EARLY MEDIEVAL STEWKLEY:
SETTLEMENTS AND FIELDS

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Although Stewkley does not appear in the historical record until 1086, and only sketchily for centuries thereafter, much can be gleaned about the medieval village from the available sources. This paper examines the early settlement patterns, population and the evolution of the field systems in this large Vale parish. It does not concern itself with Littlecote, which was then quite distinct in all these respects. The period covered is essentially from Domesday Book (1086) to the Hundred Rolls (1279), but there are also backward glances to the Anglo-Saxon period. Suggestions are advanced about the origins of what is alleged to be England's longest village and the far from simple nature of its open fields. It appears likely that Stewkley once contained a series of small settlements within its territory, each with its own enclosed fields. This pattern is typical of the period prior to the tenth century, and has its origins in prehistoric times. The creation of two planned settlements, each with its own open field system appears to have been in progress in the late-eleventh century, although the reasons for this are now unclear. A church was located between these two "villages", which ultimately coalesced to form later medieval and modern Stewkley.
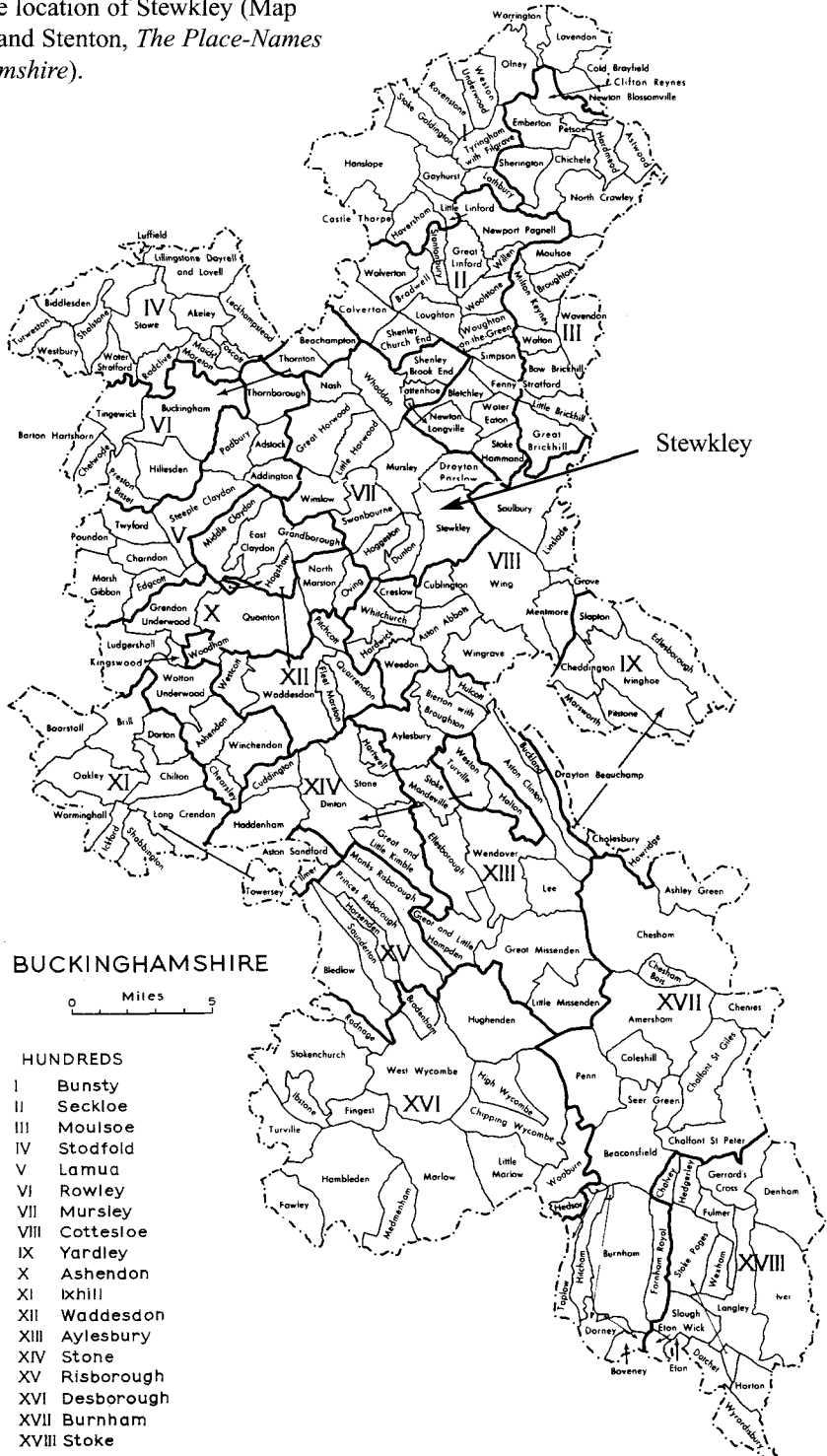
I

The principal aim of this paper is to examine evidence for the development of settlement and landscape use in Stewkley, as depicted in Domesday Book (1086) and the Hundred Rolls (1279), and in the few documents, mostly fines, which survive from the intervening period. There is no direct evidence from the Anglo-Saxon period, except for place- and field-names, most of which are not recorded until 1200 or later. They do, nevertheless, reveal much about the landscape before the Conquest. With the exception of prominent earthworks associated with Woburn Abbey's grange and two moats, the medieval and earlier archaeological record for the parish is also scanty in the extreme.[1]

Stewkley is a larger-than-average Buckinghamshire parish (3,982 acres [1,611 ha.], compared with a mean value of 2,317 acres [937 ha.]). It is situated on undulating high ground in the northern part of the Vale of Aylesbury (Fig.1). The local geology consists of glacial clays overlying Jurassic clays and limestones, the latter sometimes exposed in valley sides.[2] Stewkley lies on the watershed between the Thames (Thame) and Ouse (Ousel) drainage basins, generally around 400–450 ft. (120–135m) OD. Since enclosure in 1811, the majority of the land has been given over to grazing, replacing a system in which the open fields

accounted for almost 2,000 acres (800 ha.) of arable land. Much of the local soils had been unsuited to arable in terms of drainage and soil fertility, but no attempt seems to have been made to effect early piecemeal enclosure for grazing, other than in the far north of the parish, where large tracts of open field had become "Old Enclosures" by 1811.[3] Stewkley parish includes the deserted hamlet of Littlecote and its fields, forming a long "tail" to the south-west. Littlecote's once open fields were enclosed by the sixteenth century, except for some strips which lay intermingled with those of Stewkley in Folding Field.[4] The 'marriage' of Stewkley and Littlecote is relatively late. The hamlet, which never became a parish, was previously in Cottesloe Hundred.[5] It was associated with Creslow, another former village now reduced to a single farm. Littlecote is excluded from this paper, reducing the area of Stewkley 'proper' to about 3,200 acres (1,295 ha.).

Stewkley is reputed to be the longest village in England, and is at least 1.5 miles (2.4 km.) from end to end. The fact that there are still two clearly-defined "ends", named as such on maps until relatively recently, offers a clue to its history. It will be suggested here that this reflects the creation of two separate, "planned" settlements in the early medieval period, along with their associated field

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FIGURE 1 The location of Stewkley (Map
from Mawer and Stenton, *The Place-Names
of Buckinghamshire*).

Stewkley

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Miles
0 — 5

HUNDREDS

I	Bunsty
II	Seckloe
III	Moulsoe
IV	Stodfold
V	Lamua
VI	Rowley
VII	Mursley
VIII	Cottesloe
IX	Yardley
X	Ashendon
XI	Ixhill
XII	Waddesdon
XIII	Aylesbury
XIV	Stone
XV	Risborough
XVI	Desborough
XVII	Burnham
XVIII	Stoke

systems, which replaced a characteristic scatter of earlier hamlets and farms. Tellingly, St. Michael's church is located in the "no man's land" between North End and South End, although it is not possible to say whether the current very well-preserved twelfth-century building is the first on the site, or indeed if it replaced separate places of worship in the two settlements. The unified ecclesiastical history of Stewkley suggests, however, that it has always had the one church, despite the complexities of its manorial history. The present stone church may well have replaced a smaller, possibly wooden structure of the early-mid eleventh century on the same site (see below).

II

Domesday Book is the pivotal point for any study of medieval Stewkley, as with the rest of Buckinghamshire. In 1066 and 1086, there were two estates, each assessed at the somewhat unusual rate of 3½ hides, making a total of seven hides. This assessment may represent the kind of 30–35% reduction in hidation which Hart noticed in Northamptonshire, although that is not unusual in this county.[6] If that were the case, then Stewkley would represent two of the typical five-hide estates said to be the minimum endowment for a thegn.[7] Such entities represent one of the stages in the fragmentation of the great estates typical of the early Anglo-Saxon period. In the absence of any charter evidence, we cannot know from which territory the two Stewkley estates were derived, or when this occurred. The territory of the *Wiðungas* who gave their name to Wing, which had an early minster church and was probably a royal estate for much of the pre-Conquest period, is one possibility. The districts occupied by such groups were often assessed at three hundred hides in the seventh century, and were the smallest units recognised in the "Tribal Hidage" of c.670–700.[8] In 1066, the total assessment of the the three Hundreds (Mursley, Yardley and Cottesloe) which later made up the triple hundred of Cottesloe was about 371 hides. The boundaries of Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire were, however, evidently fluid in 1086 making it difficult to assess what the original situation might have been.

Of the two estates at Stewkley in 1066, one was held by Brictric (*recte* Beorhtric, although the Domesday version will be used here) a thegn of king Edward the Confessor; the other by Wulfward

Cild (not signifying a child, but a younger son of a noble family), also a king's thegn. The former is a very common name in eleventh-century Buckinghamshire, but Stewkley was the only estate to pass from a Brictric to Miles Crispin after 1066. Men commended to Brictric held small properties at Soulbury, Wingrave, Pitstone, Horton, Hardwick, Burston and Aston Sandford, all of which also passed to Miles, suggesting that Stewkley was the focus of Brictric's interest in the county. (This Brictric may have held the valuable Bedfordshire estate of Clapham in 1066, since this also passed to Miles.[9]) There is no evidence that Brictric was resident at Stewkley, however, any more than his post-conquest successors. He, like them, may merely have used it as a source of income.

