# SOME ASPECTS OF THE AGRARIAN HISTORY OF HARGHAM AND SNETTERTON AS REVEALED IN THE BUXTON MSS.

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THE Buxton MSS., a collection of Norfolk documents in the Library of the University of Cambridge, contain much information about a number of villages in South and South-Central Norfolk. In some cases the papers range from medieval times to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Among the villages mentioned more fully in the collection are Hargham and Snetterton which are also the most south-westerly of any documented in the MSS. As they lie very close to the eastern margin of Breckland, a region which had its own peculiar field system, they have special interest; furthermore Hargham is a deserted medieval village while Snetterton has, somewhere within its boundaries, Ashby, another possible "lost" village site. Study of these two parishes is made especially easy by the existence within the Buxton collection of A Field Book of Hargham and Snetterton. This dates from 1681 with later annotation up to about 1708; it contains an account of the lands in each parish and has within its cover tenurial maps of the furlongs of each of the villages. A preliminary examination of the material concerning the two villages suggested that it might be possible to throw some additional light upon the desertion of Hargham and the whereabouts of Ashby, as well as the field systems and agricultural economy of the parishes particularly in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, while the 1681 survey together with several rentals and extents of various periods appeared to give information about the progress of early enclosure.

### (A) THE DESERTED MEDIEVAL VILLAGE OF HARGHAM

This was one of 130 lost medieval villages listed by K. J. Allison;<sup>2</sup> in the appendix to that paper a summary of the information then available for the desertion of Hargham is given concluding with a survey of 1629 (British Museum Hargrave 247) and Blomefield's account of the village, when all but one farm had been purchased by the lords and there were only six houses.<sup>3</sup> There is also a reference to a dispute over the commons in the main text of the paper. Allison drew attention to the apparent cause of village depopulation in Norfolk. The foldcourse for the sheep which were such an important part of the economy in much of the county, contained two kinds of land; heath and waste for summer pasturage, and part of the open field for winter feed. The desire for larger profits from wool led landlords to increase their flocks, at the expense of their tenants, by various means. Among those suggested are enclosure of commons for their own benefit and enclosure of their own arable

land, thus depriving tenants of grazing rights on these lands. The dispute over the Hargham Common in 1599 mentioned by Allison is suggested as possible evidence for this kind of dispossession there.

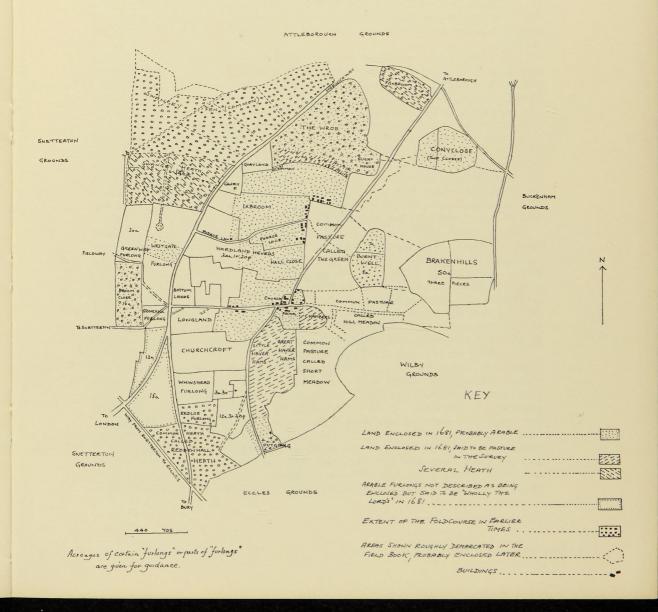
In the Buxton MSS.<sup>4</sup> there is a sheet of evidence, gathered, probably in the late seventeenth century, from old documents. Presumably it was collected in order to throw light on the extent and use of commons in the past; included is an account of the dispute. After a brief summary of the way in which Hargham came to the Hare family in the reign of Henry VIII and its subsequent sale, the notes go on to the dispute between Gurney of Hargham and John Lant of Beck Hall in the neighbouring village of Wilby. It began in 1595 when Gurney sued Lant over the commons. Lant replied with a bill in the Exchequer claiming to be tenant in chief, but this was dismissed. Lant tried again in 1597 and this time obtained the verdict. Gurney replied with a new bill about his foldcourse to prove what he used to keep on the common, but seems to have been unsuccessful despite producing Court Roll evidence, showing that the commons had long been part of Hargham.

Doubt about the lordship of the commons seems to have persisted well into the seventeenth century. In  $1629^5$  enclosures within the commons called Brakenhills were recorded as being part of the demesne of the Manor of Beck Hall in Wilby but in the 1681 Field Book, a revision of the 1629 survey, they are said to be demesne of the manor of Hargham by an old deed dating from Elizabeth's reign. The dispute, seen in this light, seems to have been between two neighbouring manorial landlords rather than between landlord and tenant and so not to have bearing upon the depopulation.

The Buxton MSS. do show that enclosure of the common land took place over a period of time in Hargham and it follows that this could have been a cause of depopulation. The sheet of evidence already mentioned shows something of the way in which the commons had declined in area over the years. The position of the enclosure called Little Haverhams can be seen on the accompanying map (Map One): on the sheets of notes we have "deeds of lands in little Haverhams abbutt on the common E. and W. and lying next the Com. on the North by wch it appears there are lands now in the hands of the Lord wch anciently were Com. since the Haverhams now abbutt on the Com. only E.". A similar entry has "of Hernhouse croft now the Wroe is noe longer ment (ioned) as Common".

The map of 1681 (see Map One) shows that the eastern margin of the cultivated land was distinctly lobed with "islands" of enclosure lying out in the common, strongly indicative of progressive lessening of the common lands, and it is significant to compare the map of 1681, its attendant survey, and that of 1629 with some manuscript notes, again of probable late sixteenth or seventeenth century date, made from earlier sources. These notes delimit the extent of the "sheepscourse" in Hargham which, according to one source, comprised Swangey Heath and "the rest of the Walk being 120 acres of common on the Northside the town, 30 acres of heath neere the Gallows (OS Gallows Hill ref. 014903) and the whole field". Another extract refers to later times,

