

THORNBOROUGH OPEN FIELD BOUNDARIES

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INTRODUCTION

In 'The Buckinghamshire Landscape', Michael Reed used Thornborough to illustrate how a medieval parish evolved from a two open-field to a later three open-field method of cultivation¹. An exercise in field-names recently conducted in Thornborough supports Reed's proposition, as well as fleshing out as far as possible actual locations and relevant topography where it survives. How the landscape was physically divided in the medieval period to promote a more productive agriculture and improve demesne income becomes evident.

The virtue of the open-field method of farming was that, given the existing technologies, it maximised the amount of agricultural land in cultivation whilst institutionalising the beneficial routines of crop rotation, animal husbandry and manuring. The investment in ox-driven heavy ploughs made a considerable contribution to expanding the amount of land under cultivation particularly on the local heavy clay soils. It is also apparent that improved land drainage ensured that occupation sites became drier whilst enhancing arable cultivation.

At the time of Domesday there were three manors listed at Thornborough. The primary fee, located at what has become the centre of the modern village, became known as 'Fraynesplace' after the de Frayne or de Fraxino family who held it from the Barony of Wolverton, which was established under Mainou Le Breton following the Norman Conquest. Another fee on the hill at Great Ground had been first awarded after the Conquest to Bishop Odo of Bayeux, the half-brother of William the Conqueror, later became home to the d'Aumeri family, who held from Oseney Abbey following its gift by Robert d'Oilly in his will. Robert had acquired the estate following the arrest of Odo for treachery in 1082. The third manor was to be found 'in the fields' as it had no specified centre. There are two theories concerning this manor. The

first is that it may have been subject to the lord at Thornton². The second is that it may have been the decayed residue of an older settlement identified as *Britrichescrot*³ or *Costowe*, in the south-east of the parish towards Adstock.

Each manor had its own court to manage the distribution of the land under its jurisdiction and organise its cultivation. As with most English parishes subsequent to the Norman Conquest, all the manors in Thornborough experienced considerable subinfeudation, leading to a highly complex pattern of land ownership. It was not unusual to find the top of a hill owned by one party, whilst the hill slopes belonged to a variety of others. However, in due time there became three principal landlords: namely, the Abbey of Biddlesden, the Priory of Luffield and the Hospital of St John, Oxford. These all kept copious records of what land they owned and on what terms so that it has proved possible to track land divisions back into the medieval period. The Luffield cartulary has been published by the Buckinghamshire Record Society. The Biddlesden archive is included in the Harley Charters in the British Library, and those of the Hospital of St John are in the hands of Magdalen College, Oxford, having been collated in the nineteenth century by W D Macray. It is believed that these latter, along with the Luffield cartulary, were used by Reed in his original research.

The initial two open-field arrangement directly affected the development of settlement in the principal areas of habitation within Thornborough. The principal settlement site is now the modern village, whilst the other is a deserted medieval village to the western end of the valley towards Padbury Brook, described by Browne Willis as the 'Chantry Closes'. The period within which the two open-field arrangement was first established is thought to be in the reign of King Cnut, with the deliberate intention of improving estate income from all three manors. This may well have proved

opportune following the ravages of King Sweyn, Cnut's father, along the river Great Ouse in 1010. It is apparent from the pattern of landscape division that substantial investment in both capital and labour was made to ensure the success of this revised landscape. This would have required the prior establishment of a parish identity probably in the latter part of the tenth century, followed on by a consistently long period of social peace.

The later division into three open-fields during the High Middle Ages is sadly not recorded, other than in Luffield Charter 711p, which is dated between 1313 and 1331. This provides a detailed list of furlong names in each open-field. These changes seem to have taken place around the same time as the building of the medieval bridge over Padbury Brook, close to the site of the Romano-British burial mounds. It is not known who funded the erection of this beautiful bridge. The revision of the open-fields may have been the means to recover any financial outlay following the building of this valuable yet expensive piece of regional infrastructure.

From an assessment on the ground and from aerial photographs it becomes apparent that the formation of the fields and furlongs became over the centuries a process of continual improvement and, in some instances, decline. The subsequent Parliamentary Inclosure Act of 1801 can be seen as a further evolution in landscape use, shaping it into a form more suited to a period in which precise asset division was supported by exacting survey.

NORTH (EAST) & SOUTH (WEST) FIELD BOUNDARIES – TWO OPEN FIELD SYSTEM

The two open-field boundary extends in a broken line, east to west across the entire parish (Fig. 1). This created a North and a South field, which for some reason are often defined in the medieval charters as the East and West Fields. The South or East Field was also known as *Costowefeld*, whilst the name of the North or West Field is incomplete but is given as *Mys...Slade* in Luffield Charter 711p, dated 1313–1331.

The parish has three main water-courses that flow downhill from high ground to the east towards Padbury Brook in the west. Two of these are the *Thornbrooke* and the *Tonnebrook*, both of which appear on the Magdalen Tithe Map of 1613, which

rise from springs on the higher ground at Nash, the neighbouring parish to the east. These two streams merge at the western end of the modern village centre to form the *Cowarde Brook* as described in *VCH Bucks* (1905). Other names used for this stream are *Colefordbroc* as in Luffield Charter 616, dated 2 December 1291, *Caforde* and *Cowford* as mentioned on the Magdalen Tithe Map of 1613.

The third water-course is the *Holebrok*, thus named in Luffield Charter 655, dated 1210–19. This emanates from a sequence of springs in a defined hollow below *Piltch Field*, as shown on the Parliamentary Inclosure Map of 1800. This stream was also known further down its valley as *Costowebroch* as in Luffield Charter 595, dated 1240–51. This latter flows into Padbury Brook just to the north of Coombs. There are other smaller and shorter water-courses in the parish which either feed into these streams or directly into Padbury Brook or the Ouse.

