vital that he acquired and then extinguished the copyholds, displacing their occupants as he went.

Some light on the Michelborne land deals is shed by a deed of 1634–5 executed as a preliminary to the marriage settlement of his son, William Michelborne, which contains a resumé of the story. The deed was part of a legal process to ensure that the land which Sir Richard Michelborne had acquired would stay as an entity in the family.<sup>26</sup> This land was described as:

32 yards of land in Stanmer of which 9 were purchased of Richard Prior and Thomas Awcocke, 4 of John Michelborne, 4 of Thomas Burtenshaw, 4 of Richard Challoner, gent., 4 of (blank) Towner's widow, 3 of John Godley, and 2 of Thomas Jeffery; also lands whereof 1 yard was late Holcoumbe's, ½ yard late Gower's, a croft, and a leg [sic] of land late Burtenshaw's, a croft late Fyshers, a croft called the Parson's croft, a croft late Godlies, 2 yards of Stephen Tull, 1 small piece late Tullies, a house where Richard Carter dwelt, and a croft called Smithes Croft.

In Tables 3, 4 and 5, this information is set out against that of the 1608 survey, from which it is instantly clear that the main thrust of Michelborne's purchases had been among the owners of more than 1 virgate (or 'yard'), many of whom were not resident in the village (Table 3). Of the owners of half or one virgate in 1608 (Table 4), John Burtenshaw's 16 acres had been acquired by Sir Richard in 1622.<sup>27</sup> John Anstie and his wife died in 1627 and 1630 respectively, and their virgate is presumably 'the yard late Holcoumbes'—Holcoumbe being a regular local 'alias' for the Ansty family. The virgates of Thomas Aucocke, Thomas Jeffery and (blank) Gower are not readily identifiable against the 1608 statistics (due to inheritance or purchase between 1608 and 1635, of which there is no extant record).

Gentlemen's negotiations were therefore conducted, presumably with relative ease in

order to net these virgates into Michelborne's bag. But what of the land stake of Nicholas Prior? (See Table 1). Here was a landowner who in 1608 not only held the largest stake in the parish outside the Manor Farm, but who was also a resident. His arable land amounted to 83 acres and he had pasture for 14 beasts and 175 sheep. Only in its capacity to raise sheep did the demesnes surpass him. The parish register shows him to be the second generation, at least, of a local family and the father of many children baptised at Stanmer. In 1591 his daughter Joan (baptised in 1571) married one Nicholas Hider

and the couple went on to produce their own children, whose baptisms were recorded at Stanmer until 1601. Hider's family was currently farming the manor farm of Ditchling, the neighbouring manor to the north.<sup>28</sup> Assuming that the Stanmer Manor Farm was in the hands of tenant farmers before the advent of Sir Richard Michelborne, Nicholas Prior and his family are certainly the most likely candidates for the post.

At the time of the 1608 Survey the Prior holdings were all in the hands of Nicholas the father and none in the hands of his son, also

TABLE 3  
The Michelborne Purchases  
(from owners of more than one virgate)

1608 tenant owning more than 1 virgate	No. of virgates	House	Cottage	Barn	'Hortus'	Garden	Croft	Residency in 1608			Michelborne purchases			Pelham purchase
								N	Y	P*	prior to 1633	1633 to 1665	1666 to 1700	1700 to 1736
Thomas Burtenshaw	3	?	/	/	/	/	/	/				4		
Richard Challoner	3	/	/	/	/	/	1r	/				4		
John Frend	2		/	/	/	/	0.5a	/					2	
													1654	
John Godley	3		/	/	/	/	0.5r	/				3		
Thomas Holmewood	3.5		/	/	/	/	1r			/				0.5
														1665
Nicholas Jackett	1.5		/	/	/	/	(1) 1a (2) 1r	/					1.5	
													1654	
													0.5	
													1659	0.5
John Jorden	1.5	/		2	/	/	/	/						1675
Jn. Michelborne gent.	6		/	/	/	/	/	/				4	2	
													1639	
Sir Ric. Michelborne	3.5	1.5	/	/	/	/	/	/						
Nicholas Prior	7	/	/	/	/	/	/	/		/		4.5		
Richard Penticost	2	/	/	/	/	/	3r	/					2	
													1639	
Richard Towner	5	2		2	2	2	4 crofts = 2r 10p			/		4	1	
													1634	
Stephen Tull	2	/	/	/	/	/	3r	/				2		
<i>Owners after 1608</i>														
Thomas Aucocke												4.5		
Thomas Jeffery												2		
John Wymark													2	
													1633	
Barnard Chatfield													2	
													1633	
Totals											32	13	1	0

\* N = No, Y = Yes, P = Probable

called Nicholas. The son's wife had recently died (in 1607) and the son followed her to the grave in 1612, leaving the father to linger on until 1618. The entry recording his burial at Stanmer in 1618 marks the last of the formerly numerous Priors. It was Richard Prior, a younger son of Nicholas the elder who inherited his father's virgates at Stanmer in 1618. Born in 1568 he had himself been a Stanmer parent from 1589 to 1597 and yet was not a landholder there in 1608. His fortunes were clearly therefore pinned elsewhere, rendering him willing in 1618 to sell his Stanmer inheritance. Significantly, the year of Nicholas Prior's death was the very year that Michelborne's own residence at Stanmer is implied by the parish registers.

