

WINCHELSEA

- Design and plan of the town

The highly ordered gridded layout of Winchelsea is considered to be a prime example of medieval town planning. Thomas Tout regarded it as ‘the most elaborate scheme of town planning ever devised even by Edward I’.⁴⁴² Yet it is easy to overlook the details of the plan of the town, which are themselves telling about the ideas of those who created it, and whose activities are glimpsed through the documentary records examined above. To do so really questions how far Edward himself was involved in the proceedings.

The layout of New Winchelsea has attracted a level of unsurpassed attention by historians of English medieval town-planning. In the main this interest is due to the survival of the town’s detailed documentation, in particular the rental drawn up in 1292, just three or four years after the town’s foundation.⁴⁴³ This document captures in written form a contemporary picture of New Winchelsea’s make-up and provided William Homan the opportunity to reconstruct a map of the town showing its probable layout in 1292.⁴⁴⁴ Using as a basis the first edition Ordnance Survey plan he not only calculated the areas of the town’s plots and street blocks (‘chequers’ or ‘quarters’) but also managed to work out how they were arranged as individual units of property. He was able to do this because the rental is a sequential list of individual properties, complete with their respective area (recorded in *virgae* – a medieval unit of area), and also their location within the town. The rental is arranged according to numbered quarters and streets, and the outlines of these survive in the town on the ground as street blocks, making the arrangements of plots and streets of 1292 identifiable and map-able. In effect what Homan did was to convert the rental from its written form to a cartographic plan.

William Homan undertook his work on Winchelsea in the 1930s and ‘40s, and left a large body of unpublished material on the town’s early history and topography.⁴⁴⁵ He, like Thomas Tout before him and Maurice Beresford after him, drew upon the documented process of Winchelsea’s planning, but said relatively little about how the town’s design was drawn up and laid out on the ground in the 1280s.⁴⁴⁶ In other words, little work has been done on interpreting the town plan itself. What has been done by many, however, is to compare Winchelsea’s layout with the *bastide* towns of Gascony in south-west France. The basis for such comparisons is not at all surprising since at the same time that Winchelsea was being created the English were also establishing new towns in Edward’s recently-acquired lands in Gascony, and certain individuals recorded working at Winchelsea are known to have had connections with Gascony either through their administrative work or as merchants. So the gridded layout of Winchelsea has been seen as deriving from a model provided by the *bastides*, an influence from abroad carried by the likes of Waleys or

⁴⁴² Tout, *Mediaeval Town Planning*, p.26.

⁴⁴³ PRO: SC 11/674.

⁴⁴⁴ Homan, ‘Founding of new Winchelsea’, p.28 et seq.

⁴⁴⁵ See Winchelsea Corporation Records – a catalogue, ed. R.F. Dell (East Sussex County Council, Lewes, 1963), pp.82-6. Homan’s collection is housed at East Sussex Record Office.

⁴⁴⁶ Tout, *Mediaeval Town Planning*, pp.23-6; Homan, ‘Founding of new Winchelsea’, p.30, 39; Beresford, *New Towns*, pp.14-28. Homan remarks: ‘we do not know the methods or means by which a survey was carried out in the thirteenth century, nor do we know if a plan (it would not be drawn to scale) was made on parchment recording the survey or the laying-out of the town’ (p.39).

Rokesley.⁴⁴⁷ This is a persistent view, fostered throughout the twentieth century by Thomas Tout, William Homan, Maurice Beresford, and since repeated in generalised accounts of medieval town planning.⁴⁴⁸ It is due some reevaluation. To do this requires careful scrutiny of the layout of Winchelsea, and examination of the chronology of its formation and those individuals involved recorded by the contemporary sources.

As far the town's layout is concerned, it has had further work carried out on it by David Martin and Barbara Martin who have redrawn William Homan's plan of the town on the basis of further documentary and survey work.⁴⁴⁹ A further physical survey of the town was undertaken in 2003 as part of the 'Mapping the medieval urban landscape' project to provide detailed field measurements of Winchelsea's surviving street and plot patterns.⁴⁵⁰ With these two new studies it is possible to understand more about the design and plan of New Winchelsea, and begin to question the idea that its plan derived from a model of a Gascon bastide. What begins to emerge from this is the possibility that Winchelsea's plan was conceptualised in imitation of a bastide, but was not modeled on one.