Stewkley was Wulfward's only Buckinghamshire estate in 1066, and passed to the bishop of Coutances. A man of Wulfward's held a small property at Milton Keynes. As we shall see, this was a much more important estate than Brictric's, and it is possible that Wulfward lived locally, the last tenant-in-chief to do so for several centuries. He may have been the son of Edeva (Eadgifu), who held substantial estates at Worminghall and Ludgershall from Queen Edith, and probably Water Eaton apparently in her own right, all of which passed to the bishop after 1066.[10] She is described in one case as Wulfward's wife (?widow), which would account for the use of Cild to qualify the holder of the estate at Stewkley. To the bishop, Stewkley was one of a very large portfolio of estates which he had been granted as his share of the spoils of war, to be exploited by bailiffs for the maximum benefit. It must have been a traumatic change for the local peasants, however much the rigours of the feudal system had predated the arrival of William I.

Both estates are described in Domesday Book as held *pro uno manerio*, 'as manor'. This term is used of around one Buckinghamshire holding in six, and denotes an obligation to pay geld (a national tax based on hidage assessment).[11] Almost all occur in divided vills, that is places with the same name, but more than one estate. They are concentrated in the three northern triple Hundreds (Cottesloe, Buckingham and Newport). It has been suggested that in divided vills, only one manor is to be found, with the sole responsibility of discharging the geld liability on that vill.[12] This is often not true in Buckinghamshire, however, and is not the case in Stewkley, *unless* the two manors in question

TABLE 1 Stewkley in 1086

1066: 1086:	Brictric Crispin	Wulfward Coutances	Total
Hides	3½	3½	7
Demesne Ploughs	1 (+2)	2	3 (+2)
Tenants Ploughs	3½ (+2½)	6½ (+½)	10 (+3)
Total Ploughs	4½ (+4½)	8½ (+½)	13 (+5)
Villeins	9	10	19
Bordars	2	10	12
Slaves	0	5	5
Total Population	11	25	36
Meadow [x ploughs]	9	8	17
Value	£4	£4	£8

Note: The figures in ( ) under ploughs indicate those for which there was said to be potential, over and above those actually at work.

represent two discrete settlements and associated arable land in 1066 and 1086. Whatever the truth, it is clear that these were clearly separate and individual entities, and for all the upheavals in tenure and ownership which followed, this remained true thereafter. The salient features of the two estates are summarised above.

Despite having the same hidage assessment and annual value, the two estates are very different in terms of resources and agricultural activity. Indeed, it is difficult to see how the Wulfward/Coutances property only achieved a return of £4 from twice the number of ploughs and men. The fact that both come close to a frequently-assumed "norm" of one hide:one pound (in this case 23/- per hide) highlights the artificiality of many Domesday figures, where the tax liability was fixed and soon failed to reflect the reality of a rapidly-growing economy.

Especially striking is the great difference between the "actual" and "theoretical" number of ploughs on the Brictric/Crispin estate, where only 4½ were at work, compared with a capacity of nine, a 50% shortfall. This compares with 8½ and nine, respectively, on Wulfward's holding. In other words, both manors were seen as having land for nine ploughs, but with very different situations in reality. This is reflected in the population data, with Wulfward's estate having 2.3 times as many recorded inhabitants as that of Brictric. This suggests that while the landscape had been apportioned between two equal-sized properties, one had

developed far more than the other. In the absence of any charters, it is impossible to know when this division occurred. It may have been in the mid-tenth century, when scores of similar grants were made by kings such as Eadwig and Edgar to reward laymen and to harness their military resources to the service of the state. Whenever it happened, the situation recorded in Domesday Book shows that wide divergences had arisen. The eleventh century and the subsequent two and a half centuries were ones of great change in the local landscape, with dramatic expansion in arable farming and population. It seems likely that the roots of this dynamism lay in the decision to grant the Stewkley estates to men who, even if not resident, had a vested interest in exploiting their assets to the maximum advantage. In this they were of course helped by a rapidly growing population and economy, and all that meant in terms of farming, trade and urban development.

III

It is to that economy and landscape that we now turn. The exiguous sources for the eleventh century do not of themselves permit a reconstruction of the fields and settlements of Stewkley, any more than they do for other local estates. Such key questions as whether the two estates of 1066/1086 represent two settlements and field systems, the later North and South Ends, must wait. The twelfth century does not add very much to the tally of local docu-

ments, and almost all of them date from the 1190s. The flow picks up after 1200, although in the absence of specific manorial documents, little more than the names of a scattering of individuals are recorded, mostly in the upper echelons of society, but including some peasant farmers, along with certain field-names. The key source for any understanding of the history of medieval Stewkley is the so-called Hundred Roll of 1279. This was a tax-related document, in which details of individual landholdings and rents appear, assigned to the various manors which had by then come into existence. The survival of this document in the case of Stewkley is extremely fortuitous, since details have been lost for large parts of Buckinghamshire.[13]

Unfortunately, the Hundred Roll is not concerned with matters topographical, any more than was Domesday Book, and in the absence of any detailed map of the whole of Stewkley before Parliamentary Enclosure in 1811, anything like a full reconstruction of the fields and furlongs is impossible. It is, however, possible to make suggestions about the way in which the landscape was exploited in 1279, and to project these back to the late-eleventh century.

The simple, twofold division of Stewkley between Miles Crispin and the bishop of Coutances recorded in 1086 was long gone by 1279. Typical of an area where the tenant-in-chief was not a religious house or the monarch himself, the process of subinfeudation had gone on apace, and there was a continuous granting of land and the associated houses and peasants to newly-founded monasteries. The complexities of the way in which changes in ownership took place are fully covered in the VCH, and need not be rehearsed here.[14] By 1279 there were four principal and two smaller holdings in Stewkley:

1. Earl of Gloucester
2. Abbot of Fontevrault [Normandy]
3. Abbot of Woburn
4. Prior of Grove [Leighton Buzzard]
5. Prior of Kenilworth
6. Lord John Parslow

By the mid-twelfth century, Miles Crispin's Domesday estate had passed to the Earls of Cornwall (Honor of Wallingford). This was later known as Fowlers manor. The bishop of Coutances' estate passed to the Earls of Gloucester (Honor of Bris-

tol), later called Vaux manor. Before 1167, both of the original estates had contributed part of their land and resources to the abbey of Fontevrault and to Grove priory, an English cell of that French monastery. These lands later became known as Stewkley manor, which also included the small Parslow holding. The latter derived from Crispin's estate. By about 1250, both Wallingford and Bristol honors had also given property in Stewkley to the Cistercian abbey at Woburn (founded 1145). This was known as the manor of Stewkley Grange, and the abbey had a substantial moated house and park at the northern end of the parish. The priory of Kenilworth's holding had come from the Coutances estate, and was associated with the parish church, of which the priory also held the advowson.

The effect of all these changes in ownership was a thorough distortion of the simple pattern found in 1066. Fortunately, the Hundred Roll does offer clues as to the way in which the holdings were arranged in 1279, and how this was related to the pattern of two centuries earlier.

The total of the demesne holdings in 1279 was nine carucates [ploughlands in Domesday parlance] and 62 acres, of which 22 acres were woodland, the latter representing scarcely 0.5% of the parish area. Assuming that a carucate was equal to one hundred acres, the demesne arable covered 940 acres, almost one third of the parish (excluding Littlecote). The tenants' lands totalled 41.5 virgates (of which half were in free tenure and half in villeinage) plus 29.5 acres. Unfortunately, we have no unequivocal statement in the sources about the size of the virgate in Stewkley. It certainly appears to have been at the upper end of the possible range, however, and may have been as much as forty acres. If so, the tenants' holdings in 1279 would have covered almost 1,700 acres. The large size of the virgate reflects the inherent difficulty of wresting sufficient grain from the heavy soils. The total acreage for the manors of Stewkley, Grange and Vaux in 1811 was 2,861, which may be compared with 2,651 acres in 1279 for the sum of their predecessors. In other words, the great majority of the parish was given over to arable farming by 1279. (It is unclear whether the park of the abbot of Woburn was included in the figures given in the Hundred Roll.)

We may now compare the data for 1279 with those for 1086. At the earlier date, there was said to be land for five demesne ploughs, of which three

TABLE 2 Stewkley Holdings in 1279

A. Demesnes

1. Earl of Gloucester	2 carucates	11 ac. wood	1 old mill
2. Fontevrault	1 carucate	6 ac. wood	-
3. Grove [Glos. Fee]	2 carucates	–	-
4. Woburn	3 carucates	–	-
5. Parslow [Glos. Fee]	40 acres	5 ac. wood	-
6. Kenilworth [Bristol Fee]	1 carucate	–	1 messuage

B. Tenants

1. Gloucester

Name	Type	Virgates	Acres	Dwellings	Rent
John de Baybrok	F	3	–	–	6d
	V	2	–	–	20/-
William Carpenter	F	1	–	–	4/6
Ralph Cissor	F	–	1	1 mess.	4/-
Thomas de Fote	V	1	–	–	12/4
Ralph Godeman	F	–	½	–	8d
Robert de Littlecote	F	1	–	–	20/-
John Mayn	F	1½	–	–	n/a
Alice dau. Michael	F	1	–	–	1/-
Henry Scarlet	V	½	–	–	6/-
Peter Scarlet	V	1½	–	–	19/-
Peter Smith	F	–	4	–	1/8
Adam of Soulbury	F	1	–	–	4/-
Ralph le Vanne	V	1	–	–	12/-
Robert le Veel	F	1	–	–	n/a
	F	½	–	–	3dª
John le Ward	F	2	–	–	6d
Henry le Wodeward	F	–	4	–	4d
Peter Wylioch	V	1	–	–	12/-
Michael Alfred	–	–	–	1 cott.	2/-
Matilda Hubberd	–	–	–	1 cott.	2/-
Henry le Mercer	–	–	–	1 cott.	2/4
Roger Miller	–	–	–	1 cott.	4/-
Clement Pap	–	–	–	1 cott.	4/-
Juliana Taylor	–	–	–	1 cott.	4/-
Total	–	19 [12F/7V]	9½F	1 m./6 c.	137/1