Sir Richard Michelborne died in 1638 having already settled Stanmer on his son William. A Court book was commenced with the new Lordship and runs from 1633 to 1736.<sup>29</sup> It implies that the Prior holdings had been dissipated before coming back into Michelborne's bag. But whatever the mechanics of this process, their acquisition was of major significance to Michelborne, enabling him to sweep the board in Stanmer without fear of local rivalry.

A close study of the Stanmer Court Book reveals most of the paths by which the remaining copyhold virgates were acquired during William Michelborne's lordship. Surrenders of the various properties were made in the manorial

TABLE 4  
The Michelborne Purchases  
(from owners of half, or one virgate)

1608 tenant owning half or 1 virgate	No. of virgates	House	Cottage	Barn	'Hortus'	Garden	Croft	Residency in 1608			Michelborne purchases			Pelham purchase	
								N	Y	P	prior to 1633	1633 to 1665	1666 to 1700	1700 to 1736	
Thomas Austen	0.5														
John Anstie	1	/		/	/		0.5r								0.5
John Burtenshaw	1	/				/			/						
Thomas Hawkins	1	/		/	/	/	1r			/					
Laurence Michelborne	1	/					/		/						
John Martin	0.5								/						0.5
John Smith	0.5	/	/		/	/	(1) 0.5a (2) 0.5a								croft hse., 1634, 0.5a, 1659
Elizabeth Wood al. Dyne	1	1.5		/	2	2	(1) 0.5r (2) 1r			/					1683*
<i>Post-1608 owners</i>															
(Blank) Gower	0.5														0.5
(Blank) Prise	1														1
Homewood Prior	0.5														0.5
William Pankhurst	0.5														1633 0.5 1633
Total											2.5	1.5	0	0	
Carried over from Table 3											32	13	1	0	
Grand total											34.5	14.5	1	0	
= 50 virgates															

\* Cot. garden and croft only (no virgate)

court in the usual way, but fines and heriots were waived. The persons who were taking up the tenancies were in fact lawyers, relatives and friends of Michelborne who was himself of the Inner Temple. Simon Stone of the Middle Temple, John Rowe junior, Anthony Stapley and Laurence Ashburnham all played prominent parts, while the key agent was John Coby of Lewes. The customary or copyhold tenures were then extinguished, although this was not always noted in the Court Book.

Tables 3 and 4 show that of the land stock of 50 virgates, 34½ were settled on William Michelborne in 1635 while another five were already in his hands, as evidenced by the Court Book. He had succeeded his father as resident, or semi-resident squire, and the baptisms of three of his children were registered at Stanmer between 1639 and 1643. By 1639 his grand total of village land was 44½ virgates.

#### *The effects of the Michelborne take-over, 1640–1656*

The purchasing of a virgate meant not just the acquisition of the arable land but the complete package—house, garden, barn, barnyard and crofts of land—as well as the sheep and cattle pastures that went with it. By 1639, therefore, William Michelborne owned 16 of the 27 village dwellings, 18 of the 20 village barns, 18 of the 19 village ‘herti’ (? barnyards) and 18 of the 25 village gardens. He also owned 23 of the 32 village crofts. The Court Books show that he was keen to acquire spare village crofts which were then hived off into his estate, leaving the remaining village houses with no land other than a small garden.

The key to ‘modernisation’ which ultimately allowed the parkscape to take shape at Stanmer was the extinguishment of the customary rights that were part and parcel of each tenant’s copyhold tenure. Their continued existence would have hampered Michelborne’s use of the customary pastures and rendered him unable to alter the basic distribution of farming practise around the parish. Although it was perfectly

feasible for customary rights to remain preserved in the name of the copyholders but the land to be farmed *en bloc* by an outsider, this must have been administratively tiresome. At Ditchling, for instance, from 1776 the tenantry sheep down was leased as a whole from a long list of copyholders, each of whom had to be paid a small compensation each year.<sup>30</sup>

There were by now virtually no independent farmers left in the community. The village now only farmed 66 out of the 631 arable acres available, while village pasturage rights were reduced to 125 sheep and 11 beasts. Michelborne by contrast could now raise over a 1,000 sheep on the village sheep downs as well as the 500 he may already have had on his demesne down of Cold Down, and he could pasture out 89 head of cattle in the former village ox pastures. Alternatively, having extinguished the copyhold tenures he was now free to tamper with the old customary order. He could convert the old sheep pastures to arable, if he so desired, or turn the village arable into a sheep walk. It is no wonder therefore that not only the redundant village dwellings, but, more significantly, the village barns, subsequently fell into decay. With no land left to till, no pastures and no crofts of which to support animals, the village had no further use for its barns. These structures must have been the first victims of the new regime—swept away, or simply left to decay while Michelborne reorganised the landscape and evolved an early prototype of the present estate farm with its capacious and centralised barns. By 1652 there were two barns remaining in village ownership, but they were the last, and from that date onwards no more barns were registered in the Court Books.<sup>31</sup>

How did this takeover affect the cottagers of Stanmer, those who in 1608 owned no arable land and no pasturage rights? (See Table 5). Virtually no impact appears to have been made upon them at first, and logically these were the families whose successors stayed on to become labourers on the Stanmer estate. In 1608 the village contained 10 such families having

dwelling accommodation but no arable land, while in 1640, Table 5 shows that their number had only reduced by one, to nine. Eight of their dwellings then survived in village ownership into Edward Michelborne's term as Lord of the Manor (1656–1700), but by the time Henry Pelham succeeded to the estate in 1713, only 4 remained. One by one these were then purchased when a convenient opportunity occurred, the last being the messuage and croft owned by the Jorden family. Astonishingly this dwelling was still complete with its tiny stake of 1½ acres in the arable fields of Stanmer, just as it had been in

