

HARDMEAD AND ITS DESERTED VILLAGE

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The results of a survey and watching brief at the deserted medieval village of Hardmead are evaluated in the context of additional archaeological and historical evidence assembled during a subsequent parish survey. There are indications that Roman land use may have influenced later colonization patterns, which did not peak until the thirteenth century. Documentary sources show that enclosure, followed by local and national socio-economic trends producing long-term pauperism and housing problems, led to the depopulation of the medieval village in the mid-nineteenth century.

Introduction

There are two deserted medieval villages in Hardmead which formed a north-south orientated polyfocal settlement. The watching brief was carried out on the area of the northern 'end' (Fig. 1:5 and Fig. 2), a little under one mile (1.4 km) north of the west-east Newport Pagnell-Bedford road, which bisects the southern half of Hardmead parish. The parish is irregular in shape, with a narrow peninsula-like projection to the south, and a long north-south axis. It is bounded on the west by Chicheley and Emberton, on the south by North Crawley, and on the east by Astwood, its extreme northern limit bordering Petsoe Manor in Emberton, with Clifton Reynes, and with Turvey in Bedfordshire.

The parish is situated on the plateau of bluffs which rise gradually from flood-plain of the Upper Ouse valley, the river lying about two miles (3.2 km) north and some four miles (6.4 km) west of Hardmead. Most of the land north of the Newport Pagnell-Bedford road lies above the 300 ft (91.4 m) contour, the highest point being 341 ft (103.9 m) above O.S. datum, slightly to the west of the northern 'end'. The shallow valley, cut by Chicheley brook on its way westward to join the Ouse, keeps the southern half of Hardmead below 300 ft; the lowest point, where this brook leaves the parish, is around 260 ft (79.2 m) above O.S. datum.

The soil is heavy, slowly permeable calcareous clay with flint, overlying a chalky fill. This would have caused considerable drainage and saturation problems in the past, especially on the level plateau area in the north of the parish around the northern 'end' where, even with modern drainage techniques, long periods of waterlogging can still occur. These soils are also susceptible to compaction, a hard impervious 'plough-sole' forming beneath the tilth after sustained use as arable land. The present agriculture is primarily arable with very little permanent pasture. There are isolated pockets of shrub and tree cover, preserved for the breeding of pheasants. Recent trends towards large open-field cropping have resulted in the grubbing-up of a large part of the hedgerow network, the levelling of upstanding earthworks and the erosion of less well-defined sites by deep ploughing. The destruction of the deserted village crofts described in this report was part of this policy of maximum land use.

The survey and watching brief was carried out in 1973-4 by members of the Milton Keynes Archaeological Unit on behalf of Bradwell Abbey Field Centre Trust and was funded by the Department of the Environment. The report of this watching brief is combined in this paper with additional archaeological and historical evidence obtained by the author during a parish survey which took place over the period 1975-7. This project enables the

deserted village to be examined within its proper context as part of the whole settlement sequence in the parish, rather than as an isolated element.

Historical Background

Hardmead appears in the Domesday Survey under the various names of Herouldmede, Herulfmede and Horelmede which may be rendered as Herewulf's Meadow (Mawer and Stenton 1925, 36). The last of these entries, Horelmede, appears to survive as a field name as late as the seventeenth century, for a strip of land alongside Chicheley brook, lying in Chicheley parish but belonging to the Manor of Hardmead, is called Horrell Meadow (see Fig. 1) on the 1638 estate map.

Previous analysis of the Domesday statistics for the Newport Hundreds (Tull 1969) has shown that considerably more land was entered under Hardmead than exists within the present parish, and this discrepancy has recently been explained (Chibnall 1979). Professor Chibnall argues convincingly, using later documentary evidence, that Hardmead, like other villis in the area, was for fiscal purposes the controlling element in a binary-vill system, and because of this the statistics of the dependant village (Great Crawley) were entered under Hardmead. This work continues the definitive account of the descent of Hardmead's holdings, and the following brief description of the main long-term occupancies is summarized from this invaluable source (Chibnall 1979, 141-9).

Professor Chibnall's reinterpretation of the Domesday data shows Hardmead's lands, totalling five hides, to have been held at the time of King Edward between three men, this distribution of holdings being preserved after the Conquest in the form of three separate fees. The principal manor was held in 1086 of Walter Fitz-Other by a certain Ralph, and was valued at four hides as a parcel of Walter's chief manor of Stanwell, Middlesex. Walter's eldest son took the surname Windsor, and the Windsors continued to hold this manor until 1542 when they were forced to exchange their manor of Stanwell with the King.

The de Pembrokes (knights with a strong Windsor connection through Pembroke castle) appear to have held this manor during much of the twelfth century, and it was held in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries first by the Bending, and later the de Olney families. The estate became somewhat reduced in size during the latter tenancy. William de Olney sold the manor and advowson in 1374 and it passed through a number of hands until acquired by a Richard Maryot of Sherington sometime before he died in 1491 when it passed via his daughter by marriage into the Catesby family.

Francis Catesby took up residence in the parish in the mid-sixteenth century, and under the expansionist policies of his son Thomas the estate grew and prospered. During the last decade of the sixteenth century Thomas consolidated his holding by acquiring considerable amounts of land belonging to the other fees and by the time of his death in 1620, was in a strong position to enclose by agreement. This was accomplished between 1627 and 1623 by his son Francis. Francis's son Thomas—who had a map of his holdings drawn up in 1638 which provides valuable evidence of the recent enclosures, settlement areas and individual dwellings obtaining at that time (Beresford and Hurst 1971, fig. 7b; Chibnall 1979, map 12)—ran the estate into enormous debt, and in 1681 it passed into the hands of Sir John Maynard, who was also squire of the neighbouring parish of Clifton Reynes.

