

Between Two Forests: the Social and Topographic Evolution of Medieval Anstey

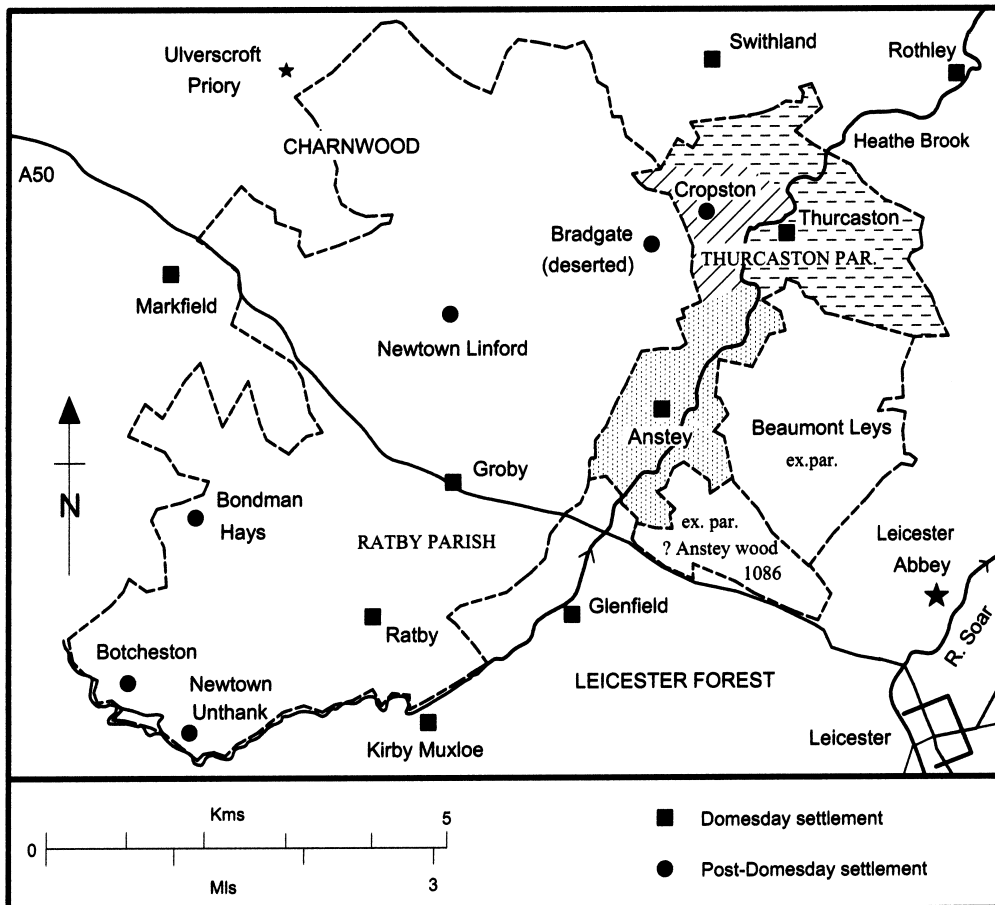
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This paper originated from background research for the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS), relating to developer-funded excavations on a pasture close in Cropston Road, Anstey. Excavations in 1990 and 1992 in this former medieval toft (house and garden) produced residual Saxo-Norman pottery (i.e. from later layers) and post-hole structures of the 12th–14th centuries, followed by evidence for abandonment (Browning and Higgins, this volume) (illus. 3: X). Initial examination of the 1886 Ordnance Survey map indicated that the modern plan of Anstey village held clues to its history. Linking the village's development to a complex history of assarting (woodland clearance) and multiple manors proved to be a complex exercise in detection. Inevitably, the trials and tribulations of such a process, as well as the occasional joyous moments of insight, are hidden beneath the constructed coherence of a finished narrative.

Origins

Anstey parish lies in the former hundred of West Goscote. The surface geology is formed of glacial boulder clay except for a band of fluvial deposits (silt and gravel) along the line of the Heathe (or Rothley) brook. Modern farmland within the township is predominantly pastoral. The present pattern of tarmac public roads in Anstey was to an extent created by enclosure, but their topography suggests that they were partly selected and modified from a pre-existing pattern of lanes (illus. 1–3). In particular, the straight stretches of the Anstey to Thurcaston and Cropston roads and of parts of Gynsill Lane stand out as *de novo* products of the 1762 enclosure award. It has been suggested that Anstey Way is on the line of a Roman road from Leicester to Ratcliffe on Soar. Its line northwest of Anstey village is uncertain though a possible crop mark is overlain by ridge and furrow. This suggests that parts of the presumed route had fallen into disuse by the late Saxon period (Lycett 1999).

The place-name Anstey is derived from the Old English word, *anstig*. A great deal of discussion has surrounded the interpretation of this place-name. Gelling (1984, 63–4) suggested that it meant 'one-way' and referred specifically to settlements on a short stretch of road with forks at either end. This applies well to the Hertfordshire and Leicestershire Ansteys and to the Warwickshire Ansty. However, a number of examples in counties along the south coast fit better with the alternative interpretation of the place-name as meaning 'steep road' (Gelling and Cole 2000, 66–7). Atkin (1997–8 and 1998) has stressed the location of many Anstey place-names on watersheds and noted that some Ansteys were specifically associated with the residence of royal officials. She



1. The medieval parishes of Ratby and Thurcaston.

suggests that they may have served as meeting places for those assigned to track down cattle thieves. Certainly, Anstey (Leics.) looks to have been located at the point where several route-ways merged to form Anstey Lane, a green way and presumed driving route that linked Leicester and Charnwood. However, it is neither in an elevated position nor on a watershed. There is also no specific evidence for Anstey ever having had such a policing role, and moreover it was originally a dependent member of Thurcaston manor (see below). A multiple origin for this place-name remains possible. Regardless of the debate over the place-name derivation, the distinctive, double-forked road pattern of the Leicestershire, Warwickshire and Hertfordshire Ansteys is associated with wood-pasture landscapes and all three road-systems may have originated as woodland paths.

In the medieval period, Anstey was sandwiched between Leicester Forest to the south and Charnwood Forest to the north (Fox and Russell 1948 and Squires 1981). Medieval forests were legal entities designed to protect the hunting rights of the crown across broad belts of countryside, often only partly wooded. Leicester Forest, became a royal

forest in the 12th century, though Charnwood Forest was never actually part of an official royal forest. In Saxon times, the two forests may once have joined together forming a single stretch of woodland. The elongated shape of Anstey parish and its manorial/parochial connections suggests that it may have been assarted into this Charnwood/Leicester woodland from the Thurcaston area, perhaps following pre-existing trackways running along the westward side of the Heathe Brook. The waisted or figure “8” shape of the parish may reflect two distinct phases and foci of clearance (illus. 2 and 6). Two of Anstey’s open field names, Stocking (O.E. *stoccing* ‘land cleared of tree stumps’ and Horserood (OE *rod* = clearing) are characteristic of woodland clearance (illus. 2).

Recent research indicates that the classic East Midland landscape of villages and open fields originated from a widespread re-organisation of the landscape. Excavation evidence in the Midlands currently suggests this process began in the late 9th or 10th centuries, at least in the river valleys (Parry, *forthcoming*). Former dispersed settlements became concentrated into villages and the landscape was divided up into large open-fields, which allowed communally organized cropping and grazing of the fallow. There is still much debate about both the exact sequence and causes of these changes. Nevertheless, it is widely believed that they mark a move to a more intensive and commercially orientated system of agriculture. It also seems likely that the processes of village nucleation and the rise of common-field systems are intimately linked. Certainly, one of the notable features associated with it was the decline of the kindred as a social force and the rise of the village community (Lewis *et al.* 1997; Brown and Foard 1999; Courtney, *forthcoming*).

Domesday Anstey

The place-name of Anstey is first recorded in Domesday Book when it was held by one of the county’s largest landholders, Hugh de Grantemesnil, castellan of Leicester (DB, 1, 232a). Anstey was a chapelry of Thurcaston (also held by earl Hugh in 1086) until 1866 when it became an independent parish (*Rot. Hugh*, i, 252; *VCH Leics*, 1, 399). The chapelry relationship suggests that Anstey was once part of a single estate based at Thurcaston, which also possessed the hamlet of Cropston. The latter was first recorded in the Leicestershire Survey of *c.* 1130 where it was assessed for tax purposes comprising 4 carucates (Slade 1956, 17). It is possible therefore that Cropston was a new creation resulting from the assarting of woodland, though a gap may have occurred between clearance and carucation (see table 1). Thurcaston is recorded as having woodland measuring two leagues long by half a league wide ($3 \times \frac{3}{4}$ miles). It was probably located in the extra-parochial area of Beaumont Leys, or less likely, given its size, occupied Cropston and the part of Thurcaston township which lay to the west of the Heathe Brook (illus. 1).

In order to understand Domesday taxation it is necessary to understand the distinction between *inland* and *warland*. *Inland* was land owned by the lord though it could be rented out. It was distinguished by being permanently exempt from paying tax and was therefore not assessed in hides or in carucates (a measurement used in much of the Danelaw). *Inland* was presumably also excluded from the Domesday ploughland figures. By contrast, the *warland* comprised those lands that were assessed for tax purposes either in hides or carucates (Faith 1997). *Warland* paid tax if it was held by peasants but was exempted if it formed part of the lord’s demesne (land worked for the lord’s direct profit). The ploughland was an alternative measure of agricultural resources used in Domesday Book whose significance has been much debated (Roffe 2000, 145–69). In Domesday, Anstey was valued for taxation purposes at 2 carucates and by a

separate system at 4 ploughlands. Thurcaston was assessed as 9 carucates and 4 ploughlands in 1086, and was reassessed at 8 carucates in the Leicestershire Survey of *c.* 1130 (DB, I, f.232b; Slade 1956, 16). The carucated tax assessment for Thurcaston appears to be unusually heavy suggesting its rating was politically adjusted rather than being a direct reflection of resources.

Table 1: Assessment in 1086 and *c.*1130

	Thurcaston	Cropston	Anstey	Totals
1086	9 carucates 4 ploughlands	–	2 carucates, 4 ploughlands	11 carucates,
DB demesne	2 ploughs, 4 slaves	–	1 plough, 4 slaves	
DB tenants	22 villeins, 4 bordars	–	13 villeins, 4 bordars	
<i>c.</i> 1130	8 carucates	4 carucates	6 carucates	18 carucates
Acreage	1116	374	721*	

* excludes Holgate ward

Anstey was reassessed in the Leicestershire Survey of *c.* 1130 at 6 carucates, the theoretical equivalent of 24 virgates in Leicestershire (Slade 1956, 16). A virgate or yardland was the standard holding of a medieval peasant of villein status. Virgates were normally the same size within the same village but could vary from 20 to 40 acres between different communities. Depending on context, medieval land measurements such as the carucate, could be based on real holdings in the fields or be purely fiscal with little or direct no relation to realities on the ground.