1608 (See Table 1, John Jorden senior). The house and land had been handed down in the Jorden family until the death of Mary Jorden in 1736, whereupon her heir John Jorden of Seaford was persuaded by Thomas Pelham to relinquish this tiny but persistent relic of the past. The 1½ acres was, even in 1736 described as 'in le common laynes', but the addendum of 'in the occupation of Richard Banks and Thomas Pelham' infers that it was in fact being farmed as part of the Pelham estates, and that Mary Jorden had merely enjoyed its title and rentable value.<sup>32</sup>

To sum up, therefore, the first half of the

TABLE 5  
Cottagers

Tenants owning no virgates in 1608	Arable land	House	Cottage	Barn	'Hortus'	Croft	Croft	Residency in 1608			Michelborne purchases			Pelham purchase	
								N	Y	P	prior to 1633	1633 to 1665	1666 to 1700	1700 to 1736	
Edward Atherall		/			/	/	0.5r	/							
William Atherall		/				/	10p	/							*1
William Grinier			/		/	/	1r	/							1731
John Jorden sen.	1.5a	/		2	/	/	(1) 1a (2) 1r	/						*2	1675
William Keate			/			/	0.5r	/							*3
Henry Lucas	2a	/		/	/	/	1r								1736
Richard Martin			/			/	0.5r	/							
Nicholas Prior jun.			/			/	0.5a	/							
Thomas Tester		/				/	0.5a	/						*4	1675
Henry Tully		/				/	/	/					*5		
Francis Walsh		/		/		/	1r						1635	*6	*7
														1639	1704
<i>Unidentified (?from above)</i>															
Crofts late Fisher's, Godley's, the Parson's												pre-			
croft, house where Ric. Carter dwelt												1635			
Cot. and gdn. (death of Ric. Hide)													1659		
Cot. and gdn. (admission of Jas. Beckett)													1663		
Cot. and parcel late Maynard's, formerly Maynard's: admission of Geo. Stokes															1715

*Description in Court Book, 1633–1736*

\*1 Cot. and gdn.

\*2 Messuage, close and 0.5 acrs.

\*3 Messuage, croft and 1.5 acres in le common laynes

\*4 Messuage, garden and croft

\*5 Small piece late Tullies

\*6 Croft

\*7 Cottage and 8 rods

17th century had been drastic for Stanmer. The village community in 1608 had contained approximately 30 households which were equally divided into three classes:

- (1) farmers who were 'copyholders' or 'customary tenants' of the Manor, occupying their own land with pasturage rights.
- (2) farmers who were under-tenants of absentee copyholders of the Manor and who were therefore also occupying arable land for their own use, and probably also the pasturage rights.
- (3) 'Cottagers' with no arable land and no pasturage rights.

Classes (1) and (2) between them had 631 acres of arable land and 200 acres of pasture for their own use and benefit, that is, two-thirds of the total parish, while the tenant of the Manor farm only had the remaining one-third for his use.

In 1618, the tenant of the Manor Farm had become Lord of the Manor and in due course, by 1659, classes (1) and (2) had been entirely eliminated; the first by deciding to sell out, the second presumably by means of non-renewal of their leases when the expiry date arrived. Since the granting of copyhold leases was entirely at the will of the lord of the manor, the Michelbornes clearly had the whip hand in the matter. Class (3), although not immediately affected by loss of land, or a roof over their heads, nevertheless, were ultimately affected by a down-grading of their status. Formerly, they had lived by their labouring or craft skills, as part of a community of fellows; a community which shared the benefit of twice as much land as its most powerful member. A few decades later, they lacked even their crofts of land in the village street, and there was only the one powerful member left alongside themselves. Their immediate local status was thus reduced to the lowest possible level.

*The Michelbornes' final phase, 1656–1700*

William Michelborne died in 1656 and was succeeded by his son Edward. Apart from the 1½

acres still in the Jordan family's hands, all the arable land in the parish had been bought up by 1659. By 1665 the only separate households in the village were as follows, evidenced by the Hearth Tax Returns.<sup>33</sup>

Mrs Ann Michelborne	13 hearths
Mr Leversuch	4 hearths
Thomas Packham	3 hearths
Robert Smith	1 hearth
James Grindger	1 hearth
John Wakeline	1 hearth
John Walker	4 hearths

Mr Leversuch was the rector, and Messrs Smith, Grindger (Grinier) and Wakeline were clearly cottagers. Of the remaining two (Thomas Packham and John Walker) the former died in 1667 and was described at his burial as 'one of two tenants of Mr Michelborne's farm'. The deed had therefore already been done. A village of multiple occupancy of the land had been converted into a simple tenant farm with only two tenant families.