The two open-field boundary had to break at the eastern end of the modern village centre in order to accommodate the course of the Tonnebrook. This causes the field boundary to separate and navigate to the immediate south of the modern village site, marked by a boundary ditch and an embankment. The ditch is partly used to facilitate water drainage off what is now known as Windmill Hill. In the Luffield Charters 709, dated 2 July 1351 and 711p, dated 1313–1331, the hill-slope is identified as *Le Grene*. Charter 711p also identifies *Wyndemulhul*, suggesting that this hill-top and the slopes were separate furlongs. The eastern end of the embankment starts on the western side of Bridge Street.

The ditch which compliments this embankment is described in the Parliamentary Inclosure Map of 1800 as *Greenditch*, or the more modern *Crindage*. This ditch once ran south of the principal manor site (Fig. 2) and the church, flowing into Cowarde Brook to the west of the confluence between the Thornbrooke and the Tonnebrook. This outflow runs very close to what is now called The Old Manor, built c.1456 by William Wainfleet, Bishop of Winchester, to act as the administrative centre for the land Magdalen College acquired in Thornborough from the Hospital of St John, Oxford. Much of the ditch has been eroded or filled in over the years, but parts of it remain evident where more modern gullies have been dug.

The ditch is broken at the Padbury road, but the alignment continues westwards along the back of

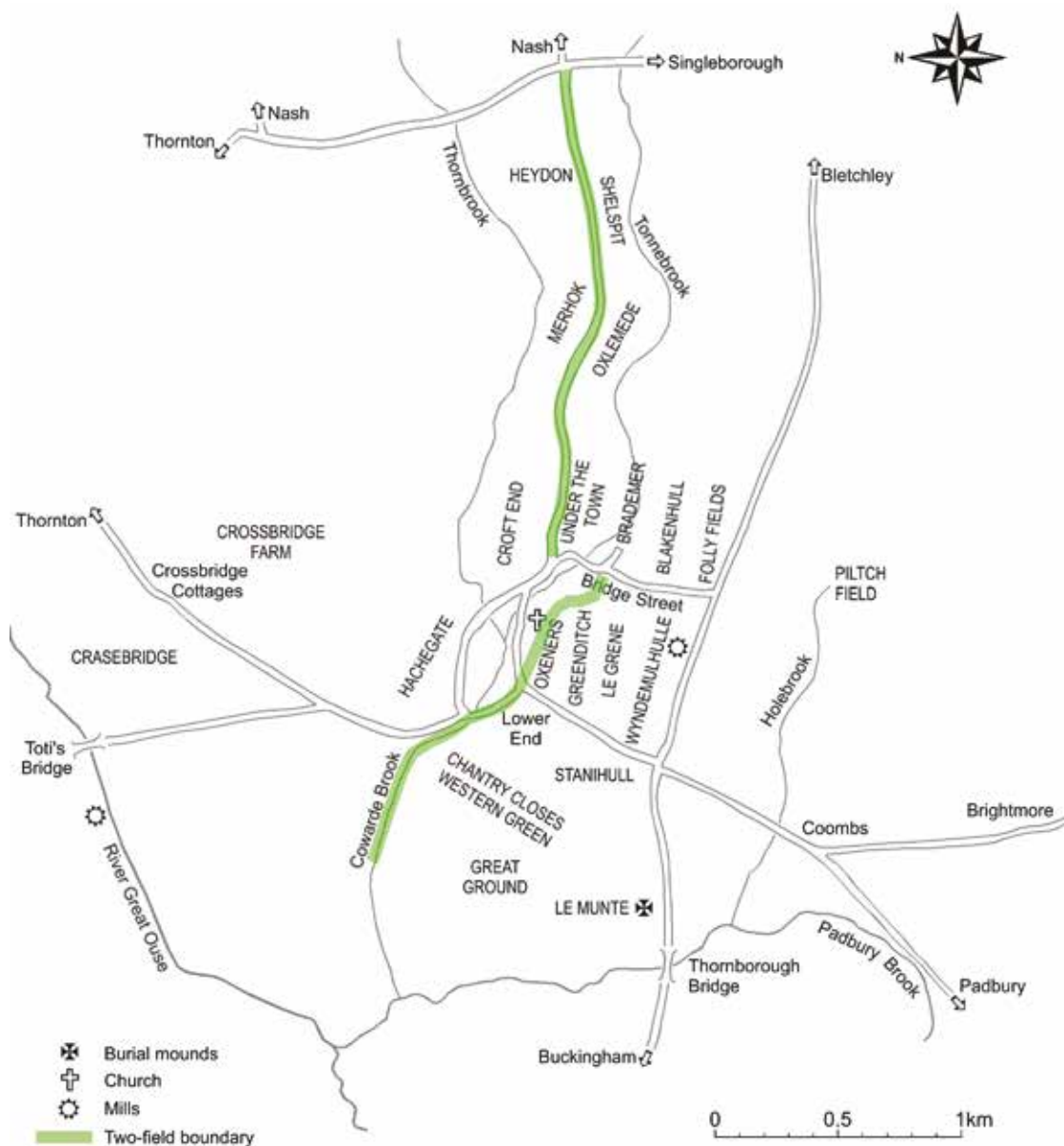


FIGURE 1 Thornborough two-field system

properties in Lower End. Lower End Farm and College Farm in particular define this division as they are the older properties in this part of the village. The ditch finally peters out visually at The Leys below Great Ground in Western Green, although the boundary continues probably along the line of Cowarde Brook.

The Topography of the Two-Open-Field Boundary

The two-open-field boundary starts in the east of the parish between *Shelspit* and *Hedone*. There are about seven different spellings to *Shelspit* in both the Luffield and Magdalen charters. The field name originates in the Old English ‘*ceosel-pytte*’



FIGURE 2 The remains of *Greenditch* behind the manor

meaning a shingle or gravel pit. There are a lot of deposits of glacial aggregate in the immediate vicinity, as indicated by the name of the nearby hamlet of Singleborough in the neighbouring parish of Horwood. This aggregate was ideal for mixing with the abundant local clay to form a more easily worked soil. No doubt it was also used for local infrastructure purposes. This field name is firmly located in the South Field by Luffield Charter 656, dated 1240–46.