Domesday Book records that 1 plough and 4 serfs (*servi*) were held by the lord of Anstey in demesne, while 13 villeins and 4 bordars (cottagers with little land) held a further 2 ploughs. Eight acres of meadow and two stretches of woodland are also listed. The value of the manor was said to have risen from 10 shillings in 1066 to 40 shillings in 1086 (DB, i, f. 232b). To the west of Anstey was the large medieval parish of Ratby, which included the chapelries of Groby and Newtown Linford (elevated to parish status by the 16th century). The townships of Swithland, Ulverscroft, Newtown Linford and Bradgate were all dependencies of the manor of Groby, with its castle motte (Farnham 1927–8, 196–222). Ratby formed a distinct manor by the Norman Conquest, though both manors were subsequently held by the same lords, notably the De Saers and Ferrers, through the high Middle Ages. Groby and Ratby presumably once formed part of a single royal or comital (aristocratic) estate with its Saxon caput or centre located by the minster or mother church of Ratby (Cain 1990, 20–1). The rise of Groby Castle as a chief residence after the Conquest may reflect the strategic and commercial importance of the routeway (A 50) it was located on, linking Leicester to Ashby de la Zouche (illus. 1). In the early-modern period, the parish of Ratby and manor of Groby were associated with an ecclesiastical liberty known as the peculiar of Groby.

Thurcaston was held freely by Leofwin in 1066, but no indication is given of Anstey's former ownership. Domesday (1, 230a) records that earl Hugh had 24 burgages in Leicester attached to Anstey but only a single house to Thurcaston. A further 73 houses were listed as attached to 13 of Hugh's other rural manors within the county. The administrative attachment of burgages to rural manors is thought to originate in the practice of

rural lords acquiring urban properties to rent out as a source of income (see Flemming 1993). An alternative interpretation, generally less favoured by current historians, is that this was a means of financing the defence of the borough. The large number attached to Anstey may be a reflection of its convenient closeness to the town.

Two Dozen Virgates: the Leicester Abbey manor

Robert fitz Parnell, Earl of Leicester (1191–1204) granted 24 virgates of land and 4 cottages in Anstey to Leicester Abbey, an Augustinian house. He also granted the Abbey the rights to pasturage in the part of Leicester Forest lying between the roads from Leicester to Anstey and Groby (Bodl. Laud 625, fo. viii; *Rot. Chart*, 1i, 145). The latter area can be identified with the extra-parochial areas known in modern times as Anstey Pastures, Leicester Frith and Gilroes (illus. 1–2). The 1344 and 1477 rentals indicate that the abbey had no demesne at Anstey and no mention is made of any manorial buildings such as a hall or barn (Bodl. Laud 625 fos. viii–x and fos. ccii–cciii; Nichols, 3ii, 1079–80: 1477 only). The abstract of the Le Pyn Roll, preserved in Charyte’s Rental, also indicates that Anstey was not amongst the abbey’s demesne manors in 1254 (Hilton 1946, 36–7).

Intriguingly, the 24 ‘field’ virgates held by Leicester Abbey in 1341 correspond exactly to the 6 carucate geld (tax) assessment of the Leicestershire Survey. A close correspondence between field virgates and tax assessments has been noted in a substantial number of townships in Northamptonshire and Leicestershire (Hall 1992, 77–94; Brown 1991, 39–78; Bowman 1995, 138–46). Presumably this enabled the burdens of tax and other dues to be easily calculated and collected from the peasant tenants. This correspondence in Anstey also tends to support Cain’s (1990, 16) suggestion that not all the increases in carucation between Domesday Book and the Survey can be explained by assarting. He suggests that the rise on some manors reflects the confiscation of tax-exempt demesne (*inland*) and its re-grant as carucated and taxable *warland*. Certainly, the history of assarting in Anstey (see below) is unlikely to explain this increase. Anstey was held by the castellan of Leicester in 1086 and by his direct successor, the earl of Leicester in c.1130, so confiscation seems equally unlikely.

It is most likely that the increase represents an economically motivated retreat from demesne farming and its conversion to rentable and taxable peasant holdings. Given general economic trends this is most likely to have occurred in the period of widespread demesne contraction between Domesday Book and c.1180. The 13th century was, by contrast, a period of demesne expansion (Miller 1971; Lennard 1959, 105–212; Harvey 1977, 77–85; Dyer 1980, 61–2). Certainly, many demesnes were temporarily farmed out to peasants in the 12th century whether wholly or partly. Renting of demesne land on the Bishop of Worcester’s lands in the West Midlands was most common in the period c.1125–50 (Dyer 1980, 62). Anstey’s demesne was perhaps unusual in that its demesne was permanently granted away. The larger Domesday demesne at Thurcaston probably continued to function to judge from the surviving earthwork complex around Manor Farm (Hartley 1989, fig. 30). Thurcaston was granted to the earl of Leicester’s falconer and his descendants, the Fauconer family, to hold by serjeantry (i.e. in return for non-military service). Unfortunately, it has thus escaped record in the *inquisitiones post mortem* (surveys of land made upon a knight’s death) which only record land held by knightly tenure (Farnham 1928–33, iv, 375–8).

A major problem is whether or not the conversion of demesne to peasant virgates merely involved the division of the demesne while the old villein lands remained untouched.

Alternatively, a more radical re-organisation may have occurred which involved the entire arable and meadow of the abbey's meadow being redivided to create 24 virgates and perhaps involving an adjustment to the size of the Anstey virgate. It is thus uncertain that the apparent correspondence between the geld assessment and field virgates pre-dates the 12th century. The Domesday total of 13 villeins is certainly irregular, though one cannot assume that every peasant held a standard virgate holding even at this early date (Lennard 1959, 343–4). Unfortunately, the size of the Domesday demesne and whether or not it formed a compact block, as opposed to being dispersed among the peasant lands, remains unknown.

Table 2: Abbey tenants in Anstey

	1086	c. 1130	1341	1477
Villeins	13	?24	31	16
Tenant virgates	?13	?24	24	22½
Demesne virgates	?	?0	0	0
Total no. of virgates	?	?24	24	22½
Cottagers	4	?	3	6

It seems likely at this date that most of the 13 villeins of Domesday Anstey each held a virgate of land, the standard tenurial unit. By 1341, 31 unfree tenants (*nativi*) each held a messuage and lands totalling 24 virgates in units of ¼, ½, ¾ and 1. By 1477, there were only 16 'tenants at will' who held in total 19 messuages and 22½ virates in units of 1, 1½ or 2 virgates. The missing 1½ virgates appear to have been broken up into small fragments. In 1420, William Edson and his six sons, all surnamed Wilson, paid Leicester Abbey the considerable sum of 100 marks for their freedom (Bodl. Laud 625, f. x). In 1477, Robert Wilson and Thomas Wilson, either the last survivors from 1420 or a new generation, both held a virgate from the Abbey.

The above tenancy pattern reflects the rising post-Domesday population and the subsequent fragmentation of properties probably through inheritance. The 14th-century demographic down-turn resulted in fewer tenants and a coalescing of virgate fragments. In 1341 and 1477 each Abbey virgate was said to contain 18 acres of arable and 9 rods of meadow, the latter located along the Heathe Brook in the eastern part of the parish. The average size of a virgate in Leicestershire and on Leicester Abbey's estates was 24 acres (Bowman 1995, 145–6; Hilton 1949, 9: fn. 1). The Anstey virgate was exactly three-quarters of this, possibly another indication of the prevalence of duodecimal calculations in land division, although other sizes of virgate also occur in the county. Possibly the ample meadow of the Abbey's manor in Anstey helped offset a smaller arable holding than was the norm.

The Abbey rentals record 3 cottages in 1341 and 6 in 1477. One of the cottage holders in 1341 (who also held a messuage and a ¼ virgate) was noted as having a hand-mill in the said cottage, reflected in his cottage rent of 5s 7¼d. Both villeins and cottagers were recorded as owing light labour services in 1477. It is uncertain if these were carried out on a nearby abbey demesne, such as Thurmaston, or commuted to a money payment. A late 15th-century list of customs in Charyte's Rental includes Anstey among 6 manors in which labour services were referred to as being in the past rather than the present (Hilton 1949, 70–1).

The abbey was granted a mill in 1306 by Richard Bircheley, parson of Hungarton, which with its attached meadow, produced rents of 50s. in 1341 and 33 shillings and 4d. in 1477 (*CPR 1301–7*, 486; *PRO C143/61/10*). It probably stood on the site of the