Although Winchelsea's plan is a grid and highly regular in overall form, it is not a uniform layout and neither is it strictly orthogonal. It comprises five streets laid out in parallel and running approximately north-south, each spaced at a regular interval. Across these longitudinal streets are a series of latitudinal streets, each orientated more or less on an east-west alignment but showing more variation in their direction and spacing than the longitudinal streets. Three in the northern part of the town are on one alignment, two to the south are on another, and two further south are on yet another. So the latitudinal streets run on three different alignments. Only in the case of the northern-most streets are intersections close to being right-angled; elsewhere right angles are absent and the grid is skewed. This variation in street orientation produces a series of differently-sized and shaped street-blocks. These street-blocks are the 'chequers', or 'quarters', thirty-nine in all, listed in the 1292 rental, and the latitudinal streets are those likewise recorded in order, from north to south, as 'first street', 'second street', 'third...' and so on up to 'eighth street'. In the mind of the individual who completed the survey to draw up the 1292 rental, the streets and street-blocks of the town had an order, but on the ground in their layout this was not conveyed as a perfect abstract geometrical form, rather more simply as a series of various quadrilateral street-blocks, the thirty-nine 'quarters' that made up the town as a whole. This choice of layout reveals something of the approach and ideas of the individual(s) who came up with it in the first place, the various parties who were at work planning the town in the 1280s.

The differing orientations of the latitudinal streets and the variations in street-blocks have not gone unnoticed. William Homan suggested there were existing features that the town's surveyors had to take into account, giving rise to some streets having not quite straight alignments and not intersecting at right-angles: 'it may have been done in order to fit the layout to existing buildings or perhaps even to the roads of an older settlement', but was

⁴⁴⁷ On the lives and Gascon connections of these two particular men see Williams, *Medieval London*, pp.330-335.

⁴⁴⁸ Tout, *Mediaeval Town Planning*, p.25; Homan, 'Founding of new Winchelsea', p.22; Beresford, *New Towns*, pp.28-9; Morris, *History of Urban Form*, pp.98-100. Morris uses the term 'bastide' to describe Edward's new towns – which is not strictly-speaking correct.

⁴⁴⁹ Martin and Martin, *Extensive Urban Survey*; Martin and Martin, *Quarter-by-Quarter Analysis*. See also Martin and Martin, *New Winchelsea*, pp.25-28, 94-100.

⁴⁵⁰ K.D. Lilley, C. Lloyd, S. Trick and C. Graham, 'Analysing and mapping medieval urban forms using GPS and GIS', *Urban Morphology* 9 (2005), pp.5-15; see also 'Data downloads'.

‘not due to carelessness or bad surveying’.⁴⁵¹ One of these buildings was a religious house belonging to the Franciscan friars. This was founded on land granted in c.1285, ‘before the town was laid out’, according to David Martin, causing a ‘break in the symmetry of the street layout’ around Grey Friars, such that ‘their northern and western boundaries probably influenced the entire grid of the town’.⁴⁵² Certainly there were pre-existing parcels of land on the hill-top site, for these were what gave rise to so much protracted negotiation between landholders and the king’s agents in the mid-1280s, as well as complaints over compensation. The commissions of involving Waleys, Rokesley, Penecestre and others in 1281 and 1283 were all concerned with these issues, and the 1292 rental itself makes it clear that various landholders in the manor of Iham had cultivated land and buildings.⁴⁵³ Indeed, the complaint of 1303 levelled by Burgeys and Langhurst for their 35 acres ‘within the site of the new town’ covered a large portion of the hill-top.⁴⁵⁴

A process of protracted negotiation, coupled with the presence of existing landscape features, is likely to have caused the variations in the layout of the new town therefore. If so, they seemed to have concerned the southern portion of the town – where such variations are most noticeable – rather than the northern portion where the town plan is most regular and symmetrical. In the work Penecestre was asked to do in 1286, ‘to lay out lots at fixed rents for dwelling purposes [at] a place called ‘le kenel’ for the enlargement of the town of Winchelsea’, we perhaps have the evidence for this. The location of ‘le kenel’ is not known, and not indicated on early maps of the town. It probably lay in the southern part of what became the new town, for the ‘enlargement’ Penecestre was overseeing surely relates to a southward extension, adding further latitudinal streets south of the Greyfriar’s precinct, where their alignments are most awry from those to the north, as well as laying out additional plots. The longitudinal streets were presumably already in place here, or at least their alignments were simply extended by Penecestre, for they show no significant deflection in orientation along their whole lengths. The town was seemingly enlarged, then, simply by placing further cross streets to form new street-blocks (quarters 23 to 39), their resulting odd shapes and alignments reflecting this additional stage in the laying out of the new town. The implication of this is that the plan of Winchelsea was laid out in two stages, the first taking place prior to 1286, but after 1283, and including the longitudinal streets and quarters in the northern half of the town (quarters 1 to 22), and the second taking place subsequently, during 1286, extending the town to the south once agreements were reached with landholders. The result is the largest of all the new towns of Edward’s reign.