The three individuals in the 1665 returns who had one hearth each probably lived in the village cottages which at that date were still in separate copyhold ownership. We may suspect that Ann Michelborne's liability to 13 hearths may have included some of the village houses by then in her ownership. An inventory taken before the old Manor House was pulled down shows it to have been large and rambling, but even so, 13 hearths seems excessive for one unmodernised house.<sup>34</sup>

A deed of 1700 upon the sale of the Stanmer Estate to Peter Gott Esq. accredits the Manor with three messuages and ten cottages.<sup>35</sup> This type of deed, a 'fine', or 'final concord', was always imprecise in its property descriptions and can only be taken as a rough guide, but nevertheless, it accords fairly well with the Hearth Tax and the Court Book. The three messuages must represent the rectory and the two tenant farm houses. Of the 27 original village houses, 15 had been formerly owned by virgaters. These were by then surplus to

requirements and were no longer standing. This left 12 dwellings, two for the tenant farmers and ten for the cottagers. It is apparent, therefore, that as the humbler village dwellings came piecemeal into the Michelborne's net, though their copyhold customary tenures were extinguished, these dwellings did not immediately cease to exist. The estate needed its core of village families as labourers. A continuing population decline over the latter part of the century is implied however, by the parish register.

The number of parents producing children for baptism at Stanmer had declined dramatically since the previous century. Whereas between 1580 and 1620 there had been an average of 15 couples per decade producing children for baptism, in the decade 1660–1669, there were only six couples. From 1670 to 1689 there were four couples per decade, while from 1690 to 1699, only two village couples were producing children. This decline in the baptism rate of Stanmer villagers makes a striking contrast with the marriage register at Stanmer during the same period. For the parish church witnessed the union of a multitude of couples during the same period, portrayed in the parish register, not as locals, but as soldiers and their brides. Clearly therefore, the estate was being used as army quarters during these final decades of the 17th century—yet further proof that the restructuring of the community had already taken place. In the village itself, there must have been yet further diminution of the housing stock, paving the way for the complete refurbishing of the village street with 'estate' houses by the Pelhams.

In the final decades of the 17th century the Michelbornes' star began to wane. Of the 12 children of William and Ann Michelborne, eight died in childhood.<sup>36</sup> Three of the remaining four were girls, Ann, Sybil and Bridget. The only surviving boy, Edward, lived until he was 61, but without ever marrying. At his death, registered at Stanmer in 1700, his two surviving sisters therefore inherited the estate. Ann had since

died, and her former husband, John Martin 'of Hastings, gentleman' had married her younger sister Sybil, while Bridget remained unmarried. Although Sybil and John Martin had been involved enough with Stanmer to register their children's baptisms there between 1686 and 1689, this involvement had presumably not been sustained. At their brother's death in 1700, the two co-heiresses sold the estate to a London merchant, Peter Gott and thus the Michelborne family took their final bow.<sup>37</sup>

### CORRELATION WITH THE MODERN TOPOGRAPHY

It may usually be assumed that where parks were created in corn growing regions, they swallowed up large areas of former arable land. At Stanmer this was indeed so, while at the same time even more acres of sheep pasture in two blocks, demesne and tenantry, were re-shaped into wooded parkscape. Re-defining the precise area of Stanmer's early arable and pasture land is however, a difficult venture. Instead of ancient hedgerows, rooted in time, we find landscaped plantations. Their woodland rides wound prettily to assist the pleasures of daily exercise and their 'designer' fringes were set in neat waves to enhance the view from the house, thereby obscuring, for us, the early practicalities of the topography. The landscape historian's trusty friends the Tithe map and First Edition 6-inch O.S. map, usually such faithful 'mediums', fail to bridge past and present at Stanmer, where the parkscape was entrenched long before 1840. Earlier maps have not survived, and an estate map of 1799 is no more useful than the Tithe map for reconstructing an early 17th century topography.<sup>38</sup>

The old village centre is assumed to have been located in the area of the modern estate village, as discussed above. The following analysis examines the distribution of the former agricultural lands of the parish. It is not conclusive, however, and it should mark the

beginning of the search for Stanmer's early identity. The author would welcome further testing of the theses presented here. Figs. 1 and 2 are intended as a general guide to the reader, in order to identify the areas under discussion.

### *The Village Lands*

The 1608 survey has shown us that the village lands consisted at that date of ox pastures amounting to 80 acres, sheep downs of 120 acres and arable lands in three great fields, West, Middle and Chisselden Laines, totalling 631 acres. The grand total was 831 acres, approximately two-thirds of the parish.

To start with the arable, we find that just north of the village street today there is a large area of arable land. Somewhat to the north-east, on more hilly ground, there is another area currently under the plough, which was also under cultivation in 1839 at the time of the Tithe survey, known as 'Mill Banks', and today commemorated in the name Mill Bank Woods (See Fig. 1). This name refers back to the windmill which the 1608 survey tells us was erected on land allocated out of Chisselden Laine. The former mill thus indicates the general area of Chisselden Laine, while the map evidence suggests a possible continuity of arable farming there since the 17th century. Chisselden Laine may well have stretched east as far as the boundary with Falmer parish. In 1541 a title deed (? relating to Thomas Burtenshaw's freehold—see Table 1), refers to two acres of land, presumably arable, as being in Stanmer 'at Bormerhyll'.<sup>39</sup> This is modern Balmer hill on the eastern boundary of the parish.

There is thus clear evidence that one of the former arable fields of Stanmer, Chisselden Laine, occupied the central/eastern part of the parish, possibly stretching east to the boundary with Falmer. The location of this laine, on hilly land at some distance from the village, suggests that it may have been brought into cultivation relatively late in the life-span of the settlement. The name 'Chisselden', at face value, suggests an origin for the area as a 'stony wood pasture'. We

should therefore assume that Middle and West Laines occupied the favourable land to the north of Stanmer street and that they represent the oldest area of village cultivation.