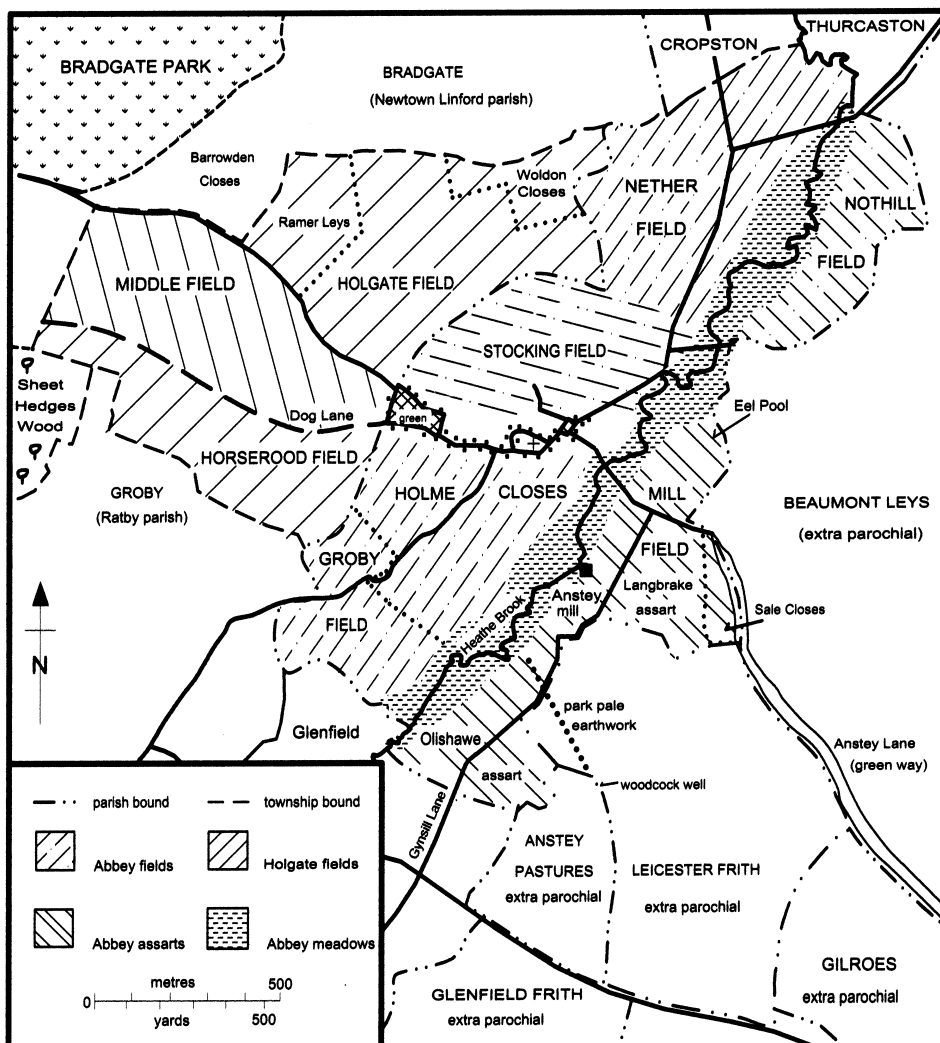
modern Anstey Mill located south of the village on the Heathe (Rothley) Brook. After the Dissolution five abbey tenements in Anstey were by the crown granted to Thomas, earl of Rutland in 1541 (*L & P Hen VIII*, 16, 325–6). Other properties were leased to tenants for periods of several decades. However, the crown still retained about half the acreage of the abbey manor in 1609 when it was sold off to various existing tenants (Nichols, 3ii, 1081).

Taming the wild: woods and assarts (illus. 2 and 7)

The two Domesday woods measured respectively 1 league long and $\frac{1}{2}$ league wide (c. $1\frac{1}{2} \times \frac{3}{4}$ miles) and 2 furlongs long by 1 furlong wide ($\frac{1}{4} \times \frac{1}{8}$ miles). The larger of the two Domesday woodlands can only have lain between Anstey Lane and Gynsill Lane. It probably included not only the extra-parochial area of Anstey Pastures but also the 530 acres of Leicester Frith and Gilroes to the southeast (see Fox and Russell 1968, 134 and map inside covers). A possible location for the smaller Domesday woodland is around Anstey Green which retains the characteristic concave shape of a former woodland common used for pasturing (Rackham 1986, 137–46; Roberts 1987, 158–9). It was also formerly the site where two streams joined and was the site of a communal well, now concreted over. It thus may have suffered from waterlogging as well as providing a useful watering source (illus. 3–5). The broad width of Anstey Lane, now a green road, running southeast of the village towards Leicester suggests that it was once a major droving route from Charnwood Forest to Leicester. The surviving stone pack-horse bridge, now by-passed by the modern road, is presumably the ‘great bridge’ documented in 1588, and probably represents pre-Dissolution investment by the Abbey (Farnham 1928–33, i, 28).

Oselishawe and *Langbreche* assarts were granted to the Abbey, by Simon de Montfort (the younger) sometime before his death in 1265. This occurred as part of an exchange for the Abbey giving up its pasture rights in the earl’s enclosed wood between the ways running from Leicester to Anstey and Groby respectively (Bodl. Laud 625, f. cciii). The 1341 rental also reveals that Leicester Abbey received 10s rent from *Oselishawe*, which was said to lie between *Freborows holme* and the Frith (illus. 2). The place-name *holme* was originally used to describe an island or meander but was frequently used to describe plots of meadowland; while *frith* was used to describe woodland open for commoning. *Freborows holme* is unlocated, though *Fremaneslond* field is recorded as bordering on the Groby field system in 1371 (*CCR 1369–74*, 351). The assart is also described as lying below the ‘defensive’ palisade on the south side of the mill, presumably the surviving linear earthwork which runs south-eastward of Gynsill Lane (illus. 2). A modern Freeman Close was also recorded by the Women’s Institute field-name survey in Anstey Pastures, located immediately west of the pale (LLRRO FNS/1/1–2). This bank and ditch system has also been shown by excavation to cross Gynsill Lane, running westward towards the meadow of the Heathe Brook, where it is overlain by the ridge and furrow of Mill Field (Meek 1992 and Finn 1992). The earthwork and its lost palisade may have enclosed the Abbot’s Frith Park, first documented in 1297 (Nichols 4ii, 783). The above evidence points to an identification of *Oselishawe* assart (*haw* or *hay* ‘enclosure’) with the southernmost extension of Anstey parish bounds east of Gynsill Lane (illus. 2).

The Abbey also received a further 10 shillings in 1341 from *Langebreche* assart, that is the Long Breck (long assart/slope). This assart was located west of a croft or enclosure in Anstey called Belgrave Sale. Other entries state Belgrave Sale had formerly belonged



2. The dual field systems of Anstey based on 1762 enclosure award (with selected closes).

to William de Belgrave and that it was granted to abbot Robert (1244–7) by Geoffrey Christopher of Anstey. A likely identification of ‘Langbreche’ is the more northerly extension of Anstey parish east of Gynsill lane. The easternmost close of this projection, alongside Anstey Lane, is identified as Sale Close in the 1762 enclosure award (illus. 2) (LLRRO En/Ax/3/1; see also LLRRO FNS/1/1–2).

In 1477 *Oselishawe* and *Langebreche* were both described as having been divided amongst the tenants and produced no separate rent. However, rental income had fallen at Anstey as elsewhere on the abbey estates since 1341 (Hilton 1949, 81). This was presumably a reflection of the strength of tenants’ bargaining power in relation to their lords after the Black Death. Anstey manor also collected rents in 1341 from areas of abbey woodland outside the parish, namely the unlocated *Cleyhegges* (clay hedges) and

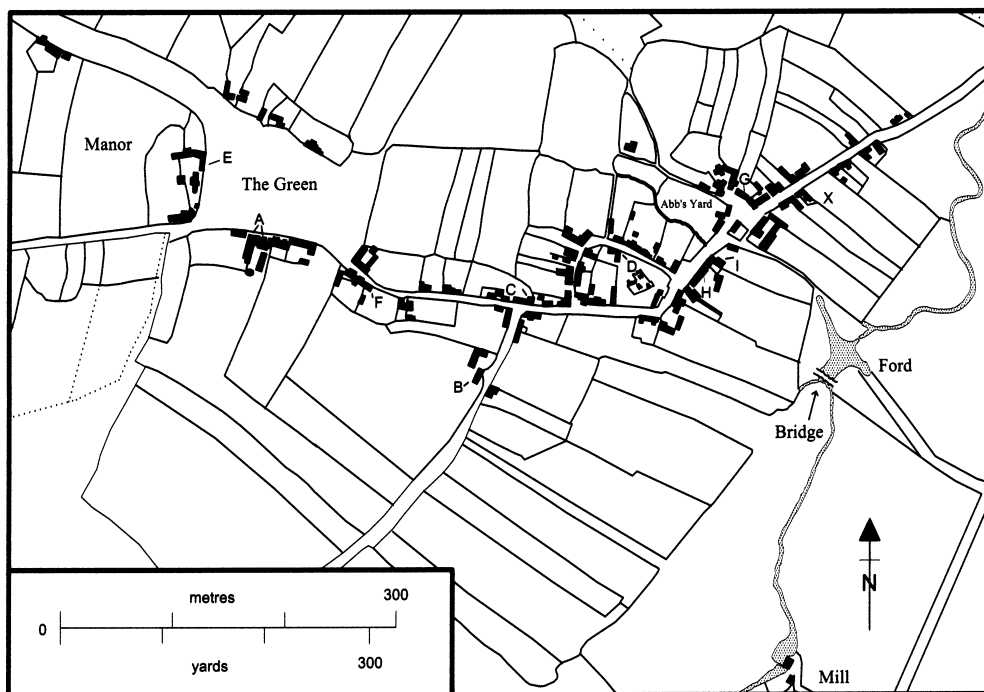
Stocking (modern Stocking Farm). *Cleyhegges* was granted, with other woodland in Leicester Forest, to Leicester Abbey by Simon de Montfort the younger, in a charter confirmed by the King in 1252 (*CChR*, 1, 408; Fox and Russell 1948, 25). In 1477 both *Cleyhegges* and *Stocking* were recorded as common and no rent was therefore collected. Both *Oselishawe* and *Langbrech* assarts were probably bounded to the west by the meadow-land along the Heath Brook. It is also noticeable that the presumed park pale earthwork has been shown to have once extended at least 60 metres north-west of Gynsill Lane (illus. 2). This must raise the strong possibility that more or less the whole of Mill Field, rather than just the areas east of Gynsill Lane, were late assarts (illus. 7). Thus Mill field probably only became part of the common field system between 1341 and 1477.

In 1585 Anstey Pastures, within Leicester Forest, was leased by the Duchy of Lancaster to Thomas Martin and others for 31 years (illus. 2). In 1606 Robert Martin and three others purchased Anstey Pastures (108 acres) from a London-based group (including the earl of Salisbury) who had purchased it in 1604 from James II. Martin and his colleagues sold on portions of the land to nine others and divided the residue (c. 57 acres) between themselves (LLRRO DG6 A1–4). The boundary of the 108 acres of Anstey Pastures in 1606 was said to run from the middle of the furlong by the old pale beyond Anstey Gate alias Cowgate (Anstey Lane). The bound then ran towards Leicester following the old pale of Leicester Frith to Groby Gate (i.e. along Gynsill Lane to the Leicester to Groby road). It then went eastward by the new ditch, said to be two furlongs and three perches in length (489.5 yards or 447.6 metres). Finally the bound turned north to the pool still known as Woodcock Well, and finally back to the start (LLRRO DG6 A1). The northern part of what by the time of the 1886 OS map formed the 146.75 acre extra-parochial area of Anstey Pastures (i.e. north of the pale earthwork) was clearly not included in the original grant (OS 25" XXXI:1). In 1628 the rest of Leicester Forest was sold off by the crown and enclosed (Fox and Russell 1948, 105–17). By the 19th century the Martins had acquired most of the extra-parochial area of Anstey Pastures and lived in the house of the same name there from 1833 to 1892 (Turner 1985, 39).