If Penecestre was responsible for laying out the southern part of the town in 1286, was he likewise influential in the northern part of the town? He was, after all, named in the earlier commissions of 1283. He also had to be able to ‘lay out lots at fixed rents’, and since this was required for the town as a whole it makes sense to see him as the person who had done likewise in the northern quarters too. He was doing this in 1286, so why not in 1283 as well? This might be why the longitudinal streets are on one single alignment – if he was simply extending what he had already begun. There are other contenders however. Not least Waleys and Rokesley, who were also named in the October 1283 commission ‘to plan and give directions’ for the new town’s streets and lanes, market places and churches. The specific wording of this commission is telling in this regard. The instruction was ‘for places suitable for a market, and for two churches... as there are in the aforesaid town of

⁴⁵¹ Homan, ‘Foundation of new Winchelsea’, p.34.

⁴⁵² Martin and Martin, *Extensive Urban Survey*, pp.14-15; Martin and Martin, *New Winchelsea*, p.30.

⁴⁵³ CPR 1281-92, pp.3, 58-9; Homan, ‘Foundation of new Winchelsea’, pp.24-5.

⁴⁵⁴ CPR 1301-1307, p.185.

Winchelsea'.⁴⁵⁵ Just as the three men were instructed so provision was made for these in the layout of the new town – the Monday market being one of the places for a market, located just to the west of Grey Friars, with two further street-blocks accommodating St Thomas' church and St Giles'.⁴⁵⁶ But who had decided on them? Were the three men simply following orders and following through a predetermined plan? Or are they being told what to include but using their own design which met the stated requirements? No doubt the barons of old Winchelsea had a say in this too, for it was their 'replacement' town, and it was their own properties, church and market, that had to be replicated in the new town.⁴⁵⁷ It may be, then, that they were dictating how the new town should look. The role of the three agents begins to look more like they were acting as intermediaries, being told first what the new town should contain, and to 'give directions' to others to do the work. Of the three, perhaps Penecestre was most key, hence the task he was assigned to do in 1286, in effect to continue what he had already begun.

But assigning the planning of the new town to any one individual is perhaps erroneous. It may instead be wiser to view the layout of New Winchelsea as the product of many hands, and the culmination of many discussions, just as is the case with town planning today. The decision-making included a range of people from across the political and social hierarchy of Edward's realm, from the bureaucrats of the royal household to the local barons and property-holders. Some of these individuals, the most high-ranking, are better represented in the documentary record. John de Kirkby is one such official, who in July 1288, 'on behalf of the king, had delivered seisin of the land to the commonalty' – giving the community of the new town legal possession.⁴⁵⁸ Earlier, too, Kirkby had been overseeing matters. The letter patent of 1303, in which the complaint of Burgeys and Langhurst was being heard, refers also to 'John, sometime bishop of Ely, the treasurer, to whom the ordering of the new town was assigned'.⁴⁵⁹ The complaint related to lands being exchanged and compensated for in 1283, or shortly thereafter. He was Lord Treasurer in 1284, bishop of Ely in 1286, and died in 1290.⁴⁶⁰ Between 1284-5 he was undertaking a survey of lands in Yorkshire on behalf of the king.⁴⁶¹ Kirkby's role in the 'ordering' of New Winchelsea in 1283-4 was around the time at which land exchanges were being carried out and instruction issued to Penecestre, Rokesley and Waleys 'to plan and assess the new town'.⁴⁶² This latter would have coincided just prior to his appointment as Lord Treasurer, when he was 'chancery clerk' serving as 'right-hand man' to Robert Burnell, the king's chancellor between 1274 and 1292 – the 'greatest post' in the king's administrative service.⁴⁶³ Either as clerk in 1283, or as treasurer in 1284, Kirkby 'was in intimate relation with the king'.⁴⁶⁴ Through Kirkby, the planning of New Winchelsea was thus connected to the highest authority in the land.

