The Evolution of the Manor During a Period of Depopulation and Engrossment: Land and Society in Geddington, Barkby and Catesby, 1300-1550

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Abstract

This thesis concerns three manors in the East Midlands of England. At Barkby, Merton College owned a manor alongside three other estates. The Catesby manor was owned by a Cistercian nunnery which continued direct demesne farming until the late fifteenth century. Geddington was a royal forest manor leased at farm to its wealthier tenants.

Merton derived a rental income from its tenants. At Catesby, the Priory's rental income funded demesne farming provisioning the Priory. Neither manor manifests any sustained 'seigniorial reaction'. Rather, the manorial lords attempted to bind tenants to manorial institutions and to adapt to changed conditions in the post-plague period, by broadening the role of the *homagium* and encouraging litigation. They met with limited success.

At Geddington the manor was dominated by a peasant oligarchy giving way to a gentry family in the fifteenth century. It showed what might happen where conventional lordly authority was weak and the community subject to internal stress.

Tenant culture and the wider variety of identity groupings in the fifteenth century is considered against the background of increased awareness of the law. Each manor was unique for reasons ante-dating the plague (differing environment, seigniorial management strategies and tenurial arrangements in particular).

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List of abbreviations

BL	British Library, London.
Bodleian	Bodleian Library, Oxford.
DMLBS	Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources (2015, online).
MCR	Merton College Records, Merton College, Oxford.
NAS	Northamptonshire Archives, Northampton.
ODNB	Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (2004, online).
ROLLR	Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland, Wigston Magna.
TNA	The National Archives, Kew, London.

Chapter 1

Introduction

This thesis concerns three manors in the East Midlands of England in the years 1350 to 1500, the later middle ages (map 1). The first is the Leicestershire manor owned by Merton Hall, Oxford, at Barkby, on low-lying ground bordering the Soar, about five miles north-east of Leicester and just off the Fosse Way. The second is Catesby, a Northamptonshire manor owned by the prioresses of a rather remote Cistercian nunnery there, on the relatively high land in the south-west of the county on the Warwickshire borders. The third is Geddington, a forest manor forming part of a complex of royal manors in Rockingham Forest, on an important medieval road from Northampton to Stamford.

These three manors were chosen because they are all relatively well-documented. They also belonged to a reasonably representative sample of different types of lord: institutional at Barkby (Merton College), ecclesiastical at Catesby (a Cistercian nunnery) and royal at Geddington, Their location in the East Midlands was chosen because this thesis was originally intended to address the origins of enclosure in the late middle ages and, consequently, it seemed sensible to start with a part of England that, in traditional historiography, was regarded as the epicentre of early modern and modern enclosure. However, it became apparent that early enclosure, although present at both Catesby and the outlying settlements at Geddington, was only an incidental part of a much larger picture. That picture comprised, in particular, the institution of the manor and its evolution in the later middle ages and the remarkably robust common field system. A major problem was that 'early enclosure' implies a deterministic process leading, inevitably, to early modern enclosure by agreement and then, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, parliamentary enclosure. In fact, that characterisation obscures the fact that enclosure occurred in different ways, at different times, in different places and for different reasons. Thus, for example, much of the polemic around parliamentary enclosure concerned

'improvement' whereas, as this thesis demonstrates, late-medieval enclosure at Catesby and (probably) the outlying settlements of Geddington was a default response to post-plague depopulation.

By contrast, the institutions of the manor and common fields proved remarkably resilient. From the perspective of the late middle ages, it was far from inevitable that England, or at least the East Midlands, would become a country of several ownership of agricultural land. The manor remained the basic unit of ownership and production and was bound in a symbiotic relationship with its field system. However, the 'production' element of that role was significantly weakened by the abandonment of direct demesne management which had occurred at both Geddington and Barkby many years before the commencement of the period of this thesis in the mid-fourteenth century. That still left intact the important role of production for the manor's tenants. That production, in turn, provided them with a surplus and hence a cash income with which to pay rent to the manorial lord. Although the manor's direct link to production was severed by the abandonment of direct demesne farming, it still subsisted by that indirect route.

As to the field systems, the core of the 'productive' element of the manor, all three manors had common field systems with, in the case of Barkby and Geddington, a three-course rotation and (probably) a two-course rotation at Catesby. That was accompanied by common grazing of the fallow and the fields were configured in the familiar 'ridge and furrow' of the midlands, and sub-divided into furlongs. The ridge and furrow has almost completely disappeared at Barkby and Geddington (the result of ploughing out and, at Geddington, iron-stone mining) and only survives in part at Catesby. At Barkby and Catesby, it was captured by aerial photography in the late 1940s (maps 4, 9 and 13).

The common arable fields occupied about 67% of the land in the 'core' of Geddington (ignoring the outlying villages of Barford and Glendon), about 75% of the land at Barkby and

78% of the land at Catesby.[1] These figures have been computed by comparing measurements of common fields in early modern terriers and maps with the measurements of the entire parish in the Enclosure Act awards for Barkby and Geddington and by estimating the medieval arable from a 1638 terrier for Catesby (which had been enclosed by then and where there was no Enclosure Act). The calculations are quite rough and, in the case of Barkby and Geddington, probably conceal a reduction in the arable from its medieval peak. The percentage for Catesby may, in fact, be the most accurate reflection of the medieval peak because the 1638 terrier can be compared with aerial photographs of the 1940s which show the extensive area under ridge and furrow. These calculations point to the availability of meadows and pasture at Barkby adjoining the River Soar and elsewhere and at Geddington in closes around the village and, in particular, assarts along the margins of the royal forest. Catesby is an exception and may typify the manor of extensive, rather than intensive, arable on heavy soil with limited pasture. That may point to its fate as the one manor where the population and common field system collapsed completely.

The two main themes of this thesis, as the title indicates, are land and society. Land was of critical importance throughout the period because it was the source of almost all wealth and subsistence in late medieval England. This thesis adopts Campbell's conclusion that the agrarian problem of pre-plague England was primarily a weak 'demand side' with limited urban growth (outside London) which in turn resulted from the relative absence of a manufacturing sector and links to international trade.[2] England was, in short, a predominantly rural land-based economy dependent on the production of raw materials, mostly wool and some metals, for export and low quality grains for subsistence. The arrival

[1] Calculations taken from, for Catesby, NAS, XYZ 1346 and map 6388 (1638 terrier and field map) and Historic England, RAF/CPE/UK/1994 1155–1282 (aerial photographs, 13 April 1947); for Barkby, ROLLR, DG 27/Ma/19/1 (1779 Enclosure Act award) and measurements taken from MCR, 1635 Barkby field map (unindexed); for Geddington NAS, [insert] (Geddington Enclosure Act award) and the 1717 terrier of Geddington (NAS, unindexed).
[2] Bruce M. S. Campbell, *English Seigniorial Agriculture, 1250–1450* (Cambridge, 2000), ch. 9 especially and see the following chapter.

of the Black Death in England in 1348 altered that dependence, but only very slowly, over the 150 years which are the subject of this thesis, by reducing prices of both land and agricultural produce and increasing wages.

The plague was therefore, in Campbell's words, a 'catastrophe with a silver lining' that opened up the market for higher quality grains and animal proteins (meat and dairy produce) with higher wages to pay for them. Conventionally, the most noticeable feature of the late medieval rural scene was the emergence of the yeomen and husbandmen who dominated the rural landscape until the late eighteenth century. This thesis shares the more recent historiography with reservations in viewing this as a broadly 'cultural' change, involving the emergence of numerous social groupings (itinerant labourers, professional soldiers, drovers and local 'men at law' to name but of few that appear later), and one that may be more complex and interesting than a simple transition to yeomen and husbandmen. However, manorial lordship was a continuing and highly significant factor in that change not least because lords remained the owners of manorial land. Likewise, the institution of the manor endured because it was robust and adaptable and also provided the only vehicle by which lords could both own land and extract an income from it.

This thesis has been informed by a visit to view the operation of the field jury and court leet at Laxton, Nottinghamshire, notable as the location of the last surviving 'open' field system in England, in November 2023. Laxton today provides a glimpse of a counter-factual England as it might have been but for the virtual elimination of the smallholder in the English midlands in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries – a process which, in tandem with parliamentary enclosure could be seen as an exaggerated second cycle of demesne farming without (possibly) the economic justification. The surviving field system at Laxton does, however, illustrate the importance of a commonly understood and accepted body of rules concerning

the use of common resources.[3] In a rather unexpected way, that makes every tenant of Laxton both a local historian and lawyer because that body of rules is derived from precedent. This is not immediately apparent from medieval sources but occasionally emerges, usually in arguments between lord and tenants, over the custom of the manor.

The present-day Laxton can also be viewed as a field-system under stress. Those stresses are, in the main, very different from those of the later middle ages: loss of agricultural subsidy and the difficulties of running a profitable farming business on tenements of only around 120 acres. One aspect of distress is, however, familiar to historians of the late middle ages: the scarcity of incoming tenants. The common field system is highly dependent on the presence of a sufficient number of tenants to form a field jury and to maintain the institutions on which the system depends.

So far, this introduction has concentrated on one of this thesis' two major themes: land. The second, society, is much more dependent on the interplay in each manor of various minor themes, some of which have already become apparent – the adaptation of the manor to post-plague conditions and the shortage of tenants in an agrarian economy where supply of land exceeded demand are just examples. The importance of law is a similar feature as is the emergence of a sense of identity, or more probably identities, amongst different classes of manorial tenants. 'Identity' is used here in its neutral, dictionary sense of 'essential sameness' and has been influenced by Andrea Ruddick's work on the emergence of an 'English' mentality during the fourteenth century.[4] These themes will be developed in the following chapter after an examination, in the following chapter, of their role in the historiography of the later middle ages.

[3] See in particular Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* (Cambridge, 1990) which is considered further in the following chapter.
[4] Andrea Ruddick*, English Identity and Political Culture in the Fourteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2013).

This thesis has adopted a broadly 'qualitative' rather than 'quantitative' approach. It is not easy to extract meaningful statistics from manorial records, court rolls in particular, partly because the sample size is small but, more frequently, because attempts to extract numbers from court rolls often end up mapping nothing more than the survival of court rolls in an interrupted sequence. Statistical evidence has, however, been used where it seems appropriate, particularly when it can be extracted from accounts. Merton's Barkby manor has an extensive set of bailiffs' accounts and Catesby a more partial set of fifteenth-century accounts for the entire priory, both of which have been mined for statistical evidence.

A further problem with manorial records arises from medieval measures. At Geddington it is possible, although uncertain, that the medieval records use a forest acre based on a linear pole of twenty-one feet rather than the conventional 16½ feet.[5] Likewise, at Barkby, the early modern records refer to an 'old rod', the size of which was equivalent to one-and-a-half conventional rods although that can only be established by a chance marginal note added to the 1609 survey at a later date.[6] It is unknown whether that measure was used in the middle ages. Similar problems may lurk undetected in the records.

In this thesis, manorial tenants are referred to as 'tenants' rather than 'peasants'. That should not be taken as indicating any sympathy for earlier historiography which doubted the existence of peasants in England in the middle ages.[7] That question of categorisation now seems an arid area for argument. The term 'tenants' is used because references to 'peasants' seem anachronistic when no such term, or anything similar, was used in England in the middle ages.

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[5] Philip A.J. Pettit, *The Royal Forests of Northamptonshire: A Study in Their Economy, 1558–1714* (Gateshead, 1968), p. 9.
[6] MCR, unindexed.
[7] In particular, Alan Macfarlane, *The Origins of English Individualism: The Family, Property and Social Transition* (Oxford, 1978).

Finally, a note should be added about transcriptions from medieval documents. Where the transcription is uncertain, the uncertain words have been enclosed in square brackets and where the words are either absent or wholly unclear, they have been left blank but similarly enclosed by square brackets as are editorial comments.

Chapter 2

Literature review

This chapter commences with a brief factual overview before moving on to the larger-scale economic and social historiography of the period and, in particular, trends in manorial evolution before and after the Black Death, the seigniorial response to the Black Death and tenant culture.[1] That is followed by a review of the smaller-scale historiography relating to more specialist but inter-related topics: the manor, the law, the environment and field systems.

The factual background to the historiography

English population rose from just under two million in 1086 to a peak around 1300 of, possibly, five to six million. With the impact of successive waves of the Black Death in 1349, 1361 and 1369 (in particular), it fell back to between 2.5 and three million in 1377 with a continued decline thereafter to a nadir in the mid-fifteenth century of, possibly, 2.25 million before a slow recovery in the sixteenth century.[2] The severe famine and animal disease of 1315 to 1320, and subsequent climatic changes, interrupted the population growth of the

[1] The main works covering the agrarian economy and society of the later middle ages are H.E. Hallam (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, vol. II, 1042-1350* (Cambridge, 1988) and, in particular for the purposes of this thesis, J.A. Raftis, chapter 3, 'New Settlement, C, The East Midlands', pp. 189-202; chapter 4, 'Farming Techniques, C, The East Midlands', pp.325-40; chapter 6, 'Social Structure, C, The East Midlands', pp.634-50; Edward Miller (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, volume III, 1348-1500* (Cambridge, 1991) and, in particular, Edmund King, chapter 2, 'The Occupation of the Land, D, The East Midlands, pp. 67-77; chapter 3, 'Farming Practice and Techniques, D, The East Midlands', pp. 210-22; chapter 7, 'Tenant Farming and Tenant Farmers, D, The East Midlands', pp.624-35; also C.C. Dyer, chapter 2, 'The Occupation of the Land, E, The West Midlands', pp. 77-92; chapter 3, 'Farming Practice and Techniques, E, The West Midlands', pp.222-238; chapter 7, 'Tenant Farming and Tenant Farmers, E, The West Midlands' pp. 636-647; Joan Thirsk (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, vol. IV, 1500-1640* (Cambridge, 1967) and in particular, Joan Thirsk, chapter 1, 'The Farming Regions of England, J, The East Midlands', pp. 89-99.

[2] Bruce M. S. Campbell, *English Seigniorial Agriculture* (Cambridge, 2000) sets out varying estimates at table 8.06. Campbell's own figures derived from grain supply are somewhat lower – see table 8.05.

twelfth and thirteenth centuries: it resulted in mortality of around 15% and the extent of recovery before the first wave of the Black Death in 1349 is unclear.[3]

Indexed prices of consumables rose from around 1200 reflecting increased demand and increased population. Prices increased dramatically during the famine years from around 1315 to 1320 before stabilising. They continued to rise after the Black Death which is probably explained by the peculiarities of those years (a run of bad harvests, in particular). It was only twenty-five years after the first wave of the Black Death in 1376 that prices started to drop, a trend which continued to the mid-fifteenth century, following which they showed signs of recovery. Real wages followed demographic changes rather sluggishly with a declining trend up to 1300 but a slight rise in the period up to 1350. They remained depressed in the years following the first wave of the Black Death. As with prices, this was probably attributable to the unusual features of those years but they started an upward trend in the 1370s with the indexed figures for wages exceeding the indexed figure for prices in the critical year, 1376–7.[4]

From the early thirteenth century, increasing prices had encouraged manorial lords, particularly large or institutional lords, to abandon leasing their demesnes and to cultivate them themselves thereby taking advantage of the favourable market for their produce. Seigniorial involvement in direct demesne farming was just one aspect of an increasingly commercialised economy but is important because its corollary was a sufficiently well-developed system of local markets providing *entrepôts* for the sale of the surplus produce of both demesne farms and peasants. A further aspect of commercialisation was the increasing significance of an agrarian wage economy. The participation of wealthier tenants

[3] For climatic changes see David Stone, 'The Impact of Drought in Early Fourteenth-Century England', *Economic History Review*, 67.2 (2014), pp. 435–62.
[4] Campbell, *Seigniorial Agriculture.*, fig. 1.01 (itself taken from D. L. Farmer, 'Prices and wages, 1350–1500 in Miller, *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, vol. II*.

in a market economy was another feature of the English economy before the Black Death.[5] Likewise, the existence of a widespread peasant market for small pieces of land has long been recognised along with the rural credit market that supported it.[6]

Seigniorial demesne farming characterised the period up to the first wave of the Black Death and enjoyed an 'Indian Summer' lasting to around 1376. By the end of the fourteenth century, however, in a period of declining prices and increasing wages, the advantages of direct farming disappeared and institutional manorial lords retreated to leasing their demesnes. That left them dependent on sub-commercial customary rents and the depressed rent from leasing their demesnes.

Although manorial tenants had very largely escaped from the more burdensome forms of labour service by the early fourteenth century, population growth presented serious problems.[7] The most obvious, high prices for food grains, has already been mentioned as has the volatile peasant land market and associated pressure on land.[8] The Black Death relieved demographic pressure on land so that both customary rents and rent for demesne land remained low. The outcome, in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, was a period

[5] Christopher Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages* (New Haven, 2003) and elsewhere reconstructs peasant family budgets and highlights the significance of the surplus.
[6] The usual starting point is Christopher Brooke and M. M. Postan (eds.), *Carte Nativorum: A Peterborough Abbey Cartulary of the Fourteenth Century* (Oxford, 1960) followed by P. D. A. Harvey (ed.), *The Peasant Land Market in Medieval England* (Oxford, 1984). For the peasant land market and family holdings in Norfolk contrasted with the Midlands see Jane Whittle, 'Individualism and the Family – Land Bond: A Reassessment of Land Transfer Patterns among the English Peasantry c.1270-1580', *Past & Present* 160 (1998), pp. 25-63 and for women's involvement in property holding 'Inheritance, Marriage, Widowhood and Remarriage: A Comparative Perspective on Women and Landholding in North-East Norfolk, 1440-1580', *Continuity and Change*, 13.1 (1998), pp. 33-72. The peasant credit market before the Black Death has been identified by Chris Briggs, *Credit and Village Society in Fourteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 2009).
[7] For the legal background to servile tenure see Paul R Hyams, *King, Lords and Peasants in Medieval England: The Common Law of Villeinage in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (Oxford, 1980) and for subsequent developments Mark Bailey, *After the Black Death* (Oxford, 2021 and 'The Transformation of Customary Tenures in Southern England, c.1350 to c.1500', *Agricultural History Review,* 62.2 (2014), pp. 210-30.
[8] For the problems of both manorial lords and their tenants before the Black Death, see B. M. S. Campbell, 'The Agrarian Problem in the Early Fourteenth Century', *Past & Present*, 188 (2005), pp. 3–70.

of increased standard of living for the peasantry and a broadening, and improvement, of the peasant diet with more expensive grains, more protein (meat especially) and more beer. Dietary changes to higher quality grain, meat (including rabbits) and stronger beer using hops are all well-documented.[9] This took place, however, against the background of commercial depression, low prices for manufactured and luxury (or non-essential) goods and, in the early fifteenth century, a shortage of silver resulting from the exhaustion of mines in eastern Europe.[10]

The Great Revolt of 1381 was an uprising led by wealthier peasants in Essex and Kent, later extending to the home counties and East Anglia and possibly further.[11] One of its main demands was an end to serfdom. That is odd because in Kent, one of the *foci* of the revolt, servile status had been almost unknown and was rare in Essex, another focal point, and, as has been observed, labour service had largely disappeared from most manors. Likewise, the burning of manorial rolls is surprising because those rolls constituted written evidence of peasants' landholdings. On the other hand, their desire to retain the view of frankpledge and insistence on the 'law of Winchester' suggests a desire to retain institutions which the leaders of the revolt could manipulate to their own advantage in the village community. Other causative factors include high taxation, the result of war, and resentment of

[9] See David Stone, *Decision-Making in Medieval Agriculture* (Oxford, 2005) for switches to higher quality grain (wheat in particular) and pastoral (meat) production in this period; Judith M. Bennett, *Ale, Beer and Brewsters in England: Women's Work in a Changing World, 1300–1600* (Oxford, 1996) for changes in ale brewing; Mark Bailey, 'The Rabbit and the Medieval East Anglian Economy', *The Agricultural History Review*, 36.1 (1988), pp..1–20 for rabbit warrening.

[10] For the problems of the mid-fifteenth century see in particular John Hatcher, 'The Great Slump of the Mid-Fifteenth Century' in Richard Britnell and John Hatcher (eds.), *Progress and Problems in Medieval England* (Cambridge, 2012).

[11] The literature on the Great Revolt is extensive and can be traced from André Reville, *Le Soulevement des Travailleurs d'Anglterre en 1381: Etudes et Documents Publié avec une Introduction Historique par Charles Petit Dutaillis* (Paris, 1898) to Charles Oman, *The Great Revolt of 1381* (Oxford, 1969) to the Neo-Marxist interpretation represented by Rodney Hilton, *Bond Men Made Free: Medieval Peasant Movements and the English Rising of 1381* (London, 1973). More recent work includes Juliet Barker, *England Arise: The People, The King and The Great Revolt of 1381* (London, 2015) and chapter 5, 'Injustice and Revolt' in Mark Bailey, *After the Black Death: Economy, Society and the Law in Fourteenth-Century England,* (Oxford, 2021). For the Great Revolt in the East Midlands see David Crook, 'Derbyshire and the English Rising of 1381', *Historical Research: The Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 60.141 [1987), pp. 9-23.

governmental incompetence. The revolt and its origins will be considered further in chapter 6 in the light of evidence from the three manors.

The larger-scale historiography

Writing in 2001, Hatcher and Bailey identified three 'supermodels' which had dominated interpretation of the later middle ages: neo-Malthusianism, neo-Marxist and neo-classical economic theory, which they described as 'commercialisation'. Hatcher and Bailey were writing after the 'Brenner Debate', an argument between historians aligned to Marxist and neo-classical economic viewpoints, had loomed large in the historiography.[12] In fact, the three 'supermodels' identified by Hatcher and Bailey can probably be reduced to that two-sided argument. Malthus was, after all, one of the classical economists of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. As will be seen, further historiographical developments since the beginning of the twenty-first century have also modified this categorisation and, to some extent, moved the debate into different areas.

The neo-Malthusian model, of which M. M. Postan was the main proponent, came to prominence in the middle decades of the twentieth century.[13] Malthus's basic proposition had been that whilst agricultural food production increases mathematically, population increases geometrically or exponentially. In classical economic theory increased demand results in an increase in the price of agricultural products which can, to some extent, be limited by improvements in agricultural production. If, however, population growth is not restrained, it will be reduced by disease and, ultimately, halted by famine. The Malthusian

[12] The main contributions to the Brenner Debate were collected in T. H. Aston and C. H. E. Philpin (eds.), *The Brenner Debate: Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe* (Cambridge, 1985).

[13] M.M. Postan's main contributions can be found in two volumes of essays, *Essays on Medieval Agriculture and General Problems of the Medieval Economy* (Cambridge, 1973) and *Medieval Trade and Finance* (Cambridge, 1973). His contribution to M.M. Postan (ed.), *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe, Volume I, The Agrarian Life of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1966), 'Medieval Agrarian Society in its Prime, 7, England' summarises his views. His late work, M.M. Postan, *The Medieval Economy and Society: An Economic History of Britain, 1100-1500* (Cambridge, 1972) was generally considered rather disappointing.

cycle then continues with a rapid re-growth of population leading to the same result unless checked by 'restraint', by which Malthus seems to have meant delayed marriage.

Postan elaborated the Malthusian model with observations that, in medieval England, innovations and extension of the area under cultivation to more 'marginal' land secured an increase in food production. His neo-Malthusian thesis evolved with the realisation that, although the famine of 1315–20 could be attributed to a Malthusian mechanism, the most important demographic feature of the fourteenth century, the Black Death, was essentially exogenous to the Malthusian process outlined above because it was not a response to population growth.

Further problems with the Postan thesis arose from the period after the Black Death. The Malthusian cycle would have predicted a relatively rapid recovery of population accompanied by renewed growth of agricultural production along with all the other eventual consequences of increasing rent and prices, decreasing availability of land and so on. In fact, that did not happen and population, prices and productivity remained stubbornly depressed or decreasing for the next 150 years with a recovery only in the early sixteenth century.
Two strands of thinking can be identified in the Marxist model. The orthodox Marxist position was that there were internal contradictions between the mode of production and the emerging economy of the late middle ages.[14] Essentially, lordly confiscation of the surplus value represented by servile labour stifled the operation of emerging markets. This led to an internal debate within the Marxist tradition, fired by the emergence of the neo-Marxist 'new left' of the 1960s, emphasising peasant resistance and persistent class friction also leading to the collapse of an exploitative but inefficient feudal economy and its replacement by capitalism.

[14] M. Dobb, *Studies in the Development of Capitalism* (London, 1963) and E. A. Kosminsky, *Studies in the Agrarian History of England in the Thirteenth Century* (Oxford, 1956) and 'The Evolution of Feudal Rent in England from the XIth to the XVth Centuries, *Past & Present* 7.1 (1955), pp. 12–36.

The neo-Marxist approach, like the neo-Malthusian, struggled with the developments of the late-fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Evidence of class struggle in the extensive manorial court rolls of this period is rather thin; rather, they suggest that friction *between* peasants was as much, if not more, a feature of manorial society as conflict between lords and peasants. Similarly, the thesis of a 'seigniorial reaction' following the Black Death has been difficult to sustain (see below). The sluggish response of manorial lords to the erosion of their frequently sub-economic rental income following the abandonment of direct demesne-farming is difficult to reconcile with the neo-Marxist model.

The 'commercialisation' model sought a new approach to these problems based on the work of Adam Smith and David Ricardo.[15] Ricardo's theory of 'economic rent' involves the attribution to land of value represented by the difference between the market value of its produce and the cost of production (including the remuneration of the cultivator). Marx had adopted Ricardo's theory as a feature of capitalist expropriation. However, the classical economists probably lie in the same tradition as Malthus and commercialisation can be seen as an extension of the Postan model. Campbell is the main proponent of this approach and the following account is taken from his work.[16]

The English agrarian economy before the Black Death had achieved significant market integration but suffered from severe structural problems. In particular, and by comparison with more advanced areas of northern Europe, it was 'extensive' rather than 'intensive'. That is to say, it was hampered by biological constraints (poor seed-types, weeds and intractable soils, clay especially) along with poor management (irrational crop rotations, especially), aggravated by servile tenures and friction between lords and tenants. Set against that, with

[15] Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations, Books I-III* (London, 1999), especially Book I, chapter xi, 'Of the Rent of Land' and David Ricardo, *The Principles of Political Economy and Taxation* (London, 1987), especially Chapter II, 'On Rent'.
[16] Campbell, *English Seigniorial Agriculture*, ch. 9 especially.

a growing population there was a ready market for cheaper, low-quality grains so that it was possible for lords to generate an attractive economic rent (to use Ricardo's term, otherwise 'income') from their demesnes. That came at a cost because it involved continuous expansion of extensive cultivation to less fertile land (as Postan had observed), reduction of livestock and consequent shortfalls in manuring the arable.

Lords were capable of innovation, as demonstrated by the use of windmills, horses and the introduction of vetches (animal-feed) In rotations. There was, however, no incentive to improve agrarian efficiency because of an inadequate 'demand side'. London was England's sole large city and demand there encouraged agrarian efficiencies in the von Thünen areas (a derivative from Ricardian theory) of the lower Thames valley and east Norfolk which supplied the city but not elsewhere. The underlying problem was the absence of urban industry and the demand from wealthier customers. England was essentially an exporter of raw materials, wool in particular.

The Black Death, Campbell's 'catastrophe with a silver lining', provided an escape from the cycle: the reduction in population removed demand for large quantities of lower grade grains and, with the growth of urban industry (woollen manufactures in particular), led to demand from a wealthier market for higher quality foodstuffs, often animal-based. That provided a much firmer basis for prosperity and enabled an essentially medieval agrarian system to adapt, improve and support a greatly enlarged urban population into the seventeenth century.

The Campbell depiction of the pre-Black Death agrarian economy and its inefficiencies needs to be placed in context. As David Stone observed, some estate owners and managers, such as the bishops of Ely, were astute and capable of innovation but, ultimately,

abandoned demesne-farming after the Black Death because of declining prices.[17] As such, they were the victims of Campbell's 'catastrophe' but unable to take advantage of its consumer-favouring 'silver lining'.

The ‘commercialisation’ model, like its neo-Malthusian and Marxist counterparts, provided an explanation of the *process* of economic and social change in late medieval England of the later middle ages; Campbell’s later work addressed the *causes* of that change on a global scale.[18] It is not possible to do justice here to the full sweep of Campbell’s exposition of the global meteorological and environmental changes of the later middle ages. Briefly, the Medieval Climate Anomaly had lasted from about AD 500 to the turn of the fourteenth century and was caused by favourable La Niňa/El Niňo cycles in the Pacific Ocean resulting in warm weather favourable to cereal crops in Europe and dry, arid weather in the central Asian steppes. Those favourable cycles broke down in the late-thirteenth century as a result of solar minima (changes in solar radiation), and (possibly) volcanic activity, leading to damper and colder weather in Europe (the Little Ice Age) lasting into the seventeenth century. The critical concomitant was a change to moister weather in the central Asian steppes which favoured reproduction of the marmot population, the host animal of the flea carrying the bubonic plague bacteria. Ultimately, and by means which are not yet fully understood, that led to the appearance of bubonic plague in Europe with the demographic consequences outlined above.