The Domesday manor: a topographic interpretation (illus. 3 and 6)

It is possible to hypothesise a model of village development given the above information. One of the most detailed reconstructions of past morphology was undertaken for the Leicestershire village of Kibworth Harcourt by Cecily Howell (1983, 114–46; see also Roberts 1987, 202–3). As noted by Lewis *et al.* (1997, 179–80), with regard to Kibworth, a limitation of such reconstructions is that they may fail to recognise any partial or total re-organisation of the village which may have occurred. In the case of Anstey the overall trend of plan development seems fairly clear, though mapping it out in detail inevitably involves a degree of speculation (illus. 6).

The village and open field of Anstey were probably laid out in the late Saxon period though firm evidence is lacking. As in many Leicestershire villages the earliest pottery from the recent excavations in Cropston road is Stamford ware of the late 9th–11th century, all from residual contexts. The manor house and attached closes were probably created at the same time as the village, though the chapel may have been a later addition. Topographic analysis suggests that the block of land on the north side of Church Lane was the manorial close of the abbey manor (illus. 3 and 6). One possibility is that the chapel 'island', i.e. the area within Chapel Lane and the whole complex north of the lane, was originally a big block of demesne and that the chapel ground was carved out



3. Anstey village in 1762. Recorded timber buildings. A: Green Farm, B: The Limes, Groby Road; C: 67 Bradgate Road; D: 2 Church Lane; E: Manor Farm; F East of *Crown Inn*, Bradgate Road.*; G: The Nook*; H: 10–12 Bradgate Road*, I: The *Old Ship*, 4–6 Bradgate Road.* (* = demolished). X = ULAS excavations.

of it. The exact site of the manorial hall remains uncertain. The properties immediately west of the church and the toft called ‘Abb’s Yard’ in 1762, may or may not once have been manorial land (illus. 3). The latter name is probably a shortening of ‘Abbot’s Yard’ and might indicate the site of the former Abbot’s hall. The diversion of a stream round its western border is also typical of manorial closes as at Raunds Furnells (Courtney, forthcoming b). However, it is notoriously difficult to locate the site of manorial buildings within extensive manorial close-complexes.

Domesday records 13 villeins, 4 serfs and 4 bordars (cottagers) in Anstey. Assuming the village was then in existence, the villeins’ properties were probably laid out in a row, either entirely or predominantly along the south side of the main street. The plots were laid out with tofts or yards along the street and probably with elongate crofts (agricultural plots) behind, though these are not easy to date. The pattern of tofts and crofts is particularly well preserved at the eastern end of the village, but elsewhere, for example south of the church, the pattern has been lost even since enclosure in 1762. Certainly the recent excavations indicate Saxo-Norman settlement east of the Nook. Less certain is whether the primary settlement extended to the north side of the Nook or as far west as Groby Road. It should be noted that the long narrow enclosures along Groby Road appear to be the result of late medieval or early modern piecemeal enclosure. The excavated field (toft) measures approximately 37.5 metres (123 feet) along the frontage, but no consistent size for tofts is evident using modern large-scale O.S. maps (illus. 3: X). It remains unclear if

this was always the case or a result of shifting boundaries over many centuries.

The 'bubble' shaped block of land between Anstey Green and Groby Road is clearly a distinct unit, a planned addition to the village core possibly built over existing ridge and furrow (illus. 3 and 6). This extension probably dates to the division of the Abbey demesne and the associated increase in the number of peasant virgates from 13 to 24. The extension 'bubble' may have been divided into 6–8 tofts of the same or double the width of the excavated site, perhaps with crofts behind. The suggested demesne block, north of the chapel, was presumably also divided up, probably to allow the creation of eleven new tofts in total. The details of the division are extremely speculative given the high degree of later boundary fragmentation, but there was undoubtedly some such reasoning behind the process. Strong circumstantial evidence, outlined above, dates the break-up of the demesne to the 12th century. If the supposed linkage between the Leicestershire carucation and the number of field virgates is not accidental the demesne break-up can be further refined to predate *c.* 1130. This plan unit is clearly later than the village core but its chronological relationship to the third plan unit around Anstey Green is less obvious.

In the 1341 Abbey rental, Robert (?the miller), son of William Bate of Groby (a former tenant of the mill) held a capital messuage with an orchard for 4 shillings. His gate is also mentioned. A cottage on the site of his messuage was held from the Ferrers, lords of Groby and is described as 'extending next to the green'. Robert also held a 'place' (36 feet long × 24 feet wide) from the abbey on the north side of the cottage and highway and probably on the west side of his messuage. In 1477 the capital messuage is not specifically mentioned. The problem is whether this 'capital' messuage formed part of the former manorial close adjacent to the Nook Green or was a new property adjacent to Anstey Green at the western end of the village extension. The term 'capital' was applied both to manorial and large properties. It seems likely that the Ferrers and Abbey properties remained geographically distinct prior to the Dissolution. If so, the Ferrers ownership of the adjacent cottage would point to a location adjacent to Anstey Green, on the north side of Bradgate Road (illus. 3).

The other manor: the Ferrers and Anstey Green

Leicester Abbey manor was clearly not the only estate in Anstey by the 14th century. The Geryn rental of 1341 lists only 36 villein and cottage tenants, but the post-Black Death poll tax of 1379 (not 1377 as previously ascribed) lists 54 taxpayers paying 4d each. The tax was levied on married couples and single men and women over 16 years of age except for genuine paupers on a sliding scale of 4 pence to 10 marks (Farnham 1928–33, i, 23–4; Fenwick 1998, 479 and 565–6).

Thomas Danvers held 5 *yardlands* (virgates) in Anstey in 1277 from Margaret de Ferrers as $\frac{1}{20}$ of a knight's fee, worth £15 per annum (*HMC Hastings*, 1, 323). In 1344 the same 5 virgates were held by Marmaduke de Grendale but in 1371, 1388 and 1458 they were split between various tenants. In 1458 they were valued at 40 shillings a year (*CIPM*, 8, 317; 13, 70 and 16, 213; Farnham 1928–33, i, 24). A deed of 1336 records that Marmaduke de Grendale was granted various lands in Anstey and its neighbourhood by Peter de Burton Agneys and Hugh de Stiveton, clerk. The Anstey portion of this grant comprised three messuages with their adjoining crofts as well as 4 virgates and 49 acres of land. These, presumably freehold, properties were formerly held by Robert Christopher, a substantial landholder with land in several parishes, though he apparently held no land by feudal tenure. The Christopher family are last recorded in Anstey in

the 1332 lay subsidy (Nichols 4ii, 1049; Farnham 1928–33, i, 19–20). Both the lack of meadow and the witness list suggests that these lands were within the Ferrers rather than the Abbey manor.

The Close Colls of 1371 recorded the assignment of dower ($\frac{1}{3}$ of the estate) to Margaret de Ferrers. This included 1lb of cummin, $1\frac{1}{4}$ lbs of pepper and a pair of gloves from the prior of Ulverscroft, a penny from the Abbot of Leicester, 4 shillings and 4 pence from Roger Daukynesone, 3 shillings from John Flecher and 5 pence from John son of Osbert, presumably tenants of the Ferrers (CCR 1369–74, 351). Roger Daukynesone may have been the Roger, son of Ralph recorded as holding the Danvers 5 virgates with ‘others’ in 1371 (CIPM, 13, no.87). A 1512 minister’s account of Groby manor indicates that the Grey (formerly Ferrers) manor in Anstey produced 30s $\frac{1}{4}$ d and $\frac{1}{3}$ lb of pepper in rent (Farnham 1927–8, 217). The decline in value from 1277 may reflect both an inflated early valuation and the granting of tenant land to monastic establishments.

Groby manor had descended to the De Quincy family, earls of Winchester after the splitting of the Beaumont estate in 1207, following the death of Robert fitz Parnell in 1204. The manor descended in 1264 to the Margaret de Ferrers, widow of the Earl of Derby. In 1273 she granted the manor of Groby to her younger son, William de Ferrers, who was probably the first resident lord for centuries. William became the Ferrers heir upon the death of his elder brother in 1279 (see Farnham 1927–8, 196–222; *HMC Hastings*, 1, 334–5). The Ferrers estates descended by marriage in 1445 to the Grey family (later earls of Stamford). The Greys lived in Bradgate House from c. 1500 until 1709, after which they lived permanently at Enville in Staffordshire.

Three yardlands or virgates in Anstey were granted by peasant tenants, presumably of the Ferrers family, to the Augustinian canons of Ulverscroft priory in the 1280s and 1290s (Nichols 3ii, 1081; PRO C143/11/4 and C143/20/22; CPR 1292–1301, 25). Five messuages, three cottages, a croft called *Priestesyrd* and $5\frac{1}{2}$ virgates and over 30 acres of other land in Anstey were granted to the priory by Henry Lambert of Shepshed and John Clerk of “*Lyndynford*” (Newtown Linford) in 1368–9. These lands (c. nine virgates) must also have lain within the Ferrers rather than the Abbey manor of Anstey (PRO C143/365/13; CPR 1367–70, 125). The first post-Dissolution account of 1538–9 reveals that Ulverscroft received £5–6s–8d in customary rents per annum from Anstey, out of which they owed a rent to the manor of Groby of 3s–4d and one pound of pepper (PRO SC6/Hen 8/3464). In the late 13th century, the Cistercian abbey of Garendon was granted rent from two properties in Anstey by Margaret Ferrers. In 1540–1, Garendon’s land in Anstey produced 18s in rent. (Nichols, 3ii, 824; *Mon. Ang.*, 5, 336). The Abbey’s land in Anstey, along with the rest of the Garendon estate, was granted to Thomas, earl of Rutland in 1541 (*L & P Hen VIII*, 16, 325–6). Apart from a single cottage, granted to London land agents in 1546, none of the Ulverscroft properties in Anstey have been traced in the post-Dissolution land market (*L & P Hen VIII*, 21, 244).

An Anstey rental of 1350 ascribed to Anstey in Leicestershire by both the Public Record Office and Farnham (1928–33, i, 22–4) was shown during the course of this research to belong to Anstey in Hampshire, a manor of Battle Abbey (PRO SC11/381). An internal reference refers to ‘an aid towards Ralph de Bello (Battle) etc.’ and another copy of the same document occurs bound with other Battle Abbey rentals in the Court of Augmentations records (PRO E315/57 fos.84–5). A 15th-century rental has also been incorrectly ascribed to Ansty in Warwickshire (PRO SC11/680; *VCH Warwickshire*, 8, 46–7). Comparison with the former document shows that it too clearly belongs to the same Hampshire manor.