HARGHAM IN 1681



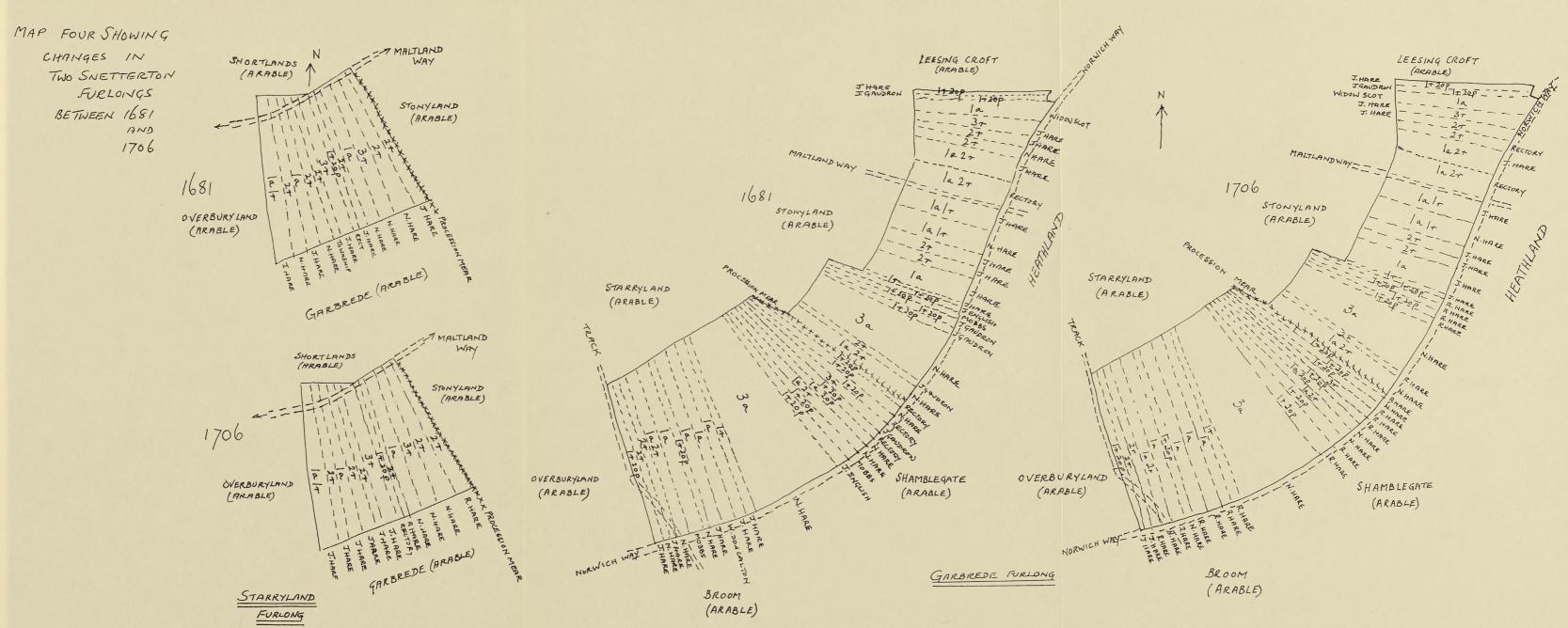
listing a pasture called Broomclose, Swangey Heath and the Wroe Close, a pasture of heath called Redlow, a little close called Outgang, a piece of pasture or heath ground called Paxbroome as well as 40 acres of arable in field.

Some evidence of two conditions which could lead to depopulation is thus available. In the first instance common land had been taken into the demesne. In the second instance some parts of the fold course belonging to the demesne were enclosed. The foldcourse as stated above has been plotted on the 1681 map. Broomclose had clearly been enclosed from Greenway furlong of which it formed a large part, while the Outgang was also an enclosure. Neither of these is stated to be pasture in the 1629 and 1681 surveys although other closes are. It would be easy to exclude tenants' animals from these areas if so desired. Swangey Heath and Paxbroome were both stated to be several heath in these surveys.

The Court Leet proceedings for the years 1642–58 show that during the first part of the seventeenth century further enclosure of the commons took place. In 1642 two new banks are recorded; one said later to be "towards the church of Hargham" and the other, with ditch and quickset, from the "east side of Coney Close to Cockes Close Gate". These would seem to have been in the common to the east of the township. In 1643 it was laid down that no man was to keep more than ten sheep between these two new banks on pain of a fine of 40/–. By 1657 and 1658 keeping or pasturing any sheep or lambs on the other side of the new bank near the church was forbidden, the fine being 1/6 per sheep or lamb found there. Even more significant is a by-law made in 1643 by which every man had to take his sheep off the commons before 12 April. The commons were presumably needed by the lord for his own flock of sheep said to have numbered between 800 and 500 at various times.

Up to about 1660 the population of Hargham seems to have remained fairly constant. The names of parish constables (headboroughs and handboroughs) are listed for each year of the Court Leet proceedings from 1642 to 1658. The number fluctuated during the Civil War period but thereafter remained steady at between 26 and 29 up to 1658, apart from one year when it dropped to 22. Moreover the same family names occur over and over again showing that the population was well established. It was however not a prosperous settlement; a letter (probably about 1640) from Hare to parishioners speaks of the difficulty of filling the vacant living "as it is but a poor living".

The 1629 Survey and the Field Book of Hargham (1681, amended up to 1685) when compared give a working date for the final depopulation of the village. Comparison of the text of these two surveys shows that whereas in 1629 demesne lands (both arable and pastoral, but excluding several heath) amounted to 310 acres out of a total area of just over 563½ acres, by 1685 the amount of demesne land had risen to just over 403½ acres—an increase from 55 per cent to 71 per cent of the total. By 1685 the landlord had thus gained a considerable hold on the freehold and copyhold land in the parish and the Field Book indicates that this was done by purchase. "Sold to the lord 1685" occurs frequently as an amendment. One agreement of this kind, made by one of the Hare family with a tenant, has survived. In Box 55 there



SCALE: About 18 inches to one mile

N.B. The strips are shown, as on the original map, conventionally tather than accurately in areal representation

is a copy of an agreement made between Dorothy Kydall (or Kidwell) a widow, and Nicholas Hare on 23 March 1682. The Field Book shows that the widow lived in a house just east of the church and held one acre in Hardlands furlong and half an acre in the Westgate furlong. Hare purchased the copyhold of both lands paying the sum of fourteen pounds. Purchases of this kind suggest that at least the able bodied among such tenants would leave to find a livelihood elsewhere, leaving the way clear for further enclosure of the remaining common lands. It is not surprising to find in Box 50 a document dated 29 April 1708 recording agreements between Humphrey Yallop (he was from Wilby—an outsider—which in itself is significant) and Ralph Hare which show a change in common rights and suggest the extinction of Hargham as a community.

In the first part of the agreement Yallop received 13 acres of pasture which he had already enclosed from the eastern part of the common, and another two acres of pasture and fen in Swangate (Swangey) Fen "as the same is now measured and staked or doled out"—this in lieu of his right of common pasture, feed and estovers in or out of the commons and wastes of Hargham which

rights he surrendered to Hare.

By this time matters had obviously gone far and later in the same document there is even more telling evidence. Among further exchanges Yallop received some 8 acres of meadow pasture, closes, yards and crofts which seem to have lain in the vicinity of the church. Provision is made for Hare to "take up, dig up and carry away with men, carts and horses all the floors, pinning, brick, stones, mortar, old thatch, clay, timber, old wood and sparrs and other materials of the lately demolished houses which stood and are upon the premises conveyed in exchange by the said R. Hare unto the said H. Yallop up to the last day of April next".

The map of Hargham in the Field Book of 1681 is executed with considerable care, and subdivisions of the furlongs are shown and the owners or tenants named. Closes are outlined in green, commons are coloured light green and buildings are shown. However there are also some pages of roughly-drawn uncoloured maps which must have been added later since they show the commons to the east of the township inaccurately divided into closes. Swangey Heath and Fen are shown divided more carefully into twelve pieces. It seems likely that these represent at least a draft scheme for the parcelling out of the

common lands.