Recovery from the combined effect of climatic and epidemic adversity was slow. Amongst the emerging patterns were a shift of trade and prosperity away from Italy and the Mediterranean and towards Flanders, Holland and Brabant (especially) and England (the start of what Campbell terms the ‘Little Divergence’). Population failed to recover in the way

[17] David Stone, *Decision-Making*.
[18] Bruce M. S. Campbell, *The Great Transition: Climate, Disease and Society in the Late-Medieval World* (Cambridge, 2016).

predicted by Malthus, which led to a long period of depression, a sluggish economy and a low birth rate with the population barely replacing itself and reaching a low around the mid-fifteenth century. However, when recovery came, mixed farming in western Europe proved far more adaptable, and ultimately far more productive, than rice monoculture in the far east (one of the components of Campbell's 'Great Transition').

Overall, Campbell's thesis provides a causal explanation of the economic and social changes of the later middle ages but it is one based not on a single unifying theory but on the random interaction of different forces: climatic, epidemic and human (mostly irrational and counter-productive). In this sense, it can be seen as a form of the 'Chaos Theory' anticipated by Hatcher and Bailey in 2001 as a possible escape route from the shortcomings of their three 'supermodels'.

At a more local, English, level a significant recent contribution has been made by Mark Bailey's granular account of the economic history of the second half of the fourteenth century.[19]

His starting point is the 'orthodox' view of English social and economic history, in which the period before the Black Death marked an apogee of lordly authority accompanied by a bizarre system of sub-economic rents, high land prices and the fracturing of holdings. Following the first wave of the Black Death, manorial lords attempted to re-assert their authority in a 'seigniorial reaction' manifested by labour legislation freezing prices and incomes at pre-plague levels. This accounted for a period of stasis in the 1350s and 1360s before a mounting wave of peasant resistance characterised by the Peasants' Revolt of 1381. It was also accompanied by sharp falls in the price of staple goods from the later 1370s whilst wages rose. The result was that manorial lords bargained away servile rents,

[19] Mark Bailey, *After the Black Death* in particular.

labour services and the other incidents of servile tenure so that villeinage largely disappeared between the 1380s and 1430s. This was accompanied by the expansion of commodity markets with contractual arrangements (particularly in relation to land tenure and labour) displacing personal ties and bonded labour.

Bailey makes three objections to this characterisation. First, manorial lordship in the 1340s was not as dominant or as powerful as this portrayal suggests. Secondly, this narrative places far too much stress on the alleged 'seigniorial reaction' of the period 1350–75 which in fact was a complex and confused period. Adverse weather events and renewed waves of plague (1361–2 and 1369) all created severe problems and prolonged the pre-1349 high price/low wage regime. There were, however, signs of change with some improvements in the welfare of the lower peasantry, the main victims of the pre-1349 regime. Finally, villeinage was in 'headlong retreat' as early as the 1350s and completely absent from most manors by the 1380s and, by the 1340s, only accounted for 10% by value of all productive labour.

Bailey's chaotic conditions of the 1350s extended well into the 1360s with evidence of 'rapid adjustments', presumably price drops and increased production, in some sectors such as manufactures, especially textiles, dairy produce, and rabbit and poultry rearing, whilst other sectors such as luxury goods and extractive industries (especially tin mining) remained sluggish. Overall, however, the picture of this period is of disrupted markets, rocketing prices particularly affecting farming equipment such as the ploughs needed to re-equip peasant farms, high taxation and uncertainty about the future. Bailey also suggests that the volatility of this period possibly resulted in cautious decision-making avoiding risk.

Between 1385 and 1395 oversupply in agricultural markets and the high cost of labour prompted lordly withdrawal from direct demesne farming and the final abandonment of most of the remaining incidents of servile tenure. The leasing of demesnes provided increased

opportunities for the peasant elite to construct large commercial holdings, leading them to self-identify as ‘yeomen’ or ‘husbandmen’. There were also some improvements in the income of landless labourers which increased by about 50% between the 1340s and the 1390s. Bailey characterises the closing decades of the fourteenth century as a ‘comfortable – but not unbridled golden-age’ for the peasantry.

The decline of villeinage was, therefore, a complex process: it was weaker before the first wave of the plague and declined more quickly afterwards than the ‘orthodox’ explanation allows. Shortage of tenants after the Black Death led to an ‘irreversible’ shift in tenurial structure: in the 1340s about 20% of land had been held on some form of contractual tenure but by 1400 that had increased to 45%.

Law plays an important part in Bailey’s narrative, represented, in part, by the emergence of a centralised state’s involvement in labour legislation and thus government intervention in the labour market. Law, rather than custom, also started to play a more significant role in land tenure leading to generally greater involvement in the court system and a ‘culture of law’. Bailey’s point here seems to be that law and the provision of generally accepted methods of dispute resolution were an essential concomitant to the growth of a market economy.

There are obvious similarities in Campbell and Bailey’s analyses of the fourteenth century. Possibly the clearest is the way in which the demographic shock of the Black Death opened the way for changes which, in some cases, had been under way before the plague (the disappearance of labour service and market integration, in particular) and which, in others, could only really take hold after a significant reduction in the population (changes to agricultural production, in particular).

More recent contributions to the field have, however, been marked by a noticeable change of focus and emphasis.[20] As the titles of some of these recent works indicate, attention has moved away from economic issues to the environment, landscape and, broadly, 'peasant perceptions'. In the cases of Tom Johnson and Spike Gibbs in particular, it is also marked by a shift of interest towards the fifteenth century and, in all cases, by an understandable desire to break down the artificial barrier between the medieval and early modern periods of conventional historiography. Johnson's view of the fifteenth century is, in some respects, the most challenging because he sees it as a period of expansion of a 'peasant consciousness', particularly concerned with law and its development. That is contrasted with the 'declinism' of earlier writers concentrating on the fourteenth century and with a more purely economic focus. That is probably a valuable corrective although Johnson's apparent view of law as filtering upwards from the peasantry rather than downwards from lords (whose presence in many of these works is rather shadowy) is questionable. Likewise, Spike Gibbs' emphasis on peasant office holding and its connections to the emerging Tudor state is undoubtedly interesting in its identification of an office-holding peasant elite but rather less illuminating on the more purely economic questions surrounding the identity of that elite. Indeed, both the economy and the continuing involvement of manorial lords tend to get edged aside in Johnson's analysis.

A valuable observation made by Johnson is that many of the critical decisions concerning the agrarian operation of the manor, such as the timing of sowing, ploughing and harvesting, went unrecorded in the manorial records because they were, of necessity, made on the spot

[20] In particular, Tom Johnson, *Law in Common: Legal Cultures in Late-Medieval England* (Oxford, 2020), Susan Kilby, *Peasant Perspectives on the Medieval Landscape: A Study of Three Communities* (Hatfield, 2020), Stephen Mileson and Stuart Brookes, *Peasant Perceptions of Landscape: Ewelme Hundred, South Oxfordshire, 500–1650* (Oxford, 2021) and Spike Gibbs, *Lordship, State Formation and Local Authority in Late Medieval and Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2023) and for other work on manorial institutions and office holding 'Lords, Tenants and Attitudes to Manorial Office-Holding, c.1300-1600', *The Agricultural History Review*, 67 (2019) pp. 155-74, '"Open" or "Closed"? Participation in English Manorial Presentment Juries, c.1310-c.1600: A Quantitative Approach', *The English History Review* 137 (2022), pp. 1003-52 and 'Limits to the Power of Economic Elites?: Wealth, Authority, and Inequality in Eastern English Villages, c.1350-c.1550', *The Economic History Review*, 79.1 (2026), pp. 247-80.

in the light of, in particular, the weather. That leads both Johnson and Gibbs to the conclusion that much of the agrarian management of the manor, and by extension that relations between peasants and lords and between different strata of the peasant community, must have been co-operative rather than 'frictional'. In this sense, the recent historiography has relied on a further strand of historiography identified by Hatcher and Bailey as the 'Toronto school'. Its primary exponent, J. A. Raftis, stressed that relations between lords and tenants were, on the whole, harmonious. More recent products of the Toronto school have continued this theme.[21] A frequent criticism of their work is that it concentrates remorselessly on the Huntingdonshire estate of Ramsey Abbey which renders impossible the important contrast between different geographical areas and different forms of lordship. A more telling criticism might be that their work focusses on detailed textual analysis of court rolls (in particular) at the expense of context and comparison between individual manors within the Ramsey Abbey estate and elsewhere.

The work of Kilby and, in particular, Mileson and Brookes is more purely 'environmental' or landscape based, with imaginative attempts to establish how peasants viewed their physical surroundings. That is, again, helpful in emphasising the fifteenth-century emergence of the peasant 'identity' of yeomen and husbandmen which will be considered in chapter 6.

Mileson and Brookes' study of the hundred of Ewelme in south Oxfordshire covers the period 500 to 1650.[22] Their objective was 'an examination of how the layout of settlements and agrarian resources affected the interactions between inhabitants which are currently understood mainly in non-spatial terms'. The sources for this exercise are 'the peasants'

[21] For instance, and in particular, Sherri Olson, *A Chronicle of All That Happens: Voices from the Village Court in Medieval England* (Toronto, 1996) and *A Mute Gospel: The People and Culture of the Medieval English Common Fields* (Toronto, 2009).
[22] Stephen Mileson and Stuart Brookes, *Peasant Perceptions*. Similar approaches can be found in Susan Kilby, *Peasant Perspectives* and, in the area of rural legal culture, Tom Johnson, *Law in Common*.

own testimony to bridge the gap between practice and perception'.[23] That involves examination of a hundred comprising manors spanning the 'Vale' country of the Thames valley and reaching up to the peak of the Chiltern scarp. The hundred included predominantly two- and three-field arable manors in the Vale and irregular field systems with a more pastoral slant in the hilly and wooded country of the Chilterns. Because their study covers a wide geographical area, it makes interesting comparisons between the Vale and the Chilterns with a slight tendency for the arable field system of the Vale to break down with the creation of closes in the late middle ages (the Chiltern manors always had been more extensively enclosed). There are some interesting and imaginative attempts to reach out to capture the peasant experience with, for example, an examination of the distance at which parish church bells could be heard by those working in the fields.

Mileson and Brookes certainly point to future areas for closer examination such as the construction of houses and other buildings, the response of manorial lords to dilapidation of those buildings in the later middle ages, church buildings and 'spaces' within villages, and how villagers, including women, interacted there. However, documentary evidence in these areas is sparse. It is unclear how far this can be pursued although attempts have been made in this thesis to do so.

Alongside these works, mention should also be made of recent work on County Durham.[24] Brown and Larson have explained the contrasting managerial approaches of two estates there, those of the bishop and priory, that emphasise the different objectives and interests of manorial lords and how they responded in different ways to the events of the mid-fourteenth century. The bishopric estate was concerned to maximise cash income in order to sustain

[23] Mileson and Brookes, *Peasant Perceptions*, pp. 4 and 5.
[24] In particular A. T. Brown, *Rural Society and Economic Change in County Durham* (Woodbridge, 2015), A. T. Brown 'The Fear of Downward Social Mobility in Late Medieval England', *Journal of Medieval History* 45.5 (2019) pp. 597–617, Peter L. Larson, *Conflict and Compromise in the Late Medieval Countryside* (New York, 2006) and Peter L. Larson, *Rethinking the Great Transition: Community and Economic Growth in County Durham, 1349–1660* (Oxford, 2022).

the bishop's expenditure. After an unsuccessful attempt at a 'feudal reaction', the bishopric's administrators concentrated on maximisation of rent whilst abandoning labour services and minimising entry fines. In contrast, the priory estate was concerned to maximise food production for the consumption of the monks and adopted a much more interventionist policy – an opportunist approach that led to polarisation in the size of peasant holdings and resulting communal conflict. The contrast is marked and is a useful reminder of the importance and consequences of differing types of seigniorial management which is echoed in this thesis.

Larson's *Rethinking the Great Transition* depicts a transition from a collectivist manorial and common field system to one based on contract and the prioritisation of profit. The subject of his study is three parishes in the bishopric estate in the south of County Durham. Symptoms of this change include the emergence of consumer products, increased specialisation of peasant production including a marked shift towards animal husbandry and animal products, as well as further polarization of tenement sizes. Features of this process include the precocious emergence of a form of copyhold around 1349, and the subsequent engrossment of holdings which usually peaked when they reached fifty to sixty acres. Larson characterises the emergence of a class describing themselves as 'yeomen' and 'husbandmen' as indicative of growing individualism. In particular, he sees enclosure as an important part of the process. For Larson the 'great transition', at least in its early stages, is essentially a rural phenomenon in which increased agrarian productivity led to greater market integration and an increasing rural population feeding town growth. Thus Larson's 'great transition' in County Durham seems to engage quite well, but not completely, with Campbell's narrative although both use the phrase in very different senses.

This thesis deals with three manors in the East Midlands where there is inadequate surviving evidence to trace the major economic and statistical themes identified by Campbell, Bailey and Stone (in particular). They do, however, provide sufficient evidence to examine

suggestions by all three historians that the late-fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were marked by adaptations of the manorial agrarian system which resulted in a more varied, and more enduring, agrarian economy than that of the pre-plague period. In particular, there is evidence of changes to the common field system, probably in the form of the adoption of some form of convertible agriculture, alongside a transition to a more pastoral agrarian economy. This adaptation was accompanied by broadly cultural changes in peasant identity or identities.

The remainder of this chapter will consider some of the 'thematic' literature relating to the manor, law and field systems – all of which are important components of the processes described above.

The manor

Academic interest in the institution of the manor gathered ground in the late nineteenth century although, at that stage, it mainly concerned the post-conquest origins of the manor and the role of manorial courts in determining and administering customary law. F. W. Maitland edited a series of early rolls for the first volume published by the Selden Society in the late nineteenth century.[25] Interest in the manor from a legal perspective continued with Vinogradoff's work.[26] However, interest fairly rapidly moved on to look at manorial records and their portrayal of a rural community in its own right with a series of monographs of which the first was probably Frances Davenport's work on Forncett in Norfolk.[27] From this point, a number of similar studies has dealt with different manors in different parts of the country.[28]

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[25] F. W. Maitland, *Select Pleas in Manorial and Other Seignorial Courts. Volume I, Reigns of Henry III and Edward I* (London, 1889, 1967 edn.).

[26] In particular, Paul Vinogradoff, *The Growth of the Manor* (London, 1904, 1932 edn.).

[27] Frances Gardiner Davenport, *The Economic Development of a Norfolk Manor, 1086–1565*, (London, 1906, 1967 edn.).

[28] A non-exhaustive list includes P. D. A. Harvey, *A Medieval Oxfordshire Village : Cuxham, 1240 to 1400* (London, 1965). J. A. Raftis, *A Small Town in Late Medieval England : Godmanchester, 1278–1400* (Toronto, 1982). Cicely Howell, *Land, Family and Inheritance in Transition : Kibworth Harcourt 1280–1700* (Cambridge, 1983). Marjorie Keniston McIntosh, *Autonomy and Community : The Royal Manor of Havering, 1200–1500* (Cambridge, 1986). Zvi Razi, *Life, Marriage, and Death in a Medieval Parish : Economy, Society, and Demography in Halesowen, 1270-1400* (Cambridge, 1980). Judith M.

Alongside the manorial monographs there have been broader 'institutional' studies dealing with entire (usually ecclesiastical) estates.[29]

From this work has emerged the picture of the manor as the basic economic building block of rural medieval England and its role as an essentially extractive economic institution. Its main components, in the conventional formularisation, are familiar. Its land comprised a demesne or 'home' farm and land held by servile and free tenants. The main representative of the lord was the steward who presided over the manorial court with authority further delegated to the bailiff or reeve, usually drawn from the manor's wealthier peasant landholders. In addition, there were also a number of minor office holders such as messors (responsible for wandering livestock), beadles, constables and ale-tasters. If the manor held rights to the view of frankpledge, there would also be tithingmen who made presentations at the view for breaches of custom, ordinance or law and jurors who (usually) confirmed the presentation and affeerers who determined the level of amercements.

The documentary records which provided the raw material for these studies of the manorial system are extensive, and comprise, in particular, manorial court rolls, bailiffs' and other accounts, extents and surveys (detailing land holdings) and custumals (describing manorial customs). The earliest court rolls date from around the middle of the thirteenth century and contain records of infractions of manorial customs and ordinances, land transactions,

Bennett, *Women in the Medieval English Countryside : Gender and Household in Brigstock before the Plague* (New York; Oxford, 1987).

[29]A similarly non-exhaustive list includes R. H. Hilton, *The Economic Development of Some Leicestershire Estates in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* (London, 1947) concerning Leicester and Owston abbeys, J. A. Raftis, *The Estates of Ramsey Abbey: A Study in Economic Growth and Organisation* (Toronto, 1957); Ian Kershaw, *Bolton Priory: the economy of a northern monastery*, 1286–1325 (Oxford, 1973); Barbara Harvey, *Westminster Abbey and its Estates in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1977); Christopher Dyer, *Lords and Peasants in a Changing Society: the Estates of the Bishopric of Worcester,* 680–1540 (Cambridge, 1980); David Stone, *Decision-making* concerning the bishop of Ely's estates.

litigation between the inhabitants of the manor and, frequently, other matters such as records of stray animals found within the manorial bounds.

This short account contains the seed of the dangerously misleading suggestion that there was a typical model manor. In fact, the manorial monographs show that there were considerable differences between individual manors (a point which has already been made). The best studies examine entire manors 'in the round' looking at the identity of the lord (ecclesiastical, institutional, lay or royal, for example), the lord's managerial strategy (demesne farming or rent-extraction, for example), the geographical or environmental features of the manor (forest, meadow, soil-type, for example) and the structure of the tenant community and its landholdings (an almost infinite variety). Given these numerous variables, it is not surprising that there is so much variation between individual manors.

This also explains a problem with more thematic approaches to medieval rural society: concentration on a single aspect of that society can blunt or obscure appreciation of differing manorial contexts. An example is the examination of the 'hue and cry' which served as a means of detecting and pursuing crime and offenders in the medieval village.[30] It is difficult to make sense of its different operation in different manors without information about the *type* of manors under examination, for example whether the lord was intrusive or detached, or the tenurial structure, which might explain why the operation of the hue and cry differed from one manor to another. This may also become a problem for the more recent historiography described above with its concentration on 'peasant consciousness' and similar themes, if careful attention is not also given to the context, almost invariably the type of manor under consideration.

[30] Contrast Miriam Müller, 'Social Control and the hue and cry in two fourteenth century villages', *Journal of Medieval History* 31.1 (2005), pp. 29–53S which explains the manorial context and S. Bardsley, *Venomous Tongues: Speech and Gender in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia, 2006) which does not.

Law

The connection between manorial studies and legal history has already been noted and remains important: the manorial court and view of frankpledge were probably the most accessible courts for England's rural population throughout the period. There is, however, a wide gap in the perception of the working of these courts. Legal historians tend to see lawyers and judges as central to the process of law-making, particularly in a precedent-based common law system, where 'consumer demand' is just one of a number of factors involved in law-making.[31] For Tom Johnson, however, the manorial courts formed part of a 'self-assertive and dynamic rural legal culture' which were 'built from below' and were closely involved in community formation.[32]

Neither approach seems particularly helpful or accurate. The assumption of some (but not all) legal historians that law evolved in a vacuum only rather fitfully influenced by outside events is implausible: after all, law is (broadly speaking) a means by which society regulates itself and social interaction. Johnson's argument that law was made 'in common' calls for qualification given what is known about seigniorial influence over manorial courts, even in the fifteenth century when it is often seen as diminishing.[33] A more satisfactory conclusion would be that law was shaped by social interaction within the manorial courts which reflected the strengths and weaknesses of the classes or groupings represented there. To that extent, Johnson may be correct in his suggestion that seigniorial influence had declined during the fourteenth century and gave way to much greater assertiveness by manorial tenants during the fifteenth. However, that should probably be qualified by the observation

[31] Anthony Musson and W. M. Ormrod, *The Evolution of English Justice: Law, Politics and Society in the Fourteenth Century* (Basingstoke, 1999), ch. 5 'External Influences on the Evolution of Justice', in particular.
[32] Tom Johnson, *Law in Common*, pp. 54 and 270; see also ch. 1, 'Rural Legal Culture'.
[33] See Tom Johnson, *Law in Common*, p. 269.

that some groups of tenants, most obviously the wealthier, were (unsurprisingly) much more influential in the process of law-formation than others. And that observation should probably be further qualified by emphasising the shifting balance of power within the fifteenth century tenant community, in particular increased polarisation of wealth and landholdings, and the extent of continuing lordly involvement in the manor,

On firmer ground, a commonly observed phenomenon is the adoption by manorial courts of procedures from the royal courts. John Beckerman has traced the ways in which procedure in the manorial courts followed that of the royal courts with the addition of trial by an inquisition jury to trial by wager of law and the introduction of the presentation procedure to the view of frankpledge.[34] That suggests that there was a relatively widespread degree of awareness of the procedures of the royal courts and that they were seen as representing a degree of sophistication which it was appropriate for the manorial courts to adopt and follow. Beckerman's conclusions, even if limited to procedural law, are difficult to reconcile with Johnson's theory that law was 'built from below'. However, it is difficult to avoid an uneasy suspicion that, in this discussion, there is confusion about what is meant by 'building' law. That confusion can probably only be dispelled by a more rigorous analysis of the nature and origin of substantive law (customary, common or statute) and its application in the complex court systems of medieval England.

A far-reaching thesis on royal justice has been advanced by Robert C. Palmer to the effect that the first wave of the Black Death in 1349 led to a wholesale revision of English law aimed at ensuring that all orders of society ‘stood to their duty’ in the language of the Ordinance of Labourers and successive Statutes of Labourers.[35] Further, this marked the beginning of a series of initiatives in the royal courts including the introduction of new writs

[34] John S. Beckerman, 'Procedural Innovation and Institutional Change in Medieval Manorial Courts', *Law and History Review*, 10.2 (1992) pp. 199–252.
[35] Robert C. Palmer, *English Law in the Age of the Black Death, 1348–1381: A Transformation of Governance and Law* (Chapel Hill, 1993).

and the modification of existing writs aimed at ensuring that labourers, artisans and others properly performed their duties. In contrast, Anthony Musson has proposed an 'evolutionary' thesis for the development of royal justice in the fourteenth century resulting from both endogenous factors (amongst which he includes consumer demand) and exogenous factors (war, plague, and taxation) as the drivers of change in the legal system.[36]

Probably the most important point is, however, that law was seen as important, that participants in the legal system had clear expectations of it and a conception of what it ought to be. It is probably also true to say that those expectations increased during the period under consideration.

Field systems

Medieval field studies have a long history stretching back to Seebohm's 1883 study of the supposedly Romano-British or Anglo-Saxon origins of the common fields of Hitchin, Hertfordshire.[37] The literature is extensive and this review will concentrate on its more recent manifestations. Bailey has pointed out that most of the older, and much of the more recent, literature is over-concentrated on the origins of the common field system and, in particular, the 'Midland System', and on field morphology (that is to say, categorisation of field systems) rather than the actual use of field systems and how that developed over time.[38] These observations are helpful in considering the following historiography although it is difficult completely to ignore the question of origins because of the light it might shed on subsequent development. However, four historiographical strands have been identified below.

[36] Anthony Musson and W .M. Ormrod, *Evolution of English Justice.*
[37] In particular Frederic Seebohm, *The English Village Community* (London, 1883), E. C. K. Gonner, *Common Land and Inclosure* (London, 1912), H. L. Gray, *English Field Systems* (Cambridge, Mass., 1915) and C. S. and C. S. Orwin, *The Open Fields* (Oxford, 1938).
[38] Mark Bailey, 'Beyond the Midland field system: The Determinants of Common Rights over the Arable in Medieval England', *Agricultural History Review*, 58.2 (2010) pp. 153–71; H. L. Gray, *English Field Systems*.

The first or ‘evolutionary’ strand originated in the mid-twentieth century with the realisation that earlier theories of ancient and ethnic origins of English field systems were impossible to sustain. This somewhat theoretical approach, associated with Joan Thirsk, suggested that the three-field Midland System represented the outcome of an evolutionary process starting with common grazing of pasture and waste which, as a result of demographic pressure, gradually extended to common cultivation of the arable and common grazing of the arable fallow. The three-field system represented the ultimate form of common field system which, by comparison with its two-field predecessor, maximised the area under cultivation in any one year. ‘Irregular’ enclosed field systems were represented as the less developed precursors of the common field system.[39] This was problematic because the areas where common field systems were wholly or largely absent, such as Kent and parts of Norfolk, were in fact some of the most productive areas of medieval England.

By the early 1980s, a second 'archaeological' strand had started to emerge with the conclusion that the developed common field system only appeared at a relatively late stage in the middle Anglo-Saxon period, the eighth to ninth centuries. Excavation evidence suggested that village nucleation and establishment of the common field system (the two are thought to be related to some extent although not necessarily contemporaneous) actually occurred later than had previously been thought. The historiography of this strand can be traced from a series of essays edited by Trevor Rowley and taking shape with a particular concentration on Northamptonshire,.[40] Concentration on the central province, and Northamptonshire in particular, continued with the work of David Hall and others.[41] This led

[39] J. Thirsk, ‘The common fields’, *Past & Present*, 29 (1964), pp. 3–25, Carl Dahlman, *The Open Field System and Beyond: APproperty Rights Analysis of an Economic Institution* (Cambridge, 1980).
[40] Trevor Rowley, *The Origins of Open Field Agriculture* (London, 1981); Carenza Lewis, Patrick Mitchell-Fox and Christopher Dyer, *Village, hamlet and field: Changing medieval settlements in central England* (Manchester, 1997).
[41] David Hall, *The Open Fields of Northamptonshire* (Northampton, 1995); David Hall, *The Open Fields of England* (Oxford, 2014); Tom Williamson, Robert Liddiard and Tracey Partida, *Champion: The Making and Unmaking of the English Midland Landscape* (Liverpool, 2013).

to an almost complete mapping of field systems in Northamptonshire.[42] Attention extended to field systems outside the central province, Somerset, south Wales and East Anglia (in particular), using Landscape Character Assessment.[43]

More recently, a third 'environmental' strand emerged in Tom Williamson's explanation of the origins of common fields (with which Hall, with qualifications, aligned himself).[44] Williamson places considerable emphasis on the importance of environmental factors, mostly geological, to explain the location of nucleated villages and their associated common fields. Essentially, he sees the 'village moment' as associated with common field formation and as a way of dealing with the difficult, heavy clay conditions of midland England. He is reluctant, for reasons which are not entirely clear, to accept that this process was to any great extent the outcome of lordly direction. His favoured timing of the process is in the eighth and ninth centuries or the middle Anglo-Saxon era.

The fourth and final historiographical strand might be called the 'institutionalist' approach and is primarily found in the work of John Blair.[45] Whilst finding common ground on many issues with Williamson, Blair stresses the importance of lordly management in the process of common field formation. His notably late timing of common field formation between 1050 and 1150 chimes with demographic evidence of increasing population and the resulting need to extend arable colonisation at that time.

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[42] Glenn Foard, David Hall and Tracey Partida, *Rockingham Forest: An Atlas of the medieval and early-modern landscape* (Northampton, 2009); Tracey Partida, David Hall and Glenn Foard, *An Atlas of Northamptonshire: The Medieval and Early-Modern Landscape* (Oxford and Oakville, 2013).
[43] Brian K. Roberts and Stuart Wrathmell, R*egion and Place: A study of English rural settlement* (London, 2002).
[44] Tom Williamson, *Shaping Medieval Landscapes: Settlement, Society, Environment* (Macclesfield, 2003) and *Environment, Society and Landscape in Early Medieval England: Time and Topography* (Woodbridge, 2013).
[45] John Blair, *Building Anglo-Saxon England* (Princeton and Woodstock, 2018), pp. 409–413 in particular.

This provides a very brief sketch of an extensive body of historiography dealing with a period long before 1350. Some conclusions can, however, be derived from it. In particular, the common field systems at Barkby, Catesby and Geddington probably developed in the late Anglo-Saxon period and in the two centuries following the conquest. They were probably a response to the environmental conditions of the midlands, in particular heavy clay, which was not easy to cultivate, and relatively light population density (compared to, say, Norfolk). It seems unlikely their development was completed without some lordly involvement although it is not possible to discern when that took place or what form it took.