4. Photograph of Anstey Green of c.1900 viewed from the east end (LLRRO copyright).

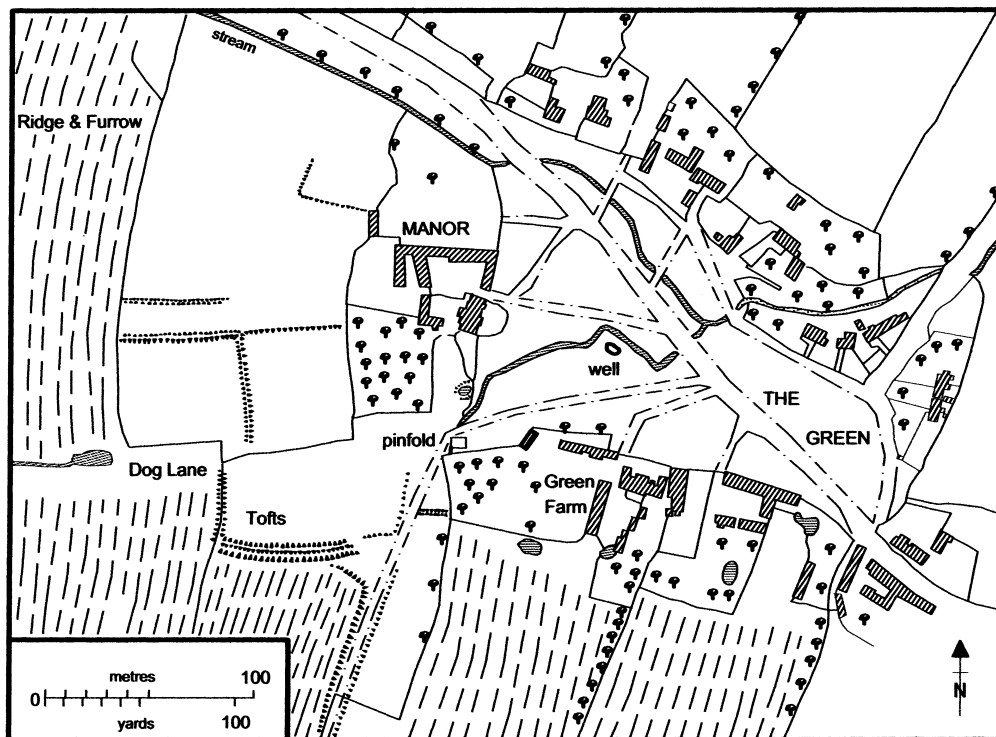
In the 1332 Lay Subsidy the following occupationally derived surnames were present in Anstey: Taylor and Miller. In the 1379 poll tax: Shephard, *Flescher* (butcher), *Fycher* (fisher), Miller, Taylor, Barker (tanner) and Smith (Farnham 1928–33, i, 20 and 21–3). Of these surnames only Miller could be linked to the Abbey surnames of 1341 or 1477. Caution needs to be taken that such surnames had not become hereditary or were nicknames but as a group they do suggest a slightly more diverse occupational structure on the Ferrers/Ulverscroft manors. Unfortunately the number of non-abbatical tenants is uncertain.

Several small plots, probably former medieval tofts, are shown by the 1762 enclosure map on the south side of the public footpath, described as Dog Lane in the enclosure award, which partly follows a headland in the ridge and furrow (illus. 3 and 5). This evidence allows the re-interpretation of at least the southernmost enclosure complex surveyed by Hartley (1989, fig. 4) as forming the bounds of one or more peasant tofts rather than as a manorial close. Three further small plots or gardens on the 1762 map, lying to the immediate west of the southern earthwork, would appear to have overlain ridge and furrow. These perhaps represent a later expansion of settlement along Dog Lane. The northern enclosures, were all held by the Earl of Stamford in 1762, but their size also suggests they may well have also originated as peasant tofts. Close examination on the ground suggests the presence of slight building-platforms may be present along both sides of Dog Lane but detailed contour survey and/or excavation would be necessary to define them and ascertain their origin.

Assarting: Anstey Green and the Ferrers

Analysis of the 1762 enclosure map (LLRO DG20/MA/3/1) and the 1886 OS 25 inch map (XXXI:1) suggests that there were two *foci* of settlement in medieval Anstey. Indeed polyfocal villages of various forms and origins are not uncommon in the English landscape (Taylor 1977; Roberts 1987, 127–50). The earliest focus at Anstey is represented by the tenements lying to the west and east of the church in a roughly linear row settlement. However, the green at the western end of Anstey village clearly forms a second focus of settlement. Anstey Green runs up to the parish boundary with Newtown Linford. A hollow way ran from the north-east corner of the Green, perhaps even marking a former woodland boundary. The 1762 enclosure map (illus. 3) shows Manor Farm, then held by the Hearn family, at the western end of Anstey Green but in the parish of Newtown. Manor Farm is first so named on the 1886 OS map, but seems the most likely candidate for the site of the *caput* of the Danvers ($1/20$) knight's fee, as it was clearly the centre of that estates successor farm.

An explanation for the origin of Anstey Green comes from the history of the lordship descent. After the death of the last Beaumont earl in 1207, the Honor of Leicester was partitioned between Simon de Montfort the elder and Saer de Quincy. The latter inherited the manor of Groby with its extensive lands round the southern fringe of Charnwood Forest including Newtown Linford and Bradgate. Leicester Abbey continued to hold the manor of Anstey but its grant never included any woodland. In



5. Earthworks in Anstey Green (after Hartley 1989, fig. 4: based on 1886 OS map).

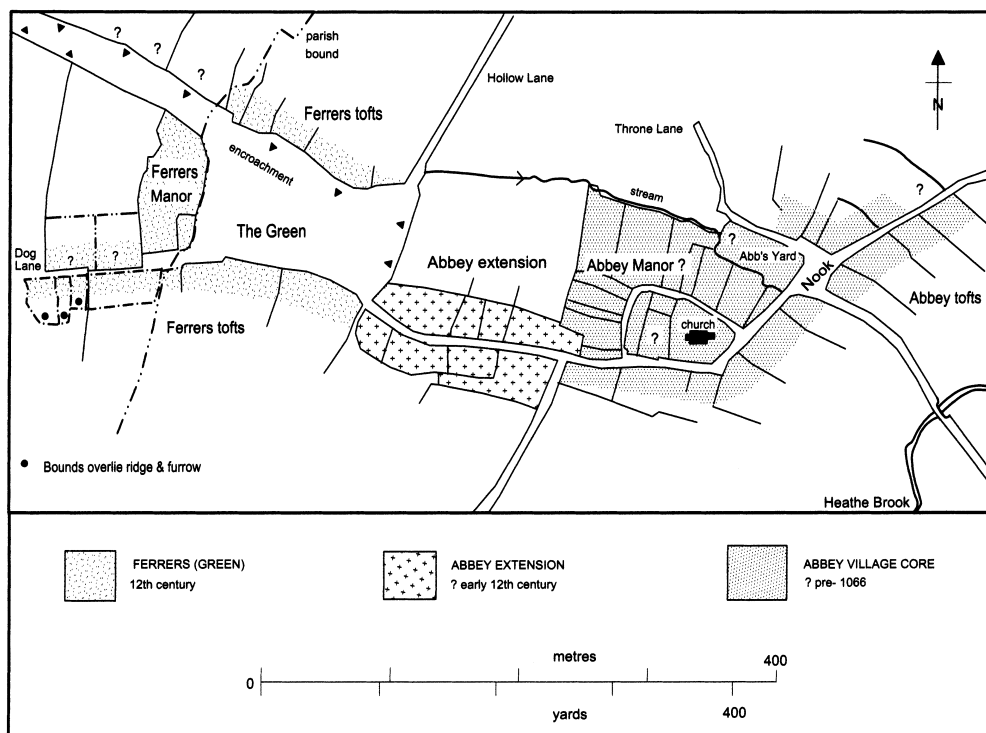
return for giving up his share of Leicester, Saer de Quincy was granted various lands including 3 pounds, 7 shillings-worth of unspecified property or rents in Anstey. This Anstey holding clearly lay outside the Abbey lands. It was presumably based on the smaller Domesday woodland as the larger woodland passed to the earls of Leicester. The grant to Saer de Quincy was clearly the embryo of the Danvers knight's fee, which is first recorded in 1277 (*HMC Hastings*, 1, 334–5). Its lands were largely located within the parish of Ratby, later Newtown Linford parish. Both the granting of a carucate in the assarts of Anstey in the 1190s to Ware Priory and the valuation of 1207 indicate that assarting was already under way (*CDF*, 227–8).

Assarting of Charnwood probably dates to before the Conquest as Domesday Book (1, f.237a) records four carucates of waste (valueless land) at Charley, which was to form the core of the foundation grant to the late 12th-century priory (*VCH Leics*, 2, 23). The tenants of Mountsorrel and Rothley also record assarting in 1205 (*PRS* 57, 34 and 58, 4–5). The fact that the tenants of the Danvers fee in Anstey later held standard units (virgates) points to organised rather than individual assarting. A 1288 extent of the Ferrers (formerly De Quincy) estate indicates extensive assarting with seven pounds, 6 shillings and 4 pence income from rents of 'new assarts' in Charnwood Forest recorded under the central manor of Groby. The new linear settlement of Newtown Linford is first documented in 1293 (Farnham 1927–8, 207–8). In 1379 Newtown had a taxable population of 76, all assessed at 4 pence (Fenwick 1998, 563).

A deed of 1264–89 refers to land in Bradgate, suggesting that assarting was already under way. The land was attached to a peasant holding in Shepshed, too distant to work directly, though it may have been sub-tenanted (*CAD*, iii, 237). Bradgate is first clearly documented as an administrative entity in the *Nomina Villarum* of 1316. Along with Rothley, Newtown Linford, Swithland, Anstey and Cropston it formed a single vill, the administrative unit below the hundred (Bradney, 1i, xlvi: for correct date see *FA*, i, xxiii–xxiv). In the 1334 lay subsidy taxation Bradgate was included with Cropston (Glasscock 1975, 161). In 1368–9, Henry Lambert of Shepshed and John Clark of Newtown Linford granted a messuage and half-virgate in Bradgate to Ulverscroft Priory (*PRO C143/365/13*). This clearly indicates the presence of standard peasant holdings there. The former settlement of Bradgate seems to have been located on a lane running from Cropston westward to Bradgate Park (NGR 547108). A row of small enclosures and several stone buildings were recorded during destruction in 1943 (Liddle 1988, 23 and fig.15; Ramsey 1998, *passim*).

