

ON THE DISTRIBUTION OF PLACE- NAMES IN SUSSEX

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THE main object of the study of Saxon place-names is to form some estimate of that little understood historical event—the settlement of England by the Saxon invaders. And Sussex is a particularly suitable county to investigate, as the place-names to which an earlier derivation can be attributed are so few as to be practically negligible. Moreover, the Danish invasions left no mark on the map, and the Norman very little.

The study is yet in its infancy, and there are diverse theories. In these notes the interpretations of the English Place-name Society have been adhered to.

Four conditions might appear to affect settlements in what was to the Saxons a new country:

- (i) Roman and Romano-British roads, clearings, and cultivation.
- (ii) The rivers.
- (iii) The geological nature of the soil.
- (iv) The possibility of settlement by different tribes.

ROMAN AND ROMANO-BRITISH ROADS AND CLEARINGS. Map I shows roughly the extent of our knowledge of Roman occupation. Only two north and south roads have been definitely traced, but there were very probably more—probably one from Shoreham to Croydon, and some have seen signs of others from the ancient crossing of the Medway at Tonbridge to Newhaven, to Pevensey, and to Rye. As regards east and west roads, there are indications of one immediately north of the Downs, and another between Chichester and Newhaven—very possibly partly destroyed by the sea. A road to the east from Pevensey would be expected, but has not been discovered.

Such discoveries as have been made point to three

main areas of occupation—the low ground from Chichester to Worthing, the ground north of the Downs between Bignor and Steyning, and the Downs themselves. But there are quite a number of Roman terrace-ways descending the north slopes of the Downs which must imply use and cultivation of the land below; it is suggested that the Romans found this low ground already cultivated by the Belgae, with their heavy ploughs and long strip fields (see *Antiquaries' Journal* for October 1933).

There are a good many traces of Roman work in the ancient iron workings in the eastern part of the county, but apparently no proof that the working was continued in early Saxon times.

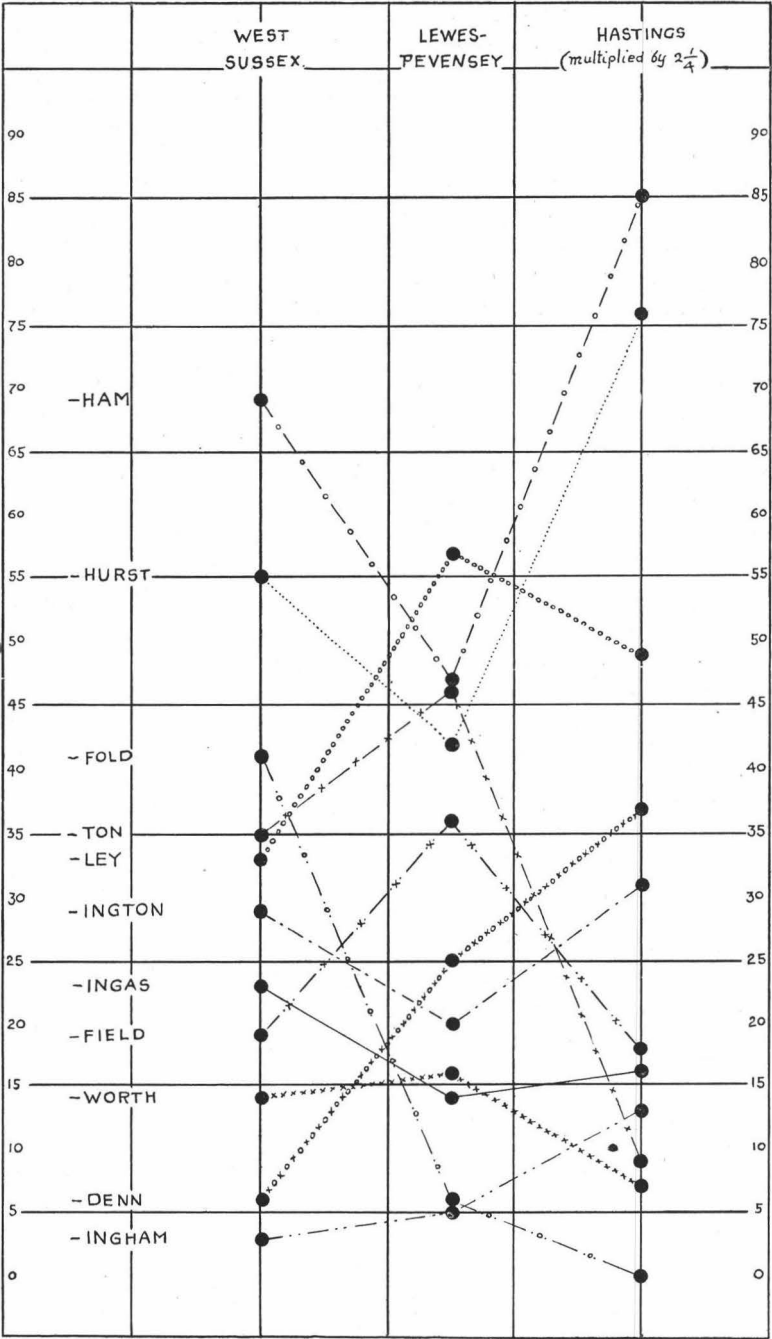
As is the case in other parts, the Saxons do not seem to have utilized the Roman roads to any great extent, nor to have inhabited their sites. Chichester is an exception.