The 1681 map shows forty-one houses or other buildings as well as the manorial buildings and the church. They were in three groups: the first lay along the village street on which the church still stands. The second group included the manor house, outhouses and one or two cottages and lay roughly where Hall Farm is today. The last group was a short distance to the north and north-east of the manorial cluster, on enclosed grounds, and faced out onto the common. The first group was the one mentioned as being demolished in Yallop's agreement.<sup>12</sup> The third group stood on land which was purchased by the Hares in 1683 and probably met the same fate, leaving the Manor House and the buildings almost alone.

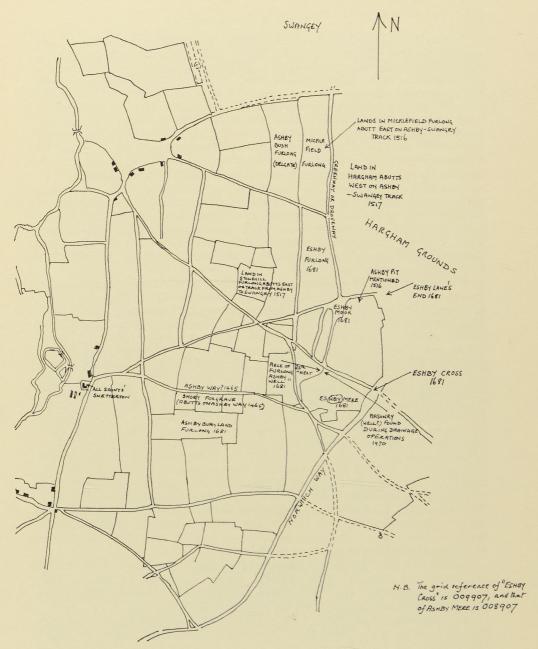
This is confirmed in part because in 1753 a faculty to sell the church bells was given. <sup>13</sup> In that year Hugh Hare was lord of the manor, the Rev. John Hare was rector and the churchwardens, George Hicks and Thomas Brown, were tenant farmers. The document states that the church roof and part of the walls were down, that the parishioners were very few in number "and most of them only tenants whereby they are unable of themselves sufficiently to repair the said church". The bells (they were cracked) were sold and the money used to repair the fabric and buy one new bell. The church, with a ruined tower and most of the nave in ruins, remains today, but although a few buildings occupy sites shown on the 1681 map, nothing is to be seen of the medieval village. Thus evidence in the Buxton MSS. gives us the years 1708–09 as a likely date for the disappearance of the buildings and suggests strongly that appropriation of the commons, linked with purchase of copyhold and freehold lands, was the cause.

#### (B) ASHBY

This was one of the places noted by Allison as one whose name was lost but whose site might still be inhabited. Recorded in Domesday as a small settlement in Shropham Hundred, it vanished quite early as it is unmentioned in the Nomina Villarum of 1316;<sup>14</sup> Blomefield says that it formed the northern part of Snetterton and had amalgamated with it. A glance at the Ordnance Survey map suggests that this could well be true since the parish has considerable north–south extent and there are two centres, North End and South End. The only reference to Ashby on the modern map is Ashby Mere at 006907 on the eastern edge of the parish in partial conflict, at least, with Blomefield's account.

Field names recorded in the survey of 1681 in the Field Book of Hargham and Snetterton include three containing the name Ashby, a piece of common called Ashby Moor and a reference to Ashby Well at 007909. The similar survey of Hargham mentions Ashby Lane's End (010912) and Ashby Cross (009907). All these names are plotted on the accompanying map (Map No. 2). They are grouped very close to the eastern boundary of Snetterton near the present Ashby Mere. This clustering is sufficiently striking to suggest a search among older documents for evidence which might support a location in this area for the site of the old settlement.

The oldest documents found to refer to Ashby are Court Rolls of Hargham<sup>15</sup> which list offenders punished in the manorial courts, many being from neighbouring townships. In 1321 several persons were summoned at Hargham for making "trangressions into the common of Hargham". Heading the list is Alan le Wrighte de Asheby and there are others from Ashby presented for the offences in Hargham. So although Ashby was no longer important enough to be mentioned in the Nomina Villarum it was still in existence, and probably close to Hargham's bounds.



EVIDENCE FOR THE LOCATION OF ASHBY PLOTTED ON THE MAP OF SNETTERTON OF 1681

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In Box 54 is a parchment roll containing a rental of one of the Snetterton manors, Parishes (Parys' or Grimes'), dated 1465. This mentions over thirty pieces of land, scattered fairly broadly through Snetterton except for the eastern part where the Ashby names were in 1681. Ashby is mentioned only twice in 1465 and that indirectly. <sup>16</sup> Shortfoxgrave furlong (see map) is said to abutt on Ashby Way: referring to the map of 1681, this could only be the track which led from South End towards Ashby Mere on its way to Eccles and Harling. There is enough evidence to suggest that until the middle of the eighteenth century the pattern of fields and trackways remained broadly the same in Snetterton, so the identification of Ashby Way is reasonably certain. It leads towards the area where the names containing "Ashby" are concentrated.

In 1465 both the churches of Snetterton were mentioned. Blomefield says that the vanished St. Andrew's (site shown on 6 inch map) was of Ashby while All Saints' was of Snetterton. The rental mentions the church of All Saints as being "de Snytterton" but St. Andrew's is not said to be associated with any place. By 1681 its site was simply called Chapel Yard not Church Yard. Blomefield's statement thus receives no confirmation but it cannot be said to be incorrect.

There is substantial evidence from the early years of the sixteenth century. Two extents are available, one for 1516, 17 the other for 1517. 18 The 1517 extent is, according to its scribe, a copy made from an older document. Among the field names mentioned are Ashbyebarlieland, Ashbyfurlong and Ashbybush furlong which are described on pages 46, 51 and 11 respectively. The name Ashby occurs elsewhere in the extent; on page 19 and page 95 are important references to roads, while on page 38, in a furlong called Lampsallpytte, four Ashby names are to be found, including Ashby Slade, Ashby Croft and Ashby Field. The locations of these furlongs and places can be fixed with some certainty: apart from those which are shown clearly on the 1681 map by name, others mentioned can be equated with furlongs numbered on that map since the extent was annotated by a late seventeenth-century hand. 19 Once again the names cluster around Ashby Mere, particularly just to the north of it. The only exception is Ashbybush furlong which is much further north, although still in the eastern half of Snetterton. The references to roads are particularly significant. The reference on page 19 is to a piece of land in Stonehill Furlong abutting "sup. quandam via ducen de Ashebye usque Swangey versus orient". From the position of this furlong on the map and the known position of Swangey today, it is obvious that such a road must have led from the area just to the north of Ashby Mere. The other reference on page 95 is similar, a holding in Hargham ground has such a road to the west.

The 1516 extent differs from that of 1517 in layout and form, that of 1516 was concerned primarily with holdings, tenant by tenant, while the 1517 document describes the various furlongs. The later one is not therefore copied from the earlier and so they provide independent evidence.

In 1516 many of the Ashby names and the locations were again in the area immediately north of Ashby Mere. Examples of such land names are Ashby Croft where Th. Gall was mentioned as holding a piece of land abutting on

the common way called the Driftway towards the east, and on page 9 of the extent a piece of land against "Asheby Pitte" is mentioned as having the common pasture of Snetterton called Ashby More to the west and the procession way next to Hargham lands to the east. These landmarks are all easily identifiable on the 1681 map.