Sir John died ten years later, and on the death of his wife the estate came by reversion to the Hobart family, who sold the whole of the old Maynard estate, including Hardmead, to Alexander Small of Chelsea in 1750. In 1793 Hardmead was sold to Robert Auriol Drummond Hay, Earl of Kinnoul, and changed hands again in 1806 when Robert Shedden purchased the manor of 'Harnead and Halfspenny' for £28,000 (P-SC:1). Descendants of Robert Shedden hold the manor today.

The smallest fee was held in 1086 by Pain, of William son of Ansculf, and consisted of one eighth of a hide—a half virgate. Early in the twelfth century this fee was held by the de

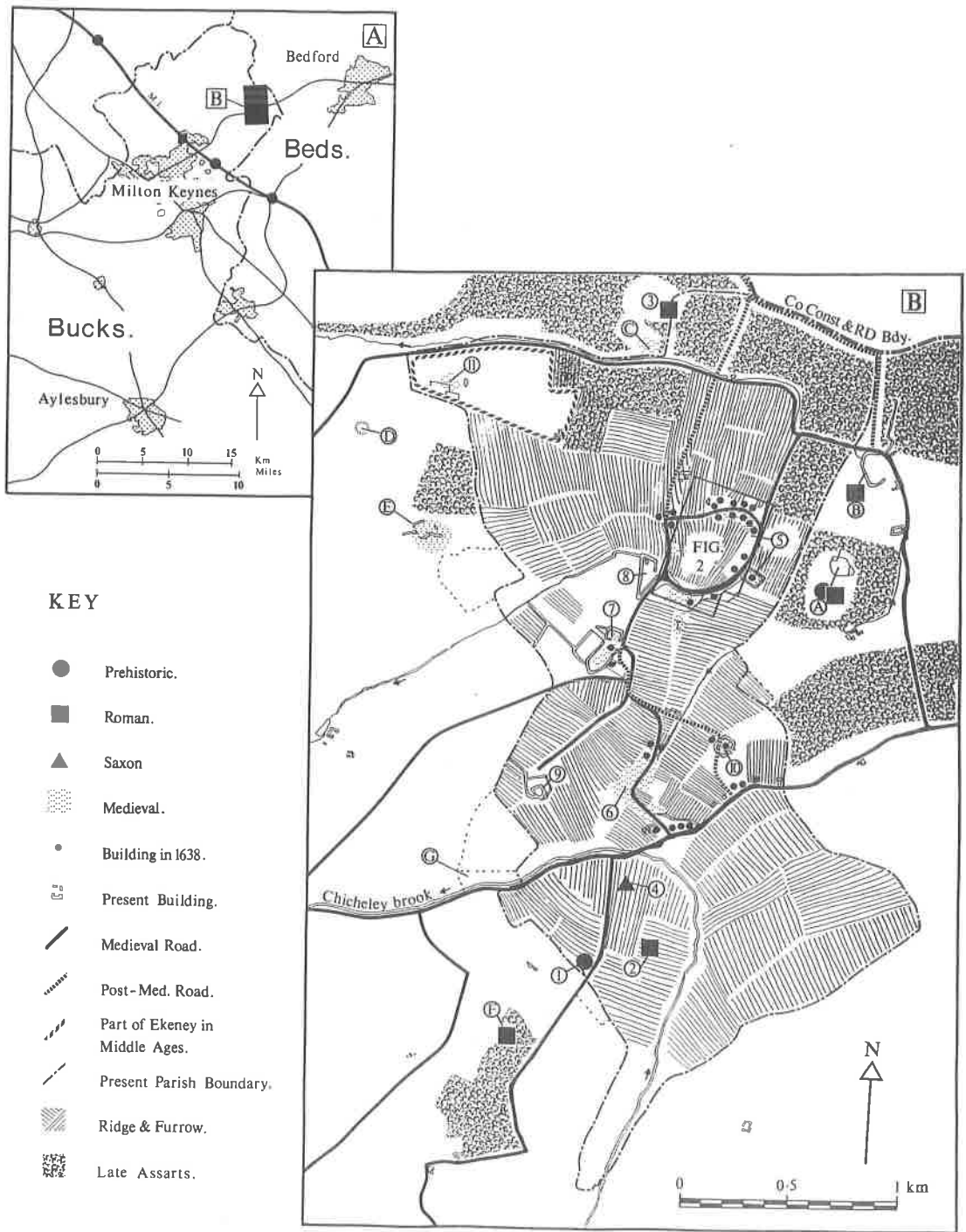


Fig. 1. A: Location Map. B: Survey area showing sites and find-spots mentioned in the text. Areas of ridge-and-furrow are shown schematically. Letters and figures refer to the text.

Hardmead family who expanded their holdings during their tenancy, and this small estate achieved considerable size when, by the last quarter of the thirteenth century, the fee became vested by marriage in the Botiler (Butler) family, who already had substantial holdings in Hardmead. Early in the second half of the fourteenth century this much enlarged estate came through marriage to the Ardres family of Turvey, and stayed in their hands until 1581, when it was sold to Thomas Catesby, holder of the principal manor. This estate then merged with the land of that manor and descended with it.