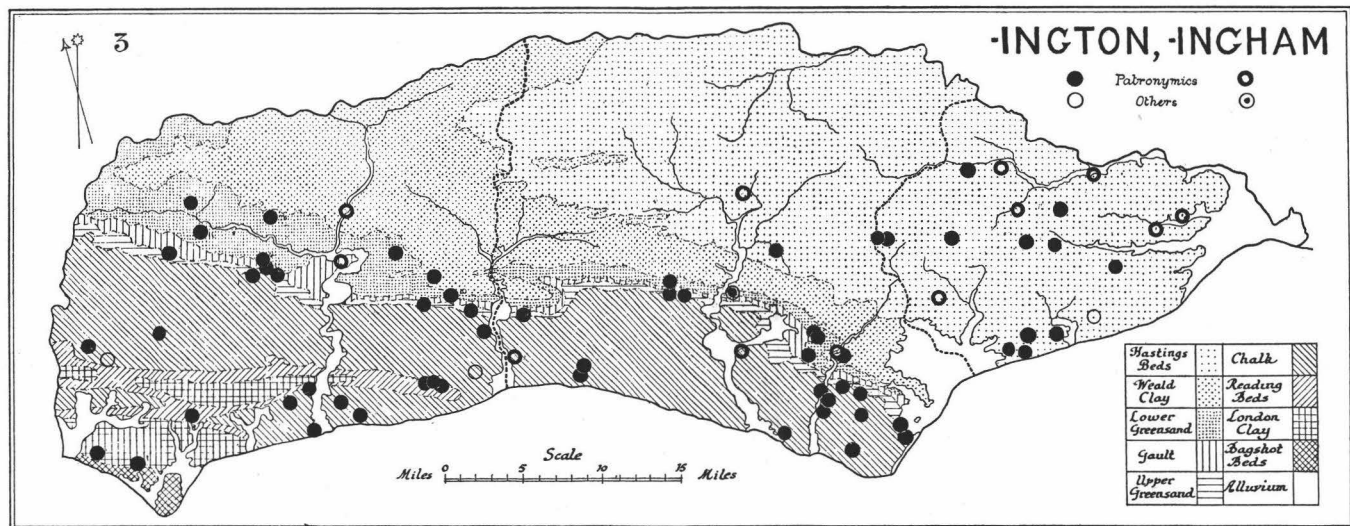
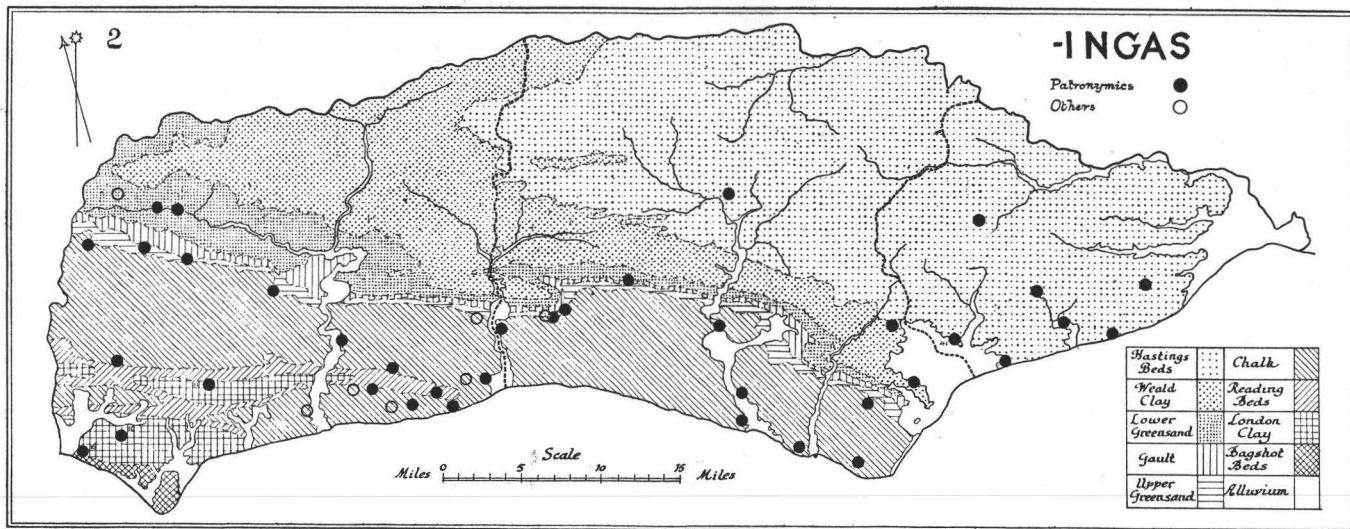
THE RIVERS. One would have expected perhaps that early settlements would cling to the rivers for communication, but this is by no means always the case. The settlements which are later—if the conclusions arrived at below are correct—seem to have utilized them more.