The best evidence from the 1516 extent lies in references to holdings in Mykillfield furlong where two pieces of land were recorded as abutting eastwards upon the common way leading from Swangey up to Ashby. This, again, is the parish boundary way which is shown on the 1681 map and which leads southwards towards the area containing nearly all the Ashby land names.

The 1681 map (Map Three) gives no indication of any buildings on the area which may contain the site of Ashby, but a surprisingly large number of tracks are shown as converging on or passing very close to the suggested area for no apparent reason—unless there had once been a settlement of some kind in that place. One of these tracks is said to be "now stopped up" by the 1681 survey suggesting that some of them had lost their original purpose. The survey also mentions a piece of land in Furlong 25 belonging to the township as "next Eshby Well". During drainage operations in the spring of 1970 a crude circular flint and mortar construction, which could have been a well top, was unearthed very close to this place.<sup>20</sup>

In the 1516 survey on page 9 there is an obscure insertion in poor script which might refer to a building in a description of a piece of enclosed land near to the Driftway.

In both of these sixteenth-century extents of Snetterton, North End and South End were called Northorpe and Southorpe respectively: in the 1516 extent each was styled "vicus" suggesting that they were recognizable as hamlets. Neither was associated with the name Ashby by the inhabitants of those times who seem to have reserved that name for the place near the eastern boundary of the parish.

No pottery has been turned up by the plough as yet, but long and thorough examination has not been possible. Aerial survey has shown only indeterminate crop marks so far. Patches of very coarse gravels can be seen on the surface after ploughing and complicate the interpretation of the pattern of colour variations in ripening cereals. However, the succession of documentary evidence gives a very limited area of probability in which Ashby's site may yet be precisely located.

## (C) THE FIELD SYSTEMS AND AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES OF HARGHAM AND SNETTERTON

The 1681 maps of both parishes show the greater part of the surface area divided into furlongs. These were of variable size: the 63rd furlong of Snetterton was  $71\frac{3}{4}$  acres while the 57th was only  $2\frac{3}{4}$  acres, there being 74 furlongs in all. Hargham, much smaller, <sup>21</sup> had only 33 furlongs ranging from  $52\frac{1}{4}$  acres in the Wroe to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  acres in the 7th furlong. Some of the larger furlongs of Hargham,

by their shape and position bordering on the commons, suggested that they had only recently been taken in. In both parishes, even in 1681, there were still extensive heaths and common lands distributed as shown on the sketch map. There were two types of such land—low lying marshy grounds in the valleys of the Thet and its tributaries, especially in Swangey Fen, and the heathlands, on what appear to have been less attractive soils, on the southern and eastern sides of both parishes.

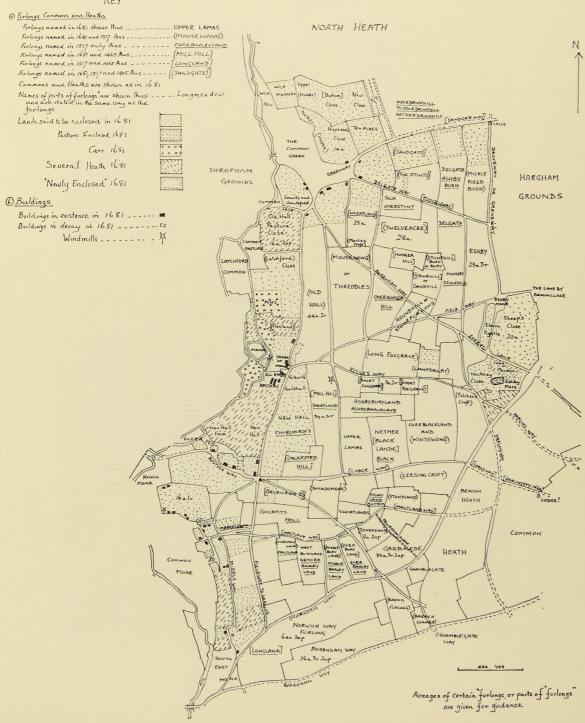
Many of the 1681 furlongs, especially in Snetterton (see Map No. 3), had names in addition to being numbered, and it is possible in that parish to trace the names in earlier documents in the collection and so gain some impression of the age of the system worked in 1681.

The rental of Parys Manor (1465), gives furlong names for one of the four manors of Snetterton. Names of thirty-four quarentena (furlongs) occur as well as those of some half dozen or so other pieces, probably specific portions of furlongs. Of the 1681 names, nineteen were among the thirty-four listed in 1465, and though it is possible their extents may have differed, they seem to have occupied the same general position. Of the fifteen remaining names some probably disappeared as the piecemeal enclosure of some furlongs progressed, others simply fell into disuse though the furlongs remained as was the case with Knoll furlong mentioned in the extent of 1517 and identified as furlong 42 by annotation.

Within the furlongs of 1465 the individual holdings seem to have been widely scattered. Seventy pieces of land were listed as being held by twenty-two named tenants within the thirty-four quarentena and six other named land areas. The largest piece of land recorded was 3 acres, nearly all were one or less. Thomas Crawty held a messuage called Wilby and one piece of land lying "in tweyn meris", several others held land "in divers pecia" but detail is scant. No reference to enclosed land is found apart from small areas associated with dwellings, although William Cadds held 3 acres of freehold land "in curtilag", this however was distributed in two separate furlongs which hardly suggests enclosure in the accepted meaning of the word.

The 1465 rental also refers to "fields" in which the furlongs were said to lie. For example, in the penultimate entry, John Bowse held one acre of land "iac apud Schortland in campo austri . . .". Elsewhere two other furlongs are said to have lain "in Southorpe field". A similar phrase occurs in a Court Roll of Hargham<sup>22</sup> of 1457 where Shortland furlong is said to have lain in the South field. This term suggests either a remnant of an earlier system of working the arable lands in fields or some kind of organization of the furlongs for rotational purposes for crops or for shack grazing. The references are too specific to be casual locational descriptions adopted for the scribe's convenience. As most authorities<sup>23</sup> agree that "fields", as in the conventional two or three field system, were of little or no significance in East Anglia it would seem that these are references to a shift system.





The 1517 extent gives a more complete review of the lands and has been annotated later, probably in the late seventeenth century. The notes then made were identifications of furlongs and so help to bridge the gap between 1517 and 1681. As the extent was conducted furlong by furlong and the holdings in each listed with their areas and abuttals, a great quantity of information is available.

Certain conclusions can be drawn from this book; the first is that some amalgamation of furlongs had taken place. Overhungrill and Overlangland of 1517 were both equated with the 7th furlong in 1681, whilst Ecclesgate and Erber furlongs, judging by their abuttals, were probably swallowed up in the 62nd or Buckenham Way furlong of 1681. Secondly, within the furlongs in 1517 changes were taking place also. The word "inclusus" is used in description of land called "Botome in Northorpe" where two acress of freehold land were said to be "enclosed next the common", this lay in one of the furlongs 70–74 on the map of 1681. The 1516 extent also contains references to enclosure and hedges especially on page 9 where a newly enclosed piece is recorded. Also, consolidation of holdings, generally held to be a preliminary of enclosure, was apparent in 1517. The phrase "in exchamb" or "in escambio" meaning "in exchange" occurring once or twice suggests that exchange of lands to bring about consolidation was in progress.