In concluding this review of late medieval landscape and field historiography, it is helpful to return to Bailey's criticisms and, in particular, his observation that field studies have neglected use in favour of origins and morphology. He also observed that there was a strand of sociological literature dealing with common property and rights which provided helpful assistance in dealing with the use of the common field system. The sociological argument had started with a 1968 paper by Garrett Hardin advancing the argument that common resources were inevitably over-exploited by their users leading to their inevitable failure.[46] Hardin's conclusions have been questioned by, amongst others, Elinor Ostrom who proposed that common property systems were in fact much more robust than Hardin had thought.[47] She identified the essential ingredients of such systems: first, the common property resources themselves (CPR) which were available to a community, secondly a 'Common Property Regime' (CPrR) or a set of rules determining use of and access to the CPR and thirdly a 'Common Pool Institution' (CPI) for enforcing the CPrR and resolving disputes amongst users of the CPR. Ostrom had intended to use the English common field system as an example of the successful operation of CPR over a period of many centuries but the scale of the task defeated her.[48]

[46] Garrett Hardin, 'The Tragedy of the Commons', *Science*, 162 (1968), pp. 1243–48.
[47] Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* (Cambridge, 1990).
[48] Ostrom, *Governing the Commons*, p. 224.

Ostrom's analysis can be readily applied to common fields with rights of pasture during the fallow and associated access to meadows and pasture constituting the bundle of rights and assets forming the CPR, the rules for their exploitation in manorial custumals corresponding to the CPrR and the manorial courts where those rules were enforced to the CPI. Ostrom's approach has been adopted by various historians.[49] It has the advantage that it can be applied to all field systems which involved elements of common rights such as open field foldcoursing in Norfolk and common pasture in the Pennines. It also provides a flexible framework for field systems allowing for modification of the CPrR (in particular) and explains why changes to the CPI (the manorial court) might affect the common field system.

The modern and early modern historiography

In any analysis of early modern English agrarian history it is difficult to overlook the work of R. H. Tawney.[50] The question of enclosure had been addressed earlier by Leadam and Gay but their attention was heavily concentrated on the 1517 inquisition.[51] In contrast, the scope of Tawney's research was vast – his work covers the fifteenth century as well as the sixteenth and his sources list the records, mostly rentals and surveys, of well over 100 different manors.[52] His main thesis, that enclosure by manorial lords was the cause of depopulation in the early sixteenth century, is now discredited but many of his subsidiary findings have stood the test of time. In particular, Tawney appreciated the existence of a significant peasant land market and the leasing of demesne land, resulting in peasant

[49] For example, Tine De Moor, 'Avoiding Tragedies: A Flemish Common and its Commoners under the Pressure of Social and Economic Change during the Eighteenth Century', *Economic History Review*, 62.1 (2009), pp. 1–22.
[50] R. H. Tawney, *The Agrarian Problem In The Sixteenth* Century (1912, London; 1967, New York reprint).
[51] See in particular I. S. Leadam, *The domesday of inclosures, 1517–18* (London, 1897, and New York, 1967 reprint) and E. F. Gay and I. S. Leadam, 'The Inquisitions of Depopulation in 1517 and the "Domesday of Inclosures"', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, New Series, 14 (1900), pp. 231–303.
[52] Tawney, *Agrarian Problem*, app. II.

landholdings which might include a mixture of customary land, land acquired by purchase and land leased from the former demesne. He recognised that some peasant landholders enlarged their holdings and on occasions enclosed them in a process which he regarded as broadly benign, unlike the lordly enclosure which he saw as the intrusion of new economic and commercial forces displacing an earlier agrarian world governed by custom. In particular, he recognised that in the post-plague world, the rather uniform system of virgate or half-virgate holdings had broken down to give way to polarised land holdings of numerous small cottagers and a small number of larger landholders, his 'Lilliputian capitalists'.[53] There were, however, blind spots in Tawney's analysis, in particular the demographic and economic factors whose operation has only became apparent more recently, and how those factors, rather than his emergent 'capitalist farmers', were the main cause of rural depopulation.[54] Even then, Tawney's long-term view that commercialisation of the rural economy led, via the Elizabethan poor laws, to the emergence of England as a manufacturing nation may still command respect even if his charting of the timing and trajectory of the process is now outdated.[55]

Seen in this light, the continuing interest in Tawney's work is unsurprising because it represents an early attempt to explain the 'great transition' from a pre-capitalist to a capitalist agrarian economy which has already been mentioned in connection with Larson's work in County Durham. Larson's conclusions about the early stages of the 'great transition' were anticipated by Jane Whittle in Norfolk.[56] Undoubtedly, there were significant changes afoot in Norfolk with an expanding peasant land and mortgage market although they fell back in the sixteenth century. The transition to a capitalist agrarian economy marked by the

[53] Tawney, *Agrarian Problem*, p. 81.
[54] Tawney, *Agrarian Problem*, p. 403 for the use of this phrase.
[55] For a recent appraisal of Tawney, see Jane Whittle (ed.), *Landlords and Tenants in Britain, 1440–1660: Tawney's "Agrarian Problem" Revisited* (Woodbridge, 2013) and in particular Whittle's introduction, ch. 1, pp. 1–18, and Christopher Dyer's 'The Agrarian Problem, 1440–1520' , ch. 2, on both of which this paragraph draws heavily.
[56] Jane Whittle, *The Development of Agrarian Capitalism: Land and Labour in Norfolk, 1440–1580* (Oxford, 2000).

disappearance of the yeomen and husbandmen of late medieval and early modern England, accompanied by the growth of farms of over 100 acres, largely enclosed and dependent on waged labour, really only happened in the eighteenth century.

The early modern historiography is helpful in explaining the process. Despite Kerridge's suggestions of an early modern agricultural revolution, the most notable feature of early modern agrarian England was how little it had changed from the late middle ages: the yeomen and husbandmen, the descendants of the medieval customary tenants, continued to farm the land in relatively small holdings and using techniques little changed since the middle ages.[57] In a sense, this picture is consistent with Campbell's conclusion that the real problem with the pre-plague agrarian economy was not so much the weakness of the 'supply side' as that of the 'demand side'. That imbalance was resolved with increasing involvement in manufacturing and international trade – the transition from a wool and natural resources exporting country to a country exporting finished woollen goods is often cited – and accompanying urban growth. The process was a slow one, possibly hindered by the demographic, climatic and political factors of the fifteenth century, but it was one that, ultimately, provided a solid basis for economic growth. The contrast is between the febrile economy of the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries and the more solid foundations for growth that started to appear in the late fifteenth century.

The agrarian economy was able to sustain that growth and feed the population of early modern England because it started from the very low base of fifteenth-century England – around 2.5 million, only slightly higher than the figure of eleventh-century England – and the use of essentially medieval agricultural techniques was quite able to feed the country until its population started to exceed the previous high point of the early fourteenth century. That

[57] Compare Eric Kerridge, *The Agricultural Revolution* (London, 1967) and Mark Overton, *The Agricultural Revolution in England: the Transformation of the Rural Economy, 1500–1850* (Cambridge, 1996).

critical point was reached at a date which is not easily identified but was probably during the seventeenth century. That necessitated the significant changes in agricultural practice manifested in the eighteenth century agricultural revolution but was also accompanied by the growth of larger farms, the disappearance of the small farmer, the growth in the numbers of landless labourers and, in short, the transition to a 'capitalist' agrarian economy.[58] Allen sees the process as one in which significant improvements in productivity were achieved by yeomen farmers in the seventeenth century whose profits were then annexed by their landlords in the eighteenth century, thus accounting for the disappearance of the small farmer, the increase in numbers of landless labourers and the increase of farm size.

The early modern historiography is of interest in setting in context its late medieval counterpart. It makes it easier to see the period from 1350 to 1500 as the start of a transitional period that ended only in the eighteenth century but it does not follow that the outcome was always inevitable. Possibly Brenner's most significant contribution to the debate of the 1980s was his observation that similar post-plague circumstances gave rise to very different responses across Europe. So too, the eighteenth-century outcome might have been different but the explanation for that probably lies, as has been suggested, in the market conditions of the early modern period rather than being pre-determined in the late middle ages.

Some conclusions

The early twenty-first century has seen increased interest in broadly 'cultural' interpretations of English social and economic history in the later middle ages. Some manifestations of that new focus have already been mentioned but others should not be overlooked. Rosamond Faith's work sheds light on the consensual but hierarchical 'moral economy' of Anglo-Saxon

[58] Robert C. Allen, *Enclosure and the Yeoman* (Oxford, 1992) and especially tables 4-4 and 5; Mark Overton, *Agricultural Revolution in England* especially pp. 168–182.

and Anglo-Norman England.[59] Her starting point is the question why peasants allowed their labour to be appropriated by the powerful in the early middle ages. Moving beyond the glib answer that it was precisely because the powerful held power, her answer is that the appropriation was based on reciprocity (food for protection and vice versa) in a very unequal society but with commonly understood safeguards, the 'moral economy'. Faith goes on to trace how this understanding evolved after the conquest with the introduction of Norman land law, the manor and a more hierarchical social and tenurial structure. Her stress on the importance of land, and the extent of and limitations to lordly power, provides a helpful background to the later middle ages, as does her observation that the resulting system involved significant popular participation in running rural communities.

The concept of the ‘moral economy’ had been revived by E. P. Thompson in the 1970s in connection with the ‘crowd’ of the eighteenth century and its remarkably legalistic polemic (a point adopted by Faith) favouring the restoration of medieval restrictions on regrating and forestalling in the grain market.[60] The popular conception of the world ‘as it ought to be’ and the importance of law had deep roots stretching back at least to the later middle ages.

Likewise, Ian Forrest’s work on ‘trustworthy men’ in the medieval parish identifies a section of wealthier peasant society that also achieved considerable significance in manorial management in the later middle ages.[61] That leads to the reflection that divisions within the peasant class were often as important as divisions between the peasants and the 'powerful'.

A ‘cultural’ approach helps to explain how and why the world of 1500 was so different from that of 1350. The increasing appearance in the record of yeomen and husbandmen towards

[59] Rosamond Faith, *The Moral Economy of the Countryside: Anglo-Saxon to Ango-Norman England* (Cambridge, 2020).
[60] E. P. Thompson, ‘The moral economy of the English Crowd in the eighteenth century’, *Past & Present*, 50 (February 1971), pp. 76–136.
[61] Ian Forrest, *Trustworthy Men: How Inequality and Faith made the Medieval Church* (Princeton, 2018).

the end of this period is conventionally understood to be a symptom of those changes which encapsulates the changes in rural society over the period. The undifferentiated mass of *custumarii* at the beginning of the period gave way to the increasingly self-identified yeomen and husbandmen. This change is attributed to the 1413 Statute of Additions which will be considered further in chapter 6 (see pp. 286-8).[62] As will be suggested in chapter 6, it may be rather more helpful to think of the emergence of multiple identities revolving around family and community, work, trade, calling or religion.

These and other changes will be examined in the following chapters but they also include deeper peasant participation in law and the legal system, both at the level of the manorial and, increasingly, royal courts, alongside increased integration into markets which started to re-build on firmer and more enduring foundations than those of the earlier middle ages. Attention has, unsurprisingly, tended to concentrate on the wealthier section of the peasant community but there may also be shadowy indications that an increasing sense of identity was also growing up amongst the less wealthy: James Belich has identified the emergence of what he describes as the 'crew culture' of groups of young, single men (usually) prepared to travel in search of the higher wages paid by an expanding economy.[63] It is not unrealistic to see the origins of Belich's 'crew culture' in the itinerant and progressively better-paid day labourers of the fifteenth century.

This emergence of a conscious peasant identity should not really come as a surprise. On the national and international stage, infantry drawn from the peasantry had started to assert itself at Courtrai (1302), Bannockburn (1314) and Morgarten (1315).[64] Even as early as the

[62] *The Statutes of the Realm*, vol. 2 (London, 1816), p. 171. See also Louisa Foroughi, 'Robin Hood: Yeoman Status and Yeoman Service' in Stephen H Rigby (ed.), *Historians of Robin Hood: The Outlaw's Legend in the Later Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2024) on yeoman status and its development.
[63] James Belich, *The World the Plague Made: The Black Death and the Rise of Europe* (Princeton, 2022), pp. 165–9 especially.
[64] Caroline Burt and Richard Partington, *Arise, England: Six Kings and the Making of the English State* (London, 2024), p. 302.

Montfortian rebellion of the thirteenth century, there are faint murmurs of peasant involvement suggesting the existence of political awareness amongst the peasantry.[65] That shadowy political awareness of course went on to manifest itself in the great revolt of 1381 – the first of a series of English peasant rebellions which continued until the Newton rebellion of 1607, in the manor adjacent to Geddington.

Enthusiasm for the 'cultural' issues does however leave at least two questions hanging in the air. First, it seems unlikely that the detailed statistical and economic evidence examined by Campbell (in particular) has yet been exhausted. Further work will involve the examination of a mass of surviving data at an estate or national scale and, quite possibly, a return to emphasis on the economic conditions of late medieval England. Secondly, scientific developments in archaeology, particularly the use of optically stimulated luminescence profiling, hold out the possibility that it may become possible to date surviving earthworks including the (sadly diminishing) remains of medieval field systems.[66] That might shed significant light not only on their origins but, possibly more significantly, on their use and development.

For the reasons explained in the introduction, large-scale statistical analysis is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, wide differences between manors make close examination of individual manors essential. Only that close study will make it possible to draw safe general conclusions about late medieval society and agrarian community. The following three chapters demonstrate those divergencies in the case of three manors in close proximity and in broadly the same part of the country.

[65] David Carpenter, *Henry III: Reform, Rebellion, Civil War, Settlement, 1258–1272* (New Haven, 2023), p. 404 for the case of Wodard of Kibworth.
[66] See for example Soetkin Vervust, Tim Kinnaird, Peter Herring and Sam Turner, 'Optically Stimulated Luminescence Profiling and Dating of Earthworks: The Creation and Development of Prehistoric Field Boundaries at Bosigran, Cornwall', *Antiquity* 94.374 (2020), pp. 420–36.

Chapter 3

Geddington

1. Topography, archival material and historiography.

Topography

Geddington, a village in Northamptonshire, lies about twenty miles north-east of Northampton on a crossing over the River Ise, a tributary of the River Nene (see map 2 for Geddington in the late nineteenth century). The soil is loamy and reasonably fertile changing to heavier clay on the surrounding higher ground. In the middle ages it lay on an important route from Northampton to Stamford where it joined Ermine Street, the main north-south artery of medieval England.

The area remains heavily wooded with Geddington Chase to the north of the village and Weekley Hall wood to the south-west, both remains of the medieval Rockingham Forest. The layout of the village remains remarkably unchanged since the early eighteenth century with the road from Northampton approaching the village from the south along Queen Street and crossing the Ise by a thirteenth century bridge with a ford alongside (see map 4 for the centre of the village in 1717).[1] A large house, The Priory, stands on the north bank of the Ise to the east of the bridge and, from early modern times, was the home of the Maidwells, a gentry family with landed interests in the area. The road then enters a triangular marketplace dominated by one of the surviving Eleanor Crosses. The ground rises to the north, the medieval 'mount', with the parish church and its churchyard to the north and east of the cross. The Stamford road took a dogleg to the west at this point before swinging north again around Geddington woods. Slightly to the east of the church a subsidiary road, the Wood Way, led northwards to Geddington Chase.

[1] John Booth's 1717 field map of the manor, Boughton House, unindexed. See also Bruce Bailey, Nikolaus Pevsner and Bridget Charry, *The Buildings of England, Northamptonshire* (New Haven, 2013), pp. 285–8.

The medieval royal manor skirted the woods to the north, included meadows and arable common fields around the village with the Ise forming the northern boundary of the manor to the west of the village.[2] The manor included the now-deserted village of Barford further to the west and land at Glendon, also heavily depopulated, to the south-west of Barford. The manor also included forinsec lands at Drayton, Islip and Cransley, villages some miles from Geddington as well as land, the Brand, at Rising Bridge just to the north of the village. The surrounding manors included Little Newton on the north bank of the Ise to the west of Geddington, Little Oakley to the north-west, Brigstock to the east and Weekley to the south.

This chapter, after an outline of the substantial surviving archival evidence (section 2), looks first at Geddington in the period from Domesday to the Black Death (section 3), then its common field system (section 4) and the operation of the manorial court (section 5). Geddington in the fifteenth century is considered in section 6. The early modern and modern denouement is addressed in section 7.

Archival material

Relatively few documents survive from the period before 1377. The most significant are a forest inquisition of 1251, a survey or extent of 1327 and a collection of charters.[3] The charters fall in two main categories: gifts of land to the abbey of Bury St Edmunds and transfers of enclosures, mostly (probably) assarts from the royal forest. They form part of the Montagu archive, so presumably they relate to land which fell into the hands of that family in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The manorial rolls of Geddington commence with some isolated rolls dating from 1326 and 1360 and continue in an almost unbroken sequence from 3 October 1377 to 1414 with some further isolated rolls from 1420–

[2] TNA, LR 2/221, the 1607 survey of the manor, describes its boundary.
[3] TNA, C 145/5, SC 12/13/29; NAS, X 349.

3, 1490 and 1505.[4] They re-commence with a sequence running from 1547 for much of the remainder of the sixteenth century although in poor condition.

The other surviving documents from the late fourteenth century are an inquisition of 1374, receivers' accounts of 1383 (in poor condition), and an inquisition of the same year (in much better condition).[5] The 1383 inquisition, in particular, provides a contrasting picture of Geddington in the years after the initial waves of bubonic plague with that of the pre-plague years shown in the extent of 1327.

For the years after the end of the sequence of manorial court rolls in 1423, the main surviving manorial sources are an inquisition of 1455 which survives only in an apparently accurate seventeenth century transcription or *inspeximus*, and receiver's accounts for the year 1460–1.[6] The manorial archives are supplemented by a wide variety of royal records contained, for the most part, in the various rolls' series and the royal court records. Geddington features quite prominently in both and they will be referred to further below along with some late-fifteenth-century wills. The early modern period is marked by a series of milestones: a survey of 1607, a field map and terrier of 1717, and the materials associated with the Enclosure Act for Geddington and Weekly of 1808, in particular the surveyors' claims book and award.[7]

Historiography

Geddington has attracted relatively little attention from modern historians. The best starting place is the antiquarian work of Bridges which concentrates on royal

[4] NAS, X351 A and B and X350 and see Bibliography, table 1 for individual courts.
[5] TNA, C 145/204/3, SC 6/948/1 and C 145/227/11 respectively.
[6] NAS, X 345B and X 351A.
[7] TNA, LR 2/221 (1607 survey); the 1717 field map and terrier are uncatalogued at Boughton House and NAS respectively; NAS X 350 (1807 claims book) and V 2129 (1808 enclosure award).

involvement at Geddington.[8] More recently, M.J. Thornton's comparative study of eighteen Northamptonshire manors, including Geddington, provides helpful statistical material.[9] His study of two late medieval village entrepreneurs, Edmund Byfield of Geddington and John Brandon of Brigstock, is also helpful. Byfield's career is considered further below.[10]

2. Domesday Book and after.

Geddington appears twice in Domesday Book. The larger holding was that of the abbey of Bury St Edmunds of one hide and one virgate of sokeland with land for two ploughs with five sokemen and four bordars, valued at 6s.[11] The smaller holding was that of the royal estate in which Geddington appears as a *membrum* of the large manor of Brigstock, of which it comprised one hide.[12] Other *membra* of Brigstock included a hide and three virgates in Islip along with four acres of meadow which were later bundled with Geddington becoming part of its forinsec land.

The outlying townships of Geddington, as they later became, also appear. Barford is described as comprising one hide formerly held by Oslac White but granted by the king to Godwine.[13] Oslac formerly held it with two sokemen and land for two ploughs and with four villains and three bordars with two ploughs and a mill rendering 32d. This sounds rather meagre for what had become, by the time of the 1327 survey, thirteen virgates in Glendon, but the explanation may lie in the fluidity of the boundaries between Geddington, Barford and Glendon and expansion of the area under cultivation after 1086.

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[8] John Bridges, *The History and Antiquities of Northamptonshire*, II (Oxford, 1782), Geddington pp. 308-12, Barford, pp. 72-3 and Glendon, pp. 14-17.
[9] M.J. Thornton, 'Rural Society in the Manor Courts of Northamptonshire, 1350-1500' (PhD. thesis, University of Leicester, 2004).
[10] M.J. Thornton, 'Two Village Entrepreneurs in Late Medieval Rockingham Forest', *Northamptonshire Past and Present* 58 (2005) pp. 17-36.
[11] TNA, E 31/2/603. Translation in Phillimore edition, *Domesday Book, 21 Northamptonshire*, ed. Frank and Caroline Thorn (Chichester, 1979), 8.2.
[12] TNA, E 31/2/477. Translation, *Domesday Book*, 1.13.
[13] TNA, E 31/2/2/10282. Translation, *Domesday Book*, 1.21.

The position in Glendon was rather more complex with the Abbey of Grestain holding half a hide and a third part of a hide and with the royal estate also holding half a hide and a third part of a hide. It seems likely the latter later formed part of the (royal) manor of Geddington.[14]

The Bury St Edmunds holding in Geddington seems to have comprised a separate manor although no medieval manorial records survive. At some point between 1156 and 1180 the abbot granted seven and a half virgates and six acres to Arnulf of Harlow which seems broadly consistent with the hide and virgate held by the abbot at the time of Domesday.[15] The charter splits the holding between five and a half virgates to the south of the Ise and the remaining two virgates and six acres to the north. At some point, although by unknown means, the Bury St Edmunds holding was incorporated in the royal estate: by the time of the 1327 survey, the two holdings had been combined in royal hands to total sixteen virgates (see below) and the only reference to Bury St Edmunds was that its tenants owed a chicken rent at Christmas and an egg rent at Easter.[16]

None of the thirteenth- or fourteenth-century documents shed any light on the size of the Geddington virgate. However, the inquisition of 1455 and accounts of 1460–1 both recite that the Geddington virgate comprised fifteen acres arable and three acres meadow, that it was held by socage tenure and owed suit of court *de tribus a tres*, that is to say at three-weekly intervals, that the entry fine was either 5s. on alienation or discretionary on inheritance, and that the annual rent was 6s. 6d. (a sum which earlier documents confirm included 1s. 6d. for commuted labour services).[17] The relatively modest acreage of the

[14] TNA, E 31/2/2/628 and E 31/2/2/478. Translation, *Domesday Book*,14.3 and 1.15c.
[15] D. C. Douglas (ed.), *Feudal documents from the Abbey of Bury St. Edmunds* (Oxford, 1932), p. 144.
[16] TNA, SC 12/13/29.
[17] NAS, X/345B and X/351A.

manor's arable in medieval and early modern documents, particularly that of the Geddington 'core' common fields, may be explained by the use of forest acres based on a twenty-one foot pole (as opposed to the conventional pole of sixteen-and-a-half feet).[18] Conversion of forest to conventional acres involves multiplication of the former by a factor of 1.62 to produce conventional acres. On this basis, the fifteen-forest-acre virgate may have comprised just over twenty-four conventional acres of arable and almost five acres of meadow.

A forest inquisition of 1251 records the tenants' rights in Geddington Wood (in the case of the tenants of Geddington) and Andolfescroft (in the case of the tenants of Barford).[19] Andolfescroft was probably the modern Weekley Hall Wood. The inquisition was not limited to Geddington but extended to Brigstock as well as the more distant forest villages at King's Cliffe and Apethorpe. It is problematic as it purports to record the state of common rights in Rockingham forest in the year before the outbreak of King John's war with the barons, so presumably 1214, when, so it was said, the forest was best kept. It goes on to recite that the common rights pertaining then had been abrogated by a judgment of Robert Passelewe and his fellow justices in eyre because those rights were abused by the tenants. The implication of the inquisition is that those rights were to be restored (why else record them?) but that is not made explicit.

The rights were significant: the tenants of Geddington and Barford had common rights of pasture which extended *'ad omniamoda animalia exceptis caperis & porcis superanuatis in mense prohibito*' (translated as the 'fence month' in the Calendar). The syntax is not entirely clear but seems to indicate that the prohibition extended only to goats and pigs over one year old (again, the translation of *porcis superannuatis* in the Calendar). The common

[18] Philip A. J. Pettit, *The Royal Forests of Northamptonshire: A Study in Their Economy, 1558–1714* (Gateshead, 1968), p. 9.
[19] TNA, C 145/5 (24) and *Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous (Chancery)*, vol. I (London, 1916), pp. 40–1.

pasture rights were, seemingly, unstinted; that is to say, they were not limited in any way, e.g. in proportion to the size of a tenant's tenement. It is not easy to see how the proviso relating to pigs could be enforced in practice but, seemingly, it applied only to adult pigs and only '*in mense prohibito'*. The tenants' rights extended further to *housebot* and *haybot*, rights to structural timber for house building and repairs: *furcas* or crucks as well as lighter wood, wattles, for walling and firewood. They constituted a valuable bundle of rights.

The pasture was probably extensive because medieval woodland was closely managed with large areas of coppice in cycles of up to twenty-two years growth and made available for grazing by cattle after seven years along with areas of grassland between larger trees kept for timber.[20] Pettit put the area of Geddington Woods at nearly 1,400 acres.[21]

The cost of these rights was modest: three annual ploughings, three days reaping in autumn and a day gathering nuts plus a chicken rent at Christmas and twelve eggs (ten only in Barford) at Christmas.

Their significance is demonstrated by another pre-Black Death document, an inquisition into the death of Peter de Deen.[22] Peter, in crossing the sluices of the watermill on the Ise between Geddington and Newton in a frenzy, *freneticus*, had fallen into the water and drowned. It had been concluded, presumably by the coroner, that his death was suicide. His widow, Juliana, petitioned the king in May 1287 to overturn that verdict and the inquisition was commissioned in July so it seems likely Peter had died either over the winter

[20] The literature is extensive but for Rockingham forest see G. F. Peterken, 'Long-Term Changes in the Woodlands of Rockingham Forest and Other Areas', *Journal of Ecology*, 64.1 (1976), pp. 123–146; J. A. Best, 'Persistent Outcomes of Coppice Grazing in Rockingham Forest, Northamptonshire, UK' in K. J. Kirby and C. Watkins (eds.), *The Ecological History of European Forests*, (Wallingford, 1998), pp. 63–72; Oliver Rackham, *Woodlands* (London, 2006), ch. 6, 'Of Wood-Pasture and Savanna' and pp. 269–76 in particular and for the early modern period; Pettit, *Royal Forests*, ch. VIII, 'Brigstock: A Case Study' deals with a neighbouring village to Geddington'.
[21] Pettit, *Royal Forests*, p. 12.
[22] C 145/46 and, *Calendar of Inquistions Miscellaneous I*., p. 405.

of 1286/7 or in spring 1287. The inquisition heard evidence from thirteen local residents and concluded that his death was attributable to misfortune, not suicide.

Helpfully, the inquisition recorded the inventory of his goods which had been taken at the inquest and which had been bought back by Peter's heir, his son. Their total value was £7 7s. 10d. (see appendix 1) of which his livestock was valued at £4 16s. 8d. and included two horses and four oxen (presumably his plough team). He also owned eight cows: two cows, two calves, two heifers of one year of age and two of two years. That pattern suggests he was breeding for dairy-production with repeated pregnancies each year to keep his cows in calf and in milk. In addition, he owned eight sheep and twenty pigs along with twenty 'hoggets' which were itemised immediately following the pigs suggesting they were young pigs. His grain comprised six quarters of wheat (*frumentum*) or rye (*silignum*), five of barley (*ordeum*) and five of oats (*avena*). In addition, his growing crops were valued: two-and-a-half acres in Newton field and the same again in Geddington field, both sown to wheat and rye, or five acres in total. Geddington and Newton operated a three-course system, which suggests he also held a further two-and-a-half acres lying fallow or seven-and-a-half acres arable in all. In short, he held a Geddington half-virgate which, assuming it comprised forest acres, amounted to just over twelve conventional acres of arable and two-and-a-half acres of meadow.

Peter's grain, assuming the inventory was taken in late winter or spring (when his stock would have been diminished), compares comfortably with, for example, Kitsikopoulos's estimates of the grain consumption of a theoretical virgater holding twenty acres arable.[23] Peter's tenement was significantly smaller. His livestock holdings significantly exceed Kitsikopoulos's virgate holder's. It is likely that his common rights in the woods enabled him to pasture a significant quantity of stock, cattle in particular but also a number of pigs, from

[23] Harry Kitsikopoulos, 'Standards of Living and Capital Formation in Pre-Plague England: A Peasant Budget Model', *The Economic History Review* 53.2 (2000), pp. 237–61.

which he could supplement his family's diet with animal protein (meat and dairy products), sell the surplus, and buy in grain to supplement what he grew on his modest arable. His other possessions suggest that he may also have brewed or baked bread, so it looks as though he was well integrated into local markets.

The royal survey or extent of 1327, which captured the manor before the plague, recorded that the customary tenants (*custumarii*) of Geddington leased 123 acres from the demesne for £4 15s. 6d. per annum; other parts of the demesne were leased for modest amounts including two pieces (*perticula*, probably *particula* was intended) of land called *le Gores* and *Wodecroft* which were let to Thomas Mulso for 12d. and were probably assarts bordering the forest.