THE GEOLOGICAL FEATURES. These are shown on all the maps, and their effect is referred to below.

THE POSSIBILITY OF SETTLEMENT BY DIFFERENT TRIBES. During the inquiry it has seemed advisable to divide the county into three parts called for convenience West Sussex, Lewes-Pevensey, and Hastings. The boundaries between the parts must necessarily be indeterminate: for that between West Sussex and Lewes-Pevensey the Deanery boundary has been taken, as being older than that of the Rapes (see *S.A.C.* LV. 108); for that between Lewes-Pevensey and Hastings the present Rape boundary.

Before proceeding further it may be desirable to endeavour to substantiate this proposed division into three parts, with areas very nearly in the ratio 9: 9: 4. That there is a decided difference between them in the incidence of the place-names is shown in the following graph, in which, for the sake of comparison, the numbers in





As regards conditions affecting settlement, the suggested Belgic and Roman cultivation immediately north of the Downs may well have had an influence in producing the line of settlements just north of the Downs, especially in West Sussex. The rivers do not appear to have helped much, except near the mouths, save possibly in the cases of Fletching and Brightling. Geologically, the Downs are avoided, the forest is hardly penetrated, especially that on the Weald Clay, the Gault is shunned, but full advantage is taken of the springs at the foot of the chalk. As regards divisions, West Sussex shows a considerable preponderance, the other two being about equal in proportion to area.

2. -INGTON. Map 3.

Typical example, Blatchington, Blaecca's farm.