Comparison of the 1517 extent with the 1681 map provides more evidence of continued change and development. In 1517 Old Hall furlong comprised land on both sides of the Street, in 1681 it lay solely on the eastern side, the portions to the west having been enclosed. The names of these enclosures (Flaxland, Milcar) current in 1517 were retained in 1681. In 1681 the 35th furlong is shown as belonging entirely to John Hare and in this furlong amalgamation is suggested since old names (Overblackland, Whitewong and Overwhitewong) are attached to various parts. Another portion of this same furlong is marked as belonging "anciently" to the 30th furlong. Hungrill furlong was enlarged in the 1680's—"all the 11th furlong and the first four pieces of the 12th are now ploughed into the 16th". Three furlongs named in 1517, Netherdringhill, Myddilldringhill and Overdringhill, had disappeared by 1681; the annotator marked them "now in the heath" and they were referred to again in the 1681 survey. This contraction of arable land is interesting.

There is thus enough evidence to show that the 1681 system of furlongs is of some antiquity. Certainly changes of one kind or another had taken place slowly over the years, but despite the disappearance of some furlong names the majority remained in use, associated with the same areas throughout the 200 year period. Evidence from Hargham is scant, but names of stadia or quarentena occur in early Court Rolls and some of these remained current in 1681 suggesting that the system there was old too.

The Buxton MSS. provide much evidence of the progress of enclosure in the seventeenth century in both Hargham and Snetterton. In Snetterton enclosed lands in 1681 were distributed, as shown in the sketch map, in three groups. Almost all the land recorded as pasture lay in the valley of the Thet, with a small area near Ashby Mere. All other enclosed areas mentioned are shown as arable on the sketch map and include buildings and their surrounds.

In 1681 the total area in furlongs was just over  $1,257\frac{1}{2}$  acres and there were 167 acres described as heathland in the North Heath. Beacon Heath was in the possession of the lord while there was another area of common heath to the east of that; no acreages for these were given. The commons of The Green, Knoll Moor, Silver Fen and the other river lands and South common, totalled

just over 1474 acres when they were enclosed in 1854.26

The total area enclosed by 1681 was over  $417\frac{1}{2}$  acres,  $76\frac{3}{4}$  acres of this being named as pasture. The pattern of ownership is interesting as by 1681 the Hare family held all the manors of Snetterton. J. Hare held over 825 acres of land, enclosed and unenclosed, together with 164 acres of the North Heath and Nicholas Hare had 220 acres and 3 acres of the North Heath. Of the total farmed area these two men held 65.5 per cent and 17.5 per cent respectively. Of the  $427\frac{1}{2}$  acres of enclosed lands, J. Hare had  $300\frac{1}{4}$  acres, and N. Hare just over 74 acres. Of the enclosed pasture only 5 acres were not in their hands.

Amendments to the 1681 survey of Snetterton were made in 1700 and 1706 and these recorded large-scale exchanges. Earlier exchanges were mentioned in 25 furlongs. The parties involved in the two years were J. Hare, N. Hare, the Rectory and Ralph Hare the last mainly as recipient. In all 332 acres were exchanged in 1700 and about 66\frac{1}{2} acres in 1706. There were also purchases from small tenants or owners, while one instance of hiring "to go with his farm" is recorded. The purpose of these exchanges becomes clear if the distribution is plotted. Diagrams of Garbrede and Starryland furlongs are attached as illustration (Map Four), showing how the changes brought about considerable simplification and grouping of the holdings. The three Hares were John of Snetterton, Nicholas of Hargham (brother) and Ralph, son of Nicholas,<sup>27</sup> and as Nicholas soon died the consolidation is seen to be even more thorough. That such consolidation was a necessary precondition for enclosure is often stated, but enclosure sometimes came first. This happened in Lampsall Pit furlong as the survey records that part was enclosed and called Lampsallpit Close, containing separate grounds—two belonging to J. Hare, one to the Rectory (with a pit), one to the township and another to J. Hare.

Some re-arrangements of land already enclosed were recorded. These included amalgamation of closes (as in New Hall furlong where two closes and a pightle became one close) and the fragmentation of others as in furlong 64

where five pieces were made out of one.

Hargham has also full evidence for the seventeenth century. The 1681 survey was an updated version of that of 1629<sup>28</sup> so that the two provide a record of nearly sixty years of change. Up to the seventeenth century there is very little evidence. Some changes in the naming or distribution of the furlongs are suggested by annotation made to the 1681 survey. In these, references are made to earlier names for furlongs or parts of furlongs stated to have been drawn from old deeds. This points to a rather more chequered history for the field system of Hargham than that of Snetterton where change does not seem to have been drastic.

In Hargham remarkably little change took place between 1629 and 1681; only  $12\frac{3}{4}$  acres were enclosed between these dates bringing the totals for 1681 to  $272\frac{1}{2}$  acres of enclosed land  $(34\frac{1}{2}$  acres of it pasture),  $158\frac{1}{2}$  acres of several heath and over  $338\frac{1}{2}$  acres of land remaining as open field. After 1681 the Field Book survey showed an acceleration in the rate of purchase and enclosure;  $92\frac{1}{2}$  acres were purchased,  $55\frac{3}{4}$  acres were enclosed and some  $42\frac{1}{2}$  acres were exchanged. In Hargham these developments are linked closely with the decay of the village.

Among the last lands to be exchanged in both Snetterton and Hargham were those held by the Rectory, even though the Hares were patrons of both livings. This was not unusual where lands were held by institutions rather than individuals. Three indentures of exchange for these lands survive.<sup>29</sup> One made in 1700 between Ralph Hare, Anthony Neech, the Rector of Snetterton, John Hare (patron) and John, Bishop of Norwich, deals with an exchange by R. Hare of 14 pieces totalling just over 16 acres for 20 pieces of glebe totalling 15 acres. The agreement was made to confirm an earlier arrangement, "in perpetuity the advantages to both parties". As late as 1753 in Hargham when the church was dilapidated and the village gone exchanges of church lands were still being made.

In summary it can be said that the Buxton MSS, show in these two parishes an agricultural landscape which had been slowly evolving over some centuries. After 1680 and on into the early years of the eighteenth century change became more rapid and after this period was over the landscape had changed quite drastically. In Box 55 there is a manuscript entitled "Lands in Snetterton belonging to Mr. Hare that are convenient for Mr. Bristow. Note Snetterton was lately survey'd and a plan thereof then made from which plan the number and contents of the undermentioned pieces were taken". It can be referred to the 1780's. None of the pieces listed can be traced on the 1681 map. The tithe map of 1844<sup>30</sup> confirms that the landscape of the parish had changed completely. Fragmentary evidence for Hargham, given by an agreement of 1760 naming twelve fields unrecognizable by the 1681 map, is in concordance.