A third fee was held at the time of the Domesday survey by Harvey, holding of William son of Ansculf, and consisted of one hide less half a virgate. This property was granted to Tickford Priory by Fulk Paynel around 1100, and was held both as freehold and copyhold by various tenants. After the Priory's dissolution the copyholds were obtained by the Cave family from whom they were acquired by Thomas Catesby in 1591. The freehold, consisting of about twenty-two acres and a moated site (Fig. 1:9) came into the hands of the Shedden family in 1860.

One other small estate, originally part of the principal manor, was granted to Reginald Lord Grey de Wilton by William de Bending in about 1300, and this came back into the holdings of the main manor when it was obtained by Thomas Catesby in 1591.

The Documentary Evidence for Desertion

Several previously unpublished documents show that the northern 'end' of Hardmead existed as a shrunken village until as late as the mid-nineteenth century. A survey drawn up in 1802 (P-SC:2) records the presence of three farms, the old rectory, and ten cottage houses within the parish, five of which were lying on or adjoining the 'green'—clearly the remnants of Hardmead's northern 'end'. Comparison of this survey with that made in 1638, shows that in only one hundred and sixty years dwellings in Hardmead had fallen from thirty to fourteen, by far the most drastic reduction being in the number of farmhouses, from fourteen to three.

Only two of these buildings (the present 'Manor' and 'Home' farms) were actual survivors, for the third was a new one (now 'Church Farm') erected slightly to the north-west of the northern settlement.

The 1638 estate map shows that after enclosures most of the smaller tenant farmers held their land in scattered, uneconomic-sized fields, only some larger holdings concentrated in the south of the parish having any real coalescence. This, combined with the debt into which Thomas Catesby ran the estate, must have made many of these smallholdings untenable, for most had become vacant by the time the estate was sold to Sir John Maynard in 1681 (NRO XYZ 1202). The resultant severe unemployment among the farm labour force, exacerbated by the total lack of positions for skilled tradesmen within the parish (BRO L/p16), led to a prolonged period of stagnation and poverty for the majority of families. This was the beginning of the end for the northern 'end' as a thriving community.

By the second decade of the eighteenth century the population had fallen to 70 (Add. MS. 5839, 200) and a list of resident parishioners drawn up a century later in 1817 (P-SC:3) gives a total population of 69, of whom 47 were paupers; the remaining twenty-two comprised three farmers, their wives and children, and fifteen servants living in. The fact that the rectory was by 1802 converted into a tenement for three poor families (P-SC:2)—both the rector and curate residing outside the parish—points to the acute housing problem which was also to become a critical factor during the following fifty years.

A series of letters written during the early 1830s by the curate Amos Westoby to his absentee rector, the Revd Bartlett Goodrich (BRO PR/94/3/1, 3 & 6), graphically illustrate the plight of the poor at this time, and record the decay of the village.

In a letter dated February 4th 1830 he states: 'The winter is the longest and most severe that I have known for 16 years. I wish you would represent Mr. Shedden the necessity of pro-

viding cottages for the poor who increase . . . The state of some of the cottages, one in particular, is dreadful—I hope something will be done to get them dry houses.’ Again, a year later in a letter dated January 31st 1831, Westoby says: ‘Hardmead is much in want of cottages, i.e. comfortable ones. The Parsonage House contains about $\frac{1}{4}$ of the inhabitants. If Mr. Shedden were to be good to build a double cottage each year upon $\frac{1}{2}$ an acre of ground for 3 years and let some of the worst cottages fall down, he would be a gainer.’

The lack of land on which to grow their own food was an equally great problem for the poor of the parish as Westoby reveals when he writes in 1830: ‘I have thought much and long upon the subject and the most likely way of feeding the poor with the least expense to the rich, is, by restoring to them the large Cottage Gardens, of which they have been deprived within the last 60 years.’

Westoby gets to the heart of the trouble in Hardmead when talking about the lack of work for young people in the parish. It must be remembered that Hardmead had no tradesmen or retailers of any kind, the only employment coming from three farms. The compulsory labour laws of the time, and restrictions on inter-parish movement, meant that the able-bodied males in poor parishes like Hardmead were trapped in a vicious circle, being compelled to work as labourers while receiving ‘bread-line’ maintenance from the parish. Often the only escape for such people was to emigrate, and Westoby says that this ‘seems to be the prevailing notion as a present remedy.’

But Amos Westoby had his own ideas concerning Hardmead’s employment problem and the future of the parish. He wrote: ‘The poor increase, and will increase, unless Mr. Shedden takes means of lessening them by putting some of the boys out as Apprentices, by which they will gain a settlement elsewhere . . . If Hardmead were my property, I should put out two each year of the poor boys as Parish Apprentices, either to sea or in some other way. The law allows this with the consent of two Magistrates.’

Westoby was, in his own small way, a remarkable man—a man whose social awareness and ideas were badly needed in this dying community. But he was fighting a solitary battle. Wedged between the poor and the rich in a rigid class system, he did his best to help the former while constantly pleading and diplomating with the latter. In an honest, obviously deeply felt statement to his rector in 1831 he says: ‘There needs a more free and kindly feeling and communication between the Gentry and the Clergy—and between all classes. You may not be aware that there is a very bitter feeling against men of property entertained by the poor—and the Tithes and the Clergy come in for no small share of the blame.’