Notes: F=free tenant; V=villein tenant; a=Sterchupeslonde

2. Fontevrault

Name	Type	Virgates	Acres	Dwellings	Rent
Margaret de Aspinall	V	2	–	–	16/6ᵇ
William Carpenter	F	1	–	–	6/8ᶜ
John Ctie [sic]	F	1	–	–	6d
William Stappe	F	1	–	–	5/-
Adam of Soulbury	F	–	–	1 cott.	2/-
Robert le Veel	V	½	–	–	10/-ᵈ
John le Ward	F	1	–	–	4/-
Roger son of Peter	–	–	–	1 cott.	1/-
Total	–	6½ [4F/2½V]	–	2 cott.	45/8

Notes: b = plus 1lb. Pepper; c = for his life; d = plus 3 capons & 1 loaf

3. Grove

Ralph le Franklin	F	1	–	–	13/2
John Lord's heirs	F	1	–	–	2/-
Alice dau. Michael	F	1	–	–	2d
Henry Pevel	F	1	–	–	5/-
John s of Thomas	F	–	–	1 cott.	4/2
Templars of Cowley	V	1	–	–	12/6
Henry le Wodeward	F	–	–	1 cott.	2d
Adam le Wyte	F	½	–	–	2/11
Total	–	4½ [3½F/1V]	–	2 cott.	40/1

4. Woburn

Symon Astil	V	½	–	–	3/4
William Carpenter	V	½	–	–	6/-
Alice Cotele	F	–	20	–	n/a
Agnes wid. Faber	V	½	–	–	3/4
Hugh s. of John	V	½	–	–	4/-
Henry s. of Michael	V	1	–	–	7/4
Symon Morel	V	½	–	–	6/8
Agnes Rode	V	½	–	–	3/4
Hugo Ruf	V	1	–	–	6/8
William Stappe	F	½	–	–	6/-
Henry Scarlet	V	½	–	–	4/-
Robert Taylor	V	1	–	–	5/10
Peter atte Treste	V	½	–	–	4/-
Clement s. of William	V	½	–	–	6/8
Total	–	10 [½F;9½V]	20F	–	67/2

5. Parslow

William le Atis	?V	1	–	–	12/6
William de Gravenhurst	?F	½	–	–	1/6
Thomas Smith+4 daus.	?F	?½	–	–	1/8
John s. of Thomas	?F	½	–	–	1/6
Total	–	2½ [1½F/1V]	–	–	17/2

were at work, and for thirteen tenant ploughs, of which ten were at work. This suggests a total for cultivated arable land of 1,300 acres, compared with 2,650 in 1279. This increase may seem improbable at first sight, but it must be remembered that the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were a time of rapid population growth. The only way to sustain this at a time of limited agricultural productivity was to increase the amount of land under cultivation, even if it meant extending the arable onto unsuitable soils. In 1086 Stewkley had a total enumerated population of 36, of whom five were slaves. Using a multiplier of five for non-slaves, plus an allowance for unrecorded individuals, the total would have been 160–180 inhabitants. There were nineteen

villeins, who probably held one virgate apiece on average, together with perhaps three virgates for the bordars, a total of twenty-two virgates. In 1279, the total was 41.5 virgates, an increase of 90%. In the case of demesne land, the total increased from a possible 500 acres in 1086 to 940 in 1279 (88%). These data are therefore consistent with a virtual doubling of land under the plough. The growth in farmland is less dramatic if the potential, rather than the actual, amount of Domesday arable is used. There was said to be land for eighteen ploughs in 1086 [1,800 acres], which rose to 2,650 acres in 1279 (+45%). The large discrepancy in 1086 may reflect the amount of land which was in the process of being brought into cultivation.

The population data are more difficult to compare. Forty-one holders of land are named in 1279, some with two or three virgates, some with only half-virgate holdings, but the average of one virgate per tenant still holds good, so the population also seems likely to have doubled. Four tenants held only a cottage or few acres of land, and there were seven cottagers named as such, a very simliar number to the twelve bordars living in Domesday Stewkley.

It seems probable that the nineteen villein holdings of 1086 are represented by the 21 villein tenancies of 1279, and that the free holdings at the latter date are those which had been created by the dramatic expansion of the intervening period. There is sharp distinction between the two sorts of holdings in terms of rent. The average for villein holdings in 1279 was 10/2 per virgate (threepence per acre if the virgate contained forty acres), whereas for free holdings the average was only 3/8 per virgate (one penny per acre). The various lords had evidently sought to encourage tenants who cleared and cultivated new land, whereas the hapless villeins were obliged to pay more rent, as well as owing more onerous labour services and dues.

IV

We now return to consider the form of settlement and field system in Stewkley in the late-eleventh century, and how this originated. It is also necessary to examine what impact the dramatic changes of the two centuries after the Norman Conquest had on the local landscape.

The view that the open, communal field system, with nucleated village settlements was a fully-fledged importation from Europe by the early Anglo-Saxons, favoured by earlier generations of ethnocentric historians, is no longer sustainable. On the other hand, there is clear documentary evidence that such fields existed well before 1066 in various parts of England. It is therefore necessary to look for their origins at some time between 500 and 1066.[15] Archaeological evidence shows that the settlement pattern on the period c.500–c.800 in southern England was one of dispersed farms and hamlets, surrounded by fields cultivated in severalty. In addition, these settlements were often short-lived and fluid in their location, perhaps reflecting. soil exhaustion, or the results of periodic epidemics and wars. Many of these settlements were later deserted, and often covered by the fields and furlongs of open-field farming. It seems that what has been called the 'village moment' (that is, the creation of larger, centralised settlements, surrounded by communally farmed fields) was a phenomenon of the ninth-twelfth centuries. It affected a broad belt of central England, including central and north Buckinghamshire, although even in this region, scattered hamlets and farms could always be found, and they always remained the norm in the Chilterns.[16]

There are glimpses of the settlement change in pre-Conquest laws. In addition, some charter boundary clauses show that features associated with open-field agriculture, such as furlongs, headlands and gores, were present by the mid-tenth century.[17] Whether the process of change was gradual, with earlier hamlets and farms disappearing as the new fields were created piecemeal, or whether lords and their agents effected a clean sweep between farming years, must remain open to debate. This equally true of the reasons which prompted the change, although growth in population and the demand for food clearly began before 1066, as did the growth of a network of urban and market centres which would have consumed any surplus. Growing demands on the part of lords over all kinds, whether rents or exactions in kind such as work on the demesne, were also part of a new 'feudal' regime, which has its roots long before the arrival of William I in 1066.[18]

There is as yet no comprehensive body of field-name material for Buckinghamshire, so the following observations must be regarded as tentative, subject to revision in the light of further documentary and archaeological work. There is no detailed listing of Stewkley field-names until 1811, although many are on record from at least the fifteenth century. It appears, however, that there is a hiatus between the names which appear in twelfth- and thirteenth-century sources and those which survived until Enclosure. At first sight, this might be a reflection of the re-ordering of settlement and fields at the local 'village moment', where old names were no longer needed, and where new features required to be identified. If this were the case, then the estates of 1066/1086 would have consisted of scattered settlements in an enclosed landscape. When one examines the evidence for the late-twelfth century, however, this hypothesis is seen to be invalid, as all the evidence points to an open-field system. The discontinuity of names seems to

be a function of the expansion of the arable and the increasing number of open fields, with the suggestion that there were fundamental changes in the landscape between 1086 and 1279, hardly surprising in view of the doubling of farmland and population noted above.

Before proceeding to look at this evidence, it is necessary to form a view as to whether Stewkley was divided into northern and southern elements in 1086, as seems logical on topographical grounds and the persistence in dividing the village in this way, or whether the division was east-west, along the line of the village street. This is not as academic as it may seem, since in 1811, the division of the open fields between manors shows a very clear east-west split. (The former grange of Woburn
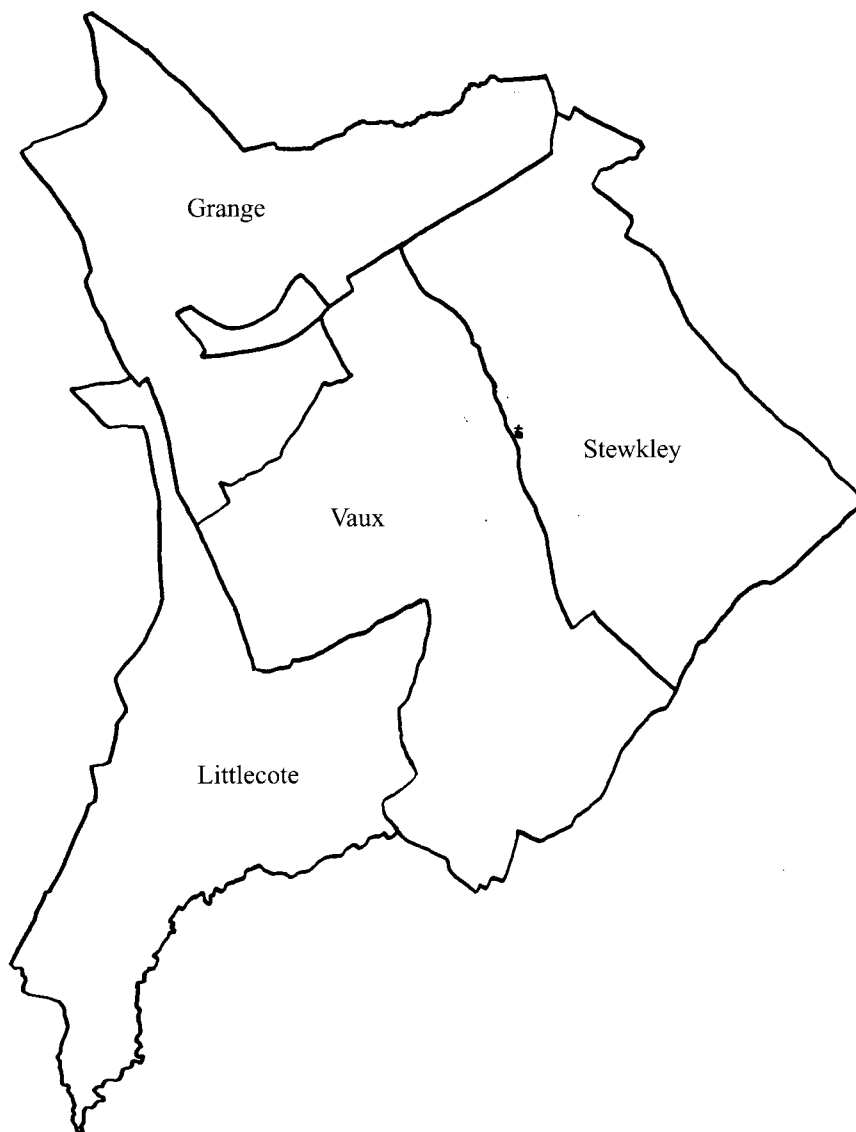
FIGURE 2 Outline showing the location of Stewkley's three manors and Littlecote. Note the position of St. Michael's church on the boundary between Vaux and Stewkley manors.