Besides the reorganization of the traditional cultivated areas, the heath and commons which had become such a prominent feature of both parishes began to disappear. In Hargham they went comparatively quickly, long before 1681 there had been extensive intakes from the commons and heaths, such as the Wroe and Conyclose, while Paxbroom and Swangey heath were several in 1681. The "rough draft" maps in the 1681 Field Book show that disposal of the remainder was not long delayed. In Snetterton they lasted longer: in 1802 Arthur Young mentioned the eastern heaths as being covered with "thick fern" but by 1844 they were divided up into large arable fields called Brecks. The North Heath and the river valley commons were enclosed in 1854. Of the medieval landscape in Snetterton only certain trackways remain (see the sketch map) together with the 1681 remnant of Old Hall furlong which is now once again a large arable field, and until recently some small fields near Ashby Mere. Possibly a few early hedges may survive. In Hargham

only the street on which the church stands is still there, traces of another road (which survived until the late nineteenth century) can be seen just outside the eastern end of the churchyard.<sup>31</sup>

One feature of the old field system about which little definite is said is the kind of boundaries employed. The furlongs were subdivided by meres32 which were frequently recorded for both parishes in the Field Book, in the 1629 Survey of Hargham, and, once, in the 1465 rental for Snetterton. Although they were not described, they were definitely stated to be separating individual holdings: in Ashbyburyland (Snetterton) in 1681, thirteen pieces of land were stated to be "between mears". A later insertion states "between the first and last pieces the mears are all plowed up".33 On the 1681 maps some meres are represented by dotted lines, others by short solid bars, but no meanings are given for these symbols. The word "balk" was used in Hargham in 1629 when the fourth furlong began at a balk although the lands within were between meres. In 1681 the same furlong was described as beginning at a mere so the difference between the terms is probably insignificant. There has been some controversy about the nature of boundaries between strips in open fields; in Snetterton and Hargham in 1681 they obviously existed. 34 Although in 1681 ploughing up of meres and even amalgamation of a few furlongs was in progress, meres were still being made. In Guildpits Furlong in Snetterton a piece of land was recorded as being bounded "by a new mear".

Common or procession meres were mentioned for Snetterton in 1681. The second piece of furlong 62 had a mere called Harlingsty (i.e. path to Harling) as a western boundary. A common or procession mere is mentioned in furlongs 44, Stonyland and Starryland and is shown crossing Garbrede; it obviously served as an access road to outlying furlongs. Most of the meres do not seem to have served as paths except on a personal basis for holders of pieces; in Hargham furlongs 22 and 23, pieces used as common footways were bounded by meres, suggesting that the meres were inadequate to serve as ways in themselves.

A parish boundary bank between the two parishes can still be seen; in 1681 it was called Greenway or Droveway and seems to have served as a road. Today it is a wide bank which can be seen where it crosses the road from Snetterton to Attleborough.

On the 1681 maps the boundaries of furlongs are shown distinctly. Those which had been enclosed have outlines coloured green; green is also used for internal division where an enclosed furlong had been subdivided into a number of closes. These were intended to represent hedges. Unenclosed furlongs have their outer limits shown in red. Apart from those stated in the text to begin at meres there is no indication as to the nature of the limits. Possibly they were headlands common to both furlongs, probably they were meres which the surveyor did not bother to mention.

Hedges had been appearing long before 1681; there is an entry in the 1516 extent of Snetterton which mentions a hedge with the elm as the species.<sup>35</sup> Hedges were apparently of two kinds; the references to hedges in Hargham

are much more numerous and include a "dry hedge" said to separate a part of the Wroe from the rest. Presumably this type was not reinforced by a ditch, as an agreement of  $1708^{36}$  gave permission to "ditch up or scour the old ditch" between the closes of the two parties. This particular ditch was to be dug " $4\frac{1}{2}$ –5 ft. wide from the laye and stubbs in the bank thereof". The hedge was planted on the earth thrown up from the digging of the ditch,  $^{37}$  judging by the instruction given in Court Leet laws for Hargham. Men were forbidden to take furze for fencing (Hargham Court Leet transactions 1658) "unless for cowes in his yard".

Few of the hedges surviving in the area today are in accordance with boundaries of 1681 except for certain ones which seem to mark the lines of old trackways, notably Mill Hill Heads. Using Dr. Max Hooper's method of dating hedgerows it can be said that some of these may be up to four centuries

old, since there are four hedgerow species to be found.

The most disappointing omission from documentary material is any really firm information about the system by which the lands were worked. For Snetterton there is almost nothing; the map of 1681 has no information while the survey contains only a footnote: "John Hare hath a piece of heath called the North Heath which indeed consists most of infield grounds at severall times purchased by his ancestors, amongst which are severall pieces of copyhold of Pakenham's" (a manor in Shropham). These must have been the three furlongs of 1517 mentioned earlier which were said to be "now in the heath". The purpose of this transaction would most probably have been to convert the infield to grazing for sheep. "Infield" implies that there must have been some form of infield-outfield system, but which particular furlongs belonged to these categories cannot be stated definitely. The eighteenth-century document "Lands in Snetterton . . . that are convenient" already mentioned, refers to Brecks, and the Tithe map of 1844 shows Brecks occupying land which had been Shamblegate, furlong 60, Breach Corner, Broomfurlong, furlong 57 and part of Norwich Way furlong. In 1681 sand and gravel pits in furlongs 38, 44, Leesing Croft, Stonyland and Starryland suggest that these were at least light land. Some furlong names, Sandgate (Sand Pit Piece in 1844) Stonehillbury, Sandhill or Stonehill and Hungry furlong, are similarly suggestive: all are marginal to the area cultivated in 1681. Pinned to the back of the 1681 Field Book is a list of lands in Snetterton belonging to the Township giving their locations in the various furlongs and their value. This gives an indication of relative fertility: comparing Old Hall furlong where  $\frac{3}{4}$  acre were valued at 5/-, with  $\frac{1}{2}$  acre in furlong 18 valued at 6d.,  $\frac{3}{4}$  acre in furlong 25 valued at 1/-,  $2\frac{1}{4}$  acres in Starryland valued at 2/- and  $\frac{1}{2}$  acre valued at 6d., certainly shows the poorer furlongs and these might be synonymous with outfield but not certainly so.

The Hargham documents yield little more. The 1681 map shows peninsulas and islands of cultivation in the heath and commons, which still occupied a substantial area. These were comparatively recent additions to the farmed area. Whether the intakes were preceded by some kind of temporary cultivation it is not possible to say; there is only a certain amount of suggestive information.

In the Court Rolls of Hargham for 1478<sup>38</sup> reference was made to a "Brakelond" furlong. Other references<sup>39</sup> suggest that some form of temporary cultivation was practised in the parish, unfortunately the references are only extracts copied, probably in the late seventeenth century, from old sources now lost, but they do conform with statements in the 1629 survey. Swangey Heath could be ploughed "at the lords pleasure" in 1629; the old sources stated that the foldcourse maintained 500 sheep "if Swangey field be layd, else not above 200". The same source mentions Burnt Close and Coney Close as "pasture or arable". In 1629 and 1681 Brakenhills was in three pieces and these are probably mentioned in an agreement of 1752<sup>40</sup> with the tenant of Beck Hall, Wilby. The tenant was allowed to plough only one part at a time leaving the other two parts as a sheepwalk.