Almost twenty years later, the coming of the railways and the setting up of stations induced changes in cross-country travel. This affected Hardmead to the extent that in 1849/50, for the first time in its history, the road through the parish was ‘made passable for the accommodation of the public.’ This is described in a letter written by a succeeding curate, James Talbot, in 1849 (BRO *ibid.*). This new influx of through traffic made little difference to the village however. In the same letter Talbot says: ‘The number of persons now residing in the the parish of Hardmead is 53, the population being considerably diminished by the removal of Mr. Robert Shedden’s cottages . . .’

Some new cottages were eventually built by the Landlord during the following ten years in a sensible position on the Newport Pagnell-Bedford road, and remain occupied up to the present time. Hardmead’s northern ‘end’ which had been under continuous occupation for at least eight hundred years became deserted—the ‘green’, loop road and crofts of the old village being left to grass over and all but vanish.

The Archaeology of the area

The only evidence for the presence of prehistoric human activity in Hardmead itself is a damaged leaf-shaped arrowhead, with delicate pressure-flaked bifacial retouch, found by the writer in the south of the parish (Fig. 1:1). It is an Earlier Neolithic type, and is of

exceptionally high quality, finely worked and with excellent symmetry. Good parallels can be made with excavated examples from Broome Heath, Norfolk (Wainwright 1972) and Hurst Fen, Suffolk (Clark *et al.* 1960); the rather translucent orange flint used for this artefact is also similar to specimens recovered from the latter site.

Several sherds of Roman pottery, recovered when part of the moat bank at Astwood Bury (Fig. 1:B) was levelled in 1968 (Mynard 1969a), were the first evidence of Roman occupation in the immediate vicinity of Hardmead. The author has since located several sites proving a substantial level of activity in the Hardmead area during this period—activity which may well have influenced the morphology of later settlement.

A site to the south of the Newport Pagnell-Bedford road (Fig. 1:2) lying on the crest of a north-facing slope in the bend of Chicheley brook, has produced large quantities of Roman occupation debris. The coarse pottery and the tegulae consist mainly of a shell-gritted fabric common to the area, which may have been made locally (see below), while fine wares are principally represented by Oxford types. Aerial photography has revealed a complex of linear and curvilinear ditches, presumably enclosures related to, or even pre-dating, this small villa/farm.

A second Roman site (Fig. 1:3) located mainly in Clifton Reynes and Emberton, but also intruding into Hardmead, lies on the crown of a gentle south-facing slope which drops down to Barrels brook. Although no definite 'wasters' have so far been recognized, a kiln-bar fragment examined and verified by Dr V. G. Swann (pers. comm.), plus the existence of a quantity of burnt clay, fire reddened limestone and some iron slag, indicates a probable kiln or similar industrial site here.

If this is the site of a pottery kiln, it is reasonable to assume that shell-gritted pottery, which is by far the most common fabric present, was the main product. Jars appear to be the pre-

valent vessel type recovered, and forms span the late first to mid-fourth centuries, while cooking pots of the first to second centuries, and flanged bowls probably of third- to fourth-century date, also occur in much smaller quantities. Pottery from this site will be dealt with in detail in a future report.

An enclosure (found by aerial survey) lying in Astwood (Fig. 1:A) has produced several abraded sherds of Roman shell-gritted pottery and fragments of quern-stone. Other isolated sherds of Roman pottery have also been found in the roadside ditch east of moated site number 8 (Fig. 1) as well as in North Crawley (Fig. 1:F), a short distance south-west of Hardmead.

Only a few sherds of definite pre-conquest Saxon pottery have so far been found in Hardmead (fig. 1:4); a dark grey sandy ware with micaceous grits. The sherds are rough, and clearly handmade, certainly no later than the eighth or ninth century, and possibly earlier. It may be significant that these sherds have only been found on the periphery of the Roman site (Fig. 1:2), some distance northwards and downhill from it towards the Newport Pagnell-Bedford road.

Archaeological evidence for the medieval and post-medieval periods is abundant within the parish and also in the immediate vicinity, with the deserted hamlet and moated manor site of Ekeney to the west as well as the site of the vanished Ekeney church (Fig. 1:E & D respectively). Several other moats and various find spots also exist in the neighbourhood. Hardmead itself was a poly-focal settlement 'characteristic of the southern Midlands plain' (Beresford and Hurst 1971, 49). It comprised two major 'ends' and additional scattered areas of occupation in the form of homestead moats and other dwellings, all of which lay to the north of the Newport Pagnell-Bedford road. A network of roads and tracks, most of which have been destroyed, gave access to these scattered pockets of settlement.

The Deserted Settlement Sites

The Northern 'End'

Peripheral areas of the northern 'end' (Fig.

1:5 and Fig. 2) had already been destroyed for agricultural purposes in 1968, when a platform located within an ancient close on the southern edge of the look road was levelled and ploughed (Fig. 2:20). Pottery, mainly of the twelfth to thirteenth and seventeenth to eighteenth centuries was recovered (Mynard 1969a 13 and 15). The next section of this paper deals in detail with the rest of this D.M.V.

The Southern 'End'

The following year the southern 'end' (fig. 1:6) was almost totally destroyed, as was a moated site nearby (see below, Fig. 1:9). No structures were observed during the destruction of this area, and as little stone was evident the observer concluded that the crofts must have contained timber buildings. Pottery spanning the eleventh/twelfth to fifteenth centuries was present (Mynard 1970a, 5).