occupied long-enclosed land in the north of the parish.) Taking the High Street as the boundary line, we find that in 1811, Stewkley Manor occupied 689 acres on the eastern side, but only 123 acres on the west, whereas Vaux Manor had 1,000 acres on the west and only 63 on the east. (The Grange estate still had 144 acres of open field land on the east, and nine on the west, the latter representing the deserted hamlet of Dean, where its tenants had once lived.) *Prima facie*, therefore, one might conclude that there were originally two field systems in Stewkley, one east and one west of the village.

There were eight, named open fields in 1811, four each to the east and west of the village street:

Field	Location	Acres
Millway	E	274
Foxhill	E	253
Woulds	E	295
Longland	E	335
Sub-total	E	1157
Dean	W	207
Thornslade	W	373
Folding	W	399
Mill	W	220
Sub-total	W	1199
Total		2356

(Note: 180 acres has been deducted from the total for the western side, since they lay in Littlecote. Virtually all of this land was in Folding Field.)

A case can therefore be made for two, two-field systems on each side of the village, each comprising about six hundred acres, or alternatively two, four-field systems of 1,200 acres for each of the principal manors. This, however, seems to fly in the face of the settlement pattern and of local nomenclature, which suggests two settlements originally, one north and one south. These would be equivalent to the two estates of Domesday Book, before the complex changes of the twelfth century, which seem to have reorientated the tenurial pattern completely. If the common fields of 1811 are arranged as pairs of two-field systems north and south of the church, a similar result is obtained. The northern group comprises Millway+Foxhill (527 acres) with Dean+Thornslade

(580 acres) total 1,107 acres, while in the south are Woulds+Longland (630 acres) with Folding+Mill (619 acres) total 1,249 acres. In other words, there seem to be four great fields of around 5–600 acres, each subdivided on topographical grounds to form smaller units which probably formed the basis of cropping arrangements, providing greater flexibility. Contrary to Gray's assertion that Stewkley provides an example of the change for a two- to a three-field system in the medieval period, the pattern seems to have remained one based on multiples of two-fields.[19]

The total of 2,356 acres of open-field land in 1811 compares with the theoretical arable capacity of 1,800 acres of 1086, although it is significantly more than the 1,300 acres which seem to have been cultivated at that time. The increase of 1,050 acres accounts for some, but not all, of the expansion which had taken place by 1279. Much of the remaining 4–500 acres of arable represents the Woburn Abbey estate at the northern extremity of the parish. Most of their land lay outside the main open field system, although there is clear evidence for ridge-and-furrow on aerial photographs across the area which lay outside the medieval park boundary. Is it therefore possible to assign Brictric's and Wulfward's estates of 1066 to the northern and southern settlements and field systems?

V

In order to attempt a leap back over more than nine centuries, we need to consider the evidence linking 1066 with 1279, and also what the draft enclosure map of 1811 and the modern map tell us about the location and nature of early settlements within the present straggling village. Unfortunately, there are no sources other than Domesday Book which pre-date the major changes brought about by the granting of large tracts of land to the abbeys of Fontevrault and Woburn. A clutch of late-twelfth and early-thirteenth century documents does, however, offer some valuable insights. Most are fines involving the Clinton family in the period 1190 to 1220, relating to claims and counter-claims over land being granted away from the original holdings.[20] The Clintons first appear in Stewkley at about the time that lands were being granted to Fontevrault and its English dependency Grove[bury] at Leighton Buzzard, which derived from both the estates of 1086. This process began the major transformation between the original and
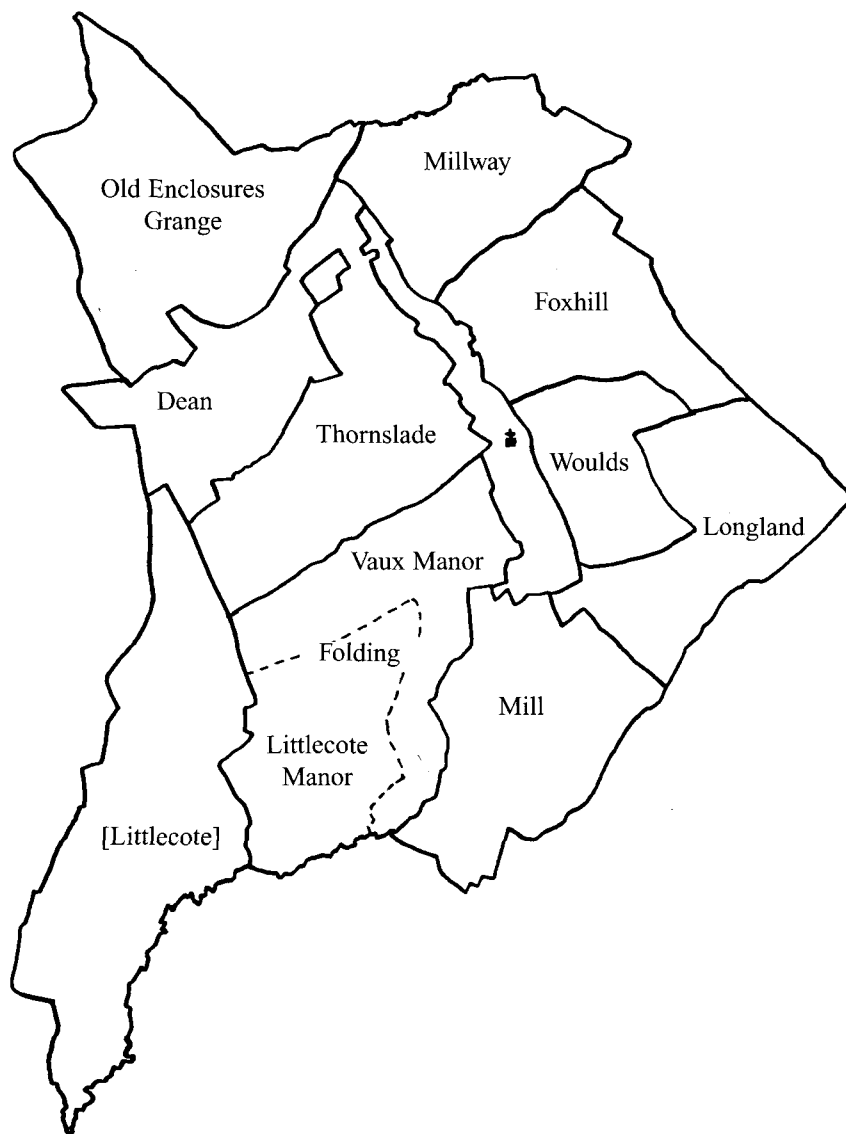
FIGURE 3 Stewkley Common Fields as they existed on the eve of Enclosure in 1811. Littlecote was long since enclosed, with the exception of the land in Stewkley's Folding Field, as was most of the former Woburn Abbey grange.

later patterns of landownership in Stewkley. In 1249, Henry Clinton's sister and heir Agnes, the wife of Warin de Bragenham (in Soulbury), granted their estate, assessed at two knights' fees, to the Earl of Gloucester. Gloucester already held the original Coutances estate, excluding the land which had been granted to Fontevrault. The latter

formed the nucleus of Stewkley Manor. It is this granting away of about half the land and assets to the Norman abbey which achieved the change from a north-south split to and east-west one, in tenurial, but not apparently agricultural terms.