There were sixteen virgate holders in Geddington (described as *custumarii*), each with a messuage, paying 5s., and ten half-virgate holders paying 2s. 6d. per annum. In addition, each virgate holder owed labour services of three days' ploughing with another man, apparently a neighbouring tenant, one day's mowing, and one day's reaping and gleaning with the entire family save wives and shepherds, which were valued in total at £1 11s. 6d. The mathematics are slightly obscure but the total suggests each virgate holder's services were valued at 18d. per annum and each half-virgate holder's services at 9d. per annum. However, they had all been commuted for cash at the valuation figures by 1327. The other customary tenants in Geddington were ten cottars paying 22s. 6d. in total (or 2s. 3d. each) and four cotterells paying a significantly higher rent per capita at 36s. 6d. in total (or 9s. 1½d. each). There were a further thirteen virgates in Barford and four in Glendon, all held on the same terms as the Geddington virgates, along with some smaller holdings, probably carved out of the demesne in both cases.

The survey specifically refers to sixty-five acres of demesne land in Barford and a further three virgates in Glendon with no accompanying labour services but rented at the high figure

of 19s. 6d. in one case and 18s. 6d. in the other two which suggests they may also have been rented demesne land. On this basis, the manorial demesne spread across the three villages exceeded 240 acres.

The survey also lists a market yielding just over £3 1s. per annum which, along with an annual fair, had been granted by Henry III in 1248.[24] There was an oven and fishery (£2 6s. 8d.), two watermills (£4), the court receipts (£5 1s.) and pannage (£2). Finally, the survey lists the labour services and chicken rents of the tenants of the fees of St. Edmund and Weekley (a nearby manor) which were broadly similar to those of the Geddington tenants and which were valued at 10s., rather suggesting there were only about ten such tenants. This seems to be a hangover from the Bury St Edmunds fee in Geddington at the time of Domesday.

The demesne at Geddington might have been directly cultivated in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries when the manor was quite extensively used by the royal family. The manor house or hunting lodge had been built in 1129-30 but was said to be derelict by 1274.[25] Henry III used the hunting lodge and had work carried out on it but it seems to have fallen out of use after his death in 1272; it was certainly derelict by the late fourteenth century.[26] That may explain why, by 1327, the demesne was rented out to the customary tenants and the labour services had been commuted for cash.

The royal administration's subsequent management of the manor varied over time, although a rather confused picture emerges from references to Geddington in the various rolls series

[24] Gazetteer of Markets and Fairs in England and Wales to 1500, online at https://archives.history.ac.uk/gazetteer/gazweb2.html.
[25] RCHM England, *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the County of Northampton, vol. II, Archaeological Sites in Central Northamptonshire*, (London, 1979), p. 51.
[26] David Carpenter, *Henry III: The Rise to Power and Personal Rule, 1207-1258* (New Haven, 2021), pp. 408, 410, 422 and 620 (which describes Henry's Northamptonshire hunting lodges as 'little visited').

(see appendix 2). Briefly, the income from the manor was usually vested in the queen along with the income from a large parcel of local royal assets including the nearby royal forest manors of Brigstock and, further afield, at King's Cliffe, all parts of Rockingham forest. This association may explain why in 1290 Queen Eleanor's bier rested at Geddington on its way south, leaving the Eleanor Cross as a distinctive village landmark.

The royal association with the manor was, however, limited because it was let 'at farm' to a consortium of manorial tenants, the *firmarii*. The lettings are summarised in appendix 2. Thus, from 1369 onwards the manor was let to Edmund Byfield and 'other tenants' and in 1401 the farm of the manor was let to John Mulso, Henry Mulso, William Juhet, Edmund Byfeld, William Howe, Thomas Lamberd, Thomas Elyot, William Knight and other manorial tenants, whilst the manor itself was vested in Queen Joan in 1404. The *firmarii* are all familiar as tenants of the manor and some of them appear again below.

The resulting, and rather curious, arrangement by which the manor was let at farm to the *firmarii*, who then let the demesne along with the customary tenements to, in effect, themselves may explain much about the history of Geddington in the later middle ages. It left a situation in which control of the manor was concentrated in the hands of (probably) wealthier manorial tenants who combined the roles of *firmarii* of the manor with tenants of the manor and demesne. The involvement of the king or queen in the management of the manor was, as a result of the letting at farm, very limited.

As can also be seen from appendix 2, the annual value of the manor was taken at £52 in the first half of the fourteenth century, although the 1327 survey gave a lower annual value for the manor at just over £47; but that fell away dramatically after the middle of the century. The computations underlying the 1327 survey are not always easy to follow but the overall picture showing how the manor's income was made up is clear and is shown in table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Geddington manorial income from the 1327 survey.		
	Income/value (£ s d)	*%age of total*
Customary rents	£16 0s. 3d.	34
Market tolls, ovens and fishery tolls, *perquisita curie* and miscellaneous	£12 19s. 4d.	27.5
Rent of demesne lands	£10 16s. 3½d.	22.9
Mill rents	£5 14s. 0d.	12.08
Rent of forinsec lands (Cransley and Islip)	£1 13s. 4d.	3.5
	£47 3s. 2½d.	
Note the total income does not correspond exactly with the medieval auditors' total but the shortfall is only 8d..		

The customary rents of Geddington amounted to only about a third of the annual value of the manor; most of the remainder, about half, was attributable to the rent of the demesne land and other receipts of which the *perquisita curie* (£5 1s.) and the market tolls (£3 1s. 8d.) were the largest. The demesne arable land was let at 9d. per acre or slightly more. That was significantly more than the rent of the customary tenants' arable land: a virgate was let for 6s. 6d. (including commuted labour services) which, allowing for an element of that figure being attributable to the accompanying messuage and three acres of more valuable meadow, probably meant that the rent of an acre of customary arable was around 3d.

The 1327 survey also contains a hint that the manor's yield was fragile: the receipts included £4 for two ruinous watermills which, presumably, would only yield an income once they had been repaired. Thus, despite the attribution of an income of £52 to the manor, by 1327 its actual income cannot have significantly exceeded £43 (£47 from the 1327 extent minus the £4 attributed to the mills).

It might be expected that the post-plague position would have been demonstrated by a 1374 petition by the ‘poor tenants’ of Geddington, presumably the *firmarii*, which led to an inquisition into its value.[27] The petition stated that the manor was let at farm and that 'by death and removal of tenants', the value of the manor had diminished significantly.

There are, however, problems with the 1374 inquisition. It commences with a recital of the decayed rents of nine holdings, all half-virgates of seven-and-a-half acres save one of one-and-a-half virgates. In all nine cases the previous rent was said to have been 13s. 2d. per annum and in almost every case the current rent (despite the assertion that the holdings lay unlet for want of tenants) was said to be 1s. 2d. or, in the case of the one-and-a-half virgate holding and one of the half-virgate holdings, 1s. 6d. The supposed 'old' rent was massively more than the customary rent of a full virgate in 1327, 6s. 6d. per annum including commuted services, or half that for half-virgate holdings. It is improbable that the 'old' rent could have approached 13s. 2d. even allowing for subletting at a profit. The 'new' rent of only 1s. 2d. is revealing: these holdings were not unlet but, on the contrary, it is likely they had been shared out amongst, and let to, the larger tenants, probably the virgators, at a favourably reduced rent.

The other items of reduced rent and income are rather more plausible in the post-Black Death era: the rent of ten cottages (formerly £1 4d.; now nil), the market (formerly £2 14s. 8d.; now 8d.), the common oven and fishery (formerly £2 6s. 8d.; now 13s. 4d.), the three watermills (formerly an oddly high £5 7s. 4d.; now £2), the site of the royal manor (formerly 13s. 4d.; now 6s. 8d.) and the profits of the court (formerly £5; now only £1 6s. 8d.). The object of the petitioners' exercise becomes apparent with the concluding section of the inquisition where the sum of the reductions (allowing for the current income) totalled £18 2s. 4d. thereby bringing the 'old' manorial annual income of £52 down to the petitioners' figure of

[27] TNA, C 145/204 (3) and *Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous (Chancery)*, vol. III (London, 1937), p. 345.

£33 17s. 8d. Evidently the local jurors were able, by some means, to convince the royal inquisitors that this was a true figure.

The disappearance of the village's market might also have been a symptom of other stresses within the local economy and would have been a significant loss for tenants such as Peter de Deen if they were (as has been suggested) quite highly dependent on it. In this context, a curious incident in 1350 commands attention. On 18 April a commission of oyer and terminer was given to William le Zouche and others to investigate a violent incident at Geddington at which the queen's market there had been broken up, violence done to her tenants and her bailiff, William de Corby, injured.[28] This seems to have been part of a pattern of similar incidents at Kingsthorpe (another royal manor just outside Northampton) which is mentioned in the same commission. A further commission two years later arose from violent incidents at Geddington, King's Cliffe and Brigstock although, on this occasion, there was no mention of breaking up the market.[29] Whether the market was the primary objective of the 1350 incidents is unclear and it is not possible to trace them further in the record. They will, however, be considered further below.

The 1383 inquisition was commissioned, like the 1374 inquisition, because of continuing complaints from the *firmarii* about the rent of the manor.[30] It was based on comparisons with the earlier annual valuation of the manor at £52. The date of that earlier valuation is not stated but the 1374 petition refers to a valuation made in the time of Queen Philippa, who married Edward III in 1326 and died in 1369. It seems likely, therefore, that that valuation pre-dated the first wave of the Black Death in 1348/9 which points to a date between the 1327 survey and the first wave of the Black Death. It might post-date the Black Death but, given its high annual yield for the manor, that seems unlikely. By 1383 the annual value was

[28] TNA, C 66/230, mm. 18d and 19d.
[29] TNA, C 66/238, m. 15d.
[30] TNA, C 145/227/11.

£32, less than in 1374 but only very slightly so. The comparison of the yield of the manor in 1327, 1327-1348/9 and 1383 is summarised in table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Geddington: comparison of the value of the manor

	1327	*1327-1348/9*	*1374*	*1383*
Customary rents	£16 0s. 3d.	£20 13s. 1d.		£18 1s.11d.
Market tolls, oven and fishery tolls, *perquisita curie* and miscellaneous	£12 19s. 4d.	£15 1s. 4d.	£2 0s. 8d.	£4 5s. 0d.
Rent of demesne lands	£10 16s. 3½d.	£9 5s. 3d.		£4 8s. 11d.
Mill rents	£5 14s. 0d.	£5 7s. 0d.	£2 0s. 0d.	£3 11s. 0d.
Rents of forinsec	£1 13s. 4d.	£1 13s. 4d.		£1 13s. 4d.
	£47 3s. 2½d.	£52 0s. 0d.	£33 17s.10d.	£32 0s. 2d.

Whilst the customary rents had held up reasonably well across this period, fixed as they were by custom, the two categories of receipts which show a marked decline are the rents of the demesne and the market tolls and other receipts. The demesne rents of arable land had declined from 9d. per acre in 1327 to 4d. per acre which was close to the value of customary arable suggested above. The market (worth £3 1s. 8d. in 1327) had ceased to exist and the *perquisita curie* had dropped from £5 1s. in 1327 to £2 5s. in 1383. Thus, those receipts which had accounted for half the manor's income in 1327 had either fallen away completely or had been severely reduced. The 1374 inquisition did not value the entire manor, so it is impossible to compare it with the 1327 and 1383 valuations save in the case of income from the market, oven, fishery and court and the mill rents. Those figures are included in table 3.2 to highlight the implausibility of the 1374 estimate of the decayed income of the manor.

Another feature of the 1383 inquisition was the complete disappearance of the ten half-virgate holdings of 1327. The process of disappearance seems to have been well under way by the time of the 1374 inquisition when eight were said to be untenanted although that seems improbable. It is not clear what had happened to these holdings but, with the

customary rent holding up reasonably well, the most likely explanation is that, as has been said, they had been quietly absorbed into the virgate holdings.

The valuation of the manorial income at £52 had been used since at least 1312 (see appendix 2) and, whilst it had probably been founded in reality when first used (presumably in either the early years of the fourteenth century or, possibly, the closing years of the thirteenth), the 1327 survey (which, as explained, was optimistic) suggests that it was becoming unrealistic. Indeed, it may be that there were difficulties in maintaining the manorial income even before the Black Death. The reasons for that are unclear but may have been exaggerated by the problematic common identity of the *firmarii* and the manorial tenants. What seems beyond doubt, however, is that the advent of the plague accentuated those problems and added new ones. That at least seems clear from the petition of 1374 and the survey of 1383.

The impact of the plague leads on to the question of population. Statistics from the poll tax records for Geddington are limited to the headcount of taxpayers for the 1377 poll tax. No records survive of the 1379 or 1381 poll taxes.[31] The 1377 records show that there were 153 taxpayers in Geddington, and a further fifty-two taxpayers in Barford with Glendon. The total number of taxpayers in the Geddington manor was thus 205. The population is considered further in chapter six (see pp. 252-4) but the poll tax records point to it being between 370 and 400.

There is no comparable information for the pre-Black Death population. The 1374 petition suggests that there had been high mortality in Geddington but it is impossible to assess how high the mortality had actually been. The dramatic decline in the letting value of the demesne arable between 1327 and 1383 (from roughly 9d. per acre to only 4d. per acre)

[31] Carolyn C Fenwick, *The Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381*, vol. II (Oxford, 2001), pp. 204-5 (Geddington) and p. 210 (Barford with Glendon).

does suggest a significant reduction in demand for land that probably reflected a significant mortality, the precise extent of which is uncertain.

Likewise, there is limited evidence about the wealth of the inhabitants although, as in the case of Peter of Deen, there is an impression that they were rather wealthier than might have been expected. That impression is reinforced by the 1352 case of Hugo de Brechale, an undoubted suicide who is considered further in chapter six. He was probably a virgate-holder. His estate was valued at £33 6s. although the absence of any agricultural equipment or household goods gives rise to doubt whether the inventory was complete. It was restricted to grain in his barn (unspecified) valued at £20, sheep at £6 and other stock (oxen, cattle of varying ages, horses and pigs) at £7 6s. As with Peter de Deen, the extent of his stock and grain is striking. The absence of any itemisation of grain type makes any assessment of quantity difficult but, assuming Hugo's grain was composed, like Peter's, of wheat, barley and oats, the total could have been around 50 to 80 quarters.[32] Both men held large amounts of grain – in Hugo's case far more than he could have grown on his virgate holding – along with significant quantities of stock. It seems likely that they were selling their surplus animal products, probably dairy produce in the case of Peter de Deen, and using the cash to buy in grain.

Peter and Hugh probably attracted the coroner's attention because of their wealth. There were others in the community who were less well-off: Hugh, son of Robert Olymakere, who in 1322 took sanctuary in the parish church following the theft of half a bushel of malt from a house in Newton, whose goods were valued at only 12d., or Alice de Thorp, *mendicans*, who in the same year was blown by wind into the river and drowned and whose goods went

[32] These figures have been computed by comparing the valuation of Hugo's grain, £20, with the indexed prices of wheat, barley and oats for 1351/2 and 1352/3 in Edward Miller (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales. vol. III, 1348-1500* (Cambridge, 1991), appendix D, p. 502.

unvalued, probably because they were worth so little.[33] However, the presence of wealthy tenants in Geddington may have created a forest manor micro-economy there selling animals and animal-products and thereby sucking in grain from the surrounding area. That might provide an explanation for the curious incident of market-breaking in 1350. It has been observed that the early 1350s were a period of considerable market volatility, partly due to labour-shortages following the first wave of the Black Death and partly due to a series of bad harvests.[34] It does not seem improbable that a village market drawing in quantities of grain at a time when it was in short supply would have aroused the hostility of less well-favoured surrounding communities. That might also explain the subsequent complete disappearance of Geddington's market, although the causal mechanism for that is opaque. It also follows that the tenants of Geddington were closely integrated into local markets before the middle of the fourteenth century. That was, however, accompanied by quite sharp divisions of wealth within the community which become apparent in the manorial court rolls (see section 5 below).

3. The common fields of Geddington.

The common field system of the manor took the form of the familiar 'ridge and furrow' of midland England. There seems to have been a 'core' area around Geddington along with a further field system at Barford which probably abutted the western boundary of the Geddington 'core' and, possibly, a further field at Glendon. Very little trace of these field systems remains visible on the ground today. The area to the west of Geddington was extensively mined for iron-ore by the early 1940s, so the aerial photography of the mid- and late-1940s is of little help in reconstructing the field systems there.

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[33] TNA, JUST 2/109 m. 3, AALT image http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT7/JUST2/JUST2no109/IMG_0007.htm for both cases.
[34] TNA, C 66/230 mm. 18d and 19d (oyer and terminer commission of 1350) and Mark Bailey, *After the Black Death: Economy, Society, and the Law in Fourteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 2021), ch. 3 and pp. 73–4 especially for grain shortages in the early 1350s.

For these reasons, much of the information about the common fields is derived from the Geddington field map of 1717. By then Barford and Glendon were separated from Geddington so the map covers only the Geddington 'core'. It shows six common fields divided into furlongs and further subdivided into selions, strips of land often in the characteristic inverse-S shape formed by frequent ploughing into ridge-and-furrow, each in separate ownership. Table 3.3 shows that it is possible to trace the field names back from the 1717 field map to the 1607 survey and from there, with increasing uncertainty, to the medieval field names. Map 3 shows the Geddington 'core' fields from the 1717 map traced onto the nineteenth-century Ordnance Survey map.

Table 3.3 Geddington: common fields[35]		
1717	*1607*	*Late medieval*
Wood Field	Wood Field	Possibly the East Field
Debdale Field	Debdale Field	Depdale Field
Boughton Field	Hamm Field	Probably an early modern creation
Tickley Hill Field	Windmillhill Field	South Field
Mill Field	Middle or Mill Field	Middle Field
West Field	West Field	West Field

The pattern that emerges from the 1607 survey is that one group of tenants held tenements concentrated in Hamm, Debdale and Wood Fields (north of the Ise) whilst another group held tenements concentrated in West, Middle and Windmillhill fields (south of the Ilse). Thus, it seems Geddington's common field system may have derived from two separate three field systems. This conclusion is tentative but, of seventeen holdings in 1607, five broadly fall in the first group and three in the second group so these holdings account for almost half the total. They are mostly the smaller holdings whereas the larger holdings are, unsurprisingly, more diverse, probably being derived from combinations of holdings from

[35] Table 3.3 is taken from the 1717 field map at Boughton house; TNA, LR 2/221 (the 1607 survey); and NAS, X 351 A and B for courts of 27.05.1385 (Scotney to Mulso transaction) and 21.10.1385 (Champeneys to Drayton transaction) referring to Depdale, Middle and West and South fields; NAS, X 351 B for the court of 15.01.1379 (Corby to Gryndell and Corby to Corby transactions) referring to the East field.

both groups. The explanation of this pattern may lie in the Domesday division of Geddington between the royal and Bury St Edmunds estates, with the former concentrated north of the river and the latter south of the river. That conclusion confirms David Hall's view that there was more than one field system in Geddington based on the Domesday division, although he tentatively reverses the royal and Bury St Edmunds estates.[36] However, he does not seem to have had access to the twelfth-century Bury St Edmunds charter which points to its estate being concentrated south of the river.

The 1717 map, although helpful in recording the Geddington 'core' field system, needs to be approached with caution. It probably (as is suggested below) records a slightly reduced post-medieval field system which might once have been rather more extensive. It is also likely that the extensive leys – strips of pasture running through the field system – were either late- or post-medieval insertions. Finally, the furlong names shown in the 1717 map and terrier are almost completely different from the medieval furlong names and there are only one or two instances where the 1717 furlong names can be traced back to the medieval furlong names. That is of some significance because the field names are only rarely used in the manorial court rolls and arable land is usually identified only by furlong name. That was probably because, firstly, any villager could immediately identify the location of a named furlong and, secondly, because that villager would also know into which *course* that furlong fell – that is to say, the cropping pattern or rotation in which that individual furlong fell. From the villager's point of view, that was probably by far the most important information about a specific piece of arable land.

The 1327 extent stipulated that the virgators owed their ploughing duty '*ad tres sesonas*' or at the three sowings, which seems to provide early confirmation that Geddington operated a three-course system.[37]

[36] David Hall, *The Open Fields of Northamptonshire* (Northampton, 1995), pp. 270–1.
[37] TNA, SC 12/13/29 (1327 survey) and DMLBS, '*saisonare*' for '*sesona*' or sowing.

The Geddington arable field system also needs to be placed in a broader context: both the 1717 field map and the 1808 enclosure map show quite extensive areas of 'closes' or 'ancient enclosures' respectively. They are concentrated in the immediate vicinity of the village and along the margins of the woods, to the north (adjoining Geddington Chase) and to the south-west (adjoining Weekley Hall woods) with an ill-defined area called Bancroft Closes lying outside the eastern boundary of the manor in the 1717 field map. In short, there was quite extensive meadow and pasture alongside the arable and which was supplemented, as has been seen, by extensive common pasture rights in the forest.

The scatter of surviving medieval charters relating to land at Geddington confirms the presence there of 'land assarted from the lord king', as well as assarts called Losewro, Stonhawe and, suggestively, Stockings.[38]

This section has set out the context for land transactions which will be addressed in the following section.

4. The manorial court

The extensive manorial court rolls provide an insight into the structure of the community, how the court – and probably the wider community – was controlled by a group of wealthier tenants, the stresses resulting from that, and how all sections of the community used the court, particularly in land transactions. The text of the rolls follows a fairly consistent format for both the manorial court (usually referred to as the *curia plena*), which was held regularly

[38] NAS, X 349, a collection of un-indexed charters including those of 13.11.1327 from William atte Assh of Geddington to Margaret, widow of Hugo Prilli of lands *'de assartis domini regis*', of 20.12.1323 from Johanna Desburgh to William, son of Robert de la Donne of an assart at Losewro, of 23.09.1346 from John Mulsho to Willaim of St Maur of an assart at Stonhawe and of 24.08.1340 from Henry of Titchmarsh to William of St Maur of 'Stockings'. As to the latter, see Paul Cavill, *A New Dictionary of English Field-Names* (Nottingham, 2018), p. 404 under 'Stocken' and similar, 'Piece of ground cleared of tree stumps'.

at roughly three-weekly intervals, and for the view of frankpledge (*visus frankiplegii*), usually held twice a year at around Easter and Michaelmas.

The full court

The record for each court usually commences with a list of essoins (*essonia*) followed by the litigation before the court with each case at its various procedural stages of summons, distraint and attachment. Almost all were pleas of debt or trespass although specific details of the individual cases are usually sparse. In each case the identity of the surety is recorded, frequently the bailiff but otherwise someone connected to the litigant. Absent litigants were fined a relatively modest 2d. or 3d. The steward presided at the courts but remains a shadowy figure referred to on only a handful of occasions throughout the roll series.

The rolls contain details of numerous property transactions which are dealt with below (see *Land tenure and transactions*).

Other matters were raised at the full court when the need arose, such as presentations by the hayward or messor in relation to infringements of grazing rights, or the detention of stray animals such as pigs, cattle and horses.[39] Ordinances were occasionally promulgated at the court and were usually expressed to be made with the consent of the lord and the village or, occasionally, by the village alone.[40] They dealt with a wide variety of matters such as the management of the common fields and pasture (amongst the very few references to that subject in the court rolls), prohibiting, for instance, gathering crops on the land of others or pasturing scabby horses on the common pasture.[41] They extended further to market

[39] For example, NAS, X 351B (court of 26.06.1382) and X 350 (court of 11.01.1490).
[40] For example, NAS, X 351B (courts of 12.07.1382 – ordinance expressed to be made by the *homagium* - and 02.08.1382 - by the lord and tenants), X 351B (court of 20.05.1389 – made by the entire village).
[41] NAS, X 351B (court of 12.07.1382 – harvesting beans and court of 29.04.1413 – scabby horses). See appendix 8, nos. 1-9 for a full list.

regulation, providing that brewers had to use sealed measures, and to more direct social control with, as will be seen, the imposition of a 40d. fine for knife and sword offences.

The full court usually ended with a presentation by the ale-tasters (*tastatores*) of a group of around six to twelve brewers.[42] Their fines were determined by reference to the number of their brewing sessions. The usual fine was 2d. per session but the level of fine was flexible and, on occasion, increased. The court clerk frequently recorded that the brewers had brewed and sold ale with 'unsealed measures' (*cum mensuris non sigillatis*) contrary to the ordinance which seems to indicate concern over issues of quality and, in particular, measure.[43] Overall, the objective of the assize of ale seems to have been market regulation and revenue-raising rather than suppression.

The record of each court concluded with the affirmation by around four named villagers. The office they held is not identified but presumably they were the affeerers who were responsible for determining fines and fees together with the sum of the amercements and fines raised at that session.[44]

The view of frankpledge

Views of frankpledge took the form of presentations by the tithingmen of the townships usually starting with Rushton (which lay outside the manor but within the jurisdiction of the view) and moving on to Glendon, Barford and Geddington. Thus, at the reasonably typical view of 8 April 1383 the presentations for Rushton and Glendon were made by one tithingman each, for Barford by two tithingmen and for Geddington by five tithingmen whose identity will be considered below.

[42] The examples are numerous but see e.g. NAS, X 351A (courts, 20.05.1387, 04.10.1387 and 11.04.1388),
[43] See e.g. NAS, X 351B (court of 03.10.1377 – unsealed measures).
[44] Mark Bailey, *The English Manor c.1200 – c.1500* (Manchester, 2002), p. 171. And see e.g. NAS, 351A (court of 11.04.1388).

The views usually ended with a record of the jurors' sworn confirmation of the accuracy (or otherwise) of the tithingmen's presentations and the sum of the fines levied.

The frequency of the courts, along with good communications on a main road, probably made Geddington an attractive forum for litigation by comparison with manors where courts were only held twice a year. The overall impression is that the courts were efficiently managed, that suits were determined quite rapidly and that there was a generally understood procedure for dealing with numerous land transactions. That was probably attributable to the quality of the court clerks. William Bernak and Edmund Byfeld (see below) are obvious examples of such court officials.

The only indications in the rolls of direct royal involvement are two letters written into the court rolls (both in French). One is from Anne of Bohemia, Richard II's first wife of 8 May 1394 permitting the tenants of Geddington and John Mulso, owner of the adjoining manor at Newton, to take stone from the ruins of the royal hunting lodge. The other is from Joan of Navarre, Henry IV's second wife, of 21 March 1405 confirming the tenants' rights to timber in the forest for housebote and heybote. These interventions were probably provoked by events in Geddington – probably by concerns, or disputes, over access to what were, or were seen as, common rights. They will be considered further below.

Office holders

Superficially, the Geddington manorial offices followed a familiar pattern with a steward, a bailiff, and subsidiary offices such as the messor. However, this pattern has to be considered in the light of the tenurial structure of the Geddington manor which left the *firmarii* as their own landlords. As will be seen, it also left them very much in control of the manorial institutions including, in particular, the view of frankpledge.

The steward probably presided over the manorial court but there are very few references to the office and none explicitly identifying the steward. However, a throwaway reference on 24 May 1414 to a hearing *coram Thoma et Henrico Mulsho* suggests they were the joint stewards then. There are few indications of the steward's direct interventions in the manorial court and, although the role was undoubtedly influential, that influence may have been exercised through others, particularly the tithingmen and jurors in the view of frankpledge.
The bailiffs' role was essentially that of officers of the manorial court. Their most frequent appearance was in the records of manorial land transactions where the bailiff, on behalf of the king or queen as lord of the manor, accepted the surrender of the land by the transferor following which it was granted to the transferee. The other frequent appearance of the bailiff was as pledge-provider in litigation and presentations. Other ballival functions included the making of attachments and distraints following the orders of the court. However, the bailiffs' main function was probably the management of the court. The managerial effort would have been considerable with frequent court sessions for which it was necessary to ensure the presence of the steward, litigants, presentees, jurors and tithingmen and other officials. The career of one prominent bailiff, Edmund Byfeld, will be examined further below.
The other officials of the manor included, most notably, the messors who were responsible for impounding stray animals and policing grazing within the manor, and the ale-tasters who were responsible for the presentations of brewers. Other officials such as the constable and bedell make rather fleeting appearances. However, it does seem that the manor had an administrative superstructure even if its form is not explained in the court rolls. It is likely that the management of this superstructure was part of the bailiff's responsibilities.

The process by which these officials were selected is opaque. The court rolls recount the 'election' of individuals to these offices rather infrequently. It is unlikely the fragmentary records can be accounted for by the loss of individual court rolls so it seems the appointment process was often part of the unrecorded administration of the manor. It is also unclear how the election actually worked and who actually 'elected' the officeholders. The 'election'

process may not have involved anything which would be recognised as such today. In reality, the outcome was probably determined by the tithingmen, jurors and affeerers.

The view of frankpledge was dominated by the tithingmen and jurors who controlled the presentations made there. The jurors also played a part in the *curia parva* when litigation was decided by jury inquisition. The other key group was the affeerers who determined the level of amercements and fees.[45]

It is helpful to consider, as representative examples. the careers of two office-holding families: the Belles and the Launcelyns.