Hedone has a similar variety of spellings, but is less easily defined. Luffield Charter 587, dated 1243–50, places *Hedun* in the East Field whilst Luffield Charter 656, dated 1240–46, puts *Hedune* in the North Field. This name could either be derived from the Old English ‘*dun*’ meaning ‘hill’ or ‘*denu*’ meaning valley, as there is both a hill and a valley that fall within the known topography of Hedone. The top of the hill forms a crest which may lie behind the un-located field-name *Escambij*, meaning in Old English ‘*aesc-camb*’ or ash-trees on a ridge, as in Luffield Charter 609, dated 8 May

1317. The valley lies to the north of this hill and extends eastwards into Nash parish. It is drained and divided by the Thornbrooke, which rises from below the spring-line in Nash to the east, close to Holywell Farm. When it enters the parish of Thornborough it possesses the characteristics of a ‘*denu*’-type valley. It later develops into a wider valley further to the west above the modern settlement site. The hill accommodates the road to and from Nash and represents more a narrow, rounded ridge than an actual hill. The south side of the hill drains into the Tonbrooke. The prefix of the name could originate in either ‘*healh*’, which in Old English means secluded, although Bosworth & Toller⁴ maintain reservations as to the proper meaning of this word; or ‘*gehege*’, the Old English description for the enclosure of land by a fence of hedge, or even ‘*gehaeg*’, meaning meadow. The latter meaning is the most understandable as this long valley is ideal for animal husbandry. There

are some faint traces of ridge and furrow, probably from the high medieval period, but this area had reverted to common by the sixteenth century. However, it should be noted that it is also relatively secluded from the main routes crossing the region.

It is of incidental interest that three of the Luffield Charters and four of the Magdalen Charters refer in several different spellings to a *Hedenslawe* or 'hlau', meaning a burial mound in Old English. No mound can now be detected, but it had to have been a distinct feature in the medieval period.

Reed asserts that the headland between Shel-spit and Hedone fields became the modern Nash Road and there is no reason to fault this view. The route of the field boundary at the eastern end of the parish broadly follows this line. This is emphasised by *Merhok* as in Luffield Priory Charter 618, dated 12 March 1330. In Old English this name means 'maer-hoc', or where the boundary bends sharply in a change of direction. This charter does not indicate that *Merhok* was in the North Field.

Opposite *Merhok* is *Oxlemede*. This appears in Luffield Charters 618, dated 12 March 1330, 631, dated 1240–47, 696, dated 30 July 1329 and 711p, dated 1313–1331. It appears as *Oxele* in Magdalen Charters 23, dated 26 May 1253, and 87, dated 1240. The name originates from 'oxa-leah-mead' meaning ox-meadow-meadow. The use of the word 'meadow' twice implies that the name is old. This is possibly the site of one of the ox-herds that was known to exist in Thornborough. Oxen were used for both ploughing and haulage in the medieval period. A modern name for this field is Bonhams Mead, reminding us of the 'bon-hommes' of Biddlesden Abbey who may have maintained their ox-herd in this location. The piece of this field closest to the road has been ploughed as ridge and furrow, suggesting the ox-herd may have been maintained closer to the Tonnebrook towards the bottom of the hill. Magdalen Charter 23 refers to one acre at *Oxele* with the grove. This grove of trees possibly gave its name to neighbouring Grove Hill. Luffield Charter 711p places *Oxlemede* in Costowefeld, an alternative name for the South Field. This confirms the continuation of the north-south field boundary down the Nash Road towards Thornborough village.

Towards the western end of the Nash Road, the modern building line reaches out into the medieval fields on both sides of the road. Some of the original field boundaries on the north side can be identified within the modern building layout. The

Magdalen Tithe Map of 1613 shows a narrow strip of land of about a quarter acre called *Longyards* on the north side of the road. This name originates in the Old English word 'geard' meaning enclosed land beside a habitation site.

Immediately to the west of *Longyards*, along the north side of the Nash Road, the Magdalen Tithe Map of 1613 shows *Croft End Furlong* as the 'Great Part' of the Magdalen College estate. There are five Luffield Charters that record a *Croftland*, Charters 569, dated 1243–7, 582, dated 1243–50, 703, dated 1298, 711p, dated 1313–31 and 711r, dated 1260–80. Charter 582 describes it as being in the East Field and Charter 711p places it in the open-field with no name. A croft is an enclosed area of meadow or arable land adjacent to a dwelling. Modern property names indicate that crofts extended along the north side of the Nash Road as far as Chapel Lane, which is further west and downhill towards the centre of the modern village. The suggestion that these crofts may represent an original settlement site is strong.

On the south side of the Nash Road on the Magdalen Tithe Map 1613 there is a field named *The Furlong Under the Town*. This suggests that the croft end of Thornborough was identified as the 'tun' or village from quite early on.

Where the Nash road ends on the hill above the central green of the modern village the two-field-open boundary stops. It starts again further south in Lower Greens Close beyond the end of the settlement line, above the field behind the last cottage in Bridge Street. The slope of the hill rises very steeply behind the houses in a natural feature, probably caused by ancient water erosion. The field boundary is further south, starting from the western edge of Bridge Street, where the footpath runs along an embankment on which a derelict brick barn now stands. This is where the two-field boundary starts again.