	<i>Hastings</i>	<i>Weald Clay</i>	<i>Lr. Greensand</i>	<i>Gault</i>	<i>Up. Greensand</i>	<i>Chalk Downs</i>	<i>Chalk Plain</i>	<i>Chalk Edge</i>	<i>Reading Beds</i>	<i>London Clay</i>	<i>Bagshot Beds</i>	<i>Alluvium</i>	<i>Total</i>
West Sussex: patronymics	..	..	6	1	5	1	3	6	3	2	..	..	27
non-patronymics	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	1	..	..	..	..	2
Total	..	..	6	1	5	2	3	7	3	2	..	..	29
Lewes-Pevensay: patronymics	1	1	4	..	2	1	2	9	..	..	..	..	20
non-patronymics	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	0
Total	1	1	4	..	2	1	2	9	..	..	..	..	20
Hastings: patronymics	13	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	13
non-patronymics	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1
Total	14	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	14

The distribution follows very closely that of the -INGAS, and implies early settlement. They are pushed northwards slightly, 10 being on Lower Greensand as compared with 4. Lewes-Pevensay is distinctly less favoured than the others as compared to area. There are very few non-patronymics.

3. -INGHAM. Map 3.

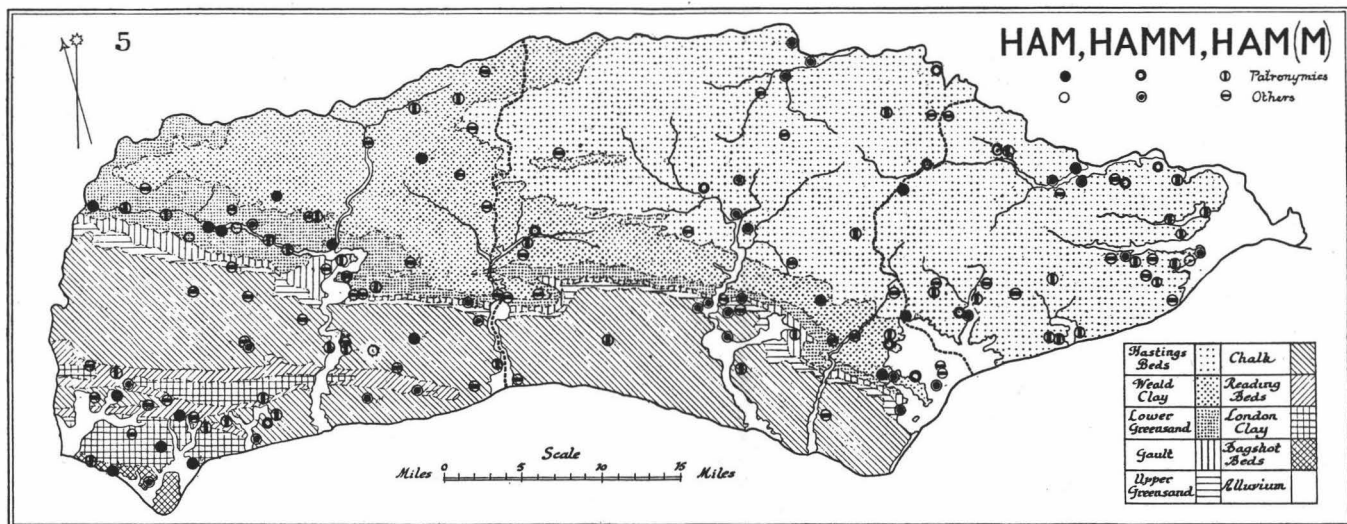
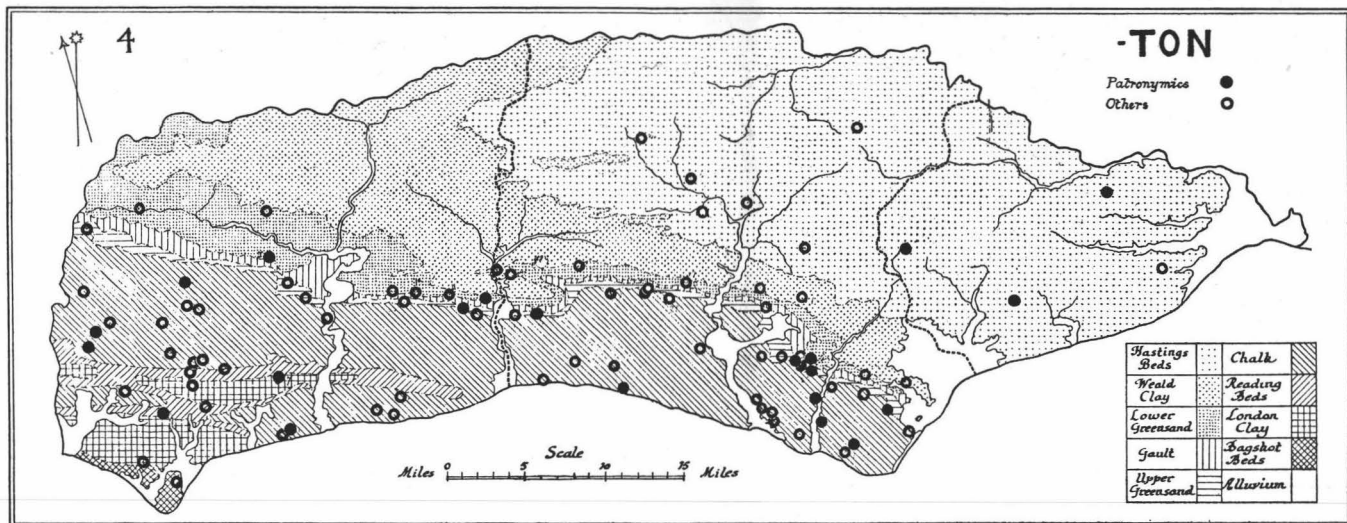
Typical example, Beddington, the HAMM of Beada's people.