Although the 1608 survey named the three great fields as West, Middle and Chisselden Laines, it should be noted that the landscape was ever changing and fluid, even without the creation of parkscapes. The 1541 deed already cited only in fact mentions West Laine by name. However, it does refer to some of the subdivisions of the great fields—the 'Long Furlong', and the 'Stonehoure Furlong'. It also mentions the 'Gouselands' (probably then arable, but the name suggests it was once common pasture) and 'Stanmere Lott' (?common meadow). It serves to remind us that even a comprehensive survey such as that of 1608 allows a mere glimpse, and misses much of the detail, of an ever-changing scene.

In short, the evidence as to village arable is that despite the drastic changes at Stanmer between 1600 and 1800, the key arable areas managed to maintain a link with the plough, albeit a diminished link. The total acreage of cultivated fields north and north-east of the village in 1830 was approximately 200 acres, only one-third of the 1608 total. It is likely, therefore, that the parts of the remaining 431 acres that were put to grass and were not turned into woodland may reveal headlands and other demarcations to those who have the patience to make a careful search.

The village sheep downs enumerated in 1608 were Highdowne and Bovehill. These were 60 acres apiece and were allocated to the villagers at the ratio of 25 sheep to the virgate. With 50 virgates in the village there were potentially therefore 1,250 sheep on 120 acres. At ten to the acre the tenantry downs were thus a heavily overstocked resource. There were also two further pastures for 'herbage' allocated at two beasts per virgate called 'Hollingdowne' (40 acres) and 'Hortells and Bullockstaile' (40 acres). As there was no separate meadow land specifically detailed in the survey we may assume



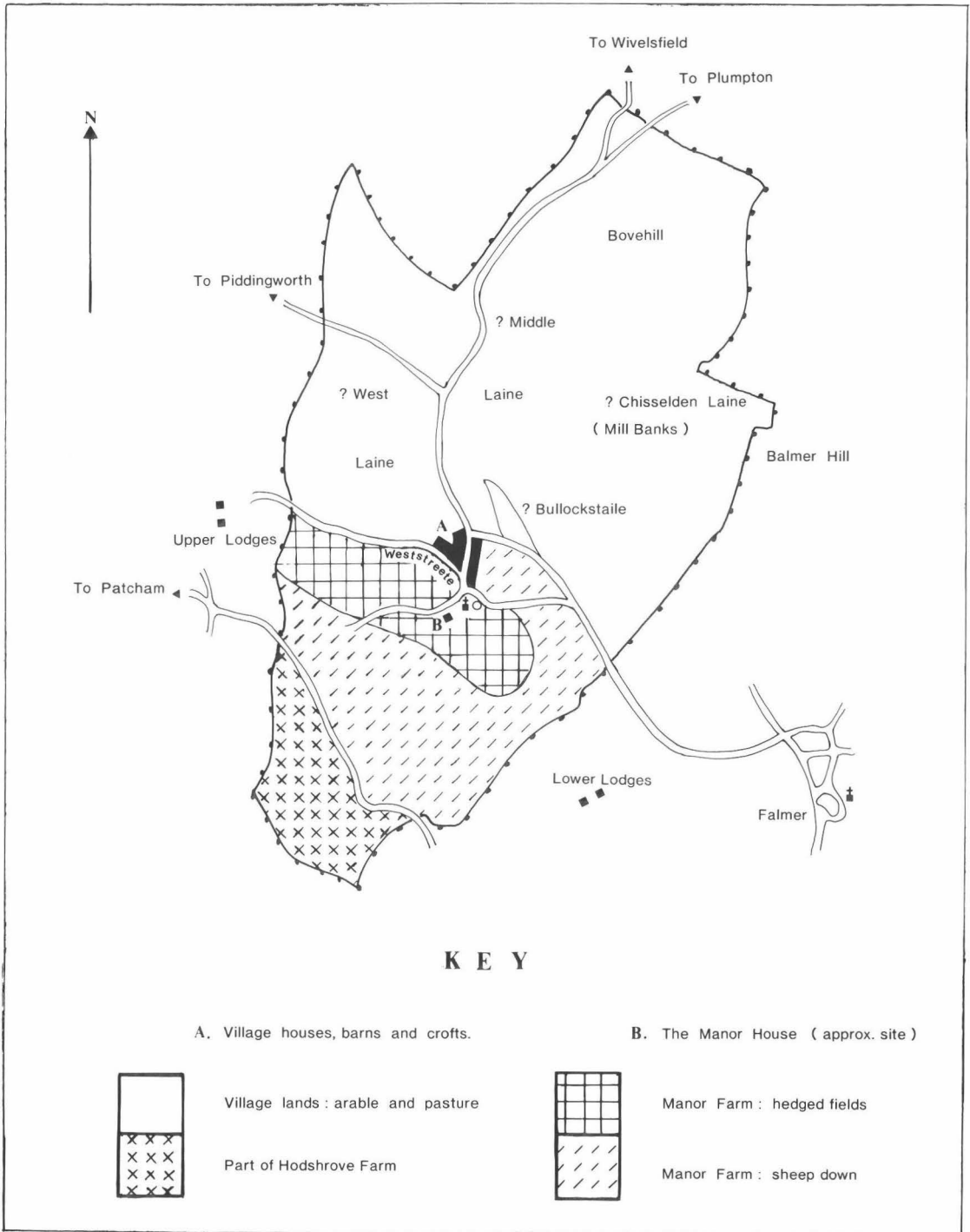


Fig. 2 Stanmer in the 17th century and earlier: a suggested reconstruction of the landscape (Nb. The Upper and Lower Lodges are added as modern reference points).