Today, Bridge Street runs uphill to join the A421 Buckingham to Bletchley road. Once upon a time it was not a through-road, as there was a drovers' road running along Spring Lane towards a junction with the Buckingham road further to the east. This appears to have gone out of use before the enforcement of the Parliamentary Inclosures⁵. There was also another road going west through Upper Greens Close towards the medieval post-mill at the top of Windmill Hill. Spring Lane bounds the northern edge of *Blakenhull*, which appears in the Luffield Charters as *Blakenhull*, 582, dated 1243–50 and 683,

dated 1243–58; *Blakenhul* 636, dated 1243–50 and 703, dated 2 March 1298; *Blucunhull*, 711p, dated 1313–31; *Shortblakunhull*, 711p, dated 1313–31, *Schortelakenhul*, 681, dated 2 July 1294 and *Nortelakenhelle* 689, dated 25 March 1300. Magdalen Charter 27, dated 3 May 1246, records a *Blakenhulle*. The name *Blakenhull* is formed from the Old English ‘blæcan-hulle’, meaning a hill with black soils. This is indicative of an early habitation site. The Magdalen Tithe Map of 1613 shows *Blaknill Furlong* extending as far up Bridge Street as Folly Fields.

On the west side of Bridge Street are Upper and Lower Greens Close. In Lower Greens Close a possible habitation platform is apparent. In both fields, there is a variety of ridge-and-furrow patterns going both north to south. The southernmost end of Bridge Street seems to cut through the east-west ridge-and-furrow on Blakenhull opposite The Folly, confirming that at one time Bridge Street did not extend as far as the Buckingham-Bletchley road. It is possible that this end of the village may have possessed more croft-type enclosures.

The space between these two sections of the open-field boundary is described as *Brademers*, or in Old English ‘braedra-maer’, meaning ‘the broad boundary’. Charter 582, dated 1243–50 places *Brademers* in the West Field and Charter 711p places it in Costowefeld. This is consistent with a topographical relationship with Blakenhull which is also in Costowefeld. It is also consistent with the large embankment that is located at the southern perimeter of modern settlement on the west side of Bridge Street. It appears that where the Nash road stops above the centre of the village, the open-field boundary turned sharply north, roughly along the line of modern Bridge Street. There is no material evidence of any marker remaining, always assuming that any existed. It is quite likely that custom allowed a defined gap in the physical boundary after which *Brademers* is named.

Windmill Hill or Le Grene has long drainage ditches that run from south to north downhill towards the Tonnebrooke. They cut through the modern footpath. These ditches are quite large and drain into a gully that feeds into a substantial and lengthy ditch that lies behind Fraynesplace and the parish church (Fig. 3). This ditch, which has now been largely filled, is the residue of *Greenditch* which appears on the Parliamentary Inclosure Map 1800. It runs eastwards down the line of the valley into a further deep gully behind the Old Manor,

where it turns north to drain under the High Street through a modern sewer into Cowarde Brook, west of the confluence of both the Tonnebrooke and the Thornbrooke. In more recent times the name has become corrupted to *Crindage*.

To the east of Le Grene and Greenditch is *Oxeners*. This name is identified in Luffield Priory Charters 582, dated 1243–50 and 608a, dated 1243–51. This field name originates in Old English from either ‘oxa-naess’ meaning ‘the ox ground’, or, ‘oxna-edisc’ meaning ‘the pasture of the oxen’. Charter 582 places Oxeners in the West Field which is also known as the South Field. There is ridge-and-furrow running on an east to west axis in this field. The existence of ridge-and-furrow in a field named as pasture suggests that the name precedes any medieval ploughing. The headland on the west side is about ten metres from the Padbury road, described in Luffield Charter 711r, dated 1260–80, as *Holewe Portwey*, and is partly lost under the hedge. This suggests that the road existed before the ridge-and-furrow was first established. This field contains the boundary where the three-open-field arrangement crosses the line of the older two-open-field arrangement. This is responsible for some strong earthen balks in the north-east corner of the field close to the boundary with Greenditch.

Stanihull and other similar names is now known as Stoneylands. It is recorded in the Luffield Priory Charters 560, dated c.1250; 562, dated 1240–47; 566, c.1250; 595, dated 1240–51; 662, dated 1240–47; 696, dated 30 July 1329; and 703, dated 2 March 1298. It also appears as *Stanethulle* in Magdalen Charter 39, dated c.1270, and as *Stoney Hill* in the Magdalen Tithe Map of 1613. The origin of this name is found in the Old English ‘staenilic-hyll’ meaning ‘stoney hill’. This name describes the local geology of a soil of boulder clay overlaying cornbrash and limestone, including glacial residues in the form of small stones and limestone boulders. The proximity of the Roman road, now the Bletchley-Buckingham road, on the southern boundary of this area is not significant, although the precise alignment of the Roman road is not known at this point. Charter 595 places *Stanithull* in the West Field.

The two open-field boundary that marks the division between the North and the South fields runs along the north side of Stoneylands Farm in the form of a ditch. This starts from a deep cut in the western side of the Padbury road or *Holewe*



FIGURE 3 Boundary and embankment behind 'Fraynesplace'

Portwey to the south of the habitations that run along modern Lower End. This ditch wends its way along the southern boundary of Stoneylands Farm behind both Lower End Farm and College Farm whose grounds extend further south than the other properties, suggesting that a bend in the ditch was exploited to maximise space for each farmyard.

This ditch dies away as it reaches Western Green, which is the site of the former medieval village. This was described by Browne Willis as the *Chantry Closes* after the former d'Aumeri Chantry Chapel. The site of this chapel has been lost, but was most likely part of the manor complex that once stood on Great Ground, further west above Padbury Brook.

On the north side of the two open-field boundary is *Hachegate*. This is recorded in the Luffield Priory Charters 560, dated c.1250; 562, dated 1240–47; 566, dated c.1250; 625, dated 1240–47; and 662, dated 1240–47. It also appears in the Magdalen Charters 33, dated c.1240; 56, dated c.1240–50; 76, dated c.1260; and 87 dated 1240. The name originates in the Old English 'haecca' meaning either a

wicket gate or a sluice gate. In this instance the 'gate' element has been used twice, suggesting that it is an old name. It is not absolutely clear as to whether the term is used to describe a wicket gate or a sluice gate, because both 'hack' and 'heck' pronunciations can apply equally. However, the proximity to a water course, namely Cowarde Brook, suggests that a sluice-gate is the most likely origin for the name.