Aerial photographs taken before 1969 (Camb. Univ. Coll:AKV 98) when the whole of this D.M.V. was under pasture, show the main area of the village as a series of rectangular ditched crofts and enclosures lying amongst ridge and furrow furlongs and aligned along either side of a contemporary thoroughfare. Only three cottages are shown clustered on the edge of these earthworks in the 1638 map (see Fig. 1)—most of the other dwellings being located on the Newport Pagnell-Bedford road—and it would seem from the pottery evidence that the major medieval portion of this southern 'end' had fallen into disuse by the end of the fifteenth century.

The Moated Sites.

Five moated sites exist within the parish but only two are in a reasonable state of preservation. Four can be safely interpreted as home-stead moats.

Fig. 1:5

This moat on the eastern edge of the northern 'end' is probably the site of the manor house belonging to the principal fee held by the Windsor family (Chibnall 1979, 179 and map 4). It is a simple rectangular enclosure of just under $\frac{3}{4}$ of an acre (0.3 ha), and is in a good state of preservation. The platform is under

permanent grass and therefore no finds have been made, but comparative evidence (Roberts 1965) points to a possible twelfth to early thirteenth-century date for the construction of simple moats of this type. The apparent lack of alteration and extensions to this structure may be an indication of the fractional reduction of this fee which took place during the late thirteenth to early fourteenth century (Chibnall 1979, 142).

By the last quarter of the sixteenth century the disused manor house had been occupied by the rector, and a new rectory was erected here by 1627 (Chibnall 1979, 144). The 1802 survey (P-SC:2) shows that by this time the old rectory building had been converted into tenements for the poor of the parish, and it was demolished sometime during the mid-nineteenth century.

Fig. 1:7

Originally the site of the de Hardmead manor house, after 1581 this site became the seat of the major Catesby manor. Now badly mutilated, this is a large complex structure; a double moat of unequal parts composed of a simple rectangular enclosure containing about $\frac{1}{2}$ an acre (0.2 ha) and forming the northern portion of the structure, and a much larger 'boat-shaped' moat enclosing nearly 3 acres (1.2 ha) which is clearly an addition to the southern arm of the rectangular enclosure. In addition to this, a D-shaped outer ditch—now only visible from the air as a crop and soil mark—spans the complete length of the double moat on its western side, enclosing a further 3–4 acres (1.2–1.6 ha). A long feeder ditch runs from this to nearby Upend brook.

Most of Catesby's manor house had been demolished by the eighteenth century (Add. MS. 5839,200), and in the mid-nineteenth century Sheahan reported that 'there are traces of the moat, and fish-ponds visible, and a portion of the front wall still remains. Foundations of several houses have been discovered in the vicinity of the church' (Sheahan 1861, 545).

In 1969 D. C. Mynard found building debris and pottery of mainly thirteenth-century type

here (Mynard 1970a, 5) and the author has recovered a large quantity of sherds from an extensive area of the ploughed platform which forms the southern sector of this double moat. The majority of medieval sherds (over 75%) are of calcite-gritted fabrics—twelfth-century St Neots ware being the earliest, with thirteenth- to fourteenth-century Olney Hide and Harrold types occurring in much greater proportion—while Potterspurty, Great Brickhill and Brill wares of the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries are the main element in the medieval sand-tempered range.

The smaller northern sector of this moat is under permanent grass, and has therefore produced no finds. But if this part of the structure was the primary phase, it must have been present by the twelfth century; for it is clear that the southern extension was intensively occupied by the thirteenth and possibly as early as the twelfth century. This phase succession conforms closely to the development pattern outlined by Roberts (1965, 27–8) for many moated sites in the Midland area. A significant thirteenth-century improvement and extension phase also ties in well with the expansion of this estate during the whole of that period, under the de Hardmead and Botiler families.

Fig. 1:8

This is a roughly triangular moat partially enclosing an area of about 2 acres (0.8 ha), in good condition and holding water for much of its length. There is a considerable gap on the east side which is probably original, and what appears to be a small pond in the north west corner. The enclosed area is under permanent grass and has produced no finds. There is no evidence so far to indicate that this should be classified as a homestead moat. As the enclosed area was called 'Dove House Pightle' in the early nineteenth century (P-SC:2) it is more likely that this was the site of the manor dovecote, while the moat itself, because of its unusual morphology, may perhaps be more suitably interpreted as fish-ponds.

Fig. 1:9

This site, shown on O.S. maps as pentago-

nal inner enclosure containing only about 0.125 of an acre (0.05 ha), with traces of an outer ditch partially enclosing a larger area, was completely filled in and levelled in 1969 (Mynard 1970a, 5). It can now only be found on the ground by a scatter of limestone rubble and occupation debris, but shows well from the air.

In 1962 D. C. Mynard retrieved twelfth to fourteenth century pottery from its surface (pers. comm.) and the writer has also recovered considerable amounts of pottery from three well defined areas: from the inner enclosure; from a scatter outside and to the south of the moat; from a scatter outside and to the east of the moat. The first two spreads have produced calcite-gritted and sand-tempered wares spanning the twelfth to fourteenth centuries, while the third spread consists almost entirely of late fourteenth and fifteenth-century sherds, mainly of Brill and Potterspurty types. This must be the site of the moated farm belonging to the Tickford Priory fee.