⁴⁵⁵ CPR 1281-92, pp.81-2.

⁴⁵⁶ On the market and church sites see Martin and Martin, *New Winchelsea*, pp.25-36, 74-82.

⁴⁵⁷ 'Old' Winchelsea had a St Thomas' church, CChR 1257-1300, p.177. On the churches in New Winchelsea see *Victoria History, Sussex*, 9, pp.71-5; Martin and Martin, *New Winchelsea*, pp.73-83; also D. Rudling, 'Archaeological investigations at St Giles' churchyard', in Martin and Rudling (eds.), *Excavations in Winchelsea*, pp.75-93.

⁴⁵⁸ *Victoria History, Sussex*, 9, p.67.

⁴⁵⁹ CPR 1301-1307, p.185.

⁴⁶⁰ Tout, *Chapters in Administrative History*, ii, p.13; *Survey of the County of York*, ed. R.H. Skaife (Surtees Society, Durham, 1867), pp.xi-xiii.

⁴⁶¹ *Survey of the County of York*, ed. Skaife, p.viii.

⁴⁶² CPR 1281-92, pp.81-2.

⁴⁶³ Tout, *Chapters in Administrative History*, ii, pp.11, 13.

⁴⁶⁴ Tout, *Chapters in Administrative History*, ii, p.11.

The ordered plan of the new town, with its grid of streets and plots 'laid out at fixed rents', has the characteristics that might be associated with the thinking of an exchequer clerk, an accountant. The gridded layout itself facilitating the computation of rents and areas, carefully recorded in tabulated form in the 1292 rental, quarter by quarter, plot by plot. The design of the town plan, then, might be viewed as a product of bureaucratic thinking – a 'rational' solution to a practical problem. This indeed has been argued.⁴⁶⁵ Certainly a man such as Kirkby, well used to dealing with drawing up lists and working out sums, as he did in the Yorkshire survey, might have approached the problem of relocating a town in this 'logical' way. Alternatively, Kirkby's 'ordering of the new town' may have been more of an instruction – an order – rather than a physical ordering of the town's layout; an instruction to others, men such as Penecestre, Rokesley and Waleys, who themselves were to 'give directions' on the town plan. These administrative documents seem to keep pointing down a hierarchical chain of command, therefore, from the top of the royal household down through appointed agents working locally, and no doubt down yet further to those with the expertise and skills to lay out a new town. The problem is these latter individuals are hidden from view. But there are indications in the town's plan that may help. Its design, for example, shows an aesthetic sensibility at work. This took geometrical form, of straight streets and neat right angles, and a concern for regularity (at least in the northern-most (earliest?) part of the town). The later thirteenth century is known to have been a time when these attributes were considered to be important to convey ideas about beauty and dignity, for civic pride.⁴⁶⁶ The loss of old Winchelsea provided an opportunity to create a new more impressive urban landscape, and restore the status of the town 'as a port most valuable to the English' following the troubles the barons had experienced in the 1270s, including their falling revenues.⁴⁶⁷ In making the town spacious and ordered, the formal, quadrilateral layout marked a new beginning. In this context, it is perhaps not without significance that geometrical forms such as the square had symbolic meaning, as demonstrated in contemporary illustrations of the heavenly Jerusalem, the celestial city.⁴⁶⁸

It is therefore possible to offer various interpretations of the regular and ordered plan of New Winchelsea. To see it on one hand as the product of a functional, rational bureaucrat trying to make a town's shape relate as closely as they can to the tabulated lists of accounts they had to use to keep an eye on revenue and landholdings; and on the other as a model urban form imbued with an aesthetic based on geometry and pointing to a symbolism that conveyed the order of God's universe and the archetypal city of Jerusalem. It is easier to pin more credence to the former than the latter as we know of individuals working at New Winchelsea, such as Kirkby, who could have seen the planning of the new town this way, whereas no mention is made of architects or masons designing the town who might have had the necessary skills and ideas to take an approach that drew upon contemporary aesthetic theory. Only in other parts of Europe is such evidence forthcoming.⁴⁶⁹

The plan of New Winchelsea itself does of course offer some clues as to the nature of its designer(s), and this relates to the idea that its layout is derived from the *bastide* towns of Gascony. There are parallels between them. In particular, Winchelsea's grid of streets, the

⁴⁶⁵ Beresford, *New Towns*, p.16; A. Randolph, 'The bastides of south-west France', *Art Bulletin* 78 (1995), pp.291, 306.