It does not appear that the endowment of Fontevrault in the late-twelfth century materially

affected the pattern of settlement in the way that the contemporary granting of a substantial estate to Woburn Abbey did. Although it had a local cell at Grovebury, the Norman abbey was a remote institution concerned solely with maximising its revenues from this land, without the desire, or ability, to make a significant impact on the way those revenues were generated in terms of field systems and settlements. In total, the Fontevrault/Grovebury estate in 1279 amounted to around 600 acres, half demesne and half tenant lands, just over one quarter of the total open field area. The Woburn Abbey grange totalled about 610 acres, only one quarter of which (153 acres) lay in the main village fields, virtually all in Millway field, part of the "East Field" of north Stewkley (see above). The remainder lay to the north of Dean Road and west of the Mursley Road, totalling 460 acres, of which around 170 acres was associated with the moated manor house and fish ponds, and with a park, whose boundary is

N ←—

Key: 1 South End
     2. Parish Church
     3. North End
     4. Dean [hamlet]
     5. Woburn Grange,
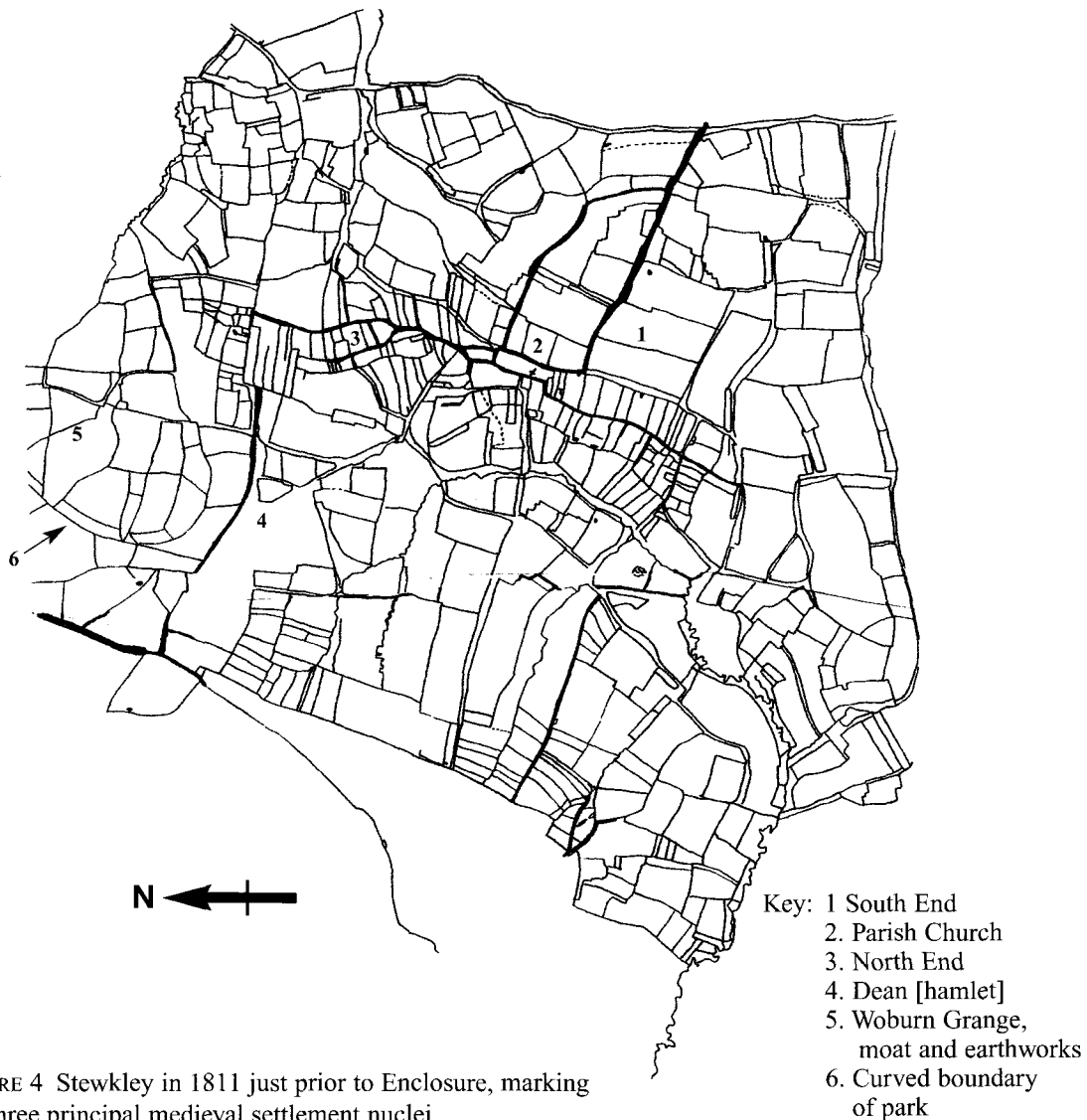   moat and earthworks
     6. Curved boundary
         of park

FIGURE 4 Stewkley in 1811 just prior to Enclosure, marking the three principal medieval settlement nuclei.

still apparent on the ground with curving lines of hedges and trees.

Much, if not all, of the remaining 300 acres of the Woburn estate was cultivated as open fields, but precisely how this land related to the rest of the village lands is not clear. It appears to have come under the plough after 1086, but well before 1279 and represents a very substantial investment in clearance and cultivation. Woburn was a Cistercian house, founded in 1145. The order's preference for remote locations and the use of outlying granges for livestock farming is well known.[21] It seems, however, that the bulk of their Stewkley estate was under the plough throughout their ownership, although it is now largely given over to grazing. It also seems that they were granted the land in at least a partly-cleared state. In 1218 Woburn held two-and-a-half carucates of (demesne) land, four virgates of tenant land, and eight acres in *Meniwude* (i.e. "common wood", from OE *gemǣne wudu*), a total of about 380 acres. In 1222 pasture from a furlong called *Gares* (Gore), next to Drayton Parslow, is mentioned.[22] It seems likely that the process of bringing this land under the plough began in the mid-twelfth century, a period of rapid population growth in Stewkley generally. It is possible that Woburn's 300 acres of open-field land represents a separate field system with its own cropping arrangements.

In 1196, there is mention of a large estate comprising *inter alia* 160 acres of demesne land (81 acres in the East Field and 79 in *Suhull* (South Hill), one barton (OE *beretun*, literally 'barley farm', but referring generally to any outlying farm) and twelve virgates held in villeinage.[23]The demesne land lay in parcels of five acres or less in twenty-two named furlongs. There were, however, two matching blocks of 23½ acres, *Ramkoteshull* (E) and *Smaltem'* and adjacent parts (S), although these too were probably open-field furlongs. Few of the names survived in later sources, but the land seems to have been scattered across both the northern and southern field groups, east and west of the village. This may be explained by the fact that half of the land derived from the Honor of Bristol (i.e. Wulfward Cild's estate in 1066) and half from the Honor of Wallingford (i.e. Brictric's estate in 1066). What had then been two separate settlements and field systems (see below) had apparently merged a century later.

This deed provides the earliest names of Stewk-ley's peasant farmers, holders of a virgate of land. From the Bristol estate came Robert de Holedene, William son of Baldwin, Anketil son of William (Isabel, daughter of Anketill is mentioned in 1197 in connexion with a virgate holding), Ingram son of Toki and Robert son of Goscelin, while from the Wallingford estate were Henry son of Saher, Ralph son of Godwin, Alice the wife of Faber (i.e. the smith), Eggelif, Roger son of Richard and Osemund. With the exception of Godwin, an Anglo-Saxon name, all of these personal names are of Scandinavian or Norman-Flemish origin. While the latter may be attributed to post-conquest naming fashion, the former must represent at least some Norse settlement in the area in the tenth-eleventh centuries which has left no record apart from these few names and some field-names, such as Toki-escroft (1218).

In 1203, Henry Clinton and the Knights Templar were involved in a transcation, comprising one messuage and 110 acres, including the tofts and crofts of Anketil Cakke, the widow Gunilda and William Pellipari (Skinner). The land in the common fields is not assigned to fields, and the furlongs named are generally different from those in the grant of 1196. For example in 1203 we read of ten acres *super Breche*, compared with eight acres in *Breche* in 1196. (Breach denotes land broken up for the plough, often former woodland.) 'Lark Hill' (*Lauerkehulle*) in Southe Hill appears in both grants, as does Ryehill Butts (*Ruihulle Butes*) in East Field. Several of the field-names of 1203 provide tantalising glimpses of the Anglo-Saxon past. *Sexlohweslade* probably refers to a burial mound (OE *hlæw*). Although the first element cannot be explained from this single occurrence, it may indicate a group of six barrows. A peasant called Saiet held a toft called *Wiclonda*, probably part of an outlying farm (OE *wic*, see below), possibly predating the creation of the open fields and centralised settlements. In 1811, a block of fields north of the Bletchley Road was called the Wicks, which is a rare example of long-lasting continuity in this area. In 1203 *Lambecoteshulle* provides a neat balance to the *Ramekoteshull* of 1196, both evidence for sheep farming and its associated structures. Further evidence of local farming practice is found in *Pusefurlong*, denoting a piece of land where peas were grown, a leguminous crop enhancing the nitrogen content of the soil.

Further documents between 1200 and 1240

throw light onto the names of Stewkley people, but none contains further detailed lists of field-names. In 1218, two virgates of tenant land were held by Walter de Ponte and Robert Wulfgiet, with two more virgates below the Woodgate Ditch. Eight acres at *Meniwude* (OE *gemæne wudu*, 'common wood'), provide evidence that the absence of woodland from the Domesday record of Mursley Hundred reflects clerical error rather than reality. Amice de Clinton was involved in six further fines in 1218, involving the following individuals:

John de Poitou	4 virgates +4 acres	7d+1 lb. of pepper
Oliver de Stewkley	3 virgates	3/6 for 2 virgates
Roger de Eillesburi	1 virgate	–
Ralf de Putenham	2 virgates	–
Michael de Stewkley	2 virgates	12d
John de Calverton	1 virgate	12d
William de Hibernia	1 virgate less 3¼ acres	1 pair of spurs worth 6d

A total of twelve virgates was involved in this one year, almost a third of those detailed in the Hundred Roll of 1279, although it is impossible to trace any of the names. Those named were a mixture of local men, probably substantial peasant farmers, both from Stewkley and other Vale parishes between Calverton and Tring, and also those whose origins lay much further afield, in France and Ireland. The low rents for these holdings, some of them including goods rather than cash, show that these were free tenants. A more significant newcomer was Warin de Bragenham from neighbouring Soulbury, husband of Agnes Clinton, sister of Henry. In 1247 they granted 3½ virgates and two messuages to John, prior of Snelshall, and in 1249 two knight's fees to the earl of Gloucester.