Three members of the Belle family appear in the court rolls: Henry (probably the father), Thomas and John (probably his sons). Henry held a tenement of six acres which was transferred to Thomas in 1380. John, described as *clericus* at the Easter 1380 view, was elected messor at the *curia* of 2 April 1380. Thomas was elected a tithingman of Geddington on 15 April 1382 and continued in that office until 1394 with a short break in 1389/90. The Belle family then disappears from the court record rather abruptly in 1404.

Thomas's career was problematic. The six acre family tenement was steadily sold off in the decade following the 1380 transfer to Thomas who appeared frequently in litigation and violent confrontations in the court rolls. Despite that, he remained a tithingman, acting as a tithingman at many of the views where he was presented. Evidently, none of this disqualified him from office. Likewise, another family of tithingmen, the Coimfords or Coimforts, also appeared in presentations for violence.

[45] Mark Bailey, *The English Manor,* p. 171.

The Launcelyn family had a rather different profile. They can be identified as virgate holders in Barford.[46] Robert was elected bailiff in 1378 and served as juror on numerous occasions between 1383 and 1410. Simon was a Barford tithingman from 1388 to 1403. Robert left his mark on Geddington as the builder of (possibly) the chancel and south chapel of Geddington parish church.[47]

Further light is cast on the tithingmen and jurors (in particular) by the identities of the eight *firmarii* of the manor in 1401.[48] John and Henry Mulso, members of an emergent gentry family, held over a virgate of land in Geddington (and possibly more). William Iuhet held three virgates in Barford, William Howe or Hough was a member of a family who either held or had held a virgate holding carved out of the demesne, Thomas Elyot held a virgate in Barford and William Knyght a virgate in Geddington. All of the named *firmarii* save Edmund Byfeld and Thomas Lambard held at least a virgate, some of them more. Byfeld and Lambard held land in Geddington but on a more modest scale. Howe, Byfeld, Lambard, Elyot and Knyght served as jurors and affeerers, Elyot was also a tithingman for Barford and Byfeld for Geddington. It is reasonable to conclude that the *firmarii* of the manor, the larger landholders, the tithingmen and the jurors formed an interlocking group which controlled the manorial court.

The careers of two office holders, probably from outside Geddington, followed a different pattern: William Barnak or Bernak and Edmund Byfeld. The names of both men presumably

[46] See appendix 3.
[47] Bailey, Pevsner and Cherry, *Northamptonshire*, p. 286. The inscription on a series of inscribed stones running around the step of the chancel and south chapel now reads in part *Robertus Launcelyn de Geytington fecit istum cancellum cuius anime propicietur deus amen*. However, the inscribed stones form part of a much longer inscription also recording (in their present form) the contribution of the priest, William Glover, to the raising of the pavement, scabella, of the chancel in 1369. The stones have, however, been rearranged on at least one occasion and may have read differently in the past (see John Bennett, *Geddington Church: The History, Architecture and Stories of a Hidden Medieval Gem* (Geddington, 2024), pp. 24-7). However, even allowing for that, it seems likely that Robert Launcelyn played some part in financing the building, or re-building, of the east end of the church.
[48] See appendix 2, 8 July 1401.

reflected their origins. Barnack is in the far north of Northamptonshire on the Lincolnshire border and several miles south-east of Stamford, about twenty-five miles from Geddington. Byfield lies about forty miles in the south-west of Northamptonshire near Daventry and close to the Oxfordshire border.

William Bernak (the commoner spelling of his name) was recorded as the *clericus* of Geddington in a land transaction at the court held on 12 October 1381 so he may well have been responsible for writing up the court rolls of that period.[49] He appeared at the very beginning of the main sequence of Geddington court rolls on 3 October 1377 and his final appearance was on 18 October 1388 suggesting that he resided there for at least eleven years and probably longer.[50] His initial appearance was as a tithingman, a post he retained until 1388.[51] In 1378 he and his wife acquired a cossetel 'at the foot of the bridge' in Geddington.[52] Thereafter, he seems to have dabbled in moneylending reflected in several debt claims for 20s. and 6s., quite large sums by the standards of Geddington debt litigation.[53]

Edmund Byfeld had an altogether higher profile. His appearances in the Geddington rolls, which number well over 400, stretched between 3 October 1377 and 14 October 1402.[54] As well as regular appearances at the ale-tasters' presentations, he was also bailiff of Geddington and an affeerer.[55] He was involved in litigation quite frequently, usually as plaintiff in relatively small debt claims (one for only 12d.), but his commonest appearance in litigation was as pledge provider for other litigants.[56] He also leased land and at one point

[49] NAS, X 351B.
[50] NAS, X 351B (court, 03.10.1377 – first appearance); X 351A (court 18.10.1388 – final appearance).
[51] NAS, X 351A (views, 03.04.1385 and 11.04.1388).
[52] NAS, X 351B (court, 17.04.1378). 'Cossetels' appear on two other occasions in transactions in the court rolls (on 02.03.1381 and 08.03.1382 – NAS, X 351 A and B respectively). The spelling is probably a variant of 'cotsetel' or 'cotsetland', a cottage holding identified by Paul Vinogradoff, *Villainage in England: Essays in English Medieval History* (Oxford, 1892, reprint 1927), pp. 255-6.
[53] NAS, X 351A (court, 25.03.1385).
[54] NAS, X 351B (court, 03.10.1377); X 351A (court, 14.10.1402).
[55] NAS, X 351A (view, 01.10.1390 – bailiff and possibly earlier; view 04.04.1380 – affeerer).
[56] For example (amongst many), NAS, X 351A (view. 04.04.1380).

was the lessee with another of one of the two mills in Geddington and, as has been mentioned, from 1369 until at least 1401 he was one of the group of *firmarii* who leased the manor from the crown (see appendix 2).[57] Towards the end of his appearances in the court rolls, he also appears as the attorney (*attornatus*) for other villagers, in land transactions in particular.[58]

Both William Bernak and Edmund Byfeld probably arrived in Geddington from elsewhere but were able to find a niche, and a relatively prominent position, within the community there. That may have been on account of particular skills including, in both cases, literacy. Both participated in the land market although, on the face of the record, only to a limited degree. Both took on office as tithingmen. Edmund Byfeld assembled a portfolio of offices as affeerer (1380), bailiff (1390), juror (1385), rent collector (1398) and bedell (1399) – a rather shadowy office whose role is unclear.[59] Bernak may have accumulated offices in a similar manner which is obscured by the loss of the pre-1377 court rolls. Otherwise, they seem to have avoided the violent conflicts in which local families like the Belles and the Coimfords were involved.

The picture which emerges is one in which the significant offices of steward, tithingman, juror, and affeerer were dominated by the overlapping categories of the *firmarii* and the manor's larger landholders. That enabled them to control the manorial court (in particular) using (probably) outsiders such as Barnak and Byfeld who had the administrative and other skills to do so. It is also evident that they maintained a functional court, meeting regularly, with the necessary clerical and administrative backup. That would have required

[57] NAS, X 351B (view and court, 03.10.1395 – lease of mill).
[58] For example, NAS, X 351B (court, 19.12.1398 – attorney for Richard Wythir; court 11.01.1399 – attorney for Richard Ekton, chaplain, view, 08.04.1401 – attorney for Laurence Peek).
[59] As above and NAS, X 351B (court, 15.04.1385 – juror; court, 09.11.1398 – rent collector; court, 26.04.1399 – bedell).

considerable administrative skill and effort as well as expenditure, which was probably only partially offset by receipt of the *perquisita curie*.

Land tenure and transactions.

The court rolls from 1377 to 1424 record about 238 land transfers over the forty-three years for which records survive (see the note in the bibliography) or slightly more than two transactions at each court session (see table 6.5). That suggests a lively land market. Many of the transactions concerned very small parcels of land. There are very few references to transfers following the death of a tenant and very few specific references to transfers of the 'standard' virgate holdings in the Geddington 'core', although there are a number of transactions relating to virgate holdings in Barford and Glendon. The larger land transactions are summarised in appendix 3 but a further twenty-four or so transactions (thus about 10% of the total) refer vaguely to 'all of the land' belonging to the transferor and that description may conceal a larger holding.

The explanation may lie in the 1455 inquisition which details the obligations of a virgate holder (see above).[60] The virgators were liable to a fine of 5s. on alienation and a fine fixed by at the steward's discretion on succession on death. It will be seen from appendix 3 (final column) that a fine of 5s. was frequently, although by no means always, paid on the alienation of virgate holdings, usually in Barford or Glendon. The reason for the relative absence of transactions or transfers involving virgate holdings in Geddington may be that the tenants there minimised the fine by concealing the size of their tenement and using the vague 'all lands' description. If so, that sheds an interesting light on the exercise of power in Geddington. The tithingmen and inquisition jurors as well as the staff of the manorial court must have been fully aware of the size of individual land holdings so it looks as though they connived at the concealment. It is also notable that this conspiracy of silence seems not to

[60] NAS, X 345 B.

have extended to the tenants of the outlying villages at Barford and Glendon. In short, it looks as though the manorial court was dominated by a niche group associated with the manorial 'core' at Geddington.

The frustrating outcome is that, despite the significant volume of material relating to land transactions, it is difficult (but not impossible) to extract information from the court rolls about the overall tenurial position in Geddington in the late fourteenth century and, in particular, the identity and profile of the Geddington virgate holders, who held a large proportion of the agrarian land and common rights in the manor. There are no rentals or similar records of tenants and their holdings before the mid-fifteenth century.

Some examples of land transactions from the court rolls are transcribed at appendix 7 (numbers 1 to 8). The clerical formula for recording such transactions remains remarkably consistent throughout the rolls from 1377 to 1423. Land was usually transferred to the transferee and his heirs and assigns in perpetuity for services owed to the crown, presumably the light labour services described in the 1327 extent and commuted for cash. The servile language encountered on other manors referring to land held *native* or spelling out the characteristic servile duties (such as heriot, suit of court or labour service) is conspicuously absent. Presumably that reflects the relatively free and privileged status of tenants of a manor of ancient demesne.[61] The seemingly unchanging nature of this tenure until at least the middle of the fifteenth century is probably explained by a combination of three factors: first, its early conversion to a cash basis before 1327, secondly the letting of the manor to farmers who were also manorial tenants who had no wish to disturb a system

[61] See Frederick Pollock and Frederic Maitland, *The History of English Law Before the Time of Edward I, vol. I* (Cambridge, 1923), pp.383-406 for the tenure and status of tenants of manors of ancient demesne. In the more modern literature, the Geddington tenure seems to correspond to Bailey's 'type 1' hereditary tenure with all the services commuted, by 1327, for cash: see Mark Bailey, 'The Transformation of Customary Tenures in Southern England, c.1350 – c.1500', *Agricultural History Review*, 62.2 (2014) pp. 210-30.

of sub-economic rents and, thirdly, the absence of an interventionist lord who might have wished to overturn these arrangements in order to secure a commercial rent.

Most of the transactions related to small, sometimes tiny, parcels of land. In some cases, they probably represent land acquired by customary tenants during their lifetimes and then disposed of (usually to their family) shortly before death, possibly to avoid the land descending under customary rules to the heirs of the tenant on death. However, the volume of transactions probably indicates the presence of an active market for small pieces of land. The rare exceptional cases where the manorial rolls deal with transmissions following death number about ten or just over 4% of the total transactions. They seem to be cases where the deceased tenant died without issue and it became necessary for the court to enquire about the identity of the heir before he or she was admitted to the land. An example is that of Henry Empyngham in the court of 22 June 1409.[62] William, who lived in Totnes in Devonshire, held land in Geddington. Following his death, Henry, a tanner of Northampton, sought admission. Obviously, both had rather remote connections with Geddington which probably explains why an enquiry was felt necessary.

Some further light is cast on tenements and the devolution of larger holdings by two transactions.

Firstly, at the court held on 27 May 1385 William Skoteney transferred thirteen acres, three-and-a-half rods of arable and seven acres, three rods of meadow to John Mulso.[63] This was a large transaction by the standards of the Geddington court rolls, amounting to just short of twenty-two acres or more than the standard Geddington virgate. So, the Skoteneys probably held an enlarged virgate. John Mulso paid an entry fine of only 3s. 4d. which confirms the

[62] NAS, X 351 B. Presumably the family originated in Empingham, a village just over fourteen miles from Geddington as the crow flies, just outside Stamford.
[63] NAS, X 351 A.

impression that there may have been some juggling with entry fines. The land comprised forty-six small parcels scattered across the common fields and meadows of Geddington. Each is individually identified in all but sixteen cases by reference to the identity of the adjoining owner or owners and usually by furlong name in the case of the arable land. Of the thirty parcels where the adjoining owner is identified, that owner was Emma Pykeryng in twenty-two cases. The Pykeryngs, like the Skoteneys, were probably virgate holders. Secondly, the disposal by William Barnak of nine acres of arable land and half an acre of meadow to John and Alicia Soul at the court session on 18 January 1388.[64] Again, the land was described as comprising fifteen small parcels with each parcel identified by furlong name and the adjoining occupier. In nine out of the fifteen parcels the adjoining occupier is identified as William Cook so, as with the Skoteney/Mulso transaction, this points to the existence of a (possibly quite large) Cook family holding. The Cooks were one of the prominent Geddington families appearing frequently in the rolls and were, probably, virgate holders.

This pattern of landholding suggests that, alongside an active market for small pieces of land (possibly often cot holdings), there remained significant family virgate holdings which had not been broken up and whose holders probably dominated the common fields of the Geddington 'core'. This conclusion is slightly surprising given the evidence from the 1383 inquisition of the disappearance of the ten half-virgate holdings recorded in the 1327 inquisition. That suggests some volatility in land holdings possibly resulting from plague mortality. The evidence from the land transactions in the court rolls, however, suggests that whatever the mortality of the virgators might have been, it had been possible to find either heirs or new tenants for the virgate holdings. As will be seen, however, there are indications that this pattern of landholding started to change later.

[64] NAS, X 351 A.

Another feature of the land transactions recorded in the court rolls is a number of linked transactions where the objective was the creation of a life interest. An example is a transfer from Agnes Corby to William and Joanna Selot on 29 January 1384 and from William and Joanna Selot to John and Margaret Etebred on the same day. Margaret Etebred was Agnes Corby's daughter and, by the second transaction, a life interest was reserved for Agnes along with provisions for her sustenance. The Selots' involvement in the transaction was purely nominal: they held the land for an instant before it was re-granted to John and Margaret Etebred subject to Agnes' life interest. Presumably they were trusted neighbours and intermediaries. Homans seems to have been the first to notice this phenomenon in earlier manorial court rolls, and Kaye also explains the rationale in the context of charters.[65] These transactions confirm the impression that the landholders of Geddington used relatively sophisticated legal devices to secure the disposition of their land and that individuals such as Edmund Byfeld assisted them in doing so.

Returning to the record of larger land transactions, appendix 3 shows a striking acceleration in the transfers of virgates in Barford in the second decade of the fifteenth century, culminating in the transfer of four Barford virgates to William and Agnes Barford in 1422, by far the largest single transaction in the main sequence of court rolls. This was part of a process of engrossment of virgate holdings there which probably led eventually to the collapse of Barford's discrete common field system. It may well be that a similar process was under way in Glendon which followed a similar trajectory to Barford.

Profiles of conflict

On 12 July 1382 the *curia plena* of Geddington ordered that a silver brooch (*nouche de argenta*) found in the demesne of Geddington and valued at 8d. belonged to the lord king,

[65] G.C. Homans, *English Villagers of the Thirteenth Century* (New York, 1960), p. 129 and J.M. Kaye, *Medieval English Conveyances* (Cambridge, 2009).

the lord of the manor.[66] John Botelyr gave his pledge, presumably (in the light of subsequent events) to hold the brooch for the king and to account for the brooch or its value. It seems likely that Botelyr had found the ring.

Three months later, in a series of presentments at the view of frankpledge on 1 October 1382, Alice, the wife of Walter Tailloer was presented for unjustly raising the hue against Botelyr and was fined 3d.[67] Next, Botelyr was presented for making a *rescussum* from the bailiff, that is to say he made an illegal retrieval of property impounded by the bailiff and was fined 6d. Finally, Walter Tailloer was presented for unjustly taking and feloniously carrying away a brooch, valued at 8d., from the Botelyr's house (presumably the same brooch that Botelyr had found earlier). Tailloer was fined an exceptionally heavy 20s.

What seems to have happened was that Walter Tailloer had stolen the brooch from Botelyr's house. The theft was discovered and the brooch was taken by the bailiff. Botelyr then attempted to recover it from the bailiff (his *rescussum*). At some point, Walter's wife, Alice, unjustly (as it was decided) raised the hue against Botelyr. Botelyr's *rescussum* is difficult to explain: he only held the brooch as pledgor and it might be thought that the bailiff would account for it to the royal administration of the manor and thereby release Botelyr from his pledge.

A few days later, in the *curia plena* of 4 October 1382, Botelyr made a claim for trespass against Tailloer.[68] This trespass claim probably arose from Walter Tailloer's theft of the brooch and was concluded by a *licencia concordandi*, a settlement. The terms of the *licencia* were not recorded (they never were) and it is unknown whether Botelyr recovered any compensation from Walter Tailloer, although it seems likely he did.

[66] NAS, X 351 B.
[67] NAS, X 351 B.
[68] NAS, X 351 B.

Further information in the court rolls makes it possible to reconstruct Botelyr's life in Geddington. He appears in the court rolls for only a relatively brief period, firstly at the Easter 1381 view of frankpledge when he was presented for harbouring someone (unidentified) and was fined 3d.[69] He then appears regularly in the ale-tasters' presentations from 12 October 1381 until 21 March 1383. After that, his name abruptly disappears from the court rolls.

The reason was that ten days after his final presentation, he was murdered in Geddington by another Geddington man, John Webstere. Webstere had been captured immediately after the murder and was prosecuted by the appeal of Botelyr's wife, Johanna.[70] Webstere appeared before the justices at the gaol delivery session held in Northampton on 14 January 1384, ten months after Botelyr's death, and was charged with the murder *cum aliis malefactoris* (who did not appear). The trial seems to have been quite brief: Johanna laid her charge against Webstere who appeared and denied the charge. The jury then delivered a guilty verdict and Webstere was sentenced to hang.

The Webstere family appears in the Geddington manorial court rolls from 1377 onwards, apparently holding a small amount of land in the manor. John Webstere appears infrequently in the rolls but was presented four times at the view of frankpledge on 1 October 1382, the same occasion as that on which Walter Taillour was presented for theft of the brooch. He was presented for *hamsokn* on Taillour following which Alice, Taillour's wife, justly raised the hue against him. Webstere was then presented for drawing the blood of John Thyngden (another Geddington resident) whose wife, Agnes, also justly raised the hue

[69] NAS, X 351B (view, 13.04.1381).
[70] TNA, JUST 3/52/10 and JUST 3/167 m. 67 (AALT image http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT7/JUST3/JUST3no167/aJUST3no167fronts/IMG_0145.htm). For the procedure for prosecution either by appeal or indictment, see Anthony Musson and Edward Powell (eds.), *Crime, Law and Society in the Later Middle Ages* (Manchester, 2009), p. 137.

against Webstere. Webstere was fined a total of 1s. 6d. for these offences. Quite what had happened is unclear but it seems probable that there was some relationship between the cycle of presentations involving Botelyr and Taillour and those involving Webstere.

John Botelyr does not appear in any land transactions recorded in the manorial court rolls but he must have occupied a house there (from which Tailloer stole the brooch) so presumably he was a subtenant. His regular appearance in the ale-tasters' presentations also suggests he was resident in Geddington. His appearances suggest he lived there for less than two years from Easter 1381 until his death in March 1383.

He appeared quite frequently in litigation unrelated to the brooch incident. In the court of 2 November 1381, he began a trespass claim against William Chaumpeneys, a member of a long-established family of customary tenants in Geddington, for the theft of a length of cloth.[71] During that litigation, at the court of 23 November 1381, he was fined half a mark (6s. 8d.) for contempt when he assaulted and threatened William.[72] At the court of 13 September 1382 proceedings were commenced against him by Thomas Skoteney, a member of another long-established family of Geddington tenants, arising from a fight in a common tavern.[73] Finally, at the court of 4 October 1382 John Mulso obtained a judgment from the court against Botelyr for a debt of 26s. 8d.[74] This was a relatively significant sum and suggests that, however the debt arose, Botelyr was regarded as a man of some substance.

The overall impression of these events, though, is of discord rippling out through the community, ostensibly the result of a rather trivial incident, the discovery of a brooch in the fields, but releasing deeper tensions, and violence, within that community. The underlying

[71] NAS, X 351 B.
[72] NAS, X 351 B.
[73] NAS, X 351 B.
[74] NAS, X 351 B.

cause of those tensions is, however, obscure. Possibly the fact that Botelyr was not a manorial tenant led others in the community to conclude that he should not have been allowed to give his pledge for the brooch. Alice Taillour's raising of the hue was a frequent accompaniment of violent outbreaks. Botelyr's attempted recovery of the brooch from the bailiff suggests that he had little confidence in the capacity, or perhaps the will, of the manorial officials to arrive at a straightforward solution to the problem which would have involved either returning the brooch to him and leaving him to account for it or its value or cancelling his pledge. It also seems Botelyr feared he would find his pledge called in whilst the brooch remained in the bailiff's possession.

Botelyr was unwise in his choice of opponents. They were drawn from amongst the longer and better-established families of tenants, the Chaumpeneys and the Skoteneys, and, in the case of John Mulso, from an emergent gentry family. The fact that John Mulso stood as pledge for both Taillour and Webstere suggests the closer involvement of the Mulso family in all these events, as does the final presentation at the October 1381 view of John Mulso for drawing a knife – which was promptly condoned by the lord.[75] Viewed from Botelyr's perspective, he was confronted with an entrenched and relatively privileged group of tenants of a royal manor of ancient demesne, who were probably conscious of their status and privileges and were reluctant to allow incomers to secure a foothold in Geddington unless they could establish that they posed no threat, as may have been the case with William Barnak and Edmund Byfeld. In the end, however, it rather looks as though internal tensions within the community became focussed on Botelyr, an outsider.

Presentations at the view of frankpledge

The presentation procedure at the view has already been described but some features should be stressed. The tithingmen's presentation was conclusive and was not traversable

[75] The identity of the 'lord', presumably the steward presiding at the view, is unknown but might have been a member of the Mulso family.

by the subject of the presentation.[76] Thus no evidence was provided either to support the presentation or to rebut it. The only review mechanism was provided by the jurors who only occasionally intervened to find that the tithingmen had failed to present well and faithfully (*bene et fideliter*) and had concealed nothing. The only records of acquittals in the Geddington manorial rolls are those where the tithingmen's presentation was overturned by the jurors.

Most of the presentations were quite routine and were punished with a relatively low fine, around 2d. Failure to make suit of court was by far the commonest presentation and another common cause of presentation was nuisance, of which the commonest form was depositing manure, presumably night soil, or building materials such as cement, sand or wood, on the highway. The transgressor was usually ordered to remove the nuisance within fifteen days with the threat of a much higher fine if he or she failed to do so, usually 12d. or 40d. Such failures are relatively rare but repeat offending was common. These are relatively rare occasions when the coercive power of the court appears to have failed completely.[77]

Violence was a common cause of presentation and theft was rather rare. These two categories are treated together because theft was often accompanied or followed by violent outbreaks although it was by no means the only cause of them. On occasion, the manorial court imposed remarkably heavy fines for the theft, as in the case of Walter Tayllour's theft of the brooch (20s.). Other offences against property, such as taking wood from the woodland, thorns from hedges or bundles of crops from the common fields attracted light fines, usually

[76] J. S. Beckerman, 'Procedural Innovation and Institutional Change in Medieval Manorial Courts', *Law and History Review*, 10. 2 (1992), pp. 197–252 at p. 237. But note that for this proposition Beckerman relies on comments of Chief Justice Hale in the seventeenth century. It remains unclear whether it applied in every manorial court in the late fourteenth century although the Geddington rolls suggest it applied there.

[77] Contrast J. S. Beckerman, 'Customary Law in English Manorial Courts in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries', D. Phil. thesis, University of London, 1972, p. 110: 'the coercive powers of many manorial courts were failing by the end of the fourteenth century… numerous presentations were repeated over and over, court after court, year after year. Obviously, nothing was being done.' However, his subsequent article, J. S. Beckerman, *Procedural Innovation*, revisits much of the ground covered by his earlier PhD thesis but omits this observation.

2d. or 3d.[78] Thefts from houses seem to have been treated more severely than the theft of goods lying in the open.

Violent offences took various forms. *Hamsokn*, an attack taking place within the victim's house, may also have involved burglary, theft or some other offence and was presented some twenty times in the Geddington rolls, mostly in the 1380s but enjoying a minor revival in the first two decades of the fifteenth century.[79] Like most violent offences, the usual fine was 6d. although that was frequently halved to 3d. when committed by a woman.

Because the main run of court roll only starts in 1377 it is difficult to say whether there was a sharp increase in violence in the early 1380s although the numbers of presentations then rather suggest that. That impression is reinforced by an ordinance of 2 August 1382 *per dominum et tenentes* which provided that drawing a knife or sword within the manor against the peace would be fined at an unusually heavy 40d. for each presentation.[80] Up until this point, the fine had usually been only 6d. In fact, the heavier fine was only levied on about eight occasions in the 1380s and early 1390s but enjoyed a revival in the first decade of the fifteenth century so that, for example, Richard Mariot, the tithingman of Glendon, presented Henry Piper at the October 1408 view for drawing the blood of John Haw and Robert Koc with a sword valued at 18d.[81] He was fined 6d. for drawing their blood but, in addition to the fine, he paid a penalty of 40d. for drawing his sword 'contra pacem domini Regis *ex antiquo facto & ordinato* and, according to the headnote, his sword was also taken from him. Finally, he was fined 4d. for causing a great affray. Henry Piper makes only a single appearance in the Geddington court rolls although he may have been related to a family of that name in

[78] For example, NAS X 351A (view 13.04.1381 – Stephen Walker, taking thorns, fined 6d.; view 20.04.1403 – William and John Synker, hedge-breaking, fined 3d.); X 351B (01.10.1382 – John Soule, taking thorns, fined 6d.; John Oxindon taking thorns, fined 2d.).
[79] See Pollock and Maitland, *The History of English Law* (Cambridge, 1911), vol II, pp. 453, 454, 457 and 493 for the origins of *hamsokn*. And at Geddington see e.g. NAS, X 351A (views of 04.04.1380, 13.04.1381) and X 351B (view of 01.10.1382).
[80] NAS, X 351 B.
[81] NAS, X 351 B.

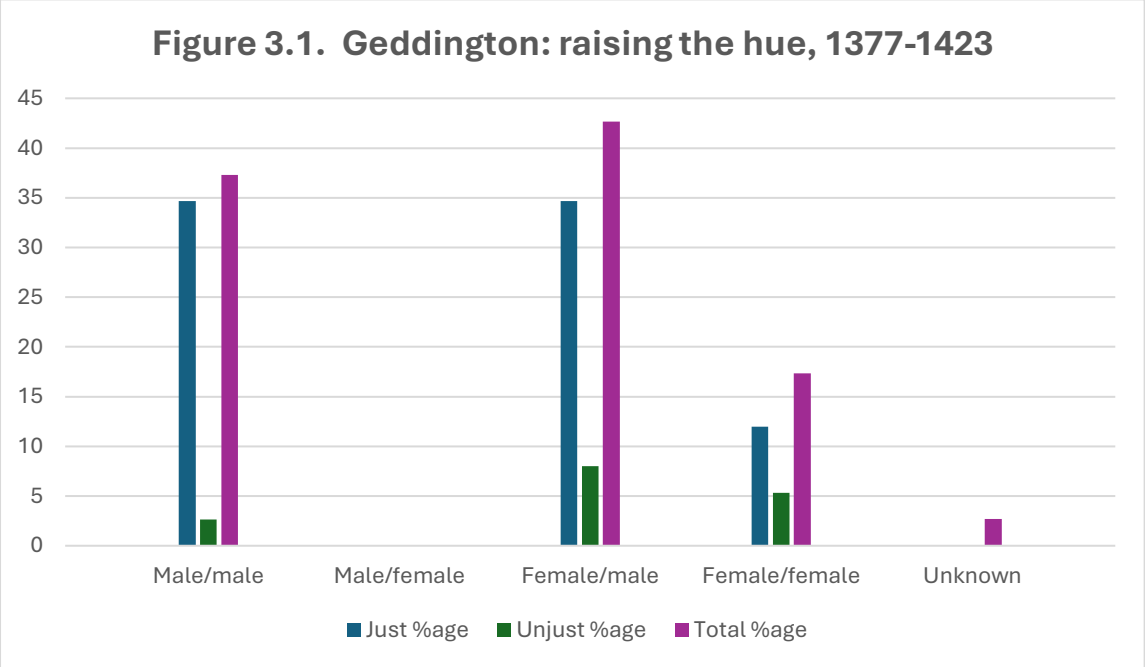
Glendon (where Robert Koc also lived). He does, however, fall into a not-uncommon category of violent offenders whose documented connections to the locality are limited and rather frail.