	<i>Hastings</i>	<i>Weald Clay</i>	<i>Lr. Greensand</i>	<i>Gault</i>	<i>Up.Greensand</i>	<i>Chalk Downs</i>	<i>Chalk Plain</i>	<i>Chalk Edge</i>	<i>Reading Beds</i>	<i>London Clay</i>	<i>Bagshot Beds</i>	<i>Alluvium</i>	<i>Total</i>
West Sussex:													
patronymics	..	1	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	2
non-patronymics	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	0
Total	..	1	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	2
Lewes-Pevensey:													
patronymics	1	..	1	..	..	..	..	2	..	..	..	..	4
non-patronymics	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1
Total	1	..	2	..	..	..	..	2	..	..	..	..	5
Hastings:													
patronymics	6	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	6
non-patronymics	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	0
Total	6	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	6

There are too few examples of this termination in Sussex to deduce any distribution. But Hastings predominates very largely in proportion to area.

They are all on or near rivers.

So far in our inquiry Hastings is the only division in which the place-names at all cover the area. Lewes-Pevensey has the largest tract uncovered, amounting to half the area.



4. -TON. Map 4.

Typical example, Walberton, farm of a woman called Wealdburgh.

	<i>Ha stings</i>	<i>Weald Clay</i>	<i>Lr. Greensand</i>	<i>Gault</i>	<i>Up. Greensand</i>	<i>Chalk Downs</i>	<i>Chalk Plain</i>	<i>Chalk Edge</i>	<i>Reading Beds</i>	<i>London Clay</i>	<i>Bagshot Beds</i>	<i>Alluvium</i>	<i>Total</i>
West Sussex: patronymics	..	..	2	..	1	2	2	..	1	1	..	..	9
non-patronymics	..	..	5	..	4	4	6	2	2	3	..	..	26
Total	..	..	7	..	5	6	8	2	3	4	..	..	35
Lewes-Pevensey: patronymics	..	..	1	..	5	1	1	2	..	..	..	..	10
non-patronymics	6	2	6	1	4	4	3	10	..	..	..	..	36
Total	6	2	7	1	9	5	4	12	..	..	..	..	46
Hastings: patronymics	3	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	3
non-patronymics	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1
Total	4	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	4

With the exception of three or four -TONS in Lewes-Pevensey, which are very possibly of late nomenclature, the geographical distribution is little altered. There are, however, many more sites on the Chalk Downs.

The distribution between divisions is very striking, Hastings being left far behind the others.

The non-patronymics are nearly three times as many as the patronymics.