The scale of assarting shown on the 1288 extent suggests that the Ferrers lords of Groby must at least have tolerated, or, more probably, pursued a proactive policy to encourage it. Indeed the laying out of the village and open fields organised in standard holdings (i.e. virgates) indicates that it must have been organised by either the Ferrers' servants or feudal tenants or else by other intermediaries. William de Ferrers probably had a greater need for ready cash than hunting rights given his limited inheritance. Similar large-scale assarting of medieval date can be seen on the North Yorkshire Moors, where Harrison (1990) has identified both seigneurial lords and large freeholders as the chief organisers in different areas.

Anstey Green can be interpreted as the heart of the Ferrers/Ulverscroft manor. It seems to have originated around a woodland-pasture common. This may once have been dotted with trees and perhaps bounded by more dense woodland. It presumably lay adjacent to a large expanse of wood or woodland pasture on its westward side in the later parish of Newtown Linford. Its tenants must originally have had limited or no access to meadowland. However, as a member of Groby manor the Ferrers/Grey tenants had rights



6. Plan phases in Anstey village (based on 1886 OS map, showing selected property bounds from 1762 enclosure map).

of common in the wastes of Charnwood Forest and Rothley Plain until enclosure after 1808 (Nichols 4ii, 795–6; see also LLRRO DE 3168/597). Certainly, an account roll of 1324 for nearby Shepshed, another member of Groby manor, recorded that there was plentiful pasture available within the forest (Hilton 1954, 165). Nevertheless, despite its woodland-pasture origins, Anstey Green still had many of the characteristics of a champion village, with its dual secular and monastic lords, virgate holdings and limited access to local common. However, access to the Charnwood wastes may have helped produce a more diverse occupation structure than the Abbey manor (see above).

The layout of Anstey Green thus at first sight has an organic appearance, but symmetry is evident with the likely manor house of the Danvers and Grendales lying at the western end. The very fact that its tenants held standard virgates in its open fields also points to either a planned clearance or subsequent reorganisation. It is thus possible that the Green settlement was a planned and regular settlement based on standard sized tofts and crofts, the sense of irregularity merely coming from the curved lines of the pre-existing green.

Duality repeated: two field systems (illus. 2)

Hartley (1989, 44) has plotted the ridge and furrow in this area from 1940s RAF photographs. The results suggest that the whole of Anstey except for the meadow, and possibly the crofts around the village, was ploughed at some time in the Middle Ages.

The 1762 enclosure award mentions eight arable open-fields and a former ninth field is implied (LLRRO En/Ax/3/1). Internal evidence in the award makes it possible to work out the locations of these fields. In Anstey parish, Stocking, Nether and Nothill fields were north of the village. Mill field and Groby field were located to the south of Anstey. A block of enclosures known as the Great and Little Hall Holme closes were described as pre-existing Lammas enclosures in the 1762 enclosure award. This indicates that they were laid open as common pasture after Lammas, August 1st (Hoskins 1957, 163–4). The c.1746 Bradgate map also identified Lammas pastures along the western edge of Nether Field (Ramsey 1998, 40–1). The Hall Holme closes seem to represent piecemeal enclosure from the arable of Holme field, recorded in stinting agreements of 1678 and 1712 (LLRRO DE1416/56). Groby field does not appear to be documented before enclosure.

In the parish of Ratby/Newtown Linford were Horse Rood, Middle and Holgate fields. Within the latter were Ramer Leys and Wooldon Closes at enclosure in 1762. However, 17th- and early 18th-century documents refer to both ‘Ramell’ and ‘Wooldale’ as separate fields (LLRRO DE 3168/597; DE 1416/174/21; DE 1416/56 and 10D/38/2). Wooldon or Wooldale also seems likely to be identifiable with the Wolfdale (in Newtown Linford parish) recorded in a deed of 1375 (LLRRO DE45/1). A W(?o)ldale is also recorded in the 1341 and 1477 abbey rentals. The multiplicity of fields, confusion between fields and furlongs and alternate or changing names makes it difficult to work out the organisation of the Anstey field system(s) in the early modern period.

The distribution of Anstey’s charitable town estate created in the 15th century points to a separate Ferrers field system in the medieval period. The estate held a ‘yardland’ (i.e. virgate) or 17½ acres in the fields of Anstey. This is very close in size to the abbey virgate of 18 acres. In 17th- and 18th-century deeds this ‘yardland’ is specifically described as lying in the ‘Holgate ward’ within Newtown Linford (LLRRO DE 45/1–15). A Groby manorial document of 1658 defines Holgate ward as comprising all the Anstey lands located within Groby Manor and Newtown Linford parish (LLRRO DE 1982/181, pp. 200–4; see also Nichols, 3ii, 1081). The term ‘ward’ (district) in this context thus almost certainly refers to the entire group of Anstey fields in Newtown Linford, of which Holgate field was just one. It should be noted, though, that ‘Holgate ward’ is also sometimes used to describe merely ‘Holgate field’ in some 17th- and 18th-century documents (LLRRO DE 1416/56). There were two other medieval open field systems in Newtown Linford parish, both the result of medieval assarting. One was based on the row village of Newtown Linford. A further field system, lying north-west of Anstey, was associated with the deserted village of Bradgate (Squires 1987, 79–82; Hartley 1989, 10, 44 and fig. 20; Ramsey 1998, *passim*).

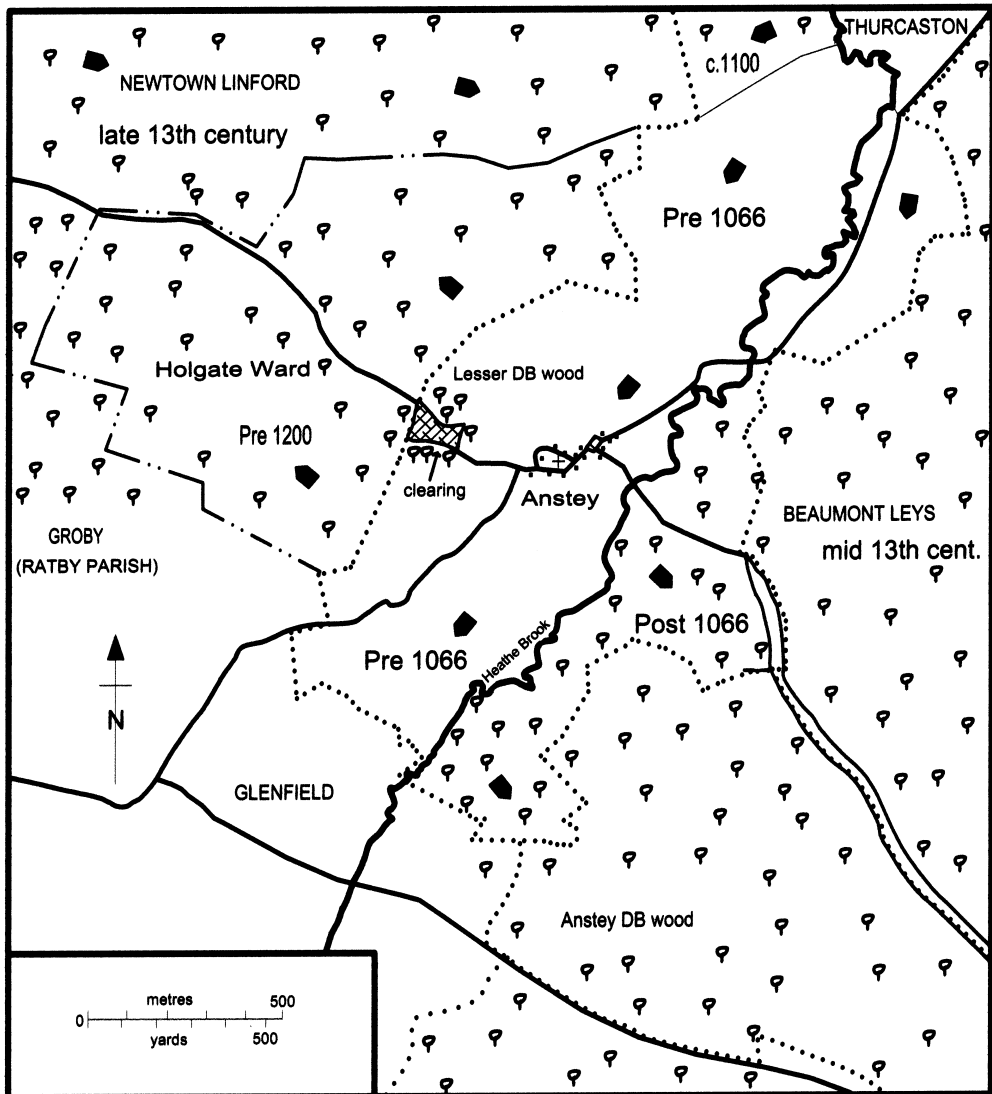
Commonly Leicestershire field-systems had numerous furlongs (the unit of cropping) organised into a three-field system (the unit of fallow-rotation). Certainly, both medieval Groby and early-modern Thurstaston had three fields (Woodward 1984, 23; LLRRO DE 1416/19). Nevertheless, as Hilton (1947, 52–3; 1954 159–60) noticed, there were places like late-medieval Bagworth and Cossington which both had 5 fields. This was a means of adapting a more flexible sowing regime than was possible in a simple three-course rotation, usually to allow an excess of spring over winter-sown crops. Such flexible regimes were also often marked by a lack of distinction between furlongs and fields. In the Anstey deeds most land is located by field and only occasionally by furlong, with or without a field-name. In 1648, for example, land is located in Eel Pool furlong and no field name is specified (LLRRO DE 1416/174/3). Modern field-names locate this furlong at the north end of the former Mill field (illus. 2) (LLRRO FNS/1/1–2).

By the 17th century the end of abbatial lordship and the land market had probably broken down the distinction between the two Anstey field systems, as is suggested by stinting (pasturing) agreements of 1678 and 1712 (LLRRO DE 1416/56). These agreements divided the open-fields into three sets, each containing three fields, according to the number of sheep allowed to graze. The need for such an agreement may have been triggered by the increasing conversion of arable to grassland, which often necessitated a lowering in stinting levels to prevent over-grazing (Yelling 1977, 148–56). In Anstey, 28 sheep per tenant ‘yardland’ were allowed to graze on Ramell field, Netherhall wong (i.e. Nether field) and Nothill field, 20 sheep on Holme field, Holgate-ward (i.e. Holgate field) and Wooldale field, and 16 sheep on Frith (?Mill) field and the Over field towards Newtown Linford. The latter perhaps comprised both Horserood and Middle fields, though these are both separately documented as early as 1624. Frith field is documented from 1648 to 1710 and Mill field from 1672 to enclosure (LLRRO DE 1416/174/1–45). There was no mention of Groby or Stocking fields though the latter is documented as early as 1652 (LLRRO DE 1416/174/28). It is unclear if these were excluded from the stinting arrangements or included within the above-named fields.