VI

Now that the admittedly exiguous evidence for medieval Stewkley down to c.1300 has been examined, it is appropriate to consider the way in which the settlements developed and how the landscape was cultivated. Fortunately there are a few clues in field-names. We have already noticed *Wiclonda*, which derives from OE *wīc*, a term of varied origin and significance, ranging from a Roman *vicus*, to a middle Saxon trading centre (for example, Ipswich, Aldwych and Hamwic [Southampton]), to an out-

lying farm or hamlet, often associated with dairying or other livestock activities. The last of these is the most likely here, given Stewkley's location. It is not, however, clear whether the Wick existed prior to the creation of the village and common fields, or the extent to which it retained a separate identity in the post-Conquest period. It was absorbed into Woburn Abbey's grange after 1218.

Another intriguing field-name occurs in 1196 and 1203, lying in the East Field. This is *Ti[d]boldeston*, from an Anglo-Saxon personal name *Tidbeald* and OE *tūn*, 'farm, settlement, village' This is definitely an English, rather than a Norse, name, and seems to have enjoyed its main currency in Merica in the ninth century[24]If so, *Tidboldeston* may represent a settlement in the eastern part of Stewkley parish created in the middle Saxon period, and surrounded by enclosed fields.

A deed of 1494 provides many Stewkley field-names, four of which, *Overtonstede*, *Nethertonstede*, *Longetonstede* and *Litiltonstede* provide further evidence of early settlement.[25]*Tonstede* is a little-changed Old English word *tūnstede*, denoting the site of a *tūn* (see above). These must have been recognisable when the common fields were laid out, probably in the tenth to twelfth centuries. Two separate settlements are involved. Upper and Lower Tonstede were in Mill Field, in the south of the parish, in the area between the Wing and Dunton Roads (Fig. 6a). They are not, unfortunately, located on the 1811 map. This *tūn* may have formed the southern extremity of the later village, but is more likely to have been out in the later furlongs, either on the high ground near Warren Farm, or in the adjacent valley. Long and Little Tonstede were in the far north-east of the parish. The 1811 map shows Long Dunstead in the angle of the Bletchley and Hollingdon Roads in Millway Field. This is a relatively flat site, close to a stream. It also adjoins one of the very few areas of common in Stewkley, the Clack, which survived until 1814. The Town Mead recorded in 1811 close to the boundary between Folding Field and Littlecote may be an echo of yet another early settlement.

Given the direct evidence for three separate *tūns*, all in peripheral locations, there may have been others whose very existence had been forgotten when the common fields were being laid out and named. The date(s) at which these settlements were established, how they grew, how much land they cultivated, how they were related to settlements of
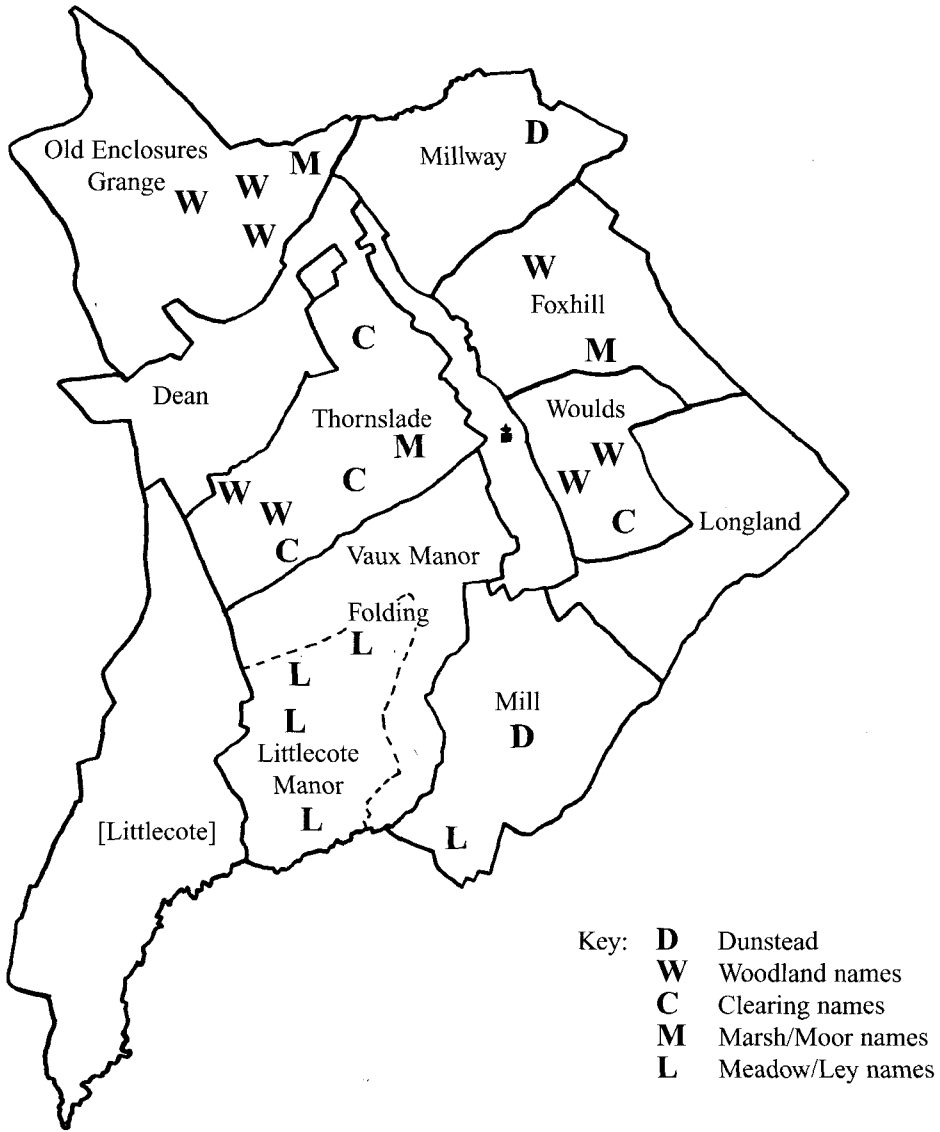
FIGURE 5 Selected Stewkley field-names.

Key:
D	Dunstead
W	Woodland names
C	Clearing names
M	Marsh/Moor names
L	Meadow/Ley names

previous eras must all remain unanswerable questions at this stage. So too must the decisions which underlay their replacement by the settlement(s) and common fields which are recorded in Domesday Book and later documents. A dynamic expansion of arable land which was already underway in 1086, and which lasted until at least the mid-thirteenth century, shows that there was plenty of unused land in Stewkley. We should therefore envisage a landscape in the middle Saxon period (say AD 650–900) in which small settlements, individual farms or small hamlets/villages, with their own fields, meadows and other resources, were separated from each other by areas of woodland and common land not yet cleared for the plough.

There is certainly a good smattering of medieval field-names denoting the existence of former woodland and its clearance. Pride of place goes to
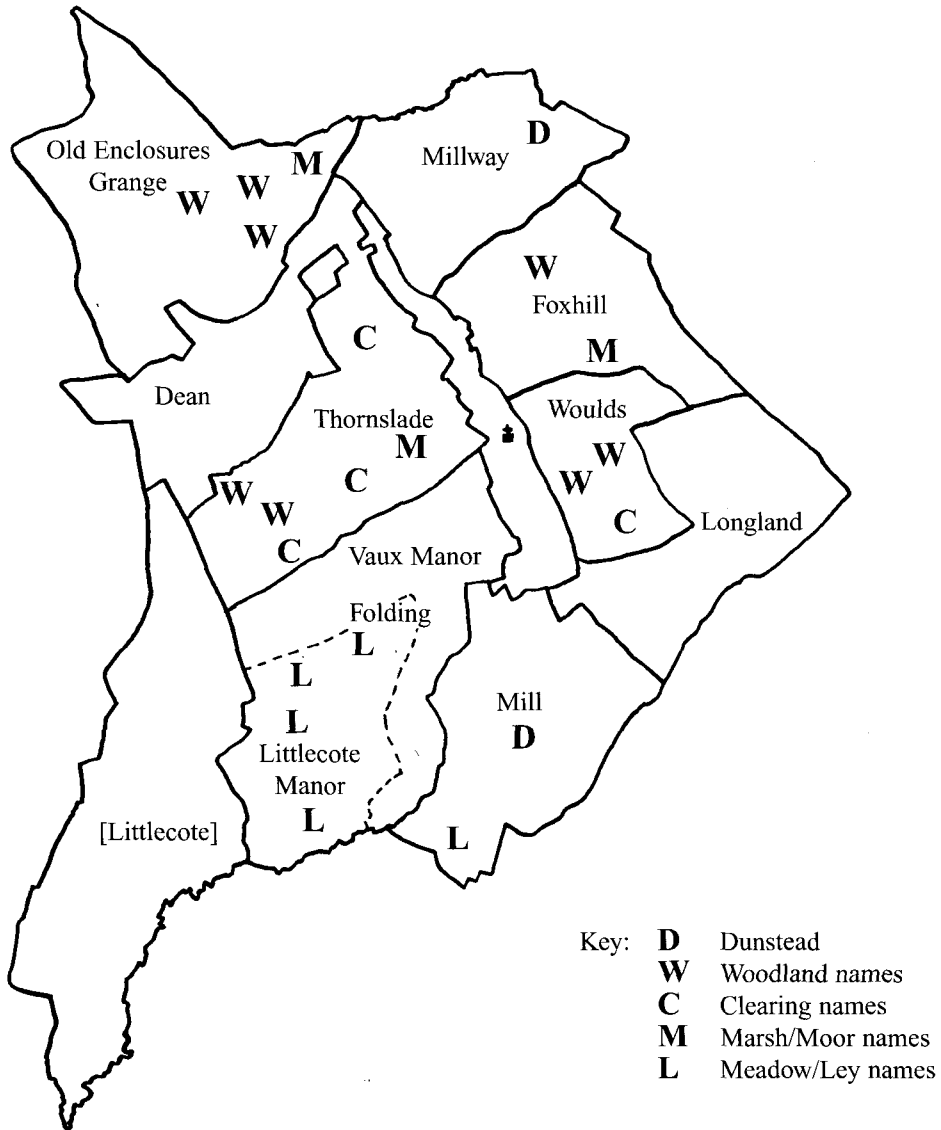
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the name of the parish itself. Stewkley is from OE *styfic lēah*, 'stump clearing'[26]The element **styfic* is related to *styfician*, 'to root up, stump up' and provides direct evidence for woodland clearance prior to 1066. Given that the village lies along a ridge which marks a major watershed, this phase of clearance may represent the removal of woodland around a pre-existing trackway specifically for the laying out of new settlement(s) associated with the reordering of the landscape, where the name came to be associated with the new sites. This route aligns with the bi-axial prehistoric landscape identified by the late Ted Bull, but which seems to have been avoided by earlier Anglo-Saxon settlement, suggests that the woodland in question might have been regenerated rather than primeval, possibly indicative of post-Roman agrarian decline.[27]The fact that only 1,300 acres was apparently under the plough in 1086 (with a further 500 acres potential arable) out of a total of 3,000 acres (excluding Littlecote), clearly shows the extent to which the area was undeveloped. By 1279, there seems to have been little land which remained unused. Unfortunately, there is no complete listing of Stewkley field-names at any specific date, medieval or later, so the following comments relate only to those names recorded at various dates which definitely indicate the presence of woodland.