⁴⁶⁶ See K.D. Lilley, *Urban Life in the Middle Ages 1000-1450* (Palgrave, London, 2002), pp.167-75.

⁴⁶⁷ *Victoria History, Sussex*, 9, p.63.

⁴⁶⁸ K.D. Lilley, 'Cities of God? Medieval urban forms and their Christian symbolism', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 29 (new series) (2004), pp.296-313.

⁴⁶⁹ D. Friedman, *Florentine New Towns. Urban design in the late middle ages* (MIT Press, London, 1988).

Monday market accommodated within a square of its own defined by streets entering into it at each corner, the overall regularity in the plan of the town, and the very fact it is a 'new town', are all characteristic of *bastides* such as Monpazier, Molières, and Beaumont du Périgord in the English-held Agenais of Gascony.⁴⁷⁰ Such towns were foundations contemporary with New Winchelsea. But the *bastides* of 'French' Gascony also shared these attributes.⁴⁷¹ So singling out those men such as Waleys and Rokesley who had connections with English Gascony in the 1270s and 1280s as possible originators of Winchelsea's design begins to look more suspect, unless they were simply familiar with the general concept of the *bastide* layout rather than attempting to create a facsimile of one. But in its details Winchelsea's plan has also some anomalies that mark it out as different from the Gascon *bastides*. Two of the most significant differences are, firstly, the lack of evidence for what in the *bastides* are called 'carreyrous', small lanes running behind plot-frontages and which form a characteristic T-shape in street-blocks facing the market place, and secondly the presence at Winchelsea of St Thomas' church in one whole 'chequer'. In the *bastides*, churches are commonly positioned in a corner close to and overlooking the market square, as at Monpazier, or else occupy small portions of street-blocks located further away from it, as at Molières.⁴⁷² In some cases, as at Laparade, they sit in the market square itself.⁴⁷³ It maybe that at Winchelsea St Thomas' was located in a square also intended to be a market. After all, the instruction issued in October 1283 was for 'places suitable for a market', the plural suggesting there was more than one market place in mind.⁴⁷⁴ Examples of churches occupying a whole chequer to themselves in the Gascon *bastides* are however hard to find.

Despite the differences in detail between the characteristics of Winchelsea and the layouts of the *bastides* of south-west France, there are superficial similarities. There are also the Gascon connections personified through Waleys and Rokesley. Considering the clear role these men had, 'to plan and give directions' for the town's streets, markets and churches in October 1283, it would be naïve to deny the possibility that Winchelsea was designed to look like a *bastide*, but it would also be unreasonable to over-egg the evidence and argue that the town plan was based upon some *bastide* familiar to each or all of them. More likely, if indeed it is accepted that these individuals had a direct role in laying out the new town, the resemblance was based on their memory or idea of what a *bastide* looked like, and not a design blueprint. This then leaves the issue of how the town was laid out, and what this involved. Again the physical layout of New Winchelsea is revealing.

As William Homan notes, 'we do not know the methods or means by which a survey was carried out in the thirteenth century, nor do we know if a plan (it would not be drawn to scale) was made on parchment recording the survey or the laying-out of the town'.⁴⁷⁵ He suggests the town was laid out with 'rods or other means of measuring', possibly 'one half *virga* in length', a *virga* he suggests being 'about 16 feet 3 inches in length'.⁴⁷⁶ Maurice Beresford suggests 'the use of a line to lay out the hill-top at New Winchelsea', as 'rope was

⁴⁷⁰ Lauret et al, *Bastides*, pp.66-7, 283.

⁴⁷¹ Lauret et al, *Bastides*, pp.63-78.

⁴⁷² Lauret et al, *Bastides*, pp.66-7.

⁴⁷³ Lauret et al, *Bastides*, p.67.

⁴⁷⁴ CPR 1281-92, p.81. See also Martin and Martin, *Extensive Urban Survey*, p.17, who note that the area around St Thomas' was used as a market in the sixteenth century.

⁴⁷⁵ Homan, 'Founding of new Winchelsea', p.39.