From these fragments it is not possible to deduce much except that the system was most probably the infield-outfield type commonly found on poorer land in Norfolk and not the peculiar Breckland system described by M. R. Postgate.<sup>41</sup> This would have been in keeping with the position of the parishes close to the margin of Breckland.

Much scattered information may be gathered about crops and animals and the use of the resources in the two parishes up to the seventeenth century.

Field names in Snetterton (Wheteland and the Bury, Bere or Barley lands) suggest wheat and barley as the cereals commonly cultivated. The importance of barley is confirmed by "the rentall for the manor of Snetterton for the whole yeare" dated 1629 which records barley and malt as payment in kind. Windmills for grinding corn existed at various times in both parishes. The 1681 map shows two in Snetterton (997909 and 985402) one of which was disused. Hargham, according to a Court Roll of 1478, 43 had a post mill.

Livestock is very fully mentioned in most documents. The Court Rolls of Hargham<sup>44</sup> mention cows, bulls, sheep, pigs, piglets and horses frequently in cases of trespass and damage to crops; for example, in 1322 Francis le Yong trespassed on the common with his beasts, while in 1327 Ranulph Galle's horses caused damage to Thomas Cupman's corn. Capons were mentioned as rent in Snetterton in 1465 and 1629.

A Court Leet document of the 1570's<sup>45</sup> for Snetterton gives much information about farming practices in that parish. Among the by-laws were very marked strictures about keeping swine ringed: "unlawful" ringing earned a fine of 3d., failure to ring them meant impounding and 4d. for release of the animal, while if, after warning from the bailiff, the swine were still unringed the penalty was 1/–. In Hargham the rules were very similar. <sup>46</sup> In Snetterton all cattle had to be cleared from the field after Michaelmas and could not be brought back before shack time. ("Shack" was the practice of grazing animals on the fallen corn, stubble and weeds left after harvest. In the sheep-corn husbandry it was of especial significance for sheep. <sup>47</sup>) However, they could be kept on the villagers' own lands where the lord's sheep were not allowed. The penalty for infringing the laws on shackage was a fine of 3s. 4d. and the animals were impounded until it was paid. The signal that shack time had

come again was a special ringing of the parish church bell, but any tenant could feed horses before the shack bell so long as they were tied on his own land. Pasturing on commons was regulated to prevent over-grazing, no person was allowed to keep more on the common in summer than could be sustained on his own "severall pasture" in winter and the "stover" growing upon his lands. The only exceptions were those who had no more than two cows, one horse and two pigs, and those who were substantial tenants. These last were permitted to buy loads of hay to maintain their flocks on the common; 40 acre holders could buy two loads, 30 acre holders a load and a half, and 20 acre holders one load. No details of the foldcourse in Snetterton exist but in Hargham the extent is known (see map). Old sources<sup>48</sup> give variously 800, 700, 600 and 500 with 40 or 50 for the shepherd as the number of sheep in the foldcourse there. One entry in the Hargham Court Leet proceedings appointed a herdsman for 1656 and ordered that he was to be paid 9d. a beast as a stud fee for each beast covered. Anyone objecting to the fee was to be fined one shilling. The duty of this herdsman lasted from one Harling Fair to the next.

Hemp was grown in both parishes; as early as 1517 three hemplands were listed in the piece called Flaxland north of the present-day Snetterton Hall. It was still called Flaxland in 1681. In Hargham a hempland was mentioned in an indenture of 1658 and was near the church. It had been mentioned together with another in a 1630 rental<sup>49</sup> and, according to later entries in that book, both were still there in 1686.

In the 1570's in Snetterton the soaking process for hemp was mentioned. There was a common hemp pit at Norththorpe and it was not permitted to lay more than one load there at a time, the fine for disobedience being 6/8d. There must have been other hemp pits at Snetterton because there was a fine of 40/– for using them without owner's permission. The fines and the high rents for hempyards suggest that it was a lucrative crop. The common hemp pit was shown on the 1681 map but was not named and the 1844 Tithe map confirms the site at 003926. A small pond just east of Hargham church would have been convenient for the hempyards there<sup>50</sup>.

Much can be learned about the exploitation of the heaths, commons and wastes, especially from the Court Rolls of Hargham where people from Wilby, Attleborough, Snetterton and, in earlier days, Ashby were frequently presented for trespass. These included the numerous occasions when animals were pastured illegally—men from Attleborough and Snetterton were often fined for staffholding their beasts on Hargham common. Periodically commons were driven—in Snetterton once a month or more often as necessary; in Hargham the lord of the manor and the lord of the Hundred and Leet each did it once a year.<sup>51</sup> In Hargham the tenants had to remove their sheep from the common by 12 April each year.

One curious entry for Hargham dated 1321 concerned the appearance of one Adam Bank for cutting down a tree planted in the lord's common ("amputavit unum arbor plantat in coia d"). The search for fuel on the common also led to offences concerning furze (common of estovers).

In Snetterton in the 1570's tenants were limited to one load of "firwood" from the common "firwoods" at Norththorpe. In Hargham numerous fines were levied (6d. per offence) on outsiders for taking furze while tenants were not allowed to sell furze elsewhere. Enough furze had to be retained to provide shelter for grazing animals.

In 1681 no woodland was recorded in either parish save for some carr in Snetterton. Hence peat digging on the commons had long been important; references to turbaries and turf and "flagge" occur frequently in Court Rolls for Hargham from medieval times—in 1327 for example, a man from Ashby was fined for digging turf in the lord's turbary in Swangey. Peat was still dug in the mid-seventeenth century for the Court Leet records show the terms under which it might be done. In 1658 the tenants had to replace the flag after the peat had been dug; cutting had to be done between 11 March and 1 August, the penalty for infringement being 10/– per thousand.

Mowing of thatch or fodder in Swangey Fen or Shortmeadow (Hargham) was also restricted to the period after Kenninghall Fair. In Snetterton mowing of grass was limited to the period after "Thomas Becketts day".

The area of the river valley seemed to have been poorly drained; apart from the references to peat digging, fisheries existed in streams which today could scarcely support such activity. In Hargham men were fined for fishing in the lord's "severall water" in Swangey. In 1327 some poachers took the lord's net, cut it and extracted the fish. In Snetterton, as late as the 1570's, a Larling farmer was fined for fishing in the common river. Reference to poor drainage occurs again in old sources<sup>52</sup> as the common in Hargham was said to be dangerous sometimes in summer for sheep because of "the wet and the rot". The same records the use of a stream on the common for the annual washing of the flock. In January 1696 Fettle Bridge had to be rebuilt because it had been "totally thrown down by the great waters".<sup>53</sup>

In Snetterton there was a common gravel pit in Stonyland furlong in 1681 and common claypits in Guildpits furlong. It may be inferred that much of this clay, in later times at least, was used for marling as in 1752 the tenant of Beck Hall in Wilby was expected to put 200 loads of clay on the land each year, while another 400 could be added if the landlord paid carriage; this gives an indication of the quantities of this material which might have been required. However, in 1517 a "Tilekylle" was mentioned in Norththorpe. No mention is made of warrening but a lodge was mentioned in 1681 in Snetterton as standing formerly on Beacon Heath and a structure was mapped in 1681 at about 009899. The track which still leads in this direction from South-End was called Lodgeway from 1465 to 1681. In Hargham a close isolated within the common was called the Coney Close in the seventeenth century.