The location of *Hachegate* in the North Field as described in Charter 625 is both close to the old settlement site on Western Green and in an area where a number of minor water-courses join the main stream which drains the entire modern village site. The original *Hathegate* may very well have included all the land along Lower End and modern Hatchet Gate Leys. There is evidence of ridge-and-furrow on a piece of land that overlooks the fall down to the brook. The proximity of the stream does suggest that there was a sluice gate near here in the early settlement period. The implication is that either Cowarde Brook once sustained fish-ponds, or the centre of the modern village may once have been marshy. Certainly, a sluice

at this point would have regulated the drainage of water from the modern village site. This may well have been connected with the creation of Green-ditch, which also acted as a major drain directing flood-water away from the village centre to enable further building.

Hachegate in Holeford, described in Luffield Charter 625, provides the name for the crossing of Cowarde Brook, which is now bridged at Lower End. This suggests the neighbourhood hereabouts was called *Holeford* from the Old English 'hol-ford' meaning 'the hollow ford'. Charter 625 also mentions that the boundary between the North and South open fields ran on the south side of Hachegate.

Le Munte only appears in Magdalen Charters 33, dated c.1240; 68, dated c.1240–60; 17, dated 23 April 1246. This name originates in the Old English 'munt' meaning 'mountain'. Charter 33 places *Le Munte* in the South Field which suggests that the boundary between the South and North fields ran to the north of *Le Munte* and south of neighbouring Hachegate. Charter 33 describes a path leading to 'the monastery of the same village'. There was no monastery in medieval Thornborough. The best suggestion is Macray's view that this referred to the road to the Grange of the Abbey of Biddlesden, which is understood to have been located where Thornborough Grounds now stands.

Magdalen Charter 68 refers to a piece of land lying between the path which is 'inter duas scalas' and *Le Munte*. Macray, quite rightly, does not attempt to translate 'inter duas scalas' as this is Medieval Latin in one of its more canine forms. Latham⁶ refers to 'scala' as being either a cart-rail, a ladder or a shieling. The first two forms appear to derive from the Latin 'scalae' meaning steps. The latter seems to derive from the Old Norse 'skali' meaning a hut. Martin⁷ refers to 'scalera', 'scaleria' and 'scalerna' as deriving from the Old English 'scead' meaning 'a style'. We can assume that 'scalus' in this sense means an item of human fabrication which is used for habitational purposes. This view is supported by the existence of a Middle-English word 'scele', meaning a shieling or wooden hut. It is suggested that this passage describes a path between either two wooden huts or even two forms of fence. In either case the path can be seen as being placed through an inhabited area. This might be an early reference to the now deserted settlement known much later as the

Chantry Closes. However, Charter 17 describes *Le Munte* as a messuage, or a house and grounds, and associates it with a croft called *Lincroft*. It is likely that *Le Munte* was a property overlooking Padbury Brook on ground below, but not part of the d'Aumeri fee.

THE THREE FIELD SYSTEM -MYLNEFELD OR THE MILL & BRIDGE FIELD

The approximate date for the switch to the three open-field system is defined in Luffield Charter 711p, which is itself dated between 1313 and 1331. This places the evolution of the third open-field within the period of the High Middle Ages before the desolation of the Black Death which afflicted England in 1348. This additional open-field was created from out of the western sections of the original two open-fields (Fig. 4). This new open-field was called *Mylnefeld* in Luffield Charter 711p or the Mill and Bridge Field as in the Parliamentary Inclosure Map of 1800.

Reed's map describing the third open-field boundary is mainly correct. It is based on the field-name evidence listed in Luffield Charter 711p, dated 1313–1331, which is the only consistent listing of the furlongs within this third open-field.

The field name of *Mylnefeld* illustrates the importance of the watermill at Stakeford which appears in four of the Luffield Charters, ten of the Magdalen Charters and one Harley Charter, all dated between 1205 and 1286. The later addition of the medieval bridge within the open-field name emphasises the significance of this crossing point over the Padbury Brook within the local topography. This new open-field name suggests some local pride in innovation and investment.

The boundary of this additional field ran from the small bridge over the Ouse, originally erected by Toti, the thane who held Thornton in the early eleventh century. This bridge is recorded in two Luffield Charters and six Magdalen Charters and was the source of conflict between the tenants of the Master of the Hospital of St John, Oxford and those of the Abbot of Biddlesden through the late thirteenth century and most of the fourteenth century.

The field boundary starts at the foot of the slope and runs up the hill along the line of the modern Leckhampstead road to its junction at the top with the modern Thornton road. This route takes the boundary through the middle of an old estate