Fig. 1:10

This site does not appear on O.S. maps. It survives only as a 50 m length of ditch to the north of Home Farm and a 10 m long shallow depression to the west; the latter being a fragment of its western arm, destroyed by the line of the road which had been put through by the seventeenth century. A small pond on the western side of this road may be a further remnant of this sector of moat.

This was first recognized as a fragmented moat by the author in 1976, and confirmed by subsequent documentary research. It appears as an almost complete circular moat with a south-eastern entrance, on an estate map of 1806 (P-SC:4), and on the Tithe Commutation map of 1838 (BRO PR/27/1&2). A further map of 1870 (P-SC:5) shows the expansion of Home Farm buildings which destroyed the southern eastern moat arms, leaving the site much as it appears at present. This is undoubtedly the site of the home farm belonging to the Grey de Wilton fee granted by William de Bending in c.1300.

Other Areas

Two other find spots are worthy of mention. The first (Fig. 1:11) was identified by a dark, silty patch of soil some 20 m across. This has produced considerable quantities of pottery—all of calcite-gritted fabric. These sherds form a tight late-thirteenth-century group characteristic of the more exotic forms of Olney Hyde type ware: highly decorated jugs and storage jars, and cooking pots with applied thumbled strips on the rims. Immediately adjacent to this scatter are what appear to be two rectangular enclosures which have only been observed from the air as soil marks. This site would have lain outside Hardmead in the lost hamlet of Ekeney during the medieval period, and may be an outlier of this settlement (Fig. 1:E).

A second site (Fig. 1:C) lies at the foot of the gentle slope on the Emberton side of Barrells brook. It has produced a quantity of thirteenth-century sherds similar to those from the previous site, and smaller amounts of fourteenth to fifteenth-century pottery. This was the eastern extremity of Petsoe hamlet at this time, and documentary evidence (Chibnall 1979, 226 & map 9) shows that a cottage occupied by a widow, Joan Gerbray, stood on this spot in 1473.

The Survey and Watching-Brief of the Northern 'End'.

The survey and watching-brief of Hardmead's northern 'end' was made necessary by levelling and drainage operations which were to destroy a large part of the surviving earthworks. The ground survey, which was carried out well ahead of these operations, recorded a series of nineteen rectangular and sub-rectangular crofts defined by ditches. These crofts—a series of linked enclosures—ran along the inner edge of a contemporary loop-road bounding the eastern side of the settlement; following this road's alignment, they then curved westward, to cluster around a narrow wedge of land known to have been the village green. An isolated croft of a very regular rectangular shape was also found on the extreme western edge of the settlement (see Fig. 2:1-19).

Most of the field circumscribed by the medieval loop-road had been broken-in and

ploughed before the survey, after being under pasture for several centuries. Crofts numbered 3-11 (Fig. 2) had already been slighted and their ditches partially filled in during this process, but were still clearly visible. A modern drainage ditch running on a roughly west-east alignment had cut through the norther part of crofts 4-7 as well as through parts of the loop-road. All the ground to the south of this drainage ditch was affected by the levelling operations, while the area to the north of it (which included croft sites 13-18, part of the road, and the 'green' itself) was left untouched beneath rough pasture.

While it was not possible to have staff on permanent duty during the whole of the levelling and drainage operations, as these took place intermittently over a number of days, most of the ground-work involving actual crofts were kept under regular surveillance. A front digger-loader was used for the operation, the dozer blade being used for most of the earthmoving as the main need was to fill ditches and other hollows, while at the same time breaking up and dispersing any firm surfaces which might inhibit ploughing. The back-acter was also used on a number of occasions when earth was taken from platforms or the surrounding area to fill deeper depressions.

The farm owner gave his full co-operation throughout, and generously allowed the watching-brief team a short period of machine time immediately prior to the start of the ground-work, in order to cut a number of small trial trenches which it was hoped might provide some stratigraphically related evidence for occupation. Crofts 1, 2 and 3 were partially investigated in this way (see Fig. 2 for trench positions). All of the watching-brief material is unstratified apart from the tight seventeenth to eighteenth-century pottery group from the cobbled yard surface of croft 3, and a similar group from the destruction level of croft 7. Most of the pottery types found at Hardmead are typical of those from other D.M.V.s in the region (e.g. Millard 1967; Mynard 1969b & 1971).

Crofts 1 and 2 were the first to be examined

by trial trenching as they were both well preserved, still under turf cover, and smaller and more regular than most of the other ditched areas. A possible building is also shown on the 1638 map, on what appears to be the southern end of croft 1. Results were however completely negative. Although three trenches, spanning both platforms and ditches in several places, were cut well down into the natural clay, no evidence of structures or occupation debris was found.

The topsoil over both these platforms seemed to be humus rich and stable, while the turf cover was deeply rooted. Most of the small stones and flint in the soil were concentrated just below the root line, and a significant stone-free zone was observed below this level—an indication that these platforms had been under turf for some considerable time, certainly for several centuries. No traces of fossilised ridge and furrow was visible either on the surface or in the trench profiles, which supports the pedological evidence. This suggests that these two 'crofts' were primarily small paddocks of permanent pasture, perhaps belonging to the home closes immediately to the east.

Shallow trenching was also carried out on croft 3 which showed that structural and occupation evidence was confined to the western sector of this platform. A cobbled yard surface was observed in the western half of this trench about 15 cm below the surface of the field, and from it was recovered a tight group of seventeenth to eighteenth-century pottery and other occupation debris including window lead and glass. The start of levelling brought this very brief controlled examination to an end at this point.