The extension of -TONS into the Hastings Beds in Lewes-Pevensey seems to follow the river beds.

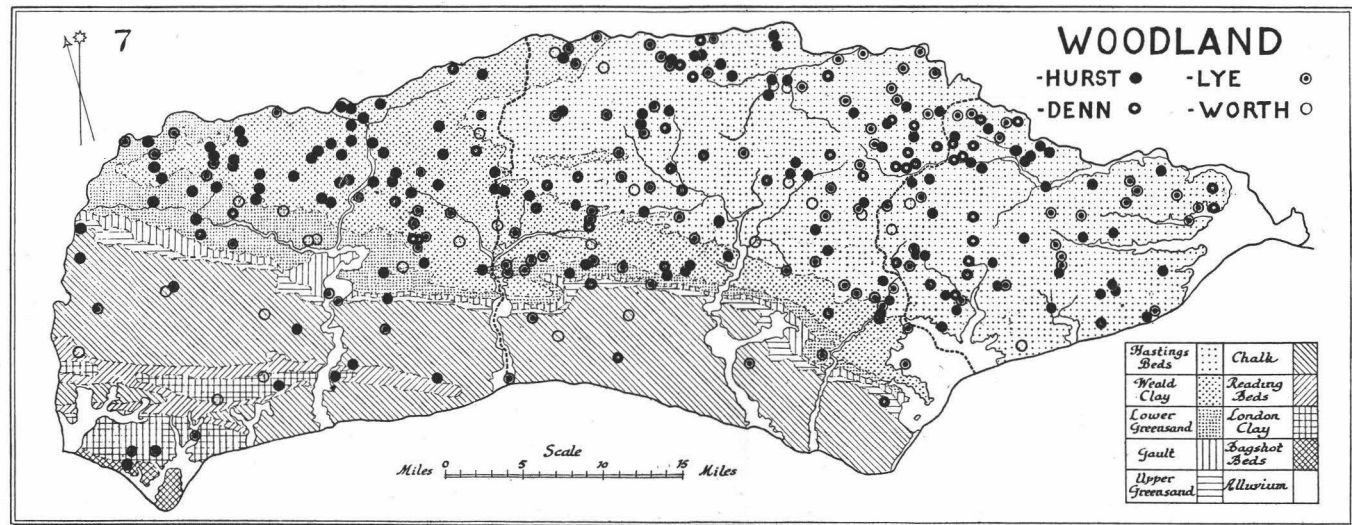
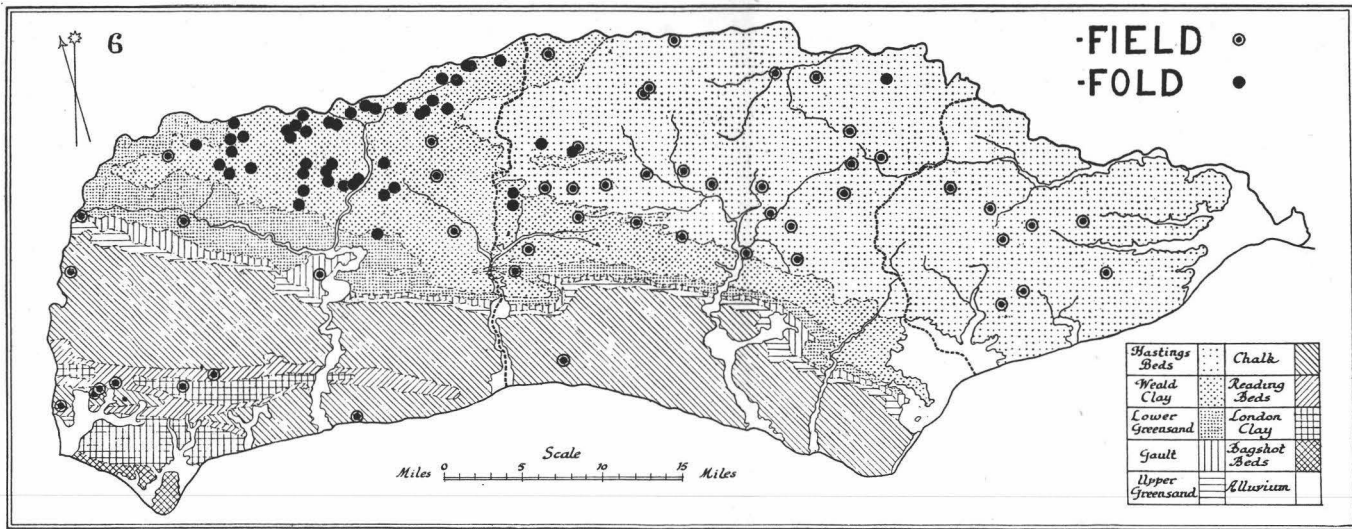
5. -HAM, -HAMM, -HAM(M). Map 5.