As has been shown in an earlier section the period 1642–1708 saw the disappearance of the commons in Hargham. Soon after this time other changes began to occur in farming and a few eighteenth-century documents bear witness to this.

In Hargham individual agreements made with farmers in 1755 and  $1760^{54}$  stipulated that grass had to be sown as a crop. In 1755 turnips had to be sown before the farm changed hands. In 1760 it was laid down that no more than four corn crops could be taken before grass was sown.

The coming of the turnip caused the foldcourse and shift system to lose its importance. Thus in 1789 in Snetterton we see a transitional stage reached:

"Twentyfive acres, three roods and twelve perches of the before-mentioned lands are in the north and south fields (shifts) over which fields all but such parts of them as are sown with corn or turnips Mr. Bristow's flock has a right of feeding constantly". 55

This was also the case in Hargham. In 1780 a tenant was made to keep some of his lands in grass for two years, others for one, while at the same time he had to allow 27 acres to be folded "in the usual manner with 350 sheep" and had also to keep his own flock on the land. This tenant and others still had furze grounds from which they could take fuel but they had to leave enough standing to give adequate shelter, not for grazing animals, but for game.

Thus the disappearance of the traditional common lands, the re-arrangement of the fields, the coming of new farming practices and the making of separate agreements with individual farmers signalled the disappearance of the old economy of the parishes which so many of the Buxton MSS. relate.

In retrospect the two parishes, with soils varying from waterlogged fen to boulderclay soils on the one hand, and poor sands and gravels on the other, present a transitional landscape between true Breckland further west and the richer lands of central Norfolk. The ancient agricultural economy revealed by the Buxton documents has reminiscences of both the heathlands of Breckland and the sheep-corn husbandry of the remainder of northern and western Norfolk.

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<sup>1</sup>Baggs, A. P., "List of Norfolk Maps Before 1700". Norfolk Research Committee Publication. 
<sup>2</sup>Allison K. J., "Lost Villages of Norfolk", Norfolk Archwology, Vol. XXXI

<sup>3</sup>Blomefield "Norfolk", Vol. I, 1739 edition.

<sup>4</sup>Buxton MSS., Box 92, Book 30 (loose leaf inserted).

<sup>5</sup>Buitch Margany 1472.

<sup>5</sup>British Museum, Hargrave 247.

\*Buxton MSS., Box 78, pages D39, 41 and 48.

\*Buxton MSS., Box 78, pages D39, 41 and 48.

\*By comparison with other, dated, manuscripts in the collection.

\*Part of the Wroe in 1681 was called "Slighthouse" or "Slightus", i.e. Slight or Slade meaning a down or Sheepwalk?

\*Buxton MSS., Box 84.

10 The surnames Gall, Tooke, Balls, Tann, Davy, Pigeon and Harrold were among those most frequently recorded. There were eight persons with the name Gall.

11Included in Court Rolls of Leet proceedings of Hargham for 1642–58, and by its position in the roll, dating

from the 1640's.

<sup>12</sup>Buxton MSS., Box 50.

<sup>13</sup>Buxton MSS., Box 55.

<sup>14</sup>Blake, W. J., "Norfolk Manorial Lords in 1316". Norfolk Archæology, Vol. XXX.

<sup>15</sup>Buxton MSS., Box 78.

<sup>16</sup>There is a record of a certain John Bouse of Ashby in this rental.

<sup>16</sup>There is a record of a certain John Bouse of Ashby in this rental.
<sup>17</sup>Norfolk and Norwich Record Office, Case 24, Shelf i.

"Norfolk and Norwich Record Office, Case 24, Shelf i.

18 Buxton MSS., Box 92, Book 30.

19 Probably that of Anne Hare of Snetterton.

20 I am indebted to Norwich Castle Museum and the Rev. M. Staines of Shropham for this information.

21, 222,628 acres to Snetterton's 2,206.577.

22 Buxton MSS., Box 79, Bundle 63.

23 Gray, H. L., "English Field Systems"; Orwin, C. S. and C. S., "The Open Fields"; Postgate, M. R., "The Historical Geography of Breckland 1600–1840" (Unpublished M. A. Thesis, Univ. of London).

24 Buxton MSS., Box 92, Book 30, page 4.

25 "Escambio" c. 1185 to exchange; "escambiatio" c. 1200 exchange, land given in exchange. Latham, R. E.

"Revised Medieval Latin Word List", 1965.

26 Norfolk County Council; Enclosure Award for Snetterton, 1854.

27 Blomefield "Norfolk", Vol. I., 1739 edition.

38 British Museum, Hargrave 247.

28 Buxton MSS, Boxes 54 and 55.

Buxton MSS, Boxes 54 and 55.
 Norfolk and Norwich Record Office.

\*\*Notions and Norwich Record Office.

31Aerial photography by the writer shows traces of old enclosure boundaries under grassland in Hargham.

32Mere of Mear (Oe gemaére, maére. Cogn. W. L. Murus, wall) a boundary; also an object indicating a boundary
a landmark. A New English Dictionary. Oxford 1908. 33 J. Hare having acquired the two outstanding pieces of Rectory land in the furlong by exchange in 1706, the

meres could be removed.

34Beecham, H. A., "A Review of Balks as Strip Boundaries in the Open Fields". Agricultural History Review

XIV, 1956.

35 Page 9 of this extent. From the description it may well have been on the parish boundary with Hargham.

\*\*Buxton MSS, Box 50.
\*\*Toepressions in grassland in Hargham, when seen from the air, match the outlines of closes shown on the 1681 map.
\*\*Buxton MSS, Box 78, D38, 39 and 41.
\*\*Buxton MSS, Box 55.
\*\*Postgate, M. R., "Field Systems of Breckland". Agricultural History Review, X, Pt. II, 1962.
\*\*Buxton MSS, Box 54.
\*\*Buxton MSS, Box 79, Bundle 63.
\*\*Buxton MSS, Box 79, Bundle 63.
\*\*Buxton MSS, Box 54.
\*\*Buxton MSS, Box 54.
\*\*Buxton MSS, Box 84, Court Leet documents, 1642–58.
\*\*Allison, K. J., "The Sheep-Corn Husbandry of Norfolk in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries". Agricultura History Review, Vol. V, Pt. I, 1957.
\*\*Buxton MSS, Box 78.
British Museum, Hargrave 247.

4\*Buxton MSS., Box 78.
British Museum, Hargrave 247.
4\*Buxton MSS., Box 92, Book 27.
5\*Godwin, H., "The Ancient Cultivation of Hemp". Antiquity, XLI, 1967, refers to Old Buckenham Mere nearby.
5\*Buxton MSS., Box 92, Book 30, Inserted Sheet.
5\*Buxton MSS., Box 78, DP48.
5\*Buxton MSS., Box 55.
5\*Buxton MSS., Box 55.
5\*Buxton MSS., Box 55, "Lands in Snetterton . . . that are convenient".