⁴⁷⁶ Homan, 'Founding of new Winchelsea', pp.28-9.

certainly bought for this purpose by Edward I's officials elsewhere'.⁴⁷⁷ The *virga* though is the unit used in the 1292 rental to calculate the areas of the plots in the town. It is a measure of area and not distance. In Homan's attempt to map the layout of Winchelsea from the rental, the *virgae* enumerated listed against people's names were key to enabling him to work backwards from the document to the areal extent of the properties. This does not of course mean that this particular unit of measurement, the *virga*, was used to lay out the town. It simply means that it was used by the surveyor in 1292 to calculate the size of each property on the ground. By then the town's plots were already laid out. So which unit of measurement was used to plan the town? In England in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries a frequently-used measure in town planning was the perch, a linear measure.⁴⁷⁸ While regional variations in the perch meant that it could range between 15 feet and 22 feet in length, in the reign of Edward I it had become a statute measure of 16½ feet, or 5½ yards.⁴⁷⁹ As Maurice Beresford notes, one square-perch equates with one *virga*, for it was '1/160 part of an acre, or 30¼ square yards', a square measuring 5½ yards on each side, 'the square pole of the arithmetic books'.⁴⁸⁰ So by this calculation the *virga* at Winchelsea was one-perch square, making it likely that a statute perch of 16½ feet had been used to lay out the town. However, this differs from Homan's suggestion that the *virga* used at Winchelsea was 16 feet and 3 inches – three inches less than the statute perch.⁴⁸¹ In all, therefore, not only is there uncertainty over what the actual size of *virga* was at Winchelsea (according to either Homan or Beresford), there is also a question mark over whether a linear measure was used in its planning, and if so which one.

Measurements of the town plan were undertaken in 2003 to calculate the dimensions of street-blocks and plot frontages for each of the complete quarters still surviving in the northern part of the town (quarters 1-3, 7-9, 13-14).⁴⁸² These were compared with the areas recorded in the 1292 rental. This revealed that the *virga* used in 1292 was around 25m². It is not possible to determine, though, which of the two *virgae* sizes suggested by Homan or Beresford is correct, as three inches is too small a margin of error to deduce from field survey measurements made of 700 year-old street-blocks.⁴⁸³ However, what the field measurements do indicate is that the surveyors who drew up the 1292 rental were accurate in their work, since their calculations closely match those recorded by the 2003 survey.⁴⁸⁴ It is also possible to use this figure of 25m² to work out the extent of the town's street blocks that are no longer inhabited, those 'lost' quarters that lie in the southern half, and

⁴⁷⁷ Beresford, *New Towns*, p.16. He presumably is referring here to the rope bought in 1287 for the laying out of the bastide of Baa near Bordeaux: see J.P. Trabut-Cussac, 'Date, foundation et identification de la bastide de Baa', *Revue Historique de Bordeaux* 10 (1961), p.141.

⁴⁷⁸ T.R. Slater, 'Ideal and reality in English Episcopal medieval town planning', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 12 (new series) (1987), pp.191-203; P. Crummy, 'The system of measurement used in town planning from the ninth to the thirteenth centuries', in S.C. Hawkes, D. Brown and J. Campbell (eds.), *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History* (British Archaeological Reports, British Series 72, Oxford, 1979), pp.149-63.

⁴⁷⁹ See P. Grierson, *English Linear Measures* (The Stenton Lecture, University of Reading, 1972), pp.4-24.

⁴⁸⁰ Beresford, *New Towns*, p.18.

⁴⁸¹ Martin and Martin, *New Winchelsea*, p.96, assume that a *virga* is derived from a statute perch.

⁴⁸² For more information on this see Lilley et al, 'Analysing and mapping medieval urban forms'.

⁴⁸³ It is worth noting, though, that in excavations of Plots 10-12 in German Street in 1974 the frontage of the property calculated from the 1292 rental was 'just 700 millimetres (two feet and four inches) greater than [that] indicated by the excavation', D. Martin and B. Martin, 'Excavations at German Street, 1974: Quarter 19, plots 10-12', in Martin and Rudling (eds.), *Excavations in Winchelsea*, p.2. This calculation was based on one *virga* being one square-perch of 16½ feet.