that these 80 acres were used as such ('herbage' being a term which implies both the cut hay as well as the grazing rights for the actual beasts). While it is fairly impossible, without further evidence, to locate these areas, there must nevertheless be a connection between 'Bovehill' and modern Bowhill in the northeast wing of the parish. Just north-east of the village there is a very steep slip of downland which can never have submitted to the plough, whose shape could well have given rise to the name 'Bullockstaile' (See Fig. 2).

### *The Manor Farm*

The survey of 1608 shows that the Manor House and its land lay totally separate from the village land, and consisted of three closes of arable, 24 acres apiece called East Laine, Middle Laine, and West Laine, together with two barns and pasture (1 acre), a close of pasture called Le 'Mead (8 acres) and Newfield, or Eastfeilde (12 acres), making a total of 93 acres.<sup>40</sup> In addition to this there was 'Herbage and pasture for 500 wethers on a parcel of land called Coald Downe . . . cont . . . 300 acres'.

We are therefore looking for 393 acres of desmesne land somewhere in the parish of Stanmer. The acreages of the 1608 survey are confirmed by the later Tithe map, a source with a reputation for accuracy. For in 1608 the villagers' individual arable holdings, their houses, barns and crofts, together with their joint pastures already discussed, amounted to 843 acres in total. The 393 acres of the desmesne farm makes a grand total of 1,236 acres for the manor as reckoned in 1608. In 1840 the Tithe map gives a grand total of 1,339 acres for the parish. If we deduct the part of Hodshrove Farm which was always in Stanmer Parish but not part of Stanmer Manor and which was measured for the Tithe Survey as 92½ acres, we find that the 1840 acreage for Stanmer Manor accords very well with that of the 1608 survey.

It is logical first and foremost to locate the 300 acres of Coald Downe on the hill behind Stanmer House to the south, abutting as it does

to the adjacent valley known today as Coldean. It is also logical to assume that the desmesne arable made use of the sheltered land both to the east and to the west of its Manor house. This house formerly stood in the immediate vicinity of the present Stanmer House, to the east of which lies the broadish valley now fed by the main access road across the Park, and to the west the narrow Combe now occupied by Brighton Corporation Nurseries. Indeed the Tithe map in 1840 still demonstrated some continuity for the landscape in this western valley, with 'Farm Laine' (29 acres), 'New field' (9 acres), and 'The Mead' (16½ acres). 'Pigeon House Field' to the east of 'The Mead' shown at 8 acres in 1840, we know to be a recent creation with the old 'West Street' diverted, grassed over, but still running across it in indentation. West Street was still clearly functioning in 1799 (though uninhabited), but by 1840 it had been diverted, presumably to accommodate the water catchment scheme for Stanmer House (See Fig. 1).<sup>41</sup> It is reasonably certain therefore that these 58 acres or so (including the southern half of 'Pigeon House field') would have been matched by another 35 acres of arable land in the valley to the east of the house to make up the 93 acres specified (See Fig. 2).

The parish boundary between Stanmer and Falmer east from Coldean towards Richmond Hill and the University of Sussex is certain therefore to mark the eastern limit of the old demesnes, the A27 at Coldean the south western limit, and the parish boundary between Stanmer and 'Falmer Detached' (now the Patcham area of Brighton) through Pudding Bag Wood, the western limit. But what of the northern limit? Clearly the continuation of old West street uphill from the village towards Patcham (now for the most part a steep banked lane too far away from the house to have succumbed to landscaping), is a likely candidate, but if we follow this road back along its old route to the village past the village pond leaving the church site properly allocated out of the desmesne block and the villagers lands and main village street nicely separated to the

north, we then find ourselves out in the topographer's wasteland of the park. The present continuation of this road down to the Lower Lodges cannot be the old desmesne bounds as it leaves us with no more than an approximate total of 300 acres both for desmesne arable and sheep down. We need another 93 acres. The neat right angle by which this road joins the main road at the Lower Lodges betrays the surveyor's hand rather than the evolution of a natural trackway between settlements. The more direct route between Falmer and Stanmer ran over Richmond Hill and can be reached on foot today by means of the trackway that plies uphill eastwards from the northern end of the village street. If this was the north-eastern limit of the demesnes, it would allow the requisite number of acres for the demesne block.