The levelling of platforms 1 and 2 produced no further occupational debris, confirming the trenching evidence that neither of these enclosures was at any time primarily used as a house croft. Croft 3 however produced a large quantity of pottery and other debris which was concentrated in its north-west sector, undoubtedly indicating the location of a building (see Fig. 2:A). All the pottery, as that retrieved from the associated yard surface, was of seventeenth to eighteenth-century date.

Crofts 4 and 5 produced only small quantities of finds, probably because the levelling work only affected the 'toft' area of these platforms, the actual house plot presumably remained untouched on the far side of the modern drainage ditch which marked the northern limit of these operations. While most of the finds from these crofts were again post-medieval, some earlier pottery was recovered; mainly sandy wares of the thirteenth to fourteenth century. A similar group of pottery was recovered from croft 6, but in much greater quantity. Finds were concentrated in the north-east corner of the croft, in a dark, silty area of soil containing considerable amounts of charcoal (Fig. 2:B) which probably marks the site of a destroyed building.

Work on the eastern sector of croft 7, close to the modern drainage ditch, disturbed a large spread of charcoal and fire-damaged occupation debris (Fig. 2:C). This was concentrated in a dark, charcoal-flecked soil layer which covered an extensive compacted area of burnt clay and earth. At first thought to be a hearth area, it soon became clear that it was too extensive. A cleared patch of about 16 sq. m exhibited a uniformity of burning and compaction, but no structural features were visible. Quite large fragments of charred wood and burnt daub were present in considerable quantities, but stone rubble was minimal consisting only of small pieces no larger than cobbles. The beginning of a cobbled yard was observed on the western side of this cleared area. It showed as a straight edge about 4 m long running north-south, the vertical face of this edge (which faced east) standing about 5 cm proud of the compacted clay surface described above.

A house is shown standing in this vicinity on the 1638 map, and it is reasonable to conclude that this is the destruction level of that building, which was presumably razed to the ground and destroyed by fire. The pottery from this house site, like that retrieved from the adjacent croft 6, formed a good seventeenth- to eighteenth-century group. A variety of iron, lead, and salt-glazed wares came from this croft as well as a broad range including Rhenish Belamine, Brill,

Delft, Midlands Yellow, Potterspurly marbled wares and Staffordshire slip wares. The latter sherds included a fragment of slipware charger with 'Toft' style decoration which fitted to a similar sherd found on croft 6.

When the drainage ditch itself was scoured and widened, large amounts of pottery were found which covered the widest chronological range obtained during the whole watching brief. The pottery consisted of equal amounts of medieval and later wares, the earliest being St Neots type sherds of the eleventh/twelfth century. Developed St Neots wares, and sandy fabrics including Great Brickhill and early Potterspurly forms, provided a substantial thirteenth- and fourteenth-century element, while later Brill and Potterspurly wares of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were also common. The post-medieval period was well represented by a broad spectrum of the wares already described.

The bulk of the pottery from crofts 9 and 11 proved to be of eighteenth-century date, but there were a few residual medieval sherds of Potterspurly and Great Brickhill wares—none earlier than the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century. Only one sherd of pottery was seen on croft 10—a fragment of eighteenth-century Nottingham Stoneware—and it is probable that this was an enclosure belonging to croft 9 or 11.

A very regular, rectangular croft (Fig. 2:19) lying amongst ridge and furrow furlongs on the far western edge of the village, produced a consistent group of thirteenth-century pottery, all calcite-gritted, developed St Neots type ware. Although a substantial number of sherds were recovered, only two of these were of sandy fabric, probably of fourteenth-century date. This group is of almost identical character to pottery from the two isolated sites described in the previous section (Fig. 1:11 and C).

Conclusions

The discovery of two Romano-British sites in Hardmead which span the first to fourth centuries AD combined with considerable Romano-British evidence from surrounding

parishes, indicates the substantial level of occupation which obtained in this thickly forested area during that period. The evidence from Hardmead suggests that a relatively small farmstead in the south of the parish (Fig. 1:2) overlapped chronologically with an industrial site to the north (Fig. 1:3). It is reasonable to postulate that this dispersed and probably multi-functional pattern of Roman settlement must have radically altered the environment of the area. While there would have been extensive deforestation around the farmstead in the south, it can be assumed that, if the northern site was indeed a pottery kiln, some form of woodland management system such as *coppice* or *coppice-with-standards* would have prevailed there, perpetuating the forest and making later colonization more difficult.

These changes in the microenvironment would certainly have influenced Saxon colonization and land-use in the area, and may have been instrumental in the formation of a dispersed pattern of medieval settlement reflecting that of the Roman period. There is no shortage of parallels for this situation: in fact investigations into polyfocal villages in Cambridgeshire have revealed 'a settlement pattern which is not only very similar to the earlier Roman one, but in many places coincides with it' (Taylor 1974, 10).

Archaeological and historical evidence from succeeding centuries would seem to indicate, by implication, a relatively slow, fractional expansion during the Anglo-Saxon period; while the lack of pre-eleventh-century pottery from the southern and northern 'ends', may suggest that a scattered settlement pattern of small farms did exist initially, rather than a nucleated village. This type of piecemeal, perhaps even partially transient settlement would certainly leave little surface evidence.