In Anstey, ‘ancient’ cottagers were also allowed to graze five sheep on the fallow. However, even recent cottagers were not entirely excluded from the right of common as all inhabitants were allowed to graze two cows or heifers and a calf on the fallow. The above stinting arrangement presumably reflects a three-course rotation organised across both manors. The stinting agreements of 1678 and 1712 forbade anyone from putting cattle or beasts into Ramell pasture, Upper (?Middle or Holgate) field pasture or Horserood pasture lying in the ‘upper end’ fields of Anstey except those with land there. These pastures are presumably leys, areas of arable put down to semi-permanent grass. The limitation of common rights was presumably a relic of these fields having been in a separate field system.

According to the 1761 enclosure act, the great tithes in Newtown Linford were held by the Earl of Stamford as rector, while the small tithes went to the vicar of Newtown Linford. Thurcaston rectory, then in the gift of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, held the tithes in Anstey chapelry (LLRRO DE 311/50/7; see also Nichols, 3ii, 1081 and LLRRO DE 1982/81, pp.200–4). However, in response to an episcopal query of 1709, it was said that the earl held the great tithes and Thurcaston the small tithes in the piece of open field called ‘Hogate wood’ in Anstey, presumably Holgate field in Newtown Linford parish (Nichols, 3ii, 1144). This situation perhaps represented an accommodation in a dispute resulting from the confusing tenorial situation in Anstey. Thurcaston’s glebe (land attached to the church) in early-modern Anstey was limited to portions of meadow with no arable, before an additional gift in 1718 (LLRRO DE 1416/19–24). Various ecclesiastical records for Thurcaston and Anstey point to wheat, barley and peas as the main crops, with some oats also being grown, in the late 17th and early 18th century (LLRRO DE/416/56; DE1416/79–82).

An *inquisition post mortem* of 1625 records that George Cater had held land by knight service in Anstey from the Grey family (created Earls of Stamford in 1628). Cater’s lands included 3 virgates in ‘Ramond’ (?Ramell) field, 2½ virgates in ‘Ballowden’ field and 3 more in ‘Hollow wood’ (?Holgate) field (Farnham 1928–33, i, 27–8). Ballowden field can be identified with Ballowdown Closes which were located immediately west of Ramey Leys within the Bradgate estate. They had been enclosed by 1676 (Ramsey 1998, 40–1 and 66). In 1658 the same fee was in the hands of John Reeves who held the Hall House, presumably Manor Farm, and 2 ‘yardlands’ of land within Anstey and Holgate ward from the Earl of Stamford (LLRRO DE 1982/181, pp. 200–4). This manor was clearly the descendant of the 1277 Danvers fee.



7. Medieval woods and assarts.

A French Connection: St. Evroul and Anstey

The advowson (tithe rights) of Thurcaston and two virgates of land were granted to the Benedictine monastery of St Evroul in Normandy by Hugh de Grantemesnil in or before 1181 (*Ord. Vit.*, iii, 235–7). A further charter of 1191–1204 by Robert fitz Parnell, earl of Leicester, confirmed this grant (*CDF*, 228–9). Countess Petronilla, Robert fitz Parnell's mother, granted a house in Charley (Charnwood Forest) to Ware priory in Hertfordshire, a daughter house of St Evroul. This grant, presumably from her dower, marked the foundation of the priory of Charley. The countess's gift also included a carucate of land

with her mill and demesne meadow in Anstey (*CDF*, 228). A confirmatory charter by the bishop of Lincoln in 1202–6 does not mention the mill and meadow but specifically locates the carucate in the ‘assarts of Anstey’. The date of Petronilla’s grant is not given in her charter but can be placed between the death of her husband in 1190 and 1199, as she is said to have divested herself of all lands in the reign of Richard I (*CRR*, 14, 411). The countess’s charter is crucial in giving a *terminus ante quem* for the clearance of the woodlands in Holgate ward in Ratby/Newtown Linford parish, that is the field system belonging to Anstey Green manor. The mill, apparently a post-Domesday creation, was almost certainly the same mill granted to Leicester Abbey, along with meadow, in 1306 by the parson of Hungarton, though its intervening history remains obscure

The alien priory of Ware was eventually suppressed in 1414 and its properties granted to the Carthusian Priory of Sheen in Surrey founded in 1415. Charley was amalgamated with Ulverscroft priory in the mid 15th century (McKinley 1954, 24). The advowson of the church of Thurstaston appears to have gone into private hands after 1415, though Sheen still received an annual pension of 27 shillings from the rectory at the Dissolution (*Val. Eccles.*, 4, 179; *Mon. Ang.*, 6i, 34; PRO SC6/Hen 8/3464). Thurstaston’s advowson, including Anstey and Cropston, was purchased around the end of the 16th century by Sir Francis Walsingham who endowed it upon Emmanuel College, founded in 1584 (Nichols 3ii, 1058). At the Dissolution, Sheen still held a portion of the tithes, valued at £3–6s–6d in Holgate ward (illus. 2), that is the Anstey land within Newtown Linford parish (*Mon. Ang.*, 6i, 34; PRO SC6/Hen 8/3464). These tithes are presumably derived from the carucate of assarted land with which Petronilla endowed Charley Priory in the 1190s.

Late medieval peasants and their homes (illus. 3)

It was probably one of the more substantial of the Abbey tenants who built the early 15th-century hall and cross-wing building known as the ‘*Old Ship*’ at 4–6 Bradgate Road (illus. 3-I). The Royal Commission for Historic Monuments recorded it prior to demolition in 1955 (McDowell 1956; Mercer 1975, 185). The hall is notable for its decorative spare truss that separated off a screens passage at the lower end of the hall, a form of architecture normally found in manorial halls (illus. 8). The Martin family, inhabitants of Anstey from at least 1341, believed it to be their ancestral home, though they only held a virgate in 1477 (Turner 1985, 1). The ‘*Old Ship*’ can probably be identified with the property termed ‘Anstey Hall’ in the Martin deeds, though there is no conclusive evidence. However, this tenanted property was only acquired by the Martin family through marriage in 1772, sold off by them in 1778 and repurchased in 1851. The hall, already divided into two tenancies in 1762, was further subdivided into three tenanted dwellings by 1851 (LLRRO DE3168/595–611). The Martins may have once lived at Green Farm on the south side of Anstey Green which they held at the time of enclosure in 1762 (LLRRO DG20/MA/3/1: see Worth n.d., 15–6 on map date). In 1833 the Martins moved to Anstey Pastures before moving again to the house in Bradgate known as the Brand in 1892 (Turner 1985, 31). In any case the subdivision of Anstey Hall was an indication of how the village’s expanding population was absorbed with minimal topographic growth but at the expense of worsening living conditions for many of its inhabitants.

Another cruck hall with inserted floor forms part of Green Farm on the south side of Anstey, a property which as noted above had belonged to the Martins from at least 1762. The same farm has a box-frame barn with secondary brick nogging. Further cruck-framed buildings at 10–12 Bradgate Road. (illus. 9) and on the east side of the



8. The 'Old Ship' prior to demolition in 1955 (LLRRO copyright).

Crown Inn (illus. 10) in the same street were demolished in 1957 and 1960 respectively (NHM, Anstey research files; Wright 1957; Daniel 1961–2). A cruck-framed 'cottage' on the northeast side of the Nook was demolished in 1968 (Smith 1969, 8–9 and VIII–IX; Smith 1971–2). All of these buildings were probably the dwellings of late medieval peasant farmers. The survival of these structures into the 20th century demonstrates that they were of substantial construction, though several appear to have subsequently subdivided to meet the needs of a growing and more economically diverse population. The cruck building at 10–12 Bradgate Road measured approximately 14×4.9 metres and an original bay may have been missing. Three other two-storey box-framed structures, dating to the 16th or early 17th centuries, survive in the village (illus. 3): no. 2 Church Lane; the Limes, a former farm; and no. 67 Bradgate Road (over a rubble-built ground-storey). A single-storied farm range (now residential) at Manor House farm on the west side of Anstey Green also has box framing.

Towards a landscape of inequality

Various demographic sources for Thurcaston, and its two chapelries of Anstey and Cropston, are tabulated below (Table 3). These include the number of payees in the 1332 Lay Subsidy and the number of payees and wives listed in 1379 poll tax. The 1563 Ecclesiastical Census lists the number of households but unfortunately gives two alternative figures for Anstey, 24 and 35 (Smith 1956, 166–7). The latter figure, which is

given in the main enumeration, is likely to be the most accurate given the general population trends. The 1670 Hearth Tax includes both charged households and those exempted on grounds of poverty (20 in Anstey). In the 1676 ecclesiastical census the number of communicants, dissenters and recusants are combined. The 1801 census gives the first accurate figures for total population including Anstey Pastures with Anstey (Fenwick 1998; Smith 1956).

Table 3: Population statistics (tax payees per 1000 acres in brackets).

	1332 payees	1379 payees + wives	1524 payees	1563 h'holds	1670 h'holds	1676 comm's + dissent	1801 pop.	C19 Acreage
Thurcaston	10 (9.0)	85 (76.2)	10 (9.0)	25 (22.4)	36 (32.3)	91 (81.5)	215 (192.7)	1116
Anstey	10 (7.8)	88 (68.6)	18 (14.0)	35 (27.3)	66 (51.5)	140 (109.2)	660 (461.9) [‡]	1282 [†]
Cropston	9*	54 (144.4)	6 (16.0)	14 (37.4)	28 (74.9)	53 (141.7)	126 (336.9)	374

* Includes Bradgate

† Includes Anstey (726 acres) and Holgate ward (456 acres)

‡ Adjusted to include 147 acres of Anstey Pastures

Sources: Farnham 1928–33, Fenwick 1998 and Smith 1956.