Name	Date	Field
Breche	1196	
Brecche	1203	
Le Brache	1494	Longland
Breach Furlong	1811	Woulds
Bulls Breach	1811	Thornslade
Southlongebreche	1494	Thornslade
Southland Breach	1811	Thornslade
Westlongbreche	1494	Thornslade
Haredon	1203	
Longdreneherst	1494	Thornslade
Litildrenherst	1494	Thornslade
Thorn Furlong	1811	Thornslade
Rodefurlange	1203	
Myddylwolde	1494	Woulds
Nether Wolde	1494	Woulds
Upper/Middle/ Lower Woulds	1811	Woulds
Wodeslade	1494	
Wood Close	1811	

Even allowing for the possibility that some of the 'breach' names (land broken up for cultivation) at different dates refer to the same area, there was clearly active clearance in the twelfth century and the memory of it six centuries later. The names of two of the open fields: Thornslade (meaning 'thorn(y) valley') and Woulds (OE *weald*, 'wood, forest') also include "wood" names. These seem to have been major areas of woodland, possibly added to the arable after c1100. The area north of the Bletchley and Dean Roads also seems likely to represent a late addition to the core fields. It seems therefore that there were still hundreds of acres of wood and scrub land in Stewkley in 1086. It also appears that a belt of woodland running east and west across the centre of the parish formed a natural barrier between the common fields of the northern and southern manors settlements recorded in Domesday Book.

Not all of the names listed above are susceptible to interpretation, given the paucity of early forms. *Haredon* is from OE *hār, dūn*, 'grey hill', in the sense of 'hoary, lichen-covered', more likely in this area to refer to trees than to rocks.[28] *Rodfurlong* contains OE *rod[e]*, 'clearing'.[29] *Drenherst*, however, is altogether more interesting. OE *hyrst* denotes a copse or hillock, often developing the sense 'wooded slope', here referring to the northern side of a shallow east-west valley forming the boundary between Thornslade and Folding Fields, and hence between the northern and southern field systems.[30]The first element appears to be either ON *drengr*, ME *dreng*, 'a man holding land by a particular form of free tenure combining service, money payments and military duty', or the ON personal name Drengr.[31] Such tenure is generally associated with the northern Danelaw and Northumberland, although an example of a place-name containing the element survives in Northamptonshire.[32] Given evidence for individuals with names of Norse origin in thirteenth-century Stewkley (see above), it is possible that such tenancies existed there in the period before and after 1066. If so, this field-name provides invaluable evidence about the way in which land was cleared. None of the surviving documents mention assarts by name in Stewkley, which may indicate that woodland clearance was carried out on a larger scale, leaving little for small farmers to clear once the great open fields had been created and the whole landscape was managed by and for the com-

munity. On the other hand *Drenherst* may derive from OE *drenc* in a topographical sense 'a drenched place', which would fit with its position on the slopes of a valley.[33]

VII

The evidence from Stewkley is generally late, but does appear to show that the landscape in earlier Anglo-Saxon times was parcelled out between a series of small settlements with their own fields, and that a large amount of wood and other unused land existed. Even in 1086, between 40 and 50% of the land seems not to have been cultivated, a situation which had dramatically changed by 1279, when the whole landscape comprised open arable fields, with only a few scraps of common, wood and the abbot of Woburn's park left apart from the tofts and crofts of the village and the hamlet of Dean. Two difficult questions remain: When were the open fields were first laid out? When were the earlier scattered settlements abandoned and replaced by a central village? There is of course no direct record of when the present village site was first occupied, or when the common fields were first laid out and how and when they were subsequently expanded. Much evidence of late-Saxon or Medieval buildings and artefacts will of course be buried beneath existing structures, and there has been no systematic field-walking in those fields not used as permanent pasture.

Domesday Book provides the best starting point. Its record of two identically-assessed estates in 1066 and 1086, albeit with quite different resources, suggests that by then, settlement was centralised, or in the process of becoming so, and that by extension agriculture was being, or had been, transformed from fields held severally to a communal system. For the purposes of the following discussion, it has been assumed that the later North End and South End of Stewkley represent two earlier, discrete settlements. This kind of nomenclature is commonplace in what have been termed 'polyfocal' settlements (cf. Green).[34] These names survived locally well into the twentieth century, even though the village had by then grown into a continuous ribbon. (Jeffreys' map of 1766–8 names Tag End at the Dean Road/Bletchley Road junction, but no other mention of this has been found, and in 1825 Bryant names it as "North End".) It has also been assumed that each of the settlements possessed its own open-field system by

1066, and that this was of the two-field variety, in which one field was cultivated and the other fallow, in alternate years. This appears to have been the norm in this part of Buckinghamshire, and survived until enclosure at neighbouring Drayton Parslow.[35] The precise nature of the later cropping arrangements at Stewkley when there were six principal fields is unclear, as is the *modus operandi* in the fields held by Woburn Abbey north of Dean Road, which were worked in part at least by tenants living at a separate hamlet called [Stewkley] Dean.[36] It is also assumed that the demesne arable formed part of the open fields, rather than being cultivated severally. Based upon the area of the open-field land north and south of a line drawn approximately through the church, the estate held by Brictric in 1066 and Miles Crispin in 1086 has been assigned to North End, while that held by Wulfward Cild and the bishop of Coutances is treated as South End.

Domesday Book offers some clues as to the way in which the landscape was settled and farmed at the end of the eleventh century in terms of the data on plough teams (at work and potential) and of the various population groups. Taking the "North" estate first, there was a massive discrepancy between the 4½ teams at work (one on the demesne), and the potential for another 4½ (two on the demesne). Assuming that each plough represents one hundred acres, the arable would have totalled 450 acres. The total of the later open fields in the north of Stewkley was around 950 acres, confirmation that only half was under the plough in 1086. This accords with the field-name evidence discussed above, which shows that substantial areas of woodland once existed in Thornslade Field, and probably also in Foxhill Field.

The "South" estate had far more land under the plough, and correspondingly less potential for new arable. There were 8½ ploughs at work (two on the demesne), but scope for only another half-plough. This suggests 850–900 acres of arable, out of a later medieval total of 1250 acres. The name Woulds Field clearly indicates the existence of former woodland, and it seems that in their earliest days, the two settlements were separated by a band of woodland running east-west. Other than arable and woodland, each settlement would have had meadow land and rough grazing, much of which was brought under the plough during the century or two after 1066 as the population expanded, but

agricultural productivity remained more or less fixed.

The enumerated population of the two estates bore a similar relationship to the number of ploughs at work: "North" had eleven (nine villeins and two bordars), equating to 2.4/plough, while "South" had twenty-five (ten villeins, ten bordars and five slaves), 2.9/plough. Demesne ploughs were often worked by the estate slaves, with a ratio of around two per plough, as seems to have been the case here).[37] At North End, the two bordars may represent manumitted slaves who had been given their freedom and smallholdings, but were still obliged to perform onerous services for the lord. The villeins represent the principal class of peasant cultivators, but they were a disparate group, betraying varied origins over the preceding centuries. There is no evidence of the size of their holdings in Buckinghamshire, but from the details provided in the Middlesex Domesday, it appears they held between one hide and half a virgate (15–120 acres), with correspondingly varied economic status. Overall the average was about one virgate or thirty acres. Bordars held an average of around five acres, little more than allotments for raising some livestock and vegetables.

At Stewkley the virgate was probably about forty acres, at the upper end of the scale allowing for the relatively poor soil and the need for farmers to have enough land to pay their dues and feed their families. At North End, the 350 acres under the tenants' ploughs would equate to nine virgates, suggesting that here the nine villeins each held one virgate, the whole settlement and field system having been laid out in a regular way. South End is slightly different, in that there was a large body of bordars, who could have up to fifty acres between them. That would leave about 600 acres net of the demesne to divide between ten villein families, or sixty acres apiece. There were 1½- and 2-virgate holdings in Stewkley in 1279 and also earlier in the thirteenth century, and it seems probable that some of the holdings of 1086 were larger than single virgates. Five two-virgate and five one-virgate holdings at the time of Domesday would account for the appropriate acreage, and well as preserving a strong element of symmetry which might be expected in a settlement and field system laid out de novo - five major and five lesser villeins, ten bordars and five slaves for the demesne. If so, this might suggest the planned arrangements were relatively new in 1066, with little time for distortions to have arisen. The same is true at North End, where the large arable potential hints at "work in progress". This in turn could explain why the sites and even the names of superseded local settlements were still remembered at the end of the twelfth century.