⁴⁸⁴ For the 2003 survey data see 'Data downloads'.

which exist today only as earthworks in empty fields. Using the earthwork remains to indicate where the streets once ran in this area, and by calculating the extent of the 'lost' street-blocks, the modern measurements taken in the field again compare favourably with those recorded in 1292 for each quarter. Using these new results the shapes of the 'lost' quarters mapped-out by Homan and Martin need to be altered slightly. To establish whether a linear measure was used in the town's planning requires some statistical analysis of field measurements made of surviving plot frontages and street-blocks.⁴⁸⁵ This in fact reveals the common occurrence of a 20-foot measure. If a single linear measure was used originally it may have been the regional perch-unit of twenty feet, rather than the statute perch of 16½. The alternative is to see the town being laid out using the *virga*, or square perch, used to survey the properties in the town for the 1292 rental. In the context of medieval town planning, however, this method would be unusual.

Apart from questions about which unit of measure was used to lay out New Winchelsea there are also uncertainties concerning the procedure that was followed by the surveyors. Once more, Homan provides an interesting possibility. He suggests that 'the surveyors appear first to have determined the positions of the streets', and then 'a strip of ground five poles wide was measured off along the south side and along the north side of each [street] block'.⁴⁸⁶ These two 'strips were then subdivided into suitably sized plots', and the 'part of the block between the two strips... divided by a north-south line and the ground on either side of this line... also subdivided into plots'.⁴⁸⁷ This then created the characteristic pattern of plots within the quarters that Homan shows on his reconstruction map showing the town in 1292. Martin and Martin have since revised some of Homan's plot patterns, and hence theirs are used here, though with some alterations to better fit the street-block areas derived from the 2003 field-survey data.⁴⁸⁸ There is no reason to doubt the sequence of planning that Homan suggests in his analysis. Setting out streets first must have required some prior consideration of the quantity and size of plots that the street blocks were to contain, so perhaps we might envisage a design stage when the layout was worked out on parchment before being laid out on the ground. The ability to work 'off plan' in ground-surveys would surely have been possible for the surveyors of the time since they were clearly able to do the reverse when measuring areas of plots to create a list in the form of the 1292 rental. What is more, as the field survey has shown, there was a high degree of accuracy on the part of the surveyors who worked in Winchelsea. This again makes it all the more unlikely that agents and administrators such as Waleys or Rokesley were up to the job, and more likely they secured specialists to do the actual work, no doubt in consultation. This was probably undertaken soon after the agreements with local landholders had been reached, during the mid 1280s. The arrangement that they came up with was similar to and reminiscent of a Gascon *bastide*, but not a straightforward copy of one. There is a hint that a castle was intended for the area around St Leonard's church – the old town of Iham.⁴⁸⁹

The design and plan of New Winchelsea is full of interest. It is not a simple layout. It seems to have been laid out in two stages, the northern part of the town being the earliest. From the start in terms of its content it was conceived to be a layout that replicated what had existed at 'old' Winchelsea, but drawn anew to a more geometrical design. Whether this

⁴⁸⁵ Lilley et al, 'Analysing and mapping medieval urban forms'.

⁴⁸⁶ Homan, 'Founding of new Winchelsea', p.30.

⁴⁸⁷ Homan, 'Founding of new Winchelsea', pp.30-1.

⁴⁸⁸ Thanks to David Martin for his kind permission allowing us access to his work. See Martin and Martin, *Extensive Urban Survey*, figure 4. Also Martin and Martin, *Quarter-by-Quarter Analysis*.

⁴⁸⁹ For this see Martin and Martin, 'Extensive Urban Survey', pp.22-3.

was chosen for its practical advantages or for aesthetic reasons (perhaps both) can be debated. Who produced the design is likewise contentious, though a process of negotiation is evident. What is for sure is that the surveyors of the time had the skills and ability necessary to undertake accurate setting out. Who they are is not documented in the various records the town's relocation left to us, but the chances are they were not the particular individuals that are named in the commissions and appointments issued by the Crown. Their role was more as administrators, or overseers, of the process. If there was one person who did perhaps play a key role in this regard it was Penecestre, Warden of the Cinque Ports. In this position he would have been the man the barons of Winchelsea would have looked to first, and in whom they would perhaps place most trust. The town that they ended up with may show passing resemblance to a *bastide* town in its general appearance, but it seems unlikely, even with their Gascon connections, that the king's agents were working from a blueprint they gained from say Monpazier or Beaumont. More likely, to them, and to others, a new town was understood at the time to have a particular shape by definition, a regular layout of rectilinear street and plot patterns, an 'ordered' townscape.