The temptation to convert such figures into dubious population totals has been resisted and analysis concentrates on comparison within the same tax (see Jurkowski *et al.* 1998 on coverage of these taxes). These figures, combined with national trends, indicate both shared and divergent trends between the three townships. By the 14th century the population densities of both Anstey and Thurcaston were similar but Cropston was about twice as densely populated. The most likely explanation is that it already had large population of cottagers working in specialised industries, possibly in the nearby Swithland slate quarries. The population of all three townships presumably fell by a third between 1300 and 1380 (Hatcher 1977; Wrigley and Schofield 1981). In the late medieval period England experienced stagnation in population growth followed by renewed growth after the mid 15th century. However, the national population probably doubled between 1500 and 1640 and thereafter either grew slowly or stagnated. Anstey seems to have recovered more quickly than its two neighbours from the late medieval downswing in population. This trend can already be seen in the 1524 lay subsidy. Perhaps the dual lordship allowed a more flexible land market than in Thurcaston. This may have been reflected by an early growth in the number of cottages with the quarries and other woodland industries of Charnwood providing work. Absentee crown lordship of the abbey manor followed by its sale, notably in 1609, to multiple freeholders no doubt encouraged the nascent characteristics of an open village. In 1722, Anstey had thirty freeholders compared to eight in Cropston and five in Thurcaston (Nichols, 3ii, 1056). A further marked rise in relative population between 1670 and 1801 was presumably linked with the rise of framework knitting.

In 1658, a survey of the Grey (Stamford) estates reveals that there were three (ancient) cottages and a number of (not necessarily occupied) messuages in Anstey, all held by freehold (LLRRO DE 1982/181, pp.200–4). The three cottages may have been those granted to Ulverscroft in the reign of Edward I. In addition, a further eight cottages are

listed as lying on the lord's waste, presumably post-medieval encroachments. An 1857 valuation of the Stamford estates revealed that the earl of Stamford held three substantial farms in Anstey: an un-named farm (Manor House Farm) with 195 acres, and the two 'High Leys' farms with c. 204 and 75 acres respectively. The later two farms were created away from the village after enclosure. All three farm houses were located in Newtown Linford parish (LLRRO DG/20/2/89). There were two further small holdings under 10 acres, one held by the vicar, and 28 'cottage' or 'garden' holdings, all but one under an acre. The 1886 O.S. map (illus. 5) shows that a sizeable portion of these lay along the north side of Anstey Green some clearly having encroached upon the former common since 1762 (illus. 3). In contrast there is an absence of encroachment along the southern side of the Green with its relatively wealthy and influential owners, an example of socially or politically defined geographic space. By contrast the enclosure map indicates that two substantial freehold farms had emerged on the south side of Anstey Green, probably based on purchases of former monastic property. Green Farm was owned by the Martin family in 1762 and the farm to the east of it was the property of the Bradshaw family (illus. 3)

Squatting, while anathema to many improving landlords, was often tolerated outside of the 'closed' townships. It served both to help keep the poor off the poor rate and give the children of villagers an opportunity to marry and set up house. Lords were also able to collect *de facto* rents in the form of fines. It seems that Anstey Green saw a long-term



9. Cruck frame at 10–12 Bradgate Road during demolition in 1957 (LLRRO copyright).

decline in the number of its non-squatter tenants from the late Middle Ages to the 19th century as land was accumulated in fewer estates. Alongside this there seems to have been a notable growth in squatter occupation on the green. Elsewhere in the village there was less opportunity for squatting though a cottage is recorded on the Nook by the 1762 enclosure map. The same process of proto-industrialisation is also reflected in the subdivision of yeoman houses into small cottages. Deeds of 1765 and 1803 show that even a humble squatter cottage erected on the waste could be subdivided into two dwellings (LLRRO DE 1982/3 and 8). The growth of cottages and splitting-up of dwellings reflects indications of demographic growth, increased poverty and industrialisation especially in the 18th and 19th centuries. John Throsby (1790, 89) noted that the poor rates in Anstey were “intolerable, 7 s[hillings] in the pound”. Framework knitting is recorded in Anstey as early as 1729 but declined after 1820 (LLRRO DG9/1059; Hartopp 1927, 454 and Lowe n.d., 13–5). Later in the 19th century the growth of the local boot and shoe industry and the Groby quarries provided work. The late 19th century onward saw both the infilling of the village by rows of brick-built terraced houses and from the 1880s outward expansion as new streets were laid out.

Conclusion: complexity and texture in the English landscape

The modern village of Anstey appears to have had its origins in two distinct settlement foci, each associated with a separate manor. The oldest focus is clearly that which became the core of Leicester Abbey’s manor and was probably in existence by Domesday. A late 9th- to 11th-century origin seems likely on East Midland parallels and the pottery recovered during the recent excavations. The second focus was post-1086 in origin and associated with a phase of assarting within Groby manor. Each settlement core was thus associated with a distinct manor and also had a separate field system. Other double field systems are known in Midland and Southern England but are likely to have varied origins. At Raunds in Northamptonshire two field systems are probably linked to different ‘ends’ of the village, both with late Saxon origins. Both of Raunds main manors lie at the north end. One possible explanation is that there was a division between a manorial ‘North End’ and a southern ‘Thorpe End’, the latter perhaps occupied by sokemen (free peasants). Certainly the term ‘thorpe’ (Old Scandinavian farmstead or settlement) is generally thought to imply a settlement of lesser status. Unfortunately, an active land market has obscured any such original social segregation (see papers in Parry, forthcoming). However, it is a reminder that we must be cautious of assigning common origins to similar topographic features without detailed documentary and field analysis.

By the early-modern period the growth of the land market meant that clear-cut tenurial divisions between the two village ‘ends’, and the proposed double field-system, had probably begun to be eroded. The limitations of the sources mean that there are numerous unsolved problems in relation to the history of Anstey. Nevertheless, an overall model of development can be postulated which may be refined by future archaeological evidence especially in regard to chronology.

Anstey appears to have begun as a simple row village near the site of its manor house and church. At least one phase in its growth was planned as is suggested by the plan unit west of Groby road. It is suggested that this was probably linked to ending of demesne farming by Leicester Abbey and the subdivision of the demesne, raising the total number of peasant virgates from 13 to 24. It remains unclear if this was accompanied by a total redistribution of land and change in the size of the virgate. The remaining Domesday woodland was replaced by a green settlement (Anstey Green) probably before the end



10. Cruck revealed by demolition of cottages during extension of *Crown Inn* in 1960 (LLRRO).

of the 12th century. By 1277 Anstey Green was associated with a minor feudal tenure ($\frac{1}{20}$ of a knight's fee) attached to the neighbouring Ferrers manor of Groby. It had its own distinct field system which was located within the parish of Newtown Linford (originally Ratby) parish. It might almost be regarded therefore as a distinct village. Presumably only the proximity of its settlement core to the Abbot's village prevented it from having a distinct name of its own. Unfortunately, without the survival of court rolls it is unclear to what extent this manorial fragmentation provoked separate identities or conflict.

A major question is whether or not the middle plan unit predates the settlement around Anstey Green. If the carucation argument is correct and the demesne was broken up prior to *c.* 1130 it was indeed earlier if only by a few decades. However, this is unlikely to be resolved by future archaeological work due to the limitations of dating. In either case what is significant is the evidence for marked demographic growth, assarting, demesne conversion and associated settlement restructuring in the 12th century.

The distinction between the two manors became less clear after the Dissolution as various freeholders built up estates with no regard to the medieval manorial structure. The Greys appear to have become *de facto* lords of the manor for the whole of Anstey though their power was presumably countered to some extent by that of the freeholders. It was probably due to the Greys influence that the whole of Anstey, though not its mother church of Thurcaston, became included within the ecclesiastical peculiar of Groby by the 17th century (see LLRRO Groby peculiar wills). Indeed, the county antiquarian John Throsby (1790, 89) noted that "Although it be considered a chapel to

Thurcaston, the earl of Stamford, I am told, says that it is attached to Bradgate". Any distinction between the two field systems appears to have also largely broken down by the late 17th century. Piecemeal enclosure and conversion of arable to leys (semi-permanent grass) was followed by enclosure in 1762.

The above analysis suggests that even within the same parish or township striking differences of settlement-type may exist. Regional character (the *pays* of the Leicester school of local historians) is generally characterised by the degree of similarity between adjacent settlements but micro study of the landscape is also necessary to unravel the small-scale patchwork of differences which equally constitutes the English landscape. Anstey's landscape could be said to constitute a pocket of typical champion (open-field) country, but it was equally affected by being sandwiched between two woodland-pasture areas, Charnwood and Leicester Forest. Indeed it seems likely that Anstey itself was formed from an undated phase of Saxon assarting, possibly transformed by the re-organisation of the late 9th–10th centuries which saw the creation of nuclear villages and common fields. Such assarting is likely to have resulted in soil erosion and corresponding alluviation (sediment build-up) in the valley bottoms. It is possible therefore that future environmental analysis may shed more light on its chronology.

Only after the Dissolution and the rise of the freeholders did Anstey take on many of the characteristics of a classic woodland-pasture village with its squatter cottages, industrial economy and industrialised economy. It became in fact a classic 'open' village marked by divided lordship as opposed to the 'closed' village controlled by a single landowner (see Holderness 1972 and Mills 1980). This was partly an inheritance of the medieval period where lordship was divided between the Ferrers family, Ulverscroft Priory and Leicester Abbey. It was reinforced by about half the Leicester Abbey manor remaining in royal hands until the reign of James I perhaps because a single buyer could not be found. When the crown eventually disposed of the remnant estate it was sold piecemeal to individual customary tenants as freehold, though whether the crown or tenants initiated the sale is uncertain.

The environment, notably the adjacent abundance of wood/wood-pasture, the changing power relations of its lords and the cyclical or wave-like patterns of demographic and economic growth are all discernible factors which shaped Anstey's landscape. Less evident is the role played, either as individuals or communally, by the medieval peasantry. In part, this is perhaps a reflection of the lack of survival of such sources as court rolls for Anstey. Certainly, the evidence of its cruck framed architecture points to a high level of prosperity among the Abbey's late-medieval tenants and the willingness and confidence to invest in improved housing. The ability of the Edwards family to raise 100 marks to buy their freedom is an indication of greater prosperity and commercial opportunity. It remains unclear to what extent this was related to such factors as the likely shift towards pastoralism in the late Middle Ages or opportunities offered by the closeness to Leicester of Anstey.

In the 15th and 16th centuries, some of the more successful peasants used their new economic freedom to aim for gentry status. The '*Old Ship*' hall must have been a peasant house and was presumably a status symbol of someone aspiring to gentry-hood. The post-Dissolution land market, in particular, allowed a number of rising farming families, such as the Martins, to build up freehold estates by purchasing former monastic and other land in Anstey and its vicinity. By the 19th century population expansion and industrialisation had created a much more diverse social structure in Anstey than had existed in the medieval period.

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