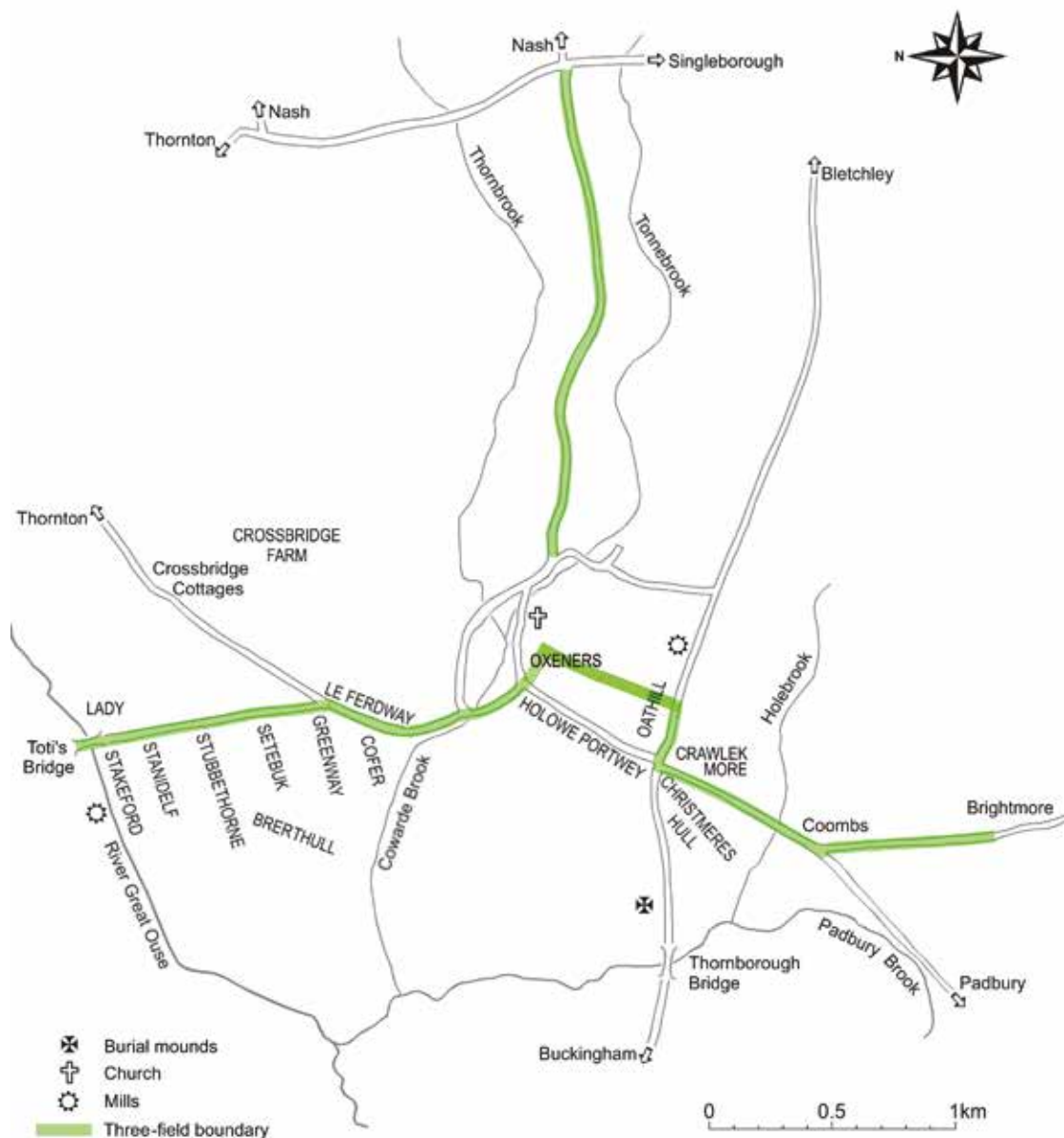


FIGURE 4 Thornborough three-field system

named in Old English as *Crakiliusbrech*, meaning ‘the slope cultivated by Krakulf’ that once existed here above the eastern bank of the Ouse. The territory of this estate was divided between Thornton and Thornborough parishes when they were founded, but the name persists in *Crasebridge Furlong* in the Magdalen Tithe Map of 1613 and

the modern names of Crossbridge Farm and Crossbridge Cottages in Thornton.

The field boundary continues south along the Thornton road towards the modern settlement site. A portion of this road is believed to be of Roman origin, coming from the site of the Roman temple at Bourton Grounds along a route identified in

Magdalen Charters 33, dated c.1240, and 80, dated c.1250 as *Le Ferdwey*, a construct of Norman-French and Old English meaning ‘the way of the fyrd’. It is believed that this track ran north along the hills overlooking the eastern bank of both Padbury Brook and the Ouse, close to the junction of the Roman roads from Bletchley and Fleet Marston, all the way to Watling Street just south of Stony Stratford. The alignment of this track was adapted at Beachampton in the reign of Edward the Elder, King of Wessex, during his campaign against the Danes of Northampton in 921⁸ so that he could lead his army to Passenham, further north, to support the rebuilding of the town walls at Towcester. *Le Ferdwey* disappears south into Western Green to become a hollow way, whilst the third open-field boundary seems to follow the modern road into the main settlement site at Lower End, where it meets the Padbury road or *Holewe Portwey*.

The third open-field boundary reappears in Oxeners further east as a sequence of balks (Fig.

5), where it meets the earlier markings of the two-open-field boundary close to the Greenditch. The boundary continues to run southwards up the hill approximately along the line of the modern hedgerow towards the Buckingham-Bletchley road. It crosses the latter close to the modern road junction in the shape of a dog-leg, due to another boundary surrounding land presumably set aside for producing income for the maintenance of a large crucifix at the top of this hill.

Christmas Hill is to the west of the road junction on the south side of the Buckingham-Bletchley road. Luffield Charters describe *Cristmerehull*, 582, dated 1243–50, *Cristemereshull*, 586, dated 1240–51, *Cristemerehull*, 595, dated 1240–51, *Cristmarehul* 703, dated 2 March 1298, *Crystemerehull*, 711p, dated 1313–31 and *Cristenhull*, 711j, dated 25 March 1290. It means in Old English ‘the hill with Christ’s mark’, in other terms the hill with a cross raised upon it. Luffield Charter 711p places *Cristemereshull* in Mylnefeld, the third



FIGURE 5 Third field boundary balks at *Oxeners*

open-field. A sequence of names in the immediate vicinity adopt the Middle English word ‘croche’ meaning a cross or a crucifix. *Crowich Waie* is another name for the Padbury road at this point and *Crawlekmore*, which appears in seven of the Luffield Charters and four of the Magdalen Charters, is a piece of land named as the boundary of the cross. Luffield Charter 711p lists *Crawlekmore* in Costowefeld which is the South open-field. It is believed that after the Reformation this large cross was tumbled, always assuming time and nature had not already achieved that, leaving a large stump which could have given its identity to the ‘Lone Tree’, a now defunct public house formerly at the road junction.