#### *The Park*

Once the villagers had been bought out of their side of the parish then the whole package became, in effect, a desmesne farm. Quite apart from the actual moves to turn the landscape into a park this had the effect of blurring even further the old demarcations. From the 18th century onwards, wooded clumps were planted at random and fields created in their shelter, the Pelhams retaining direct ownership of the woods but leasing the fields, as evidenced by the Estate map of 1799 and the Tithe Map. The inspired and extensive creation of woodland at Stanmer which today are such a pleasure to view and to walk in, even despite the dreadful damage of the 1987 Hurricane, was the work of Thomas Pelham in the mid-18th century.<sup>42</sup> A deed of 1700 makes no reference at all to woods at Stanmer but simply 'furze and heath' for the uncultivated parts. By 1799, however, the estate map shows the woodlands all in place as we know them today.<sup>43</sup>

In 1840 the farm land was held as 544 acres in the hands of Richard Woodman (the main tenant farmer) and a further 391 acres held by William Moon, operating from St. Mary's Farm just outside the eastern boundary of the parish. The

greater part of Moon's Farm was a 280 acre sheep down called Bow Hill, yet Bove Hill of 1608 was only 60 acres. The name had survived but the scene had moved on. It is useless to try to correlate any of these acres with the old tenantry arable, firstly because some of them were drawn from the old demesnes, and secondly because the retention of plantation in hand by the Pelhams throughout the parish (demesnes and tenantry land alike), confounds the situation utterly. It is the 18th-century innovations that mark today's landscape. The fences and ditches that protect Stanmer's woodlands and fields today are, in the main, no more than 250 years old. The 16th-century and earlier features that they overlay have yet to be discovered.

#### CONCLUSION

In the analysis of Stanmer's evolution it has been necessary to look at a wide range of documentary evidence for two reasons. Firstly, to make any sense of the archaeology of deserted sites there must, if possible, be some analysis of the capacity of the land available to sustain its occupants. Secondly, in order to understand the chronology of desertion the Domesday statistics must, where available, be analysed against the other extant records of the estate in question. The failure to do this and the willingness to take at face value the Domesday statistics (ignoring hidden statistics for outlying settlements), can make the Anglo-Norman occupancy of a downland village seem misleadingly high and the level of desertion more dramatic, or earlier than it actually was.

Stanmer was therefore a settlement whose population was always bound to be small because the land resource of the estate was only 1,250 acres. Nevertheless, it was the ability to use and occupy two-thirds of this land that supported and nourished the old community at a fairly constant level of 25–30 families for many centuries. It was the first half of the 17th century that was critical for Stanmer, with village occupancy of the land reduced to one-quarter of



Fig. 3 Stanmer village from the north-west, looking across the area of deserted crofts.



Fig. 4 Stanmer village: the main street.

the total by 1635, and to virtually nil by 1659. This loss of land was the key factor which stringently pruned the community and rendered more than half its houses and nearly all its barns useless. The villagers who stayed on, numbered only as many as were needed to run the estate and no more. The sites of the derelict houses, barns and crofts of their forebears were left to grass over (Figs 3 and 4), and thus they remain today, as silent witnesses to the changed nature of this downland community.

It would be unfair to judge Sir Richard and William Michelborne as mere self-seekers at Stanmer. It can be argued that they were high-minded improvers with a missionary zeal for modernising archaic systems of agriculture. In their favour, we must recall their family background where improvement of the land was a doctrine imbibed from birth. Mixed in with this was the Puritan zeal which, heightened by the religious and political upheavals of the times, often justified drastic measures by ascribing man's affairs to the will of God. Common lands everywhere, whether they were arable strips and sheep down as at Stanmer, or heathy pastures in the Weald, were under pressure for enclosure. Often, as at Chailey in 1624 the 'benefit to the Common Wealth' was cited as the chief reason for enclosure.<sup>44</sup>

Against the Michelbornes, it should be noted that at Stanmer the Manor Farm of 393 acres was already separate from village land. Enclosure of the village arable at Stanmer was not a device to extricate the Lord's and the villagers' lands from common regulations into separate blocks for more freedom and efficiency in production. Where this happened with the villagers retaining ownership of their re-arranged units, the community remained buoyant. At Ditchling the village arable, meadow and some of its pasture were enclosed in the 17th century and earlier.<sup>45</sup> In Wivelsfield, in the Weald, the

common pastures of South Malling Lindfield Manor (which once in the distant past had belonged to Stanmer) were enclosed in 1626.<sup>46</sup> But the overall ownership remained one-third with the Lord and two-thirds with the tenants in both these communities and the social structure of each area therefore remained unchanged—a pattern repeated in countless wealden commons around the same time. At Stanmer, simple enclosure of the common arable and the common sheep down was not the primary aim, though it was indeed the ultimate effect. The primary aim had been to buy out the villagers altogether and to extend the Michelborne estate at the expense of the village.

Finally, this paper has tried, by relating the 1608 survey of Stanmer to the physical features of the parish, to demonstrate just how drastic were the landscape changes effected between 1600 and 1800. The valley through which one approached the rambling Tudor Manor House flanked by its ancient church, would have been set with hedges containing the fields of the Manor farm, guarded on three sides by open sheep-down. By contrast, the modern aspect, even after the Great Storm of October 1987, is of hill tops crowded with trees, and an open sward on the valley floor. In the village the miscellaneous and random huddle of cottages, closes, gardens, barns, and barnyards have long been replaced by two neat rows of estates houses and the single capacious barn of the tenant farm. All are served by an elegant regency church, itself a fashionable handmaiden to the adjacent Palladian Mansion.