The discovery and partial excavation of Middle Saxon settlement features in the parish of Chicheley (Farley 1980) about 3 miles (4.8 km) west of the Roman settlement and probable Saxon site in Hardmead (Fig. 1:2 and 4), now provides stratified evidence of this type of settlement pattern in the locality. Although

the size of the Saxon settlement could not be determined, the excavation revealed Romano-British features close by, and an eighth or ninth-century date is suggested for the Saxon occupation which may have been relatively short-lived. The site may also have influenced the layout of medieval furlongs.

Discussing the evidence from various excavated Saxon settlements, Farley (1980, 95) suggests that *location* was an important influence on the transient or continuous nature of individual Saxon settlements, and in this respect the Chicheley and Hardmead sites show interesting similarities. The Chicheley settlement is, for example, located close to Chicheley brook on the edge of, or within an area of ancient 'enclosed meadow land' (Chibnall 1979, 4 and map 5): a location matching the Saxon find spot in Hardmead which also lies near an area of ancient meadow flanking Chicheley brook. Professor Chibnall (*ibid*, 5) concludes from the result of field- and place-name analyses, which emphasize the early importance of this meadow zone, that initial Anglian settlement of Hardmead may have begun there.

Both the Chicheley and Hardmead sites lie next to Romano-British occupation areas, and it seems reasonable to speculate that this ancient meadow land may, in both cases, have been a legacy of Roman land management. Land such as this would have provided an ideal settlement location for a small group of Saxon colonists, but may not have remained 'consistently attractive' (Farley 1980, 97). A fairly rapid transition from a semi-pastoral pioneering economy to a predominantly arable one would have required more widespread clearance with a corresponding expansion outward from the original location. This could have left some primary farmsteads in a rather marginal position within a progressively delineated area; and it may be significant that the Middle Saxon settlement in Chicheley and the Saxon find spot in Hardmead both lie close to their respective parish boundaries and some distance from later medieval village 'ends'. Peripheral settlements such as these—which may even have maintained stronger links

with farms outside their own embryonic parishes, than with those within—would eventually have shifted to a more attractive location.

The few sherds of pottery from Hardmead's northern 'end' that can be assigned to the twelfth or perhaps late eleventh century show that discrete areas of occupation around the 'Green', and in a close to the south of the loop-road, were present by this time, as were areas in the southern 'end'. At least some of the moated sites appear to have been constructed and occupied by the late twelfth century, but the vast bulk of medieval pottery recovered from both D.M.V.s and from the other sites in the parish belongs to the thirteenth century, indicating the most intensive period of medieval occupation. Evidence from excavated clay-land villages, such as Goltho and Barton Blount, shows that the main boundary and drainage ditch systems surrounding the crofts were constructed during this period, at a time when the climate was deteriorating (Beresford 1975, 50). It is reasonable to assume that this may also have been the case in Hardmead.

The exclusively thirteenth- to early fourteenth-century occupation evidence displayed by croft 19, certainly seems to indicate a similar date for the ditches surrounding it, while its position suggests that the croft's presence influenced the layout of the surrounding furlong system. This implies a date no earlier than the thirteenth century for the creation of this block of plough-lands enclosed by the loop-road.

The arable life of these furlongs must also have been a relatively short one, for ridge and furrow ploughing had not slighted or impinged on the platform of croft 19 at all; in fact the furlong headlands were clearly visible outside the croft ditches. As the surface finds indicate that it is unlikely the croft was occupied much after the early fourteenth century, the likelihood is that these furlongs reverted to pasture at about the same time, or even a little earlier: otherwise this croft site would surely have been taken into the arable furlongs within a short time of its desertion.

This indication of comparatively late, substantial intakes of land for short-lived arable use, when allied to other evidence such as the extensive area north of the village where the author has been unable to find definite traces of ridge and furrow furlongs, suggests that Hardmead's arable potential was never fully exploited in medieval times. Significantly this area is almost identical to that which Professor Chibnall (1979, 175) proposed was Domesday woodland, parts of which, judging from field-name evidence (Chibnall 1969, 13 and 1979, 16, 177) may not have been assarted until the thirteenth century.

The northern 'end' of Hardmead lay on the southern edge of this substantial area of woodland—about 200 acres (80 ha) at Domesday (Chibnall 1979, 210)—and in this respect the morphology of the village itself is very informative. If one considers its compact curvilinear form as circumscribed by the loop-road, it has a marked similarity to many portions of late surviving woodland, woodland closes and late assarts shown in Chibnall's field map of Clifton Reynes and southern Emberton (*ibid.*; 186, 196): areas which he argues were under thick woodland in 1086. Piecemeal assarting, to provide further closes for a freshly planted settlement, may also account for the small furlongs butting onto the northern edge of the village green (see Fig. 1).

It is then possible to postulate from the combined evidence that Hardmead's northern 'end' was probably a late pre-Conquest or early post-Conquest settlement, which may have been the product of specific colonization

assarting in the northern, less populated sector of the parish. Assarting presumably continued north of the village, slowly extending the open-field system in piecemeal fashion; the last substantial remnants of 'wildwood' (or perhaps more correctly, reverted tended woodland) probably being cleared during the thirteenth-century. It is highly probable that after this final clearance phase much of the land involved was put down to pasture, and remained in this condition until the eighteenth century when crop prices led to an expansion of arable ground. By this time the northern 'end' was in a state of terminal decay, and local and national socio-economic trends, producing long-term pauperism and housing problems within the parish, ensured its demise a century later.

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