A common corollary of such violent outbreaks was the raising of the *hutesium* or hue, often by the victim or their spouse.[82] The entries recording the raising of the hue are short and usually record that an individual raised the hue against another either justly or unjustly. If the hue had been raised justly, the fine was paid by the person against whom it had been raised but if it had been raised unjustly by the person raising the hue. The fine in either case was usually 3d. The common cue for raising the hue was the commission of an offence, most often *hamsokn* but sometimes a *rescussum*, followed by the victim or a witness raising the hue. As has been observed in other manors, a common *rescussum* involved the retrieval of animals impounded by the bailiff or messor.[83]

As can be seen from figure 3.1, the hue in Geddington was raised rather more frequently by women than men. This presents almost a mirror image of Müller's study of the raising of the hue in Badbury in Wiltshire and Brandon in Suffolk which she describes as 'tightly controlled' ecclesiastical manors of the abbot of Glastonbury and the bishop of Ely respectively.[84] Bardsley's study of a wider range of manors shows a profile similar to Geddington's with a much higher proportion of female hue raisers, although, unfortunately, she gives little indication of the types of manor and manorial administration which form her sample.[85] However, the contrast between the rather loosely administered royal manor of Geddington

[82] See Pollock and Maitland, *History of English Law*, vol. II p. 578 for the early history of the hue or *hutusium* as a form of popular and immediate justice, said to be derived from the cry 'out, out'.
[83] See e.g. Miriam Müller, 'Social Control and the hue and cry in two fourteenth century villages', *Journal of Medieval History*, 31.1 (2005), pp. 29-53, at p.50. Peter L Larson, *Rethinking the Great Transition: Community and Economic Growth in County Durham* (Oxford, 2022), p. 143 also mentions the phenomenon.
[84] Müller, 'Social Control'.
[85] S. Bardsley, *Venomous Tongues: Speech and Gender in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia, 2006), pp. 72 et seq.

and Müller's tightly controlled ecclesiastical manors is significant. One of the evidential requirements in Badbury and Brandon for the 'just' raising of the hue was for the hue raiser to state the offence which had been committed. That probably deterred single women on their own from raising the hue against, in particular, a sexual aggressor. By contrast, at Geddington, where there was no such evidential requirement, women had little hesitation in raising the hue.



Presentations included a variety of offences against property rights, such as poaching – usually fishing in the river.[86] Its more frequent manifestations included making a purpresture (enclosure encroaching, usually, on the royal forest or demesne) as well as other forms of agrarian offending.[87] For example, there were frequent presentations for cutting and taking away thorns which were modestly fined (usually 2d. or 3d. – see above). Likewise, many

[86] NAS, X 351A (view, 04.04.1380 – William Gybon, taking partridges in the warren, fined 12d.; William Bush, taking fish in the warren and digging (possibly a fish trap), fined 3d.).
[87] For examples of purprestures see e.g. NAS, X 351B (view, 10.11.1385 – vicar of Geddington; view, 14.05.1386 – Henry Drayton, fined 3d.); X 351A (view, 04.10.1387 – Margaret Mulsho, no fine.

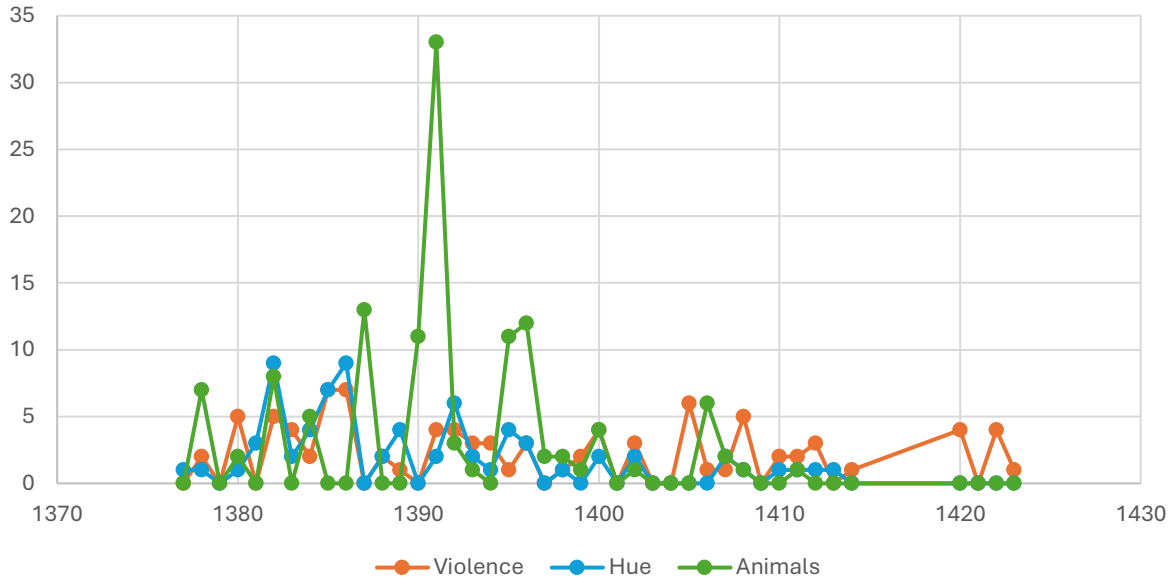
offences involved moving, destroying or ploughing out landmarks or overploughing beyond the boundary of a selion.[88]

The other, possibly more significant, category of trespass involved animals either grazing in the forest out of season (usually pigs) or in the common meadows and meadow enclosures (usually horses, cattle or sheep).[89]

The fines in these cases were modest and the infractions were presumably regarded as relatively routine. However, arguments could escalate. At the *visus* on 14 May 1386 John Busshey and John Baskirvill were fined a total of 9s. 8d. for *hamsokn* against the hayward (messor) and for beating him up as well as making an affray with the entire township of Geddington (*fecerunt I* [sc. 'unum'] *affray tota villata de Geytyngton*).[90] The record provides no details of the *hamsokn* which sparked off this incident but it may have arisen from the recovery of livestock distrained by the hayward –a *rescussum* of impounded livestock was not unusual. In this case the assault on the hayward escalated into a more general conflict between Busshey and Baskirvill and the villagers. Against this background, it is not surprising that presentations for animal trespass seem to track the presentations for violent offending with peaks in the early- and mid-1380s although thereafter the correlation is not clear cut (see figure 3.2).

[88] For examples of over-ploughing see e.g. NAS, X 351B (view, 22.04.1378 – William Godpage, fined 2d.; view, 22.10.1385 – Richard Aleyn, fine 3d.); X 351A (view, 20.04.1403, Andrew Neubotell, fined 2d.).
[89] For examples of animal trespass, see e.g. NAS X351B (view, 05.04.1382 – John ? with twenty sheep, fine 2d.); X 351A (view, 16.10.1389 – Henry Mikelton with pigs, fine 3d.; view, 01.10.1390 – Nicholas Comfort with pigs, fine 3d. and the abbot of Pipewell with pigs, fine 6d.).
[90] NAS, X 351 B.

Figure 3.2 Geddington: presentations for violence, raising the hue and animal related offences, 1377-1414 and 1420-1423



Four months later both Busshey and Baskirvill were the subject of a trespass claim by John Mulso in the *curia plena* along with three others, William Soutere, Robert Gray and John Shepherde of Glendon.[91] Whilst it is not clear that these were cases of animal trespass, all five had an extensive record in the Geddington court of issues revolving around animal trespass: for example, on 12 July 1382 Busshey had been presented for washing his sheep in the river at Geddington and subsequently on 3 October 1395 for trespassing with animals in the common fields.[92] Given their involvement with animal trespass, it is likely they were graziers.

None of the five sued by John Mulso, or anyone bearing the same byname, appear in any Geddington land transactions. John Busshey and John Baskirville make only limited appearances in the court rolls, almost always in connection with animal trespass. In both

[91] NAS, X 351 A.
[92] NAS, X 351 B.

cases, only one other individual bearing the same name, possibly a brother, makes an appearance in the rolls. William Soutere and Robert Gray were both stated to be *de Neuton Magna* and thus from an adjoining manor (owned by the Mulsos). Both families appear as tenants there in the early years of the fifteenth century.[93] Only the suggestively named Shepherde family appear to have had a long-standing relationship with one of the Geddington townships, Glendon. However, their presence in Geddington was probably attributable to the attractions of extensive grazing in the forest – which it would have been difficult for the tenants to police – or because they rented grazing there, or a combination of the two.

The curia plena

The main business of the late-fourteenth-century *curia plena* was land transactions (which have been dealt with above), litigation and the regular but entirely formulaic ale-tasters' presentations.

The *curia plena* provided what was probably the main method of dispute resolution in Geddington. The manorial court rolls disclose a substantial volume of litigation. The most frequently occurring causes of action were debt (*placiti debiti*), trespass (*placiti transgressionis*) and contract (*placiti convencionis*) although several others such as detinue of chattels (*placiti detentionis catallis*) make occasional appearances. Debt was the commonest cause of action although it is difficult to identify whether the dispute arose from moneylending or the sale of goods or services or some combination such as sale on deferred credit. The physical subject matter of disputes, where it is identifiable, was usually crops and animals, services (ploughing especially) and occasionally construction and manufactured goods (for example sandals or cloth).

[93] NAS, X 351A, a series of rentals of Newton.

From the early years of the fifteenth century onwards, the court increasingly dealt with disputes between people with either no connection or only a very tenuous connection with Geddington. Thus, in the *curia plena* of 13 March 1406 John Lynne of Kettering commenced a debt claim against Thomas Frere of Stanion. Both were residents in different manors. Again, at the curia of 3 April 1406 John Ocle of Rothwell sued William Coupar of Stanion, again in a debt claim. Similarly, in the curia of 24 April 1406 John Pope of Carlton made a debt claim against Thomas Seymore of Bonden.[94] These examples could be extended but the notable feature is that they are all debt claims and probably bear testimony to a complex web of rural moneylending.

The court was efficient and effective in terms of the time it took to dispose of cases. In cases which it is possible to trace through the court, the time from inception of the suit to final determination is two or three months and sometimes less. It does not seem to have made much difference whether the defendant opted for trial by compurgation (the more popular option) or by jury inquisition. Cases were often settled, again usually well within that time span. There is little indication of large numbers of cases dragging on from court to court without resolution although some certainly did. But again, the rapidity with which many cases were settled suggests that litigants' minds were concentrated on the need for resolution by the inevitability of an early final hearing.

The late fourteenth century in Geddington: conclusions

The overall impression of late-fourteenth-century Geddington is of a relatively high-functioning community capable of the significant task of arranging frequent courts and views, or, where it seemed necessary, recruiting outsiders such as William Bernak or Edmund Byfeld, to assist with its administration. The operation of the court included the adoption

[94] Eilert Ekwall, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place Names* (Oxford, 1960) gives details of numerous villages named Carleton or Carlton, mostly in the north of England but also in Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire and Suffolk. Bonden remains unidentified.

from the royal courts of trials by inquisition and wager of law along with the system of presentation. Indeed, it does not seem fanciful to suggest that Bernak and Byfeld may have been recruited to run the court of a royal manor precisely because they had experience in the royal civil service or courts. That makes it difficult to maintain the argument that law in the manorial court was 'made' by the tenants, although it looks as though the tenants were adept at adapting common law to their ends.[95] The court was administered without any significant lordly, i.e. royal, intervention, but that is not to suggest, however, that the administration was in any sense consensual: the evidence suggests it was firmly controlled by the wealthier tenants, the *firmarii* of the manor. That may also be a reason for the apparent, but difficult to identify, internal tensions within the community.

From an economic perspective, and if the suggestions of extensive market integration based on animal products which have been advanced above are correct, Geddington should have been relatively well-positioned to survive the economic storms of the second half of the fourteenth century. That hypothesis posits a micro-economy which, broadly speaking, exported animal products and imported grain. In turn, that micro-economy might be expected to enjoy lower wage costs (animal husbandry requiring less labour than arable) and might take advantage of a growing market for those animal products. The disappearance of the market in Geddington probably did not have alter the fundamental nature of the Geddington micro-economy but might have transferred it to other local markets such as Oundle or Market Harborough (both just over twelve miles away) or Thrapston (eight miles).

That hypothesis rests heavily on evidence from only two inventories, those of Peter de Deen and Hugo de Brechale, but the conclusions drawn from them seem entirely logical: the

[95] Tom Johnson, *Law in Common: Legal Cultures in Late-Medieval England* (Oxford, 2020) and in particular 'Conclusion: Towards a Common Constitution' and the statement at p. 269 that 'Law in late-medieval England was something made in common.'

tenants enjoyed significant common pastures in the forest alongside extensive meadow and pasture closes (the result of assarting from the forest). The cause of the social tensions which have been identified above may lie, therefore, not in economic adversity but in relative prosperity – and, above all, how its benefits were distributed within the community. A clue may lie in the fate of the ten half-virgate tenements present in the Geddington 'core' in 1327 but which had disappeared completely by 1383. In short, the presence of extensive common rights favoured a reduction in the number of customary tenants because that benefitted the survivors who then faced less competition in exploiting those rights. That would explain why the virgators had silently swallowed up the half-virgate tenements by 1383.

That would also explain the process of accumulation of the virgate holdings which becomes apparent in the last two decades of the fourteenth century with the extension of the Corby/Etbred tenement to one-and-a-half virgates some time before 1384 and John Mulso's acquisition of what looks like an enlarged virgate of over twenty-one acres from William Scotney, also in 1384. The same process can also be seen at work in Barford where Reginald and Anne Aboveton had extended their holding to two virgates some time before 1385 when it was transferred to William and Katherine Iuet (see appendix 3). As will be seen, this was a process that continued and gathered pace in the fifteenth century.

This process also led, inevitably, to a polarisation of holdings between the large multiple-virgate and much smaller holdings. In itself, that was a process which could be expected to cause internal conflicts within the community. The presence of outsiders such as Baskirville and Bush, probably transient graziers opportunistically taking advantage of common grazing, was only an additional irritant in a difficult situation. Thus, the sources of tension at Geddington in the late fourteenth century were probably, in the main, internally directed; the assizes and gaol delivery records of the king's justices in the midland counties contain no

indication of any extension of social unrest or involvement in the events of 1381 of the type reported by David Crook in Derbyshire.[96]

5. Geddington in the fifteenth century.

This section will show how the trends identified in the later fourteenth century operated in the fifteenth century. The polarisation of landholdings continued and ended in the almost complete desertion of Geddington's outlying settlements at Barford and Glendon. Further, by the end of the century Geddington had become a diverse community of gentry, yeomen and husbandmen and a growing community of cottagers. The main run of manorial court rolls ends in 1423 with only isolated survivals thereafter. The main source of evidence about manorial Geddington in the fifteenth century is an inquisition of 1455, sparked (as ever) by the complaints of the *firmarii* about the rent of the manor, and detailed accounts for 1460-61.[97] That material is supplemented by rather fragmentary material derived from, in particular, the records of the royal courts, the 1517 inquisition of enclosure and wills.[98] The most striking feature of this material is the increasing prominence of the Mulso family until 1460. The family had been present in Geddington (as has been noted) from the earliest surviving manorial documentation in the survey of 1327. By 1454 they had replaced the other tenants as *firmarii* of Geddington.[99] The background and history of the Mulso family will be addressed first before moving on to consider land tenure in Geddington during the fifteenth century and, in particular, the impact of the Mulsos and other gentry families on it.

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[96] TNA, JUST 3/52/7 (Northamptonshire) and JUST 3/167 (other midland counties including Northamptonshire); David Crook, 'Derbyshire and the English Rising of 1381', *Historical Research: The Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 60.141 (1987), pp. 9–23.

[97] NAS, X 345B (1455 inquisition) and X 351A (1460/61 accounts).

[98] NAS X 350 for the surviving sequence of manorial court rolls from 1420–3 and isolated survivals from 1490 and 1505. *The Domesday of Inclosures, 1517–1518*, vol. I, ed. I. S. Leadam (Port Washington, NY, 1971 reprint), pp. 309–11 (Glendon) and pp. 316–18 (Barford) for the enclosure commissioners' reports. NAS, Northamptonshire Early Wills register and TNA, PROB series for wills (specific references below) for wills. TNA, KB and CP series for records of the royal courts (specific references below).

[99] See appendix 2 and the record of the 1454 grant of the manor to Thomas Mulso (probably Thomas (ii) Mulso – see below) and Philip Nell (who cannot be traced).

Finally, the early modern and modern history of the manor will be addressed briefly to the extent that it sheds light on the earlier, medieval, history.

The Mulso family

The genealogy of the Mulso family is difficult: G. L. Harriss was unable to identify the relationship of many members of the family.[100] In the mid-fourteenth century a Henry (i) Mulso of Geddington (Harriss' numbering of family members is adopted below) was a London merchant owning property at Newton, the small manor neighbouring Geddington. William Mulso occupied various roles in royal service culminating as keeper of the king's wardrobe (1375). John (i) Mulso was a lawyer occupying various offices in Northamptonshire as JP (1384), escheator (385), MP (1388 and 1397–8), and sheriff (1393–4, 1395–6 and 1397–9). His three sons integrated themselves into the new regime after 1399 with the oldest, Thomas (i), building up his role in Northamptonshire as sheriff (1409–10) and escheator (1419–20). Thomas (i)'s oldest son, Thomas (ii), and his younger brother Edmund accompanied Richard, Duke of York, to Normandy in 1441 and served there as captains before raising men in Northamptonshire in support of York in 1451–2. Thomas (ii) spent his later years in Northamptonshire taking the lease of the manor of Geddington in 1454 before his death in July 1460, two weeks after the battle of Northampton and possibly the result of wounds suffered there.[101] His daughter and heir, Alice, was married to Henry Tresham, to whom his estates passed.

These members of the family are not easy to identify in the Geddington manorial archives. The first mention is of a Thomas Mulso in the survey of 1327. In the earlier years of the main run of the Geddington manorial court rolls from 1377 three members of the family, Henry with

[100] This paragraph is taken from G. L. Harriss, 'Mulso family (per. c. 1350–1460', ODNB, https://doi-org.ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/52789 . For the military career of Thomas (ii) Mulso and his younger brother, Sir Edmund, see Anne Marshall, 'The Role of English War Captains in England and Normandy, 1436–1461', unpublished MA thesis, University of Wales, University College, Swansea, October 1974, pp. 56–66, 166, 176–7 and 204 especially.
[101] See appendix 2.

his wife Elena and John, make frequent appearances. It seems likely they are the Henry (i) and John (i) identified by Harriss (although he was unable to pin down their relationship). By the early fifteenth century another Henry Mulso appears, probably Harriss' Henry (ii), younger son of John (i) and half-brother of Thomas (i), alongside a John Mulso, who may be Harriss' John (iii), another half-brother of Thomas (i) and older brother of Henry (ii). Henry (ii) was also involved in the affairs of the county as escheator (1395–7) and aulnager (1398–9).

Members of the Mulso family made frequent appearances in the manorial court in land transactions, litigation and as the subject of minor presentations, which frequently went unfined suggesting a degree of impunity.[102] These presentations included a number for 'harbouring', possibly, wage-labourers.[103] The management of the Mulsos' landholdings in Geddington will be considered further below but the implication that they were making use of wage-labour may be significant. The rolls also hint at the location of John and Henry's messuages in Geddington. Henry's is said to have been 'on the mount' – the high ground to the north of the Eleanor Cross on which the parish church stands with a cluster of houses. John's is less easy to identify but he was frequently presented for failure to scour the 'Shytforth' at 'Esttownesende', presumably a town drain into the river which suggests a riverside site at the east end of the village. That was possibly the site of the modern Priory, a large early-modern gentry house (see map 4).[104]

By 1395 references to Henry (probably Harriss' Henry (i)) fall away but Elena, his widow, continued to make frequent appearances into the new century. John (probably Harriss' John (i)), likewise, continued to make frequent appearances including a reference to his holding in

[102] For example, NAS, X 351B (03.10.1377 – Henry Mulso, dunghill); X 351B (01.10.1382 – John Mulso, knife-drawing); X 351A (04.10.1387 Elena Mulso, purpresture); X 351A (20.04.1403 – John Mulso, failing to scour the Shytforth).
[103] For example, NAS, X 351B (view, 07.10.1378 – Henry Mulso); NAS, X 351B (views 01.10.1382, 08.04.1383 – Elena Mulso), X 351A (06.10.1384 – Elena Mulso); X 351A (view, 11.04.1388 – Matilda Mulso).
[104] Bruce Bailey, Nikolaus Pevsner and Bridget Cherry, *Northamptonshire.*

Newton in the letter from Anne of Bohemia to her tenants in Geddington (see above) permitting them to take stone from the ruins of the royal manor.[105] That permission extended to *notre bien ame Iankyn Mulso* to take the stone for the repair of his *mesons* in Newton, the adjoining manor by then owned by the Mulsos. By the early fifteenth century Thomas Mulso, presumably Thomas (i), dominated the scene. Thomas appears in 1414 as steward of the neighbouring manor of Weekly (to the south of Geddington) and then as *armiger* in 1422 just before the end of the sequence of rolls.

After the manorial court rolls come to an end, Thomas (ii) (variously identified by Harriss as the son of Thomas (i) and John (iii)) becomes prominent in Geddington. He was a soldier who had served in France from 1436, returning to sit in parliament in November 1450 with his brother Edmund, and together raising men in Northamptonshire for Richard Duke of York's march to Dartford in 1451–2.[106] His career can be followed in the records of the royal courts. In 1428 a Thomas (possibly (ii)) and a Henry Mulso (unidentified) were tried at Northampton assizes for assaulting Simon Kynsman.[107] In 1437 Richard Palmer complained that Thomas had assaulted him at Weekley, near Geddington, and then imprisoned him at Geddington.[108] Also in 1437 Thomas was the subject of a complaint of assault by William Weldon (another member of the Northamptonshire gentry) at Westminster.[109] In 1440 a jury found that Thomas, accompanied by two servants, including 'John of Irelond', had assaulted William Tanner at Westminster.[110] Also in 1440 Thomas was indicted for the rape of nine women in and around Geddington, along with a string of assaults and thefts.[111] In this case there is a strong local

[105] NAS, X251B, letter transcribed into record of the court held on 21 March 1405.
[106] Harriss, *Mulso family*.
[107] TNA, KB 9/224, mm. 164-5; transcribed in Musson and Powell, *Crime*, pp. 129–30 (1428 assault); CP 40/654 (AALT image http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT1/H6/CP40no654/bCP40no654dorses/IMG_1458.htm) (hedge-breaking).
[108] TNA, CP 40/705, (AALT http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT1/H6/CP40no705/aCP40no705fronts/IMG_0015.htm).
[109] TNA, CP 40/705 (AALT http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT1/H6/CP40no705/aCP40no705fronts/IMG_0015.htm).
[110] TNA, KB9/252/1, m. 14 (AALT http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT7/KB9/KB9no252no1/IMG_0028.htm).
[111] TNA, KB 9/233 m. 132–3 (AALT images http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT7/KB9/KB9no233/IMG_0265.htm and http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT7/KB9/KB9no233/IMG_0267.htm). The latter is corrupt and, in fact,

element: many of the rape victims bore the names of local families identifiable either from the court rolls or from the tenants listed in the 1455 inquisition. In 1441 Thomas received a royal pardon for all the felonies of which he had been indicted.[112] However, this was not the end of Thomas' offending behaviour.

On 14 April 1446 William Shirwood was ambushed and murdered by William Freman, John Iryssh and William Campyon, all described as 'de Geydington'. [113] The first two were described as husbandmen and Campyon as a labourer. Campyon sought and obtained sanctuary in Geddington's parish church, but Freman and Iryssh were indicted in the King's Bench for murder along with Thomas Mulso, described as a gentleman, for abetting and supporting them, following a coroner's inquisition. No further proceedings are recorded so the outcome is unknown.

Only the Freman family appear in the Geddington manorial court rolls and mid-fifteenth century inquisition and accounts. They held land in Geddington and, in particular, in the adjoining Mulso manor of Newton.[114] Iryssh (which might suggest his origins) and Campyon (and indeed Shirwood) are names that make no appearance in these documents but Iryssh may well be the 'John of Irelond' who had featured in the 1440 Tanner assault. It seems likely that Freman, Iryssh and Campyon were part of the Mulso following in Geddington but it is unclear whether Thomas Mulso was indicted for Shirwood's murder because of his failure to control his men or because of some more active involvement. It also seems possible that Iryssh and Campyon were subtenants of the Mulso holdings in Geddington (see below).

Thomas Mulso was accused of further felonies. The rape indictments refer, in most cases, to 'deflowering' so it is clear that a sexual assault, and not merely abduction, is intended.

[112] *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Henry VI,* vol. III, 1436–1448 (London, 1907), p. 511; m. 24.

[113] TNA, KB/9/252/2 (coroner's verdict), m. 20 (AALT http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT7/KB9/KB9no252no2/IMG_0040.htm and http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT7/KB9/KB9no252no2/IMG_0041.htm); KB 29/78, m. 31d (AALT image http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT2/H6/KB29no78/bKB29no78dorses/IMG_0156.htm); KB 27/746, m. 19 (AALT http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT7/KB9/KB9no252no2/IMG_0038.htm indictment) and Shannon McSheffrey, *Sanctuary Seekers in England, 1394–1557* website at https://sanctuaryseekers.ca/2020/06/25/murder-for-hire/ deals with Campyon's claim to sanctuary.

[114] NAS, X 351A, rentals of the manor of Newton.

Thomas (ii) Mulso's final appearance comes in early 1460 with a warrant for his arrest along with a number of others (the membrane contains a number of similar entries).[115] This looks like a panicky response by the Lancastrian administration rounding up the Yorkist affinity, which would be consistent with Harriss' speculation that he was in the Yorkist army at the battle of Northampton later in the year and where he may have suffered the wounds leading to his death.

Thomas (ii) was exceptional: other members of the family appear in relatively low-key litigation concerning debts and trespasses with only occasional violent incidents in which they were, as often as not, victims as well as aggressors. It is difficult to say whether the repeated allegations against him were true or whether they were, perhaps, attributable to his apparent affiliation to the Yorkist cause. On the whole, it seems unlikely that they were wholly fabricated.

More interesting, though, is the response of the inhabitants of Geddington, particularly at the 1440 inquisition following Thomas (ii)'s miniature crime wave in Geddington. Even if events were manipulated by an unseen hand, they came forward and gave evidence against a powerful member of the gentry in the same village. That suggests that they viewed litigation in the royal courts as a viable means of neutralising Thomas (ii).

Land tenure in fifteenth-century Geddington

The evidence of land tenure in mid-fifteenth century Geddington is derived from the 1455 inquisition and the 1460–1 accounts.[116] The 1455 inquisition survives in a late seventeenth century *inspeximus*. The 1460–1 accounts survive in their original form. The 1455 inquisition was probably prompted by Thomas (ii) Mulso who took the farm of the manor at almost the same time as the commission for the inquisition in November 1454. The 1460–1 accounts

[115] TNA, KB 27/795, AALT http://aalt.law.uh.edu/H6/KB27no795/bKB27no795dorses/IMG_0432.htm).
[116] NAS, X 345B and X351A respectively.

were probably necessitated by the need to apportion the rents between the Mulsos and their successors, following the death of Thomas (ii) Mulso in 1460. It may also have been felt desirable to keep track of the letting and rent of the demesne which (allegedly) languished largely unlet in 1455.

The inquisition helpfully sets out the terms on which the virgate holdings were held, commencing with five virgates held by Thomas Mulso:

> *Thomas Mulsoe Armiger tenet quinque messuagia et quinque virgate terre quarum quilibet virgata terre continet quindecem acre terre et tres acre prati tenendum sibi et heredibus et assignatis suis secundum consuetudinem manerii in socagio et sectam curie de tribus in tres et debet domino Regi pro qualibet alienacionem cuiuslibet messuagii et virgate terre totiens quotiens quinque solidos et quandocumque aliquis heres intrat post decessum antecessoris suo more hereditarie faciat finem cum domino Rege secundum discressionem senescalli qui pro tempore occupat Et si idem tenens sequatur ipsum brevem de recto secundum consuetudinem manerii versus alium in placito terre quisque eorum inveniatur in defectu et dampno solvat Domino Regi de custuma quinque solidos et etiam reddendo Domino Regi per anum de redditu pro quolibet messuagio et virgata terre et prati ad terminos ibidem usuales sex solidos et sex denarios*

Thus the virgate tenements were held on a hereditary socage tenure with all services commuted for cash, namely the annual rent of 6s. 6d., an entry fine on alienation of 5s. (suggesting the land was freely alienable), a discretionary fine on inheritance (which was presumably determined by the custom of the manor although no custumal survives) and a fine of 5s. on entry following a *breve de recto in placito terre*, presumably litigation although the meaning is obscure. This description of the tenure also seems consistent with the transactions described in the court rolls from 1377 to 1423 (see appendix 7 for examples).

The significance of hereditary tenure according to the custom of the manor may explain the frequency in the rolls of transfers from parents to children *inter vivos* with the grant back of a life interest to the parent transferors.