Peter Gulland's recent thought-provoking paper on medieval Aston Sandford offers further confirmation of regular planning in Vale settlements, supported in that case by field-walking evidence and remains of long-deserted medieval house platforms.[38] As yet, such direct material is not to hand for Stewkley, although, if the suggestions below about the location of the eleventh-century settlements are correct, much of the land concerned is not covered by later building. Two areas appear on the 1811 map as possible house-plot locations. At North End, the line followed by the present High Street north of Stewkley House (GR SP849267) was then represented by a track and footpath, whereas a now-vanished roadway ran parallel to the north-east, reaching the Bletchley Road opposite Grange Farm (Fig. 6b). Between these tracks, a series of regular enclosed plots has the appearance of former crofts, with High Street as the former back lane separating them from the open field to the south-west. Although the enclosed land extends further west at the north end, this overlies former ridge and furrow beyond the back lane, as evidenced in the paddock of Heywood House (SP844270). The area of this rectangle of enclosures is about 22 acres, equivalent to half-a-virgate, another possible indicator of deliberate planning. At the southern end is a D-shaped area of about four acres, which may represent the original manorial centre, in which case the rest of the land would give the equivalent of a two acre plot to each of the villein families. If, as at Aston Sandford the manor house lay outside the regular toft and croft block, the D-shaped plot might conceivably denote the site of a church/chapel, replaced by the mid-late twelfth century church (see below).

The 1811 map shows two blocks of enclosed land either side of the village street in South End, Upper Closes to the east and Lower Closes to the west (Fig 6a). The latter lie behind the fully built-up street frontage, however, whereas Upper Closes front the street and are virtually devoid of buildings. They are separated from the adjacent Woulds Field by a broad back lane, which does not occur on the west side of the main street, where the land
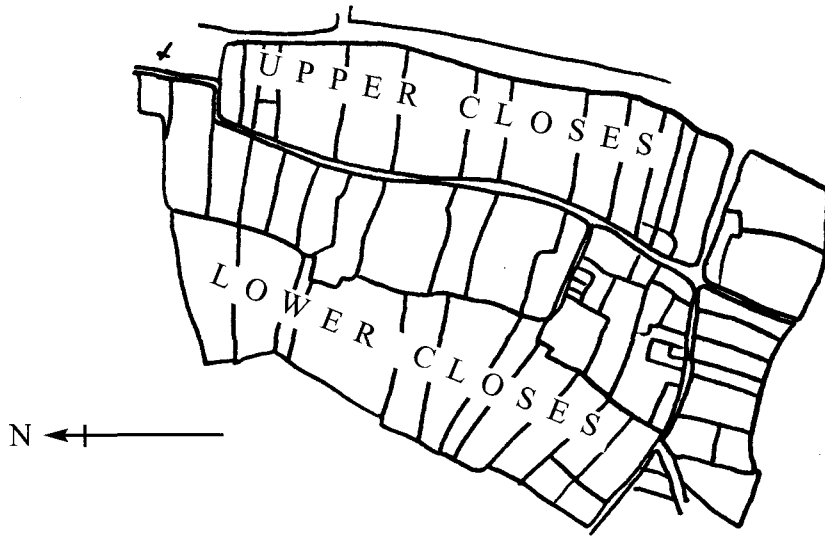
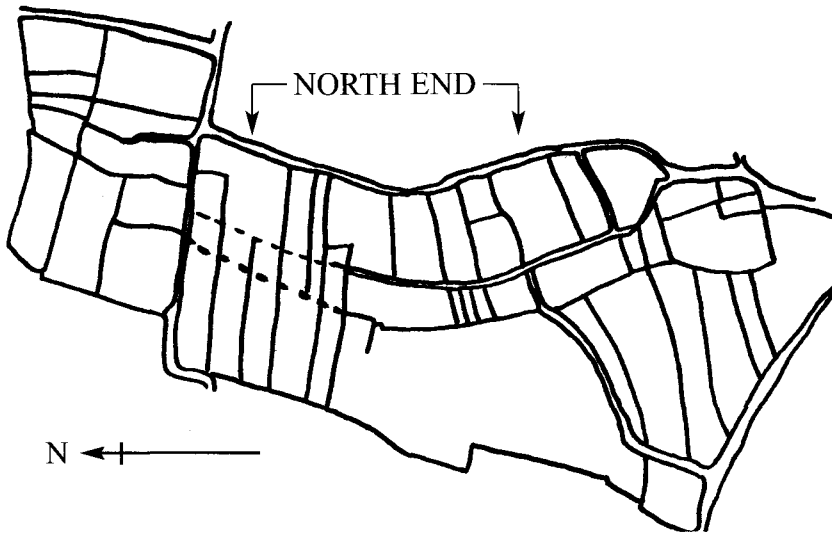FIGURE 6a The suggested location of the medieval planned settlement at South End.

FIGURE 6b The suggested location of the medieval planned settlement at North End.

drops steeply into a major valley. The Manor House, complete with eighteenth-century dovecote lies about one-third of the way along the western side, but seems likely to be a late- or even post-medieval replacement for the moated site at SP851259. This in turn may be a 12–13th-century development associated with the complex changes of ownership in Stewkley, replacing an earlier manorial centre further south. The area covered by the Upper Closes is about 28 acres, which would equate to ten 2½-3-acre plots for the villeins of 1086 (or five two-acre and five four-acre plots if these reflected the size of open-field holdings [see above]). A further block seven acres south of the old road to Leighton Buzzard known as Kings Road may be the original manorial complex where lord, or his steward, and the slaves lived. This might also have been provided with a place of worship when laid out. A series of smaller plots fronts the south side of Dunton Road, totalling five acres, and these could represent the house plots of the ten bordars, with half an acre each. In total, this suggested series of planned crofts covers forty acres, equivalent to one virgate, compared with the half-virgate allocated for the proportionately smaller population of North End.

The map evidence, admittedly very late, suggests that the two Domesday estates at Stewkley comprised planned blocks of houses and crofts, a smaller on at North End for the nine villeins of Brictric/Miles Crispin and a larger, more complex one at South End for Wulfward/Coutances's ten villeins, ten bordars and five slaves. These settlements are at the extremes of the later village street, but central to the open fields which had been created for their farmers. Although neither the pre- nor post-Conquest tenants-in-chief are likely to have been permanently resident in Stewkley, some kind of manorial "complex" for their reeves or stewards would have been necessary, with facilities for gathering produce, a house of some kind, outbuildings for livestock and equipment and quarters for the slaves if they did not have their own small plots. Both Anglo-Saxon holders were thegns, and as such may have been involved at the time of Domesday in the provision of churches for their estates (*eigenkirchen*), part of the break-up of the old minster *parochiae* and the creation of a network of recognisably modern parishes.[39] This does not necessarily mean that either Brictric or Wulfward, or both of them, or

their predecessors, provided churches or chapels to serve their Stewkley tenants as part of the reordering of the landscape which was apparently a "work in progress" in 1086. They may have done so, either individually, or together, with an eleventh-century predecessor underlying the existing very fine mid-twelfth century St. Michael's (apparently dedicated to St. Mary at first).[40] The present church was obviously conceived and built as an entity, possibly by Kenilworth priory which had been granted the advowson.[41] Any earlier church *on this site* may therefore have been of wood, or too small for a burgeoning population which would have begun to fill up the vacant land between the two original blocks of houses. It may also be that small churches/chapels had been built as part of the early planned elements, which were superseded by a large church whose site lay conveniently on vacant ground half way between them. Excavation alone seems able to answer that question.

VIII

This paper has examined the development of field systems and settlement in Stewkley between the mid-eleventh and the mid-thirteenth century, using the limited sources which survive. It appears from field-name evidence that there had been a scattering of settlements across the parish in the early-middle Saxon period, although their nature and size, together with the kind of agricultural system practised cannot be discovered without much more evidence from field-walking and other archaeological work. We know the name of *Tidbeald's tun*, possibly of the ninth century, the rest were merely apparent to medieval farmers as former settlement sites. It seems clear, however, that the extent of their fields was far smaller than that of the later medieval period, and that large areas of woodland and waste must have remained to be cleared. Whether this was post-Roman regeneration or had never been cleared is not known at this stage, since the local evidence for Roman and prehistoric occupation is still scanty.[42]

At some stage, as part of a much wider reordering of the Anglo-Saxon landscape, decisions were taken which affected the nature of the local landscape and settlement for nine centuries, and are significant even today. The impetus for, and timing of, the creation of great, communally-farmed open fields and associated planned villages are hotly

debated topics, and there is no space to discuss them here.[43] It seems, in the case of Stewkley at least, that the process had started some time in the early-mid eleventh century and was still underway at the time of Domesday Book, especially at North End. The regularity of hidage assessments, arable land, plough teams and population on the two Stewkley estates seem to be borne out by the existence of regularly-planned settlement blocks and associated two-field systems.

There was still much land to be taken into cultivation, however, and it is clear that the population grew rapidly, probably doubling between 1086 and 1279, along with a 75% increase in arable land. During that period the manorial structure of Stewkley became vastly more complex, which had the effect of changing the *tenurial* structure from a simple north-south divide into an essentially east-west pattern. The open fields grew both in extent and number, so that they reached the parish boundary in all directions, and it is difficult to identify the way in which they were grouped for cropping purposes. Houses and crofts expanded along the village's one-and-a-half mile street, filling the gaps between the original planned units, and a new hamlet appeared in Dean Road. At some time in the 12th or 13th century two moated sites were created, one on the Woburn grange in the north and the other close to the church, itself built or rebuilt in the hectic years around 1150–60.

Stewkley therefore offers many clues as to its development from two discrete estates and settlements in 1086 to what is alleged to be England's longest village, but there are still many questions to be answered, both about the way in which the local landscape was organised prior to 1066, and about the changes which took place between the Conquest and the end of the period of rapid growth c.1300.

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32. J.E.B. Gover, A. Mawer & F.M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Northamptonshire* (1933), xxvi, 205, Ring Haw (from ON *dreng hagi*, 'enclosure of the drengs'). This lay in Nassington parish in the north-east of the county, firmly in the Danelaw.

33. I owe this suggestion to Prof. Barrie Cox; thanks are also due to Dr. Margaret Gelling for help with this difficult name. The interpretation is, however, my own.

34. B.K Roberts, *The Making of the English Village* (1987), chap. 7.

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42. SMR Stewkley for finds and locations.

43. See Lewis, et al., note 16, for a recent discussion.