-HAM is barely distinguishable from -TON in its meaning of farm. -HAMM implies an enclosure—perhaps in the bend of a river. It is so difficult to distinguish between these that -HAM(M) is used for doubtful cases.

		<i>Hastings</i>	<i>Weald Clay</i>	<i>Lr. Greensand</i>	<i>Gault</i>	<i>Up-Greensand</i>	<i>Chalk Downs</i>	<i>Chalk Plain</i>	<i>Chalk Edge</i>	<i>Reading Beds</i>	<i>London Clay</i>	<i>Bagshot Beds</i>	<i>Alluvium</i>	<i>Total</i>
West Sussex:														
HAM	patronymics	..	1	4	..	..	1	1	..	1	2	1	..	11
	non-patronymics	..	..	1	..	..	1	..	1	..	..	..	..	3
HAMM	patronymics	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	1
	non-patronymics	..	..	2	..	..	1	2	1	2	..	1	..	8
HAM(M)	patronymics	..	4	6	1	..	..	2	3	2	1	1	..	20
	non-patronymics	..	4	7	1	..	4	3	2	3	2	..	..	26
Total		..	9	20	2	..	7	9	6	8	5	3	..	69
Lewes-Pevensy:														
HAM	patronymics	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1
	non-patronymics	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	0
HAMM	patronymics	3	2	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	5
	non-patronymics	6	2	2	1	2	..	1	3	..	..	..	..	17
HAM(M)	patronymics	2	1	..	1	..	1	..	1	..	..	..	1	7
	non-patronymics	7	4	2	..	2	..	..	1	..	..	..	1	17
Total		18	10	4	2	4	1	1	5	..	..	..	2	47
Hastings:														
HAM	patronymics	2	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	2
	non-patronymics	2	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	2
HAMM	patronymics	2	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	2
	non-patronymics	8	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	8
HAM(M)	patronymics	14	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	14
	non-patronymics	10	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	10
Total		38	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	38

With the -HAMS the picture changes. With the exception of the north-west parts of West Sussex and Lewes-Pevensy the area is fairly well covered. The river valleys seem to be much more utilized.

The preponderance of Hastings in proportion to area is very marked.



6. -FIELD. Map 6.

The -FIELDS are for the most part on the Weald Clay and Hastings Beds. West Sussex 19, Lewes-Pevensay 36, Hastings 8. Very common in Lewes-Pevensay, and notable as giving names to many of the larger villages, not only to farms and hamlets.

7. -FOLD. Map 6.

A similar geological distribution, but almost confined to West Sussex. West Sussex 41, Lewes-Pevensay 6, Hastings nil.

8. -HURST, -DENN, -LYE, -WORTH. Map 7.

These are shown together on Map 7 as illustrating the wooded area of the county. But the distribution between divisions is interesting:

-HURST:	West Sussex	23	Lewes-Pevensay	57	Hastings	22
-DENN:	"	6	"	25	"	16
-LYE:	"	23	"	57	"	22
-WORTH:	"	14	"	16	"	2

Many inferences could probably be drawn from this survey. Two are offered: first, that the spread of the settlements northwards from the coast is indicated by the place-names more or less in the order in which they have been considered; and, secondly, that there is a distinct indication of settlement by different tribes using a somewhat different nomenclature.