We may regret that 'progress' was invoked so many centuries ago to deprive us of undulating roofs and exposed oak beams at Stanmer. But our regret will probably fade when we remember that, had the wheel not been set thus in motion, the village and its surrounding land would not now be open for all to enjoy.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The survey was carried out by the Manpower Services Commission 'East Sussex Archaeology Project', led by archaeologist Paul Smith and working under the general guidance of Andrew Woodcock, the County Archaeologist. The present author was archive researcher for the team. The field survey awaits publication.
- <sup>2</sup> E. W. Holden, 'Excavations at the deserted medieval village of Hangleton, Part I' *Suss. Arch. Coll.* **101** (1963), 54–182; continued as J. G. and D. G. Hurst in *Suss. Arch. Coll.* **102** (1964), 94–142.
- <sup>3</sup> That Stanmer was a 17th-century, not a medieval, desertion was suggested by Dr. Peter Brandon, 'Deserted medieval villages in the Brighton District' *Suss. Arch. Coll.* **112** (1974), 162–3.
- <sup>4</sup> East Sussex Record Office (hereafter ESRO) SAS/A13, SAS/A17.
- <sup>5</sup> *VCH Sussex* **7** (1940), 239; ESRO SAS/A93; for the Michelborne family see Col. F. W. T. Attree, 'Notes on the family of Michelborne' *Suss. Arch. Coll.* **50** (1908), 61–108.
- <sup>6</sup> Public Record Office (hereafter PRO) SC12/31/25.
- <sup>7</sup> PRO SP14/44; British Library Add. Ms. 5705, p. 49; Lansdown Ms. 784.
- <sup>8</sup> Information about the demesnes comes at the end of PRO SC12/31/25; also in PRO LR2/198.
- <sup>9</sup> ESRO TD/E 80, 1839.
- <sup>10</sup> ESRO PAR 485/1/1/1.
- <sup>11</sup> H. Warne 'Stanmer, a restructured settlement' Analysis 4 (typescript in East Sussex Record Office).
- <sup>12</sup> E. Barker, 'Sussex Anglo-Saxon Charters, Part I,' *Suss. Arch. Coll.* **86** (1947), 42–101; M. S. Holgate, 'The Canons Manor of South Malling' *Suss. Arch. Coll.* **70** (1929), 183–95.
- <sup>13</sup> And see H. Warne, *op. cit.*, Analysis 2.
- <sup>14</sup> BL Add. Ms. 33182; ESRO SAS/A720, ACC 4412, ACC 2327/15.
- <sup>15</sup> Holden, 59.
- <sup>16</sup> BL Add. Ms. 33182.
- <sup>17</sup> ESRO SAS/Figg 32.
- <sup>18</sup> BL Add. Ms. 33183 fo. 12.
- <sup>19</sup> C. Brent 'Employment, Land Tenure, and Population in Eastern Sussex' (unpub. D. Phil. thesis, Univ. of Sussex, 1974), condensed in *Suss. Arch. Coll.* **114** (1976), 27–48, and **116** (1978) 41–55. For a general background on enclosing and engrossing see J. Thirsk (ed.) *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, IV, 1500–1640*, (1967) Ch. IV.
- <sup>20</sup> See the I.P.M. of Ric. Michelborne (d.1583), Col. F. W. T. Attree, *Notes of Post Mortem Inquisitions taken in Sussex I Henry VII to 1649 and after*. (Suss. Rec. Soc. **14**, 1912, 158) and Ditchling Manor survey, W. H. Godfrey, *The Book of John Rowe* (Suss. Rec. Soc. **34**, 1928, 40–56).
- <sup>21</sup> ESRO Uncat. Ditchling Charity deeds; BL Add. Ms. 5698, fo. 86.
- <sup>22</sup> Keymer Court Book. ESRO SAS/ACC 966.
- <sup>23</sup> A. Fletcher *Sussex 1600–1660: a County Community at Peace and War* (1975), 62–3 et passim.
- <sup>24</sup> Attree *Suss. Arch. Coll.* **50**.
- <sup>25</sup> ESRO PAR 485/1/1/1.
- <sup>26</sup> ESRO SAS/A 146.
- <sup>27</sup> ESRO SAS/A 111.
- <sup>28</sup> ESRO Lewes Arch. Will A9, 119.
- <sup>29</sup> BL Add. Ms. 33183.
- <sup>30</sup> ESRO HIL/6/41/1–14.
- <sup>31</sup> BL Add. Ms. 33183.
- <sup>32</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>33</sup> PRO E179/258/16.
- <sup>34</sup> Sue Farrant, 'The building of Stanmer House and the early development of the park c. 1720 to 1750' *Suss. Arch. Coll.* **117** (1979), 195–9.
- <sup>35</sup> ESRO SAS/A 317.
- <sup>36</sup> Attree *Suss. Arch. Coll.* **50**.
- <sup>37</sup> ESRO SAS/A 315–320.
- <sup>38</sup> ESRO TD/E 80 (1839): 1st Ed. 6-inch, Sheet 53; ESRO SAS/ACC 158 (Pelham Estate Map).
- <sup>39</sup> ESRO SAS/A 11,12.
- <sup>40</sup> Variant 'Eastfeilde' occurs in PRO LR2/98.
- <sup>41</sup> Compare Pelham Estate Map of 1799, ESRO SAS/ACC 158, with TD/E 80.
- <sup>42</sup> Farrant, 195–9.
- <sup>43</sup> ESRO SAS/A 317, SAS/ACC 158.
- <sup>44</sup> BL Egerton Ms. 1967, fo. 73v.
- <sup>45</sup> While working on the East Sussex Archaeology Project the author also researched the evolution of settlement in the Parish of Ditchling. The results are on disk in the County Archaeologist's office, but not yet published.
- <sup>46</sup> ESRO SAS/A 720, fo. 135.

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