The inquisition commences with the area on which royal concern was centred, the manorial demesne, which was said to total 174 acres of arable, called 'Hollelande' (probably 'hall land'), and forty acres of meadow in Geddington (although there were further areas of demesne in Barford and Glendon). The entire demesne arable was untenanted and lying fallow or uncultivated, *frisca*, the watermill lay in ruins and the pasture likewise yielded no rental income. Further, land equivalent to a large virgate, probably carved out of the demesne and formerly let to John Hough (a familiar family name from the manorial court rolls), also remained unlet. Overall, the demesne which ought to have yielded a modest rental income of almost £4 was in fact yielding only 10s. for the site of the manor.
This was attributed to plague, lack of tenants and the burden of the rent:

> *Et iuratores predicti dicerunt quod omnia terra, prata molendina et perquisiti curie, clausuri, seperali, piscarii [supradicta] in manu domini Regis existunt ob defectu tenentium que [tam] causa frequenter morbi pestilentiali ibidem de ibidem penitus recesserunt et deprivati [existerunt] quam causa magni ponderis redditus et firmarii ibidem in villa predicta penitus recesserunt*.

A cynical observer might, however, have observed that the plague had been remarkably selective in its impact since most of the manor's customary land held at sub-economic rents had found tenants. None of the fourteen jurors were tenants of the manor although four of them bore the same surname as the tenants (William Barker, Richard Smithe, John Bull and Thomas Chamber). In the fourteenth century the practice had been to empanel jurors from the surrounding villages and it seems likely that the same process was adopted here.

The customary tenants held their virgate holdings at the standard rent of 6s. 6d., unchanged since the early fourteenth century. Eighteen virgates in the Geddington 'core' and their tenants were listed although one had been overlooked so the total should have been nineteen. The 1327 survey had listed sixteen virgate and ten half-virgate holdings in the Geddington 'core' common fields, or the equivalent of twenty-one virgates in all. By 1455 the half-virgate holdings had completely disappeared which may account in part for the increase in number of the full virgate holdings and the difference of two virgates was probably attributable to the fragmentation of two virgates in the intervening 127 years.

The most striking feature of the virgate holdings is that five were in the hands of Thomas (ii) Mulso and four virgates (actually five if the virgate missed by the 1455 inquisition is taken into account) were in the hands of Margaret Mulso. Their relationship is unclear but it seems likely that Margaret was his widowed sister-in-law (see below). They held their land rather differently. Thomas's virgates were kept intact so that his holdings comprised the messuage and the fifteen acres of arable and three of meadow. Margaret's virgate holdings retained the arable and meadow but excluded the messuage which was held directly from the lord by other tenants of the manor, usually in multiple occupation by two or three tenants.

As well as Thomas Mulso's five entire virgates and Margaret Mulso's four (actually five) 'abbreviated' virgates, a further four remained intact but the remaining five virgate holdings had all fragmented in varying degrees.

The cottage holdings also demonstrated a further aspect of the Mulsos' grip on Geddington. Out of a total of thirty-four cottages, six were held by Thomas Mulso and seventeen by Margaret along with two shops and various other small pieces of land. Thus the Mulsos held almost 70% of the cottages in Geddington. The implications will be considered further but their cottages must have been sublet.

The other main category of land was a series of small holdings, the *bordelond*, totalling eighty-seven acres, and split up, for the most part, in rather small holdings. This land had been set aside in the early middle ages to provide food for the lord's table supplementing the produce of the 'Hallelonde' or the demesne arable.[117]

The final section of the inquisition sets out the *forinsec* land before moving on to the two outlying villages at Barford and Glendon. Here, there was a total of seventy acres of demesne arable and pasture and seventeen virgates, ten in Barford and seven in Glendon. In 1327 there had been thirteen in Barford and four in Glendon but the total is the same, possibly the result of shifting boundaries between the two villages.

The accounts, produced six years later, for the year from 29 September 1460 to 29 September 1461 by the then steward, Thomas Spanne, are rather more detailed than the inquisition. They were prepared more carefully than the 1455 inquisition and some errors were corrected including the virgate omitted from the inquisition. They again itemise the Geddington virgate holdings commencing with Thomas Mulso's five messuages and virgates and Margaret Mulso's (corrected) five virgates (all minus their messuages). The other virgate holders remained unchanged so that the total of Geddington virgates had increased from eighteen to nineteen, as described above. The cottage holdings in Geddington along with the virgate holdings in Barford and Glendon also remained largely unchanged.

One of the purposes of the accounts becomes apparent with a detailed description of the demesne land and the land formerly let to John Hough which, as has been said, had probably been carved out of the demesne. The demesne arable was scattered across the common fields and was almost entirely lying as *frisca* or fallow. Since 1455 some of it had been let at rents of around 4d. per acre which was about the same as the customary rent of the virgates.

[117] See in particular Cavill, *A New Dictionary of English Field-Names*, p. 475.

The efforts seemingly made in the preceding six years to let the demesne had resulted in an increase in the manor's rental yield from barely £19 in 1455 to £26 12s. 3¼d. in 1461.

It is worth pausing to consider how this situation might have worked in practice. The *frisca* was former demesne arable land dispersed through the common fields alongside strips or furlongs held by the customary tenants and it would have been difficult to maintain the common field system with the arable strips or furlongs held by the customary tenants in cultivation alongside the ungrazed or fallow demesne strips or furlongs of the demesne *frisca*. If the demesne *frisca* was used as rough grazing (as seems likely) there would have been obvious problems with animals straying onto cultivated strips unless they were all tethered (which seems unlikely) and if it was ungrazed there would have been problems with weeds spreading into the cultivated strips.

It is, therefore, likely that the manorial tenants had retreated from cultivating some of their own arable land where it lay alongside the demesne arable. A contraction of the arable would not be a surprising response to the depressed market conditions of the mid-fifteenth century and a transition towards more pastoral agriculture. That abandonment of arable was certainly far from complete and, in fact, it may be that the manorial tenants were actually practising some form of convertible husbandry.

Another consideration arising from the Mulsos' dominance of the Geddington virgates is the way in which they used that land. The contrasting patterns in which Thomas held both messuages and land whereas Margaret held only the land, excluding the messuages, suggests they had adopted different subletting strategies. It is likely that Thomas sublet entire virgate holdings and needed to hold the messuage as well as the land in order to make the holding attractive to potential tenants needing somewhere to live. Margaret evidently saw no purpose in holding the messuage and presumably cultivated her land using a labour force accommodated in her extensive cottage holdings. Along with their dominance of the arable

land, the Mulsos would have enjoyed significant control of their subtenants' access to the common pasture, including over 1,400 acres in the woods. This points to the production of a significant surplus either in the hands of the Mulsos' subtenants or, more probably, in the hands of the Mulsos themselves. That also points to their quite extensive involvement in the market, even in the depths of the mid-fifteenth century recession.

There are some indications that the Mulsos had long been dependent on employed labour. Their relatively frequent presentations for 'harbouring' in the manorial court rolls have already been observed. Some of those 'harboured' were undoubtedly the Mulsos' servants but they might have included day labourers and *stipendarii*. That impression is reinforced by the Mulsos' use of the statutes of labourers on four occasions in the royal courts.[118] The first was in the Easter term 1401 when Thomas Mulso (probably Harriss' Thomas (i)) complained of early termination of a contract of service by William Windesore of Geddington.[119] The Windesore family appear in the fourteenth century Geddington manorial court rolls as tenants of the manor.[120] Then in 1413 Thomas Mulso presented John Holt and John Tansoere for early termination of contracts of service.[121] Tansoere cannot be traced but a John Holt appears as a *carucator* in the Geddington manorial court rolls for 14 June 1408. Finally, some time later in 1458 Thomas Mulso (almost certainly Harriss' Thomas (ii)) complained of early termination of a contract of service by Roger Hamond of Little Newton, described as a 'yoman'.[122] In at least some of these cases it looks very much as though the contract of service was, in fact, either a sublease of land or some sort of sharecropping agreement. This should

[118] For the use of the statutes of labourers in the court of Common Pleas, see Nicholas S. Amor, 'Labour Litigation in the Court of Common Pleas in the Fourteenth Century', *Journal of Medieval History*, 51.5 (2025) pp. 622-45.
[119] TNA, CP 40/561 (AALT http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT2/H4/CP40no561/aCP40no561fronts/IMG_0554.htm).
[120] The first of many references to the Windesore family is at the court of 07.03.1360 (NAS, X351A). William appears in litigation at the court of 05.04.1399 (NAS, X 351B) and was presented for working outside the village *contra statutem* (a rather uncommon presentation in the rolls) at the view of 01.10.1390 (NAS, X 351A).
[121] TNA, CP 40/609 (AALT http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT4/H5/CP40no609/bCP40no609dorses/IMG_0721.htm).
[122] TNA, CP 40/708 (AALT http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT4/H5/CP40no609/bCP40no609dorses/IMG_0722.htm).

come as no surprise: plainly the Mulsos needed someone to farm their relatively extensive Geddington holdings along with their manor in Newton and elsewhere. It also suggests that the Mulsos adopted an aggressive approach to enforcing contracts of service which extended to using the royal courts.

Of the remaining nine virgates in the Geddington 'core' which were not in the hands of the Mulso family, six remained as intact or virtually intact virgates whilst a further three had fragmented. The families of their tenants had varying degrees of connection with Geddington: some families appear in the court rolls of the 1380s and 1390s whilst some seem to have been more recent arrivals or to have inherited thorough the female line. They are, however, important because their presence probably prevented the collapse of the common field system which would almost certainly have resulted if all the virgates in the Geddington 'core' had fallen into the hands of the Mulso family or its successors.

Another significant reason for the drawing up of the 1460–1 accounts was that Thomas Mulso had died in 1460 without male heirs so his lands in Geddington passed to his son-in-law, Henry Tresham, whilst Margaret Mulso's holding passed at the same time to John Pultney. As a result, it was necessary to apportion the rent between the outgoing tenants, Thomas Mulso's estate and Margaret, and the incoming tenants, Henry Tresham and John Pultney. The Pulteneys remained important figures in Geddington in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. The 1607 survey then picks up the story and helpfully sets out the transmission history of what were, by then, copyhold tenements.[123] Thomas Mulso's holding had been inherited, eventually, by Sir Thomas Tresham (the heir of the gunpowder plotter, Nicholas) and Margaret Mulso's holding had passed into the hands of Thomas Maidwell following a sale by the Pulteney family in the early years of the reign of Elizabeth. The extensive copyhold holdings of the Maidwells in 1717 and 1808 were acquired by them from the Treshams.

[123] TNA, LR 2/221.

Margaret Mulso appears as a defendant in a 1458 debt claim where she is described as the widow of Thomas Cosyn 'of London'.[124] Her will of 1493 was admitted to probate in May 1494 so presumably she had died shortly before.[125] It shows her living in London, seemingly with no heirs. She directed that she should be buried at St Michael's church at Cornhill, in the City, and left a series of charitable bequests to that church and elsewhere for prayers and masses for her soul and that of her deceased husband, William Mulso, *armiger*. That was probably William (ii) Mulso who was Thomas (ii)'s younger brother so she was Thomas (ii)'s sister-in-law. The terms of her will, coupled with the earlier marriage to a Londoner, suggest that was her place of origin. It also suggests a commercial background which may explain her apparently rather entrepreneurial approach to the exploitation of her land. It is not clear why she gave up her landholding in 1461 but the death of Thomas (ii) may have been a factor: she may have felt that she would be uncomfortably exposed had she remained in Geddington with no other Mulso presence in the village and contending with the dubious legacy of Thomas (ii)'s reputation.

The fate of the outlying villages of Barford and Glendon is derived from the 1517 inquisition of enclosures. The jurors' presentations for this part of Northamptonshire were numerous and the Geddington 'core' seems like an island of the common field system in a sea of enclosure. However, it was at Barford and Glendon, that enclosures seem to have been particularly extensive.

The jurors' report for Glendon is confused and Leadam laboured to make sense of it, concluding that some 377 acres out of a total reported acreage of 818 acres arable and

[124] TNA, CP 40/788, AALT image http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT1/H6/CP40no788/aCP40no788fronts/IMG_0327.htm . Assuming she was around sixty-five at the time of her death, that would mean she had been born in 1429 and was in her mid-twenties at the time of the 1455 inquisition, by which time she was married for the second time to William Mulso.
[125] TNA, PROB 11/10/157.

pasture had been enclosed with twelve ploughs and sixty-two people displaced by Robert Malory on 5 March 1514. [126] The jurors reported that four messuages there held from the manor of Geddington, with accompanying tenements varying between nineteen and thirty-one acres, together with a cottage holding of ten acres, had all been enclosed. Allowing for the merging of some holdings, that more or less tallies with the mid-fifteenth century inquisition and accounts of a total of seven or seven-and-a-half virgates split between whole and half-virgates. Indeed, the jurors reported that the total enclosed land taken from the royal manor was 142 acres which, divided by the seven virgates, comes out at marginally more than twenty acres for each virgate and which was the minimum enclosure reportable under the Act of 1489, H VII c.19 'agaynst the pullyng down of Townes' (as Leadam observed). Thus, it seems quite possible that all the Geddington virgates in Glendon had been enclosed by 1517. This may have been a process which had been continuing there for some time: at the views of frankpledge for 7 November 1405 and 15 April 1407, over one hundred years earlier, Andrew Neubotil was presented for enclosing the common pasture of Glendon. As is often the case, the outcome of those presentations, and whether he remedied his enclosures, is unknown.

The position in Barford was clearer and even more stark.[127] The jurors reported that just two years earlier on 3 January 1515 George Boyvyle had thrown down six messuages and a cottage holding:

> *et ab usu cultura et iconomie in pastura brutorum animalium convertit... quasi tota villa predicta de Berford destruitur et xx^{ti} persone que in Mesuagiis predictis moram trahere solebant et circa cultura terram predictam victum suum habuerunt ab inde ob causis predictis recesserunt et vagarunt... Et tenentur de domino Rege et de Manerio suo de Gedyngton per copiam curie secundum consuetudinem Manerii predicti.*

[126] *Domesday of Inclosures*, pp. 309–11.
[127] *Domesday of Inclosures*, pp. 316–17.

In this case the jurors identified the virgate holdings attached to the messuages as eighteen acres thus corresponding to the 'standard' Geddington virgate. The mid-fifteenth century records showed ten virgates and two cottage holdings in Barford but the jurors' report was clear that the *entire* town had ceased to exist. The passage is notable as, seemingly, the only record of a holding *per copiam* at Geddington.

That is consistent with the 1539 muster roll for the Rothwell hundred which shows only a single name for Barford, Richard Boyfyld (presumably Boyvyl).[128] Likewise, the 1524/5 lay subsidy assessments show only a single taxpayer in both Glendon and Barford: John Shorley (assessed at £4) and Henry Holman (assessed at £1 10s.) respectively.[129] Whatever doubts may exist over the 1517 jurors' ascription of the cause and method of depopulation and enclosure, it seems likely that Barford had ceased to exist by the early decades of the sixteenth century. It has not been possible to trace the outcome of the 1517 inquisition into the Exchequer rolls at Barford but a single reference to Glendon can be found dated 1546, some thirty years after the original inquisition.[130] Possibly unsurprisingly, it is confused about the events of over thirty years earlier but it appears that the inquisition had provided the basis for a tax or levy of half the rent of the land illegally enclosed.

It seems likely that the enclosure of Barford and Glendon, and their letting by copyhold, was the result, rather than the cause, of depopulation stretching back at least to the early fifteenth century. The records of early fifteenth-century enclosure in Glendon, the merger of virgate tenements in both communities and the extensive *frisca* recorded in the 1455 inquisition and 1460/61 accounts (which seems to have been concentrated in Barford) all point to that conclusion. It will be considered further in the concluding section of this chapter.

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[128] *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII*, vol. XIV, pt I (London, 1894), p. 282. No return is recorded for Geddington.
[129] TNA, E 179/155/133; transcript on the Medieval Genealogy website at http://aalt.law.uh.edu/aalt1/H8/E368no320/bE368no320dorses/IMG_0990.htm .
[130] TNA, E 368/320. AALT image at https://www.medievalgenealogy.org.uk/subsidies/transcripts/rothwell16c.shtml#362 .

Little is known about the alleged enclosers in the 1517 inquisition. A Simon Malory appears as the *firmarius* of Geddington for a term of forty years in 1498 (appendix 2) which probably explains the presence of Robert Malory in Glendon in the second decade of the sixteenth century. George Boyvill's will, in which he describes himself as a gentleman, suggests he came from Burton Latimer, a village about seven miles south of Geddington where he held land.[131] He left directions to be buried in the church there although he described himself as 'of Barford' and refers to his copyhold land at Barford which he held from the king's manor at Geddington. He could probably be categorised as a member of the minor rural gentry.

Geddington at the end of the fifteenth century

A thin scatter of four wills throws light on Geddington in the late fifteenth century.[132] The most interesting is that of Henry German who is commemorated in Geddington parish church along with his wife, Anne, in a monumental brass.[133] His will left a series of bequests to parish churches and their priests on the route between Geddington and Royston (a distance of about forty miles). He left a similar bequest to villages on a route between Geddington and (probably) Elkington, a deserted village about twenty miles west of Geddington in the direction of Rugby and Coventry where he also held land. He left further bequests for the repair of bridges at Thrapston and St Neots along with two other less easily identified locations at Byshampstede and Harryngton (possibly Harrington on the route to Elkington). The implication is fairly clear: Henry German was a drover on a route from Coventry to Royston, a convenient jumping-off point for London. He seemingly died without a surviving family save for his wife: his estate was divided for the most part between his *famuli*, his servants (primarily

[131] TNA, PROB 11/19/294.
[132] NAS, Northamptonshire Early Wills, William Freman (1500), F127; Henry German (1486), F45; Henry Sounde (1499), F72; Robert German (1501), F138. For a helpful review of the cultural issues surrounding wills in a society where consumer goods were becoming increasingly widespread, see Louisa Z. Foroughi, 'From Christmas Candlesticks to Deathbeds: The Material Culture of the Male "Middling Sort" in Late Medieval English Wills', *Journal of Medieval History,* 50.3 (2024), pp. 375-99.
[133] Monumental Brass Society portfolio at https://www.mbs-brasses.co.uk/index-of-brasses/henry-anne-jarmon.

Anne Bishop), some of whom who were charged with the maintenance of his widow, and to others, godchildren in particular. His estate was extensive and comprised a number of sheep – well over 280 (possibly his core breeding flock) along with a share of a further flock of 200 pastured at Newton – as well as unquantifiable cattle and agricultural tools including at least two ploughs indicating that he held arable land as well as pasture. He left tenements at both Geddington and Newton.

The German family do not appear in the manorial court rolls, nor are they amongst the list of tenants in the inquisition of 1455 and accounts of 1460/61. Member of the family appear in the Geddington lay subsidy records for 1523/4 and as the tenant of a smallholding in the survey of 1607.[134] They were probably late fifteenth century arrivals in Geddington probably renting demesne land or *frisca* at Barford or Glendon for his extensive flock. If so, that would confirm that the outlying parts of the manor at Barford and Glendon had been turned over to pasture by the end of the fifteenth century.

It seems appropriate to conclude this account of fifteenth century Geddington with some observations about land tenure. It is apparent from Henry German's will, as well as those of other Geddington tenants, Robert German of 1501 (his relationship to Henry is unknown) and Henry Sounde of 1499, that their land could be devised by will. It seems likely they held by copyhold. The glancing reference in the 1517 commission to George Boyvyle holding his land in Barford by copy reinforces the impression that copyhold was firmly established in Geddington by the early sixteenth century. This and other implications of developments in Geddington will be considered in section 8 below.

[134] TNA, E179/155/160 (1523/4 lay subsidy; Richard Jerman assessed at £1 10s., transcript, *Some Notes on Medieval Genealogy* website at https://www.medievalgenealogy.org.uk/subsidies/transcripts/corby16c.shtml) and LR 2/221 (1607 survey; Robert Jarman holding a house, 3a. 2r. arable and 3r. meadow at a rent of 3s. p.a.).

6. Geddington in the early modern period and after

The early modern and modern agrarian history of Geddington can be traced through the survey of 1607 and the 1717 field map and terrier along with material relating to the parliamentary enclosure of Geddington Chase in 1795 and then the Geddington common fields in 1808.[135] William Pitt's *General view of the agriculture of the County of Northampton* (1813), written in 1806 throws light on the Geddington common field system immediately before enclosure.

The 1607 survey was prompted by the concerns of the royal administration about the rental yield from the manor of £37 6s. 8½d., almost double the low point in 1455 of under £20. The manor was shorn of its outlying villages at Barford and Glendon. It demonstrates the polarisation of landholdings with Thomas Tresham and Thomas Maydwell holding over one hundred acres alongside a much larger holding of over 150 acres of Robert Lane, who held the lease of the manor from the crown. The remaining tenants held thirty acres or less.

By 1717, that process had continued so that the Duke of Montagu held 531 acres in the common fields having acquired the manor from the crown. The other main landholder was the Maidwell family, the ultimate successors to the Mulsos' holdings. The field map and terrier minutely detail each holding in each furlong but it is difficult, often impossible, to relate the eighteenth-century furlong names to those used in the middle ages. However, the field map shows three closes to the south of the village adjoining arable land in Mill and Tickley fields called Upper Breaches, Nether Breaches and Cow Pasture Breaches. That sounds very like the twenty-eight acres of *frisca* at Highbreche in the South Field, mostly lying unlet, and the fourteen acres of *frisca* at the Shortbreches and Highbreches in the Middle Field, again mostly unlet, in the 1460–1 accounts. It seems plausible to identify the medieval Middle and South

[135] TNA, LR 2/221 (1607 survey); the 1717 field map and its related terrier are uncatalogued at Boughton House and NAS respectively; NAS X 350 (1807 claims book for the enclosure award); NAS, V 2129 (Enclosure Act award and map).

fields as the eighteenth-century Mill and Tickley fields and the similarity of the furlong names is striking. In short, the three Breaches of the eighteenth century were probably part of the abandoned arable, lying as *frisca*, of the mid-fifteenth century.

William Pitt viewed the common fields of Geddington two years before parliamentary enclosure and recorded that they were sown on a three-year rotation of first fallow, second wheat and third beans, peas, barley, oats or vetches. In other words, the medieval 'three-season' cropping pattern had survived, much to Pitt's distress, because, as he observed, 'The common fields are cropped by antient custom which cannot be altered but by general consent.'[136]

Pitt went on to give a colourful description of the over-grazing of Geddington Chase in the opentide from 1 May to 11 November which he had apparently viewed before enclosure there in 1795.[137] In fact, it was the enclosure of Geddington Chase in 1795 rather than the enclosure of the common fields in 1808 that gave rise to most opposition, manifested in a number of petitions against enclosure of the woods in the Montagu archive.[138] That was not entirely surprising because the numerous cottagers of Geddington had grazing rights there which they stood to lose. When it came to the enclosure of the common fields, there were by then only six tenants claiming rights to land there, by far the largest proportion, over 80% of the total, being the Duke and Duchess of Montagu and the Rev. William Lockwood Maidwell. Presumably, after enclosure of the woods in 1795 the cottagers had parted with their livestock, having lost their pasturing rights in the Chase, so that their pasturing rights in the fallow had become useless. The cottagers, forty-five in all, made claims to the common fields (based on their grazing rights in the fallow)before their enclosure in 1808, but they were all ignored.[139]

[136] William Pitt, *General View*, pp. 63–4 and 70.
[137] William Pitt, *General View*, pp. 158–9.
[138] NAS, X 350.
[139] NAS, X 350, the surveyors' claims book for the 1808 enclosure award.

Thus, the trends which had commenced in the fifteenth century, if not earlier, towards the concentration of landholdings in the common fields in fewer and fewer hands and the creation of a cottager population highly dependent on common rights in the woods continued to the end of the eighteenth century. So too the agrarian system of the common fields and meadows ended with the arrival in Geddington in 1790 of the Scottish enlightenment in the form of Henry Scott, third Duke of Buccleuch, a former pupil of Adam Smith and husband of Elizabeth, Duchess of Buccleuch, who had inherited the Montagu lands in Geddington.

7. Conclusion.

A comparison of the Geddington manorial court rolls from the beginning of the main sequence in 1377 with the surviving remnants of 1490 and 1505 shows marked changes over the period. The manorial court, the *curia plena*, had disappeared and its functions were now dealt with by the view of frankpledge. The proceedings at the view were, superficially, unchanged: presentations by the tithingmen of the villages of Geddington, Barford, Glendon and Rushton for offences ranging from non-attendance at the court, obstructing roads with dunghills, hedge breaking and animal trespass and, inevitably, occasional outbreaks of violence. However, the view now dealt with business formerly handled by the *curia plena* such as land transactions, now including successions on the death of a tenant, as well as the routine assizes of bread and ale. The elaborate pledging system of the early rolls had completely disappeared. Likewise, the substantial volume of litigation had disappeared. The overall impression, easier to describe than define, is that the system of lordly control exemplified by the pledging system, and which may already have been in decay by 1377, had given way to a system of communal self-regulation, a process which, as has been said, was well under way by the end of the fourteenth century.

Looking beyond the manorial court and its records, early fourteenth-century Geddington gives the impression of a relatively prosperous community with significant market integration

manifested in its suggested micro-economy. That trend becomes much clearer in the late fifteenth century and is embodied by Henry German, a man integrated into a national rather than merely a local economy. That impression seems to be consistent with the recent historiography and the view of the fifteenth century as a period of consolidation leading to sounder and more sustained growth, despite the prolonged depression of the mid-century.[140] That impression also seems to be confirmed by the agrarian activities of the Mulsos in Geddington although that is speculative. The trajectory of change in the outlying settlements of Barford and Glendon was rather different. They were probably deserted or largely deserted and their fields enclosed or largely enclosed and let by copyhold by the early sixteenth century. An associated feature is the multiplication of gentry and semi-gentry figures: the Treshams, Pultneys, Malorys, Boyvyles and others in place of the Mulso monoculture of the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. Their emergence seems to be associated with the consolidation of tenements. That is apparent in the largest transaction in the rolls sequence, recorded on 11 November 1422, with the transmission of four virgates in Barford from Nicholas Iowet (presumably Hewit) and William Barford to William, the son of the second transferor, and Agnes Barford.[141]

An underlying cause of this was that the common field system, although remarkably resilient, was vulnerable to depopulation. Unlike systems of several ownership, it depended on the presence of a sufficient number of tenants enjoying Ostrom's common pool resources and ensuring the proper administration of its common property rights regime. A similar problem with the same outcome can be seen in present-day Laxton: the problem there is economic rather than demographic (as in medieval Barford) but the outcome is the same, the collapse of the common property rights regime with insufficient tenants to ensure its continued maintenance. Geddington may have come perilously close to that fate in the mid-fifteenth

[140] E.g. Bruce M. S. Campbell, *The Great Transition: Climate, Disease and Society in the Late-Medieval World* (Cambridge, 2016), ch. 5 especially.
[141] NAS, X 350.

century but the community and the common field system was able to adapt by converting part of the arable to *frisca*, some perhaps permanently (the Breaches, for instance) and some temporarily (possibly using some form of convertible husbandry). The appearance of areas of leys in the common fields in the 1717 field map also suggests adaptation to a more mixed arable and pastoral agrarian economy. By contrast, the collapse of population at Barford and Glendon resulted in the collapse of the system followed by conversion to pasture held by copyhold.

A notable feature of the manor was its curious structure by which the tenants, or some of them, held the manor on farm from the crown and so became, in effect, their own lords. Even more remarkable was what they did with that position. The maintenance of a high-functioning manorial court with regular sessions required some effort. It enabled those tenants to manipulate the entry fines for virgate tenements in the Geddington 'core' (although not elsewhere) and, at a different level, it is notable that mill-suit was rarely enforced at Geddington whereas the miller was regularly fined for charging excessive mill-tolls. The point is minor but telling: the *firmarii* were more interested in control than the maximisation of manorial profits.

An accompaniment of the curious manorial structure at Geddington has already been noted: the close involvement of the tenants in the process of law. In the second half of the fourteenth century this took the form of engagement with the manorial court in litigation, relatively complex land transactions and (probably) some manipulation of the presentation system at the views. By the fifteenth century, emphasis was shifting to the royal courts: the local response to Thomas (ii) Mulso took place in that forum.

That was probably an extension of a long-standing feature of Geddington: as a manor of ancient demesne, its tenants had always had access, at least in theory, to the royal courts. Even in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the widows of Peter de Deen and John Botelyr seem to have secured access to the royal courts with relative ease. However, those were

isolated cases and the real forum in which the tenants engaged with the law and legal process was the manorial court.

Possibly the most significant feature of the manorial court by the end of the fifteenth century was that it was no longer dominated by the gentry figures who seem to have been prominent elsewhere in the local landscape. In the court rolls of 1490 and 1505, it is reasonably clear that the virgators (soon to become yardlanders in the written record) such as the Bull, Comfort and Bishop families who comprised the jury, controlled the proceedings of the court and who, in 1490 at least, fined the gentry members of the Pulteney family who hadn't bothered to turn up at the court. The extent of their influence, particularly if it came to a confrontation with the gentry, was probably limited but their knowledge of the law made them a force to be reckoned with.