The boundary continues south along the line of the Padbury road. Reed merges it into the Adstock Road rather than continuing along the Padbury road to the parish boundary. There is no documentary evidence for either alignment, but the geological fault-line which created the area of small hills and valleys called *Cumbes* in Luffield Charters 595, dated 1240–51, and 711r, dated 1260–80, and known as *Coombs Pasture* on the Magdalen Tithe Map of 1613, considerably alters the nature of the landscape quite significantly at this point, suggesting that this land was not easily given over to arable. There is evidence for some settlement in Coombs. Luffield Charter 587, dated 1243–50, places *Sortecroft* and *Long’croft* in the fields next to Padbury and Magdalen Charters 15, dated c.1260, and 87, dated 1240 record the name of *Albonescumbes*, which may be land tenanted by Nigel de Aula of St Alban’s Hall, Oxford⁹.

The Topography of the Three-Open-Field Boundary

The third open-field boundary starts at the northern end of the parish at *Stakeford*, where the Leckhampstead road crosses the Ouse. This name suggests a ford with a causeway constructed from timbers driven into the river bed to anchor stones that could be used as a road surface of sorts. A more modern bridge has replaced the several previous bridges erected over the river during the last thousand years. The name *Stakeford* is also used as the location for the former water-mill whose buildings remain extant as residential property some quarter mile up-stream.

The third open-field boundary follows the line of the road with *Stanidelf*, described in Luffield

Charter 582, dated 1243–50, on the right-hand or western side within the three open-fields and *Lady Furlong*, described in the Magdalen Tithe Map of 1613 on the left in the North open-field. The field-name *Stanidelf* derives from the Old English ‘staenilic-delf’ meaning ‘stony digging’. This is quite poor agricultural land, as the topsoil is very shallow, revealing limestone rubble close to the surface. It is possible that some limestone was quarried in this field, probably to produce marl for use elsewhere in the parish. The field is now known as ‘Stonepit Field’, suggesting this activity was more recent. A portion of this field is now given over to a solar farm.

Luffield Priory Charters 618, dated 12 March 1330, 639, dated c.1230, 711p, dated 1313–31, and 711r, dated 1260–80 record *Stanidelwey*, *Standelfweye*, *Standelfwey* and *Standelwey* meaning the road or track to Stanidelf. This could be another name for the modern Leckhampstead road, or it might apply to a track, now lost, that used to go to the water-mill at Stakeford. This might be a precursor to the private road that services the several residences around the modern mill.

The next field has the modern name of *Stubbethorne*, which appears on the Magdalen Tithe Map of 1613 as *Stubbethorne Furlong*. In Luffield Charter 582, dated 1243–50, it is *Stubbethorn* and in Luffield Charter 595, dated 1240–51, it appears as *Stubethorn*. Magdalen Charter 13, dated c.1250–60, gives the name as *Stubbethorn* and Magdalen Charter 57, dated the same, records it as *Stubethorn*. Luffield Charter 582 also records a *Mukelestubbethorn*, but this is given separately, suggesting it is a neighbouring furlong. The name suggests an origin in the Old English ‘stybb-thorn’ or ‘thorn stubble’. A neighbouring field with the modern name confirmed in the Magdalen Tithe Map of 1613 as *Breast Hill* is believed to be *Brerthull* described in Luffield Charter 561, dated 1240–47 and several other charters meaning ‘a hill covered by briars’. The suggestion is that these furlongs had to be cleared of thorn and briars before they could be first cultivated. During the planning process for the installation of the solar farm what has been interpreted as a Roman farmhouse was revealed by ground-penetrating radar. It would seem this Roman farm was abandoned and the land reverted to scrub. However, arable land abandoned for a period greater than thirty years would have reverted to woodland. This is not the case here.

The next field along the boundary is *Setebuk*' recorded in Luffield Charter 595, dated 1240–51, and Magdalen Charters 13, dated c.1250–60, and 57, c.1250–60. The Magdalen Tithe Map 1613 records this field as *Seddbrooke Furlong*. The origin of this name is found either in the Old English 'seten-begenga' meaning land lived on by its cultivator, which, in turn suggests that this name precedes the open field system, or, the Old English 'sarta' meaning 'assarted land'. Given the location of the field it is more likely to mean the former in that the only 'wood' type names in the immediate vicinity refer to briars and thorn bushes rather than proper woodland. Also, this field lies within the area once known as *Crakuliusbrech*. It is possible that Krakulf, whose personal name is the origin of *Crakuliusbrech*, lived on the land he cultivated. *Setebuk* might be the place of his farmstead.

At the top of the hill, the three-open-field boundary turns right to go downhill towards the modern village. The Magdalen Tithe Map of 1613 shows *Greenway Furlong* on the right or west side within the third open-field and *Brook Furlong* to the left remaining inside the North open-field. Brook Furlong is ploughed regularly in modern times, whilst Greenway Furlong has strong ridge-and-furrow marks running north to south. A seeming settlement platform on the western edge of this field is given as a sandpit on the Parliamentary Inclosure Map of 1800. *Cofor* is the modern name for the lower portion of this hill and is believed to derive its name from the Cowarde Brook or Colefordbroc as it is described in Luffield Charter 711p, dated 1313–31, which places it in Mylnefeld. The Luffield Charter 582, dated 1243–50, places *Coleforde* in the East Field, so the date for the creation of the third open-field has to be between 1250 and 1331 at the outside. Also, Magdalen Charter 76, dated c.1260, places *Koleford* in the proximity of Hachegate, reinforcing its location in the valley to the north of Lower End.

There is no sign of the third open-field boundary within the modern settlement area, although it could be argued that the houses along Lower End may have been built on or beside the residue of a headland that ran east to west. This is arguable, as the two-open-field boundary also runs east to west about two hundred metres to the south along the northern side of Stanihull, which strangely is not listed in as being in Mylnefeld in Luffield Charter

711p, dated 1313 to 1331, despite its geographical position. This ditch, dug to mark the two-open-field division, could have easily served here as the third open-field boundary. This is a possibility, as no arable furlongs can be identified along this narrow strip of land.

The boundary of the third open-field reappears in *Oxeners*, close to the end of Greenditch. Immediately to the south of Oxeners is *Ortenotehull* or *Othul* as in Luffield Charters 560, dated c.1250, 562, dated 1240–47, 566, dated c.1250, 582, dated c.1243–50, 608a, dated 1243–51, 662, dated 1240–47, 709, dated 2 July 1351, 711j, dated 25 March 1290, and 711p, dated 1313–31; Magdalen Charter 63, dated c.1250–60 describes an *Othulle*, and Harley charter 85/E/15, dated 1245, mentions *Hottehulle*. This name origin is complex; however, it is believed to derive from the Old English 'geohht-neat-hyll' meaning a measure of land cultivated by the use of a yoke of oxen. Charter 582 places Othul in the West Field and Charter 711p places it in Mylnefeld, further reinforcing a late 13th century or early 14th-century date for the creation of the third open-field. The Magdalen Tithe Map of 1613 describes an *Oathill Furlong*. This is the field on the north-east side of the road junction at the 'Lone Tree'. *Ortenotehull* has a spring close to the top of the hill which flows north-west down the hill. There is ridge-and-furrow on a north to south axis on the east and south sides of the field avoiding the spring. It can be seen that the southern headland is now located under the track of the Buckingham – Bletchley road.

The precise location of the crucifix, or the mark of Christ at the crossroads where the Padbury road and the Buckingham – Bletchley road meet is problematic. Christmas Hill, or *Cristemereshull* as in Luffield Charter 711j, dated 25 March 1290, is at the south-west quadrant of this junction. The site of the former 'Lone Tree' public house is on the opposite side of the Buckingham to Bletchley road on the southern boundary of *Stanihull* or *Stoneylands*. The site of the crucifix is most likely to be at the top of Christmas Hill which was in Mylnefeld, the third open-field. However, the many re-alignments, widenings and gradient changes on the Buckingham – Bletchley road, along with revisions to the junction, have either obscured or destroyed any relevant markers.

Crawlekmor, *Crowlekmor*, *Crowelekmor*, *Croulekmor*, *Crowelek'mor*, *Craulekmor* as

described in the Luffield Charters 567, dated 1243–7, 571, dated 1240–7, 582, dated 1243–50, 585, dated 1248–58, 587, dated 1243–50, 595, dated 1240–51, 663, dated 1243–7, and 711p, dated 1313–31, and the Magdalen Charters 4, dated c.1250–60, 82, dated 28 April 1248, 23, dated 26 May 1253, and 10, dated c.1250–60. The origin of the first part of this name is also in the Middle English ‘croche’ meaning a cross or crucifix. In this case the dative version has been used in conjunction with the Old English word ‘maer’ meaning a boundary. This suggests that the name means the land next to the boundary of the cross or crucifix. Charters 582, 587 and 595 place it in the West Field. Charter 82 places it in the South Field. When the three open-field system was introduced Charter 711p placed it in Costowefeld, which is the name for the South open-field.

Magdalen Charter 85, dated c.1270, describes a location named *Kemscroche*, a name which originates in a description in Middle English ‘kemben-croche’, meaning the cross or crucifix on the crest of the hill. Charter 85 places *Kemscroche* in the South Field. This charter describes ‘one rood lies at *Kemscroche* and abuts ‘intertheportwaie’ and towards *Kaldwelle*. This suggests a location close to the *Portewey*, the Buckingham – Bletchley road. The location of *Kaldwelle* might be in the field behind the private house which has replaced the ‘Lone Tree’ public house. After heavy rain a stream flows from here downhill towards the Romano-British burial mounds.

The boundary of the third open-field is not described in any other location south of this point. As mentioned previously, Reed suggests that it follows the approximate line of the modern Padbury and Adstock roads. The close proximity of the Padbury Brook immediately to the west and the changes in landscape prevalent at Coombs means that there would be few furlongs to be included within the third field in this immediate area.

The sources for field-names in Thornborough parish are quite substantial, allowing some 316 field-names to be identified from the medieval period into modern times. There are multiple different spellings for many of these names, particularly in medieval times. The continuity of field-names over generations is significant, but often it can be seen that the exigencies of drawing a living from working the land has caused names to evolve or completely

change. The most favourite field-name is *Crakuluisbrech*, which is one of the earliest and loaded with historical implication. The second is *Abyssinia*, a nineteenth-century name that observes that the field is far away and difficult to get to. Clearly, to work the land demands a sense of humour.

NOTES

1. Michael Reed, *The Buckinghamshire Landscape*. Hodder & Stoughton, 1979.
2. G. R. Elvey in the *Topographical Introduction to Luffield Priory Charters, Part II* remarks that the demesne owned by the Bishop of Bayeux may have gelded to Thornton. Yet we know this reverted to Oseney Abbey. However, this does not mean that a similar arrangement may not have applied to the third manor which lay ‘in the fields’.
3. *Brittrichescrot*: a field name identified in Magdalen Charter 10, dated c.1240. This seems to refer to cottages belonging to one Beorhtic. This appears to be the same person who gave their name to Brightmoor in the south-east of the parish. The location of this settlement site has not been identified.
4. An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary of Joseph Bosworth, edited by T Northcote Toller. Oxford University Press, first published 1898, reprinted 1998. health or ‘halh....a word of doubtful meaning.’
5. Bucks County Survey air photograph reference RC8-HH66, dated 6th March, 1985 shows that the field known as *Watcherpermore Furlong* identified from the Magdalen Tithe Map of 1613 has been enlarged to break a track alignment from Spring Lane.
6. *Revised Medieval Latin Word List from British and Irish Sources* by R E Latham, published by The British Academy, 1965.
7. *The Record Interpreter of Abbreviations, Latin Words and Names* by Charles Trice Martin, published by Reeves & Turner, 1892.
8. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, translated by G N Garmonsway, published by J M Dent, 1953. The Parker Chronicle (A) 921 [920].
9. *Buckinghamshire Place Names*, by A Mawer & F M Stenton published by English Place Name Society 1925, reprinted 1969 and 1996.