Chapter 4
Barkby

1. Topography, archival material and historiography

Topography

Barkby is about five miles north-east of Leicester. The modern parish boundaries follow the bounds of the early modern village and field system quite closely (map 5). The parish rises from meadows on alluvial soil and gravel beds in the valley of the River Soar to higher land and heavier clay soils to the east for about five miles. The parish is never more than about one and a half miles from north to south. The modern village lies roughly in the middle of the parish with a nearby hamlet at Barkby Thorpe on the southern boundary of the parish. The Barkby Brook is the dominant natural topographical feature of the parish running from the east, through the village and then swinging northwards through pasture known in the middle ages as the Northings.

The surrounding villages are Syston and Queniborough to the north, Croxton, Beeby and Hungarton to the east and Thurmaston and the deserted medieval village of Hamilton to the south. The medieval manor of Wanlip or Anlep lay to the west on the opposing bank of the Soar.

Thus, Barkby comprised meadows and pasture to the west alongside the banks of the Soar, rising to heavier arable land to the east. Hoskins identified Barkby as one of a number of 'early' Leicestershire villages lying on river gravel beds above the floodplain alluvium.[1]

[1] W. G. Hoskins, *Leicestershire: An Illustrated Essay on the History of the Landscape* (London, 1957), p. 4.

Archival material

Medieval Barkby was divided between the Leicester Abbey estate and manors owned by Merton College, Langley Priory, and, finally, a gentry manor.

The Merton College archives run from the acquisition of its manor at Barkby in 1271 throughout the later middle ages. They include a relatively complete run of manorial court rolls.[2] There is also an almost complete run of bailiffs' accounts.[3] Rentals also survive from the early fourteenth century onwards.[4] There is a significant volume of early modern material including an undated sixteenth century survey probably dating from between 1536 and 1553, a survey of 1609 and maps of 1609 and 1635.[5] There is a fragmentary field book in the ROLLR which was apparently commissioned by Merton to record its holdings and dating from 1635.[6] Finally, there is an Enclosure Act award of 1781 and maps of the award held by both Merton and the ROLLR.[7]

The Langley Priory manor is virtually undocumented with only a series of heavily damaged court rolls covering the period 1471 to 1518 and a single undated rental, probably of the same period.[8]

Leicester Abbey's lands are rather better documented, the main sources being the *Novum Rentale* and the *Liber de Terris Dominicalibus*.[9] Both present problems and will be considered further below (sections 4 and 8).

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[2] MCR, 6563 to 6625 (and see Bibliography, table 2).
[3] MCR, 6483 to 6572.
[4] MCR, 6556 (c.1300, multiple, mutilated), 6568 (undated and 1312–13), 6557 (1355), 6559 (1413), 6560 (1450), 6561 (1452) and 6562 (1474).
[5] MCR. The surveys of 1536–53 and 1609 and the maps of 1609 and 1635 are all unindexed.
[6] ROLLR, DE 237.
[7] MCR, 5.21 (Enclosure Act map held by Merton) and ROLLR DG 7/MA/19/1 (Enclosure Act map apparently from the Pochin collection).
[8] TNA, SC 2/183/38 and 39 (court rolls) and SC 11/382 (rental).
[9] Bodleian Library, Laud MS misc. 625 and BL, Cotton, Galba E III ff. 81 *et seq*.

The gentry manor, probably owned by the Willoughby family in the middle ages, has left no surviving records and indeed the only evidence of its existence is found in records of litigation over its ownership in the late fifteenth century.

Historiography

The starting points for the secondary material on Barkby are John Nichols' monumental county history and George Farnham's extensive collection of source material.[10]

The Merton archive has attracted the attention of David Postles in a lively review of the earlier manorial court rolls of the Merton manor and its administration.[11] This formed the first stage of an apparently uncompleted review of Merton's Barkby material although Postles subsequently returned to Barkby in other connections.[12] Suella Postles worked on Barkby in the early modern period, concluding that Barkby had remained largely unenclosed until parliamentary enclosure in 1781.[13] Merton's management of its other manors has also attracted the attention of historians, particularly its other Leicestershire manor at Kibworth Harcourt, the subject of Cicely Howell's work.[14] As at Barkby, Merton never cultivated the demesne there, so her work concentrates on family landholdings in Kibworth Harcourt. In contrast, the College farmed its demesne at Merton's manor at Cuxham in Oxfordshire, which has provided much material on demesne management.[15] Leicester Abbey's

[10] John Nichols, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester* (London, 1811) and in particular the entry for Barkby in vol. 3, pt 1, pp. 44–52; George F. Farnham, *Leicestershire Medieval Village Notes* (London, 1929–30), and especially the entry for Barkby in vol. 1, pp. 105–130.
[11] David Postles, 'Barkby, 1086–1524', *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* LVI (1980), pp. 50–61.
[12] David Postles, 'Personal Pledging in Manorial Courts in the Later Middle Ages', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 75.1 (1993), pp. 65–78.
[13] Suella Postles, 'Barkby: The Anatomy of a Closed Township, 1535–1780', unpublished MA thesis, Leicester University (1978).
[14] Cicely Howell, *Land, Family and Inheritance in Transition: Kibworth Harcourt 1280-1700* (Cambridge, 1983).
[15] P. D. A. Harvey, *A Medieval Oxfordshire Village: Cuxham, 1240–1400* (Oxford, 1965) and (ed.) *Manorial Records of Cuxham, Oxfordshire, circa 1200–1359* (London, 1971).

landholdings in Leicestershire formed the main focus of an early study by R. H. Hilton which relied heavily on the *Novum Rentale* and the *Liber*.[16]

There is, thus, just about sufficient primary evidence for a comparison of the Merton manor and the Leicester Abbey estate in Barkby: the former essentially a rentier manor providing a cash income for Merton and the latter a component of Leicester Abbey's demesne farming operation in the meadows of Leicester, although, by the later fifteenth century, that demesne was leased out. However, by far the largest part of the surviving material relates to the Merton manor and makes it possible to analyse the problems confronting – and the limited remedies available to – a rentier landowner in the later middle ages.

This chapter will attempt, initially, to trace the origins of the four Barkby manors (section 3) before going on to consider their field system and topography (section 4). Section 5 concentrates on Merton's management of its manor. That is addressed in three phases: first, the period preceding the first wave of the Black Death in 1349 (section 6), secondly a period in which Merton, always essentially an absentee rentier lord, faced demographic and social changes from 1349 until about 1420 (section 7), and, finally, a period stretching thorough the remainder of the fifteenth century in which Merton was faced with a steady decline of its rental income (section 8). Merton's response to these problems is compared with its handling of its other Leicestershire manor at Kibworth Harcourt and also with Leicester Abbey's and – to the limited extent that is possible – with Langley Priory's management of their land at Barkby. The early modern period is than addressed briefly (section 9) before the reaching some conclusions (section 10).

[16] R. H. Hilton, *The Economic Development of Some Leicestershire Estates in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* (Oxford, 1947).

2. Domesday Book and after

Domesday Book refers to two holdings in Barkby. The first appears amongst the lands of Robert de Tosny in Gartree Wapentake.[17] It reads in translation:

William holds 18 c[arucates] of land in Barkby from Robert [de Tosny].

Land for 16 ploughs. In lordship 3 ploughs; 3 slaves.

7 villagers with 3 smallholders, 10 Freemen and 4 Frenchmen have 10 ploughs.

A man-at-arms holds 6 c[arucates] of this land in Hungarton.

He has 1 plough in lordship; 2 slaves

7 Freement with 3 ploughs.

Meadow, 16 acres.

The value was 30s; now £4.

Roger holds 5 c[arucates of land in (South) Croxton from William

The second holding appears amongst those of Adeliza or Adelaide, wife of Hugh de Grandmesnil.[18] It reads in translation:

[Leofric holds] 1½ c[arucates] of land in Barkby from [Adeliza]. Land for 2 ploughs.

Now in lordship 1 plough with 1 slave.

6 villagers with 5 smallholders have 2 ploughs.

A mill at 12d; meadow, 5 acres.

The value was and is 30s.

Siward held it freely.

[17] TNA, Domesday Book, E 31/2/2/1225. Translation from the Phillimore edition, *Domesday Book, 22 Leicestershire*, ed. Philip Morgan, (Chichester, 1979) 15.10.
[18] TNA, Domesday Book, E 31/2/2/1408. Translation, *Domesday Book*, 41.3.

The Leicestershire Survey of circa 1129 attributes to the hundred of Barkby five carucates at Barkby and six carucates at Hamilton and Barkby Thorpe (both of which adjoin Barkby to the south) and another one-and-a-half carucates to the Earl of Leicester's fee.[19] F. M. Stenton's view was that Robert de Tosny's eighteen Domesday carucates were split with six in Hungarton (to the east of Barkby), a further six (as the Survey indicates) in Hamilton and Barkby Thorpe and the final five in Barkby itself (leaving one carucate missing). That seems plausible and it also seems that the separate fee of one-and-a-half carucates attributed by Domesday to Adeliza de Grandmesnil was the same as the fee attributed by the Survey to the Earl of Leicester.

The overlordship of William's Domesday Book holding was vested in the honour of Belvoir and thus descended from the de Tosny family to the d'Aubigny family , and from the d'Aubigny family to the de Ros or Roos family in the late thirteenth century, again through the female line.[20] That holding, comprising one-and-a-half knight's fees and an eighth part of a knight's fee, at some point found its way into the hands of the de Lincoln or de Nicoll family, presumably either by inheritance from the descendants of the William who held it from Robert de Tosny in 1086 or by sub-infeudation from the D'Aubigny family if it had reverted to them.[21] Three of the Barkby manors were carved out of this fee. Langley Priory acquired its land and manor by a grant from Matilda, relict of Peter de Lincoln.[22] The Merton manor was variously described as comprising a quarter or a half of a knight's fee (the former

[19] William Page (ed.), *The Victoria County History of the County of Leicester*, vol. I, p. 346.
[20] K. S. B. Keats-Rohan, 'Aubigné, 'William d' [William Albini, known as William d'Aubigny Brito]', *ODNB* https://doi-org.ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/281, and Colm McNamee, 'Ros, William de, first lord Ros', *ODNB* https://doi-org.ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/24079; G. E. Cokayne, *Complete Peerage of England, Scotland, Ireland, Great Britain and the United Kingdom*, vol. I (London, 1910) pp. 233–9 on the d'Aubigny family and vol. VI (London, 1895), pp. 399–403 on the de Ros family.
[21] *The Book of Fees, commonly called Testa de Nevill, Pt I: 1198–1242* (London, 1920), pp. 517–18. 'William' was probably William de Boscroard or Bosc-le-Hard, see K. S. B. Keats-Rohan, *Domesday People: A Prosopography of Persons Occurring in English Documents, 1066–1166*, vol. I (Woodbridge, 1999), p. 471.
[22] Farnham, *Village Notes*, pp.106–7.

was probably correct) and probably arrived in Merton's hands by a further sub-infeudation (see below).[23] The origins of the Willoughby manor, comprising a further quarter of a knight's fee, are more difficult to trace but presumably the holding arose from either a sub-infeudation by the de Lincoln family or a further intermediary in the feudal chain.[24]

The Merton manor came into the hands of the College by a fine between Robert de Perti or Perci to Peter of Abindon, warden of Merton, of eleven and a third virgates in Barkby along with rents totalling 8s. in Leicester.[25] That is mirrored by a grant calendared in the Merton archives dated 1271 by which Robert de Perci released all his land in Barkby and Leicester to Merton.[26] It was probably a ‘distressed asset’ in the hands of the de Percis and subject to debts owed to Cok’ Hagin, a London Jew.[27]

The status and origin of the Leicester Abbey glebe land may be explained by the fact that it held the church from before the mid-twelfth century; then by a fine of 1272, by which Robert de Ros and Isabel his wife gave (or possibly confirmed) to William, abbot of Leicester, twelve virgates in Barkby along with other land including twenty-one virgates in Hungarton which looks very like part of the de Tosny fee as explained by Stenton.[28]

It is possible to estimate the extent of land held by three of the four manors or estates of Barkby. The 1312/13 rental for the Merton manor helpfully makes it clear that the Barkby bovate or half-virgate totalled around fifteen acres of arable, and three rods of meadow.[29] Equally helpfully (and uniquely) this rental also gives the acreage of the land held by each

[23] Farnham, *Village Notes*, pp. 108 *et seq*.
[24] Farnham, *Village Notes*, pp. 112–13; Inquisitions and Assessments Relating to Feudal Aids, AD 1284–1431, vol. III Kent-Norfolk (London, 1904), p. 119.
[25] Farnham, *Village Notes*, vol. I, p. 108. Fine dated Trinity 56 Henry III, 1272, no. 577.
[26] Merton College Catalogue of MSS, vol. X (Oxford, 1961), 1146, calendaring MCR Liber Ruber, ff. 32.
[27] The debts were released by a 'starr' calendared as part of the previous footnote.
[28] Farnham, *Village Notes*, vol. I, p. 108. Fine dated the morrow of All Souls, at Lincoln, 56 Henry III, 1272, no. 594.
[29] MCR, 6568.

tenant. Typically, each half-virgator held an additional four or six acres of arable and a rod or so of meadow which probably represents an apportionment of the demesne amongst the tenants (Merton never cultivated its demesne at Barkby). The modest area of meadow, three rods, was probably the area on which the tenant was allowed to cut the hay and the rods are probably the 'bere parts' or 'berry parts' referred to in the early modern documents (see below). Presumably the tenants also had rights to graze a much larger area: the entire area of the meadows when they were thrown open for grazing (probably after the early summer), the common pasture (see below) and the common fields when they were in fallow. The arrangements for the management of the meadow were complex and will be dealt with further below.

The 1312/13 rental identified a single virgate-holder and fourteen half-virgators (probably a southern-trained clerk's rendition of the northern bovate holder), four holders of other proportions of a virgate (two three-quarter and two quarter-virgate holdings) along with eleven holders of other tenements varying from several acres to nearly a full half-virgate and four cottage holders.[30] Amongst the holders of the miscellaneous tenements, three were identified as the holders of a *placea* and holdings of between two and seven acres of arable. Hilton identified the *placea* of Leicester Abbey's holdings as possible enclosures.[31] That may have been correct: one of the Barkby *placea* holders was Ralph Bercarius (sc. Shepherd), so the term might identify a house and toft or croft for graziers and their livestock.

The Leicester Abbey estate is described in the transcript of the 1341 Geryn rental in William Charyte's *Novum Rentale*.[32] The Geryn rental is less detailed than the Merton rental of some thirty years earlier but it seems reasonable to assume that here too a half-virgate or

[30] MCR, 6568.
[31] Hilton, *Economic Development*, p. 59.
[32] Bodleian Library, Laud MS misc. 625, ff. clxxxviii/185 to circa ccxvi/213.

bovate comprised around fifteen acres arable and three rods meadow. The single largest parcel of the abbey's holding in Barkby was the glebe (probably) of almost 157 acres of arable with a further eighteen acres or so of meadow.[33] The detailed description of this land in the *Liber*, where it is described as demesne, presents some problems.[34] Some of the individual field totals do not add up to the figure in the *summa* but that may be the result of a transcriber's error: both the *Liber* and the *Novum Rentale* are very clear that the demesne arable totalled just short of 157 acres. It is also clear that the demesne arable lay intermingled in the common fields with the lands of the other manors.

The sole surviving rental of the Langley Priory manor probably dates from the late fifteenth century (circa 1484) and is therefore very much later than the Merton and Leicester Abbey rentals.[35] It itemises the holdings of sixteen tenants along with their acreage. Some holdings were very small but the larger holdings were organised in ten oxgangs of fifteen acres arable and three rods meadow and three yardlands of thirty acres arable and one-and-a-half acres meadow (which reinforces the earlier impression of a standard size of tenement). It gives an approximation of the extent of the Langley Priory manor.
None of the medieval documents deals with the extent of the common pasture in Barkby but Merton's 1635 map does give very precise areas for the meadows, common pasture and common fields. The 195 acres of common pasture taken from the map probably reflects quite accurately the area of common pasture in the middle ages

The acreages taken from these documents are summarised in table 4.1.

[33] Bodleian Library, Laud MS misc. 625, ff. xii/16 for the arable (in fact, 156 acres and three-and-a-half rods) and BL, Galba E II, ff. 81 *et seq*. for both arable and meadow.
[34] BL, Galba E III, ff. 81 *et seq*.
[35] TNA, SC 11/382.

Table 4.1 Barkby: landholdings (demesne and tenant land)

	Arable	*Meadow*	*Common pasture*	*Total*
Merton College manor, c. 1313[36]	382a. 0r.	20a. 1½r.		402a. 1½r. plus tofts, crofts and *placea*
Prioress of Langley's manor, c.1484[37]	268a. 3r.	13a. 2r.		282a. 1r. plus tofts and crofts
Leicester Abbey's land, 1341[38]	318a. 2½r.	24a.3½r.		343a. 2r. plus *placea*
The Moor and the Upper Cowpasture[39]			195a. 0r.	195a. 0r.
	969a. 1½r.	58a. 3½r.	195a. 0r.	1,223a.½r.
The Willoughby manor in 'Barkby, Thorp iuxta Barkby, Hamelton, South Croxton, Hungarton and Quenby'[40]	200a.	100a.	200a.	500a.

The main elements missing from these figures is the extent of the Willoughby or gentry manor and any free land. As has been said, there is no surviving documentary evidence from the gentry manor but the late fifteenth century litigation calendared by Farnham gives what appear to be suspiciously rounded figures for the extent of this manor. The 200 acres of pasture sounds very like the 195 acres of common pasture computed above and may be an optimistic attempt to claim all the pasture in the township for this manor. It might also be explained by the conversion of arable in Hamilton to pasture. A similar consideration applies

[36] MCR, 6568 (1312/13).
[37] SC 11/382.
[38] Bodleian, Laud MS misc. 625, ff. ccv/202 to ccvi/203 and BL, Galba E III, ff. 81 *et seq*.
[39] Taken from MCR, map 1635.
[40] Farnham, *Village Notes*, 'Barkby', pp. 121 *et seq*.

to 100 acres of meadow: the 1635 map itemises very precisely about 113 acres of meadow in Barkby of which seventy-seven acres seem to be attributable to the other three estates so this manor's meadows in Barkby are unlikely to have been more than thirty-six acres. The arable figure seems plausible but, of course, may include land in other townships.

Neither the Merton nor the Leicester Abbey documents make any mention of free land at Barkby. There are indications in the early modern and modern documents that there was some freehold land (see section 9 below) but its extent is unknown. Some of the closes surrounding the common fields may have been free (see table 4.2) but were quite limited in size and their medieval extent is unknown. However, the implication of the eighteenth century barrister's opinion (see p. 177) is that some of the selions in the common fields were free. In the absence of a full field map or survey describing each selion. it is impossible to establish their extent.

The inclusion of some part of the figures for the arable and meadow of the Willoughby manor in the total for Barkby (1,223 acres in table 1) bring it closer to the approximate 1,760 acres attributed to meadow, pasture, closes and common fields in the 1635 map. Viewed from the other end of the chronological telescope, they suggest that the arable of over 1,000 acres had almost doubled from the five carucates (say 600 acres) of 1129.

3. The common fields of Barkby and the village topography

Merton's 1635 field map of Barkby gives the best overall impression of the early modern topography of Barkby and, as will be shown, it probably corresponds quite closely with the medieval topography.[41] It is supplemented by an earlier map of 1609 in the same archive which is quite heavily annotated and shows signs of being used as a 'working' map on the

[41] MCR, 1635 map (Barkby).

ground.[42] However, it suffers from the defect that it describes only the Merton village house tenements and omits those of the other estates whereas the 1635 map shows the village in its entirety. Map 6 shows the 1635 map overlaid on the nineteenth-century Ordnance Survey map of the parish.

The 1635 map divides the arable of Barkby into three fields or 'sesons'. First, Spickacre seson in two separate parcels in the west of the manor adjoining the pasture called 'the Moore' and including Hungarhill and Gallow Hill furlongs and then, separately, to the north and north-east of the village including Upper Lady Acre and Thurnwell furlongs. Secondly, Byogate seson, again split into two parcels, one to the west of the village and including Sandhill and Dale furlongs and the other to the south of the village and including Wistus and Hobb Balk furlongs and Thorpe leas. Finally, Churchadland seson, again split into two parcels, one to the south-west of the village and including Sandfeylde and Crabtree furlongs and the other to the north-east of the village. Measurements taken from the 1635 map are shown in table 4.2. The three sesons are of roughly the same size, allowing for some erosion of Spickacre in the west by a number of small enclosures. That is unsurprising if a three-field system was being operated with the need to keep roughly equal areas of land under cultivation in each year of the rotation.

[42] MCR, 1609 map (Barkby).

Table 4.2 Barkby: measurements rom the 1635 Merton College map

		Approx %age	Acres
	Meadows	8.5	149a. 2r. 13p.
	Pasture (including sickes)	11.13	195a. 3r. 30p
	Closes	6.81	119a. 3r. 20p.
	Spickacre seson	73.52	401a. 1r. 29p.
	Byegate seson		446a. 2r. 14p.
	Churchhadland seson		445a. 1r. 20p.
			1,758a. 3r. 6p.

That corresponds quite closely with the sesons described in the mid-fourteenth century *Liber* of Leicester Abbey.[43] This describes three fields comprised of furlongs whose names correspond quite closely with those in Merton's 1635 map as shown in table 4.3.

[43] BL, Galba EIII ff. 81 *et seq*.

Table 4.3 Barkby: Furlongs names from Merton's 1609 and 1635 maps and Leicester Abbey's *Liber de terris dominicalibus*

	1609 and 1635 maps	*Liber*	
	Spickacar seson Gallow Hill Hungar Hill The thre Moote Bushe furlongs Redd Lands Upper Lady Acar Thurnwell [Crabtree] [New Dikes]	 Quenyngborowhull Hungarhull Flaylandys Crothon Spikakar Ladyakar Thurnow	
	Byagate seson Sand Hill Dale Wistus and Thorpe Lees	 Byhon Dales Sondhul Campus de Thorp	
	Church Hadland seson Quinaburrow Hill Sandfeylde Trowell Sick [Smaleborow]	 Dikfurlonge Newdike Elmystubbis Blakeinylde Fineackres Mothewes Redlandys	
	Furlong names in the left-hand column are taken from the 1635 map except for those in square brackets which are taken from the 1609 map. Furlongs whose rotation seems to have moved are underlined (the Mothews of the *Liber* might be the Moote Bushe furlongs of 1635)		

As can be seen, the correspondence is not exact and it looks as though there had been some exchanges of furlongs between the Spickacre and Church Hadland sesons of 1635. However, the overall impression is of broad continuity of a three-course rotation from the mid-fourteenth to the early seventeenth centuries.

The descriptions of meadow in the 1635 map can, but with more difficulty, be reconciled with those in the fifteenth century *Novum Rentale*. The 1635 map shows a meadow bordering the Soar, Thurmeston Nell Meadowe, divided into parts with one labelled, *This parte every second yeare but noe common of pasture* and another pasture, Sowters Dole, marked, *The first harbedg* [sc. 'herbage'] *to Barekby but noe common of pasture*. Presumably this indicated that the Barkby tenants were entitled to take the hay from Thurmeston Nell every other year and to take the first cut of hay every year from Sowters Dole but had no rights to pasture their animals there after the hay had been cut. The *Novum Rentale* records various agreements between the Abbey and Thomas and Matilda de Lincoln for common pasture with Thurmeston in the Northings and the *haya de Barkeby* although none clearly refer to the meadows bordering the Soar.[44] There is, however, a record of the grant by Robert Haliday of Barkby to the Abbey of eight pieces of meadow which do seem to correspond to the Soar meadows since one of them is said to be south of the bridge at Wanlip.[45] It is not possible to be more precise: the *Novum Rentale* gives only brief details of these charters with cross references to the lost cartulary of Leicester Abbey, the Chartwary.

Leicester Abbey, unlike Merton, directly managed its demesne in Barkby at the time of the Geryn rental in 1341.[46] Thus, William Charyte, writing in the 1470s, noted that the Abbey used to graze 400 rams (*arietes*) there, presumably referring back to the era of the Abbey's direct demesne management.[47] That suggests fairly extensive pastoral agriculture carried on by both the Abbey and their tenants, as will be suggested, may have followed them.

The most striking feature of the 1635 map is the area given over to animal husbandry: just over 25% of the entire parish was either meadow, pasture or close, so that in any year, with a third of the arable lying fallow, half the parish was available at different times of the year for

[44] Bodleian Library, Laud MS misc. 625, ff. xiii/17.
[45] Bodleian Library, Laud MS misc. 625, ff. xiii/17.
[46] RH Hilton, *Economic Development*, chs II and III.
[47] Bodleian Library, Laud MS misc. 625, ff. xii/16.

grazing (see table 4.2). Of course, this shows the position in the early seventeenth century and it was probably different in the later middle ages. It is not possible to calculate the extent of that difference but there are indications that the encroachment of closes on the common fields had been going on for some time: for example, two of the closes, 'Harbard's Closes', were named after a late medieval Merton tenant. They may be the same closes that feature in a presentation in the Merton court rolls of 8 January 1444 when another tenant was fined for allowing his animals to graze on the herbage in William Harbard's closes, destroying the herbage there.[48]

The 1635 map depicts meadows of just over 100 acres bordering the Soar, and the Northings containing about forty-four acres, to the north-west of the village on the east bank of the Barkby Brook as it swings north out of the village towards Syston.[49] This was probably the location of the 'bere parts' or 'berry parts' referred to in Merton's sixteenth-century and 1609 surveys, presumably representing the Merton tenants' three rods of meadow in the middle ages. They were probably quarter-acre plots of meadow adjoining the brook thus providing water for animals during the meadow's short open or grazing season (usually between Michaelmas, 29 September, and Martinmas, 11 November) and hay in the spring and summer. There was also a small area of meadow to the east of the village adjoining the Barkby Brook, the Estmedowe.

In addition, there was pasture at the Moore (sixty-six acres), between the meadow and the arable to the west of the village – just above the floodplain of the Soar. There was another large area of pasture, the Upper Cow pasture (just under 130 acres), to the east of the village between Byogate and Churchhadland sesons. It is likely that these meadows and pastures reflect the medieval meadows and common pasture respectively.

[48] MCR, 6604.
[49] 'Ing' is a common term in northern England derived from old Norse indicating 'wet meadow or pasture land', Paul Cavill, *A New Dictionary of English Field-Names* (Nottingham, 2018), p. 223.

There were several quite large areas of *sicke* (see above), late medieval or early modern intrusions into the common fields, totalling roughly fifty acres. By far the largest (over thirty acres) was the Oute Sicke to the north-east of the village between Churchadland seson and the easternmost extent of Spickacre seson. These areas were probably used for pasturing animals which were either tethered or temporarily folded with hurdles.[50]

Neither the 1635 nor 1609 maps or the medieval records make any reference to woods. Indeed, the impression created by the numerous medieval records of decayed buildings is that structural timber (*meremium*) had to be imported from outside the parish. Today, there is a wood, Barkby Holt, at the easternmost end of the parish adjoining the area once occupied by the Oute Sicke. In the 1635 map it is described as *known ground* which might indicate heavily coppiced or managed woodland producing wood for fuel rather than construction.

Neither the 1609 nor the 1635 map show the individual selions or their holders. There were probably two reasons for this. First, the individual selions were, as appears from their descriptions in the Merton College terriers of the sixteenth century and 1609 and from the surviving portions of the 1635 field book, very small. Many had an area of a half or a quarter of an acre and some were smaller. Secondly, the selions of the estates of Merton and the other landowners (in 1609 the Stanfield and Pochin families and in 1635 the Pochin family, who had acquired the Stanfield family's Barkby estate in 1633) were intermingled so that identification of Merton's selions would have entailed a major (and expensive) survey of the selions of the other three landowners.

[50] David Hill, *Medieval Fields* (Oxford, 2010), p. 37 repeats the common view that sickes or leys were post-medieval intrusions into the common fields. J. V. Beckett, *A History of Laxton: England's Last Open Field Village* (Oxford, 1989), p. 46 deals with the use of sykes (an alternative spelling and the equivalent of leys) in post-modern Laxton where, to this day, they form a prominent part of the open field system.

Thus, the bailiff and tenant of the Merton manor, Henry Seere or Sayer, wrote to the sub-warden of Merton on 26 February 1608 observing that the College's lands in Barkby were *soo mingled* with those of Mr Pochin that they were difficult to distinguish.[51] Thus the documents prepared for Merton in conjunction with the two maps were a terrier of 1609 and the field book of 1635. They itemise only the selions belonging to Merton's own tenants. Selions held by others were noted in the field book (marked 'O' as in the map – again possibly for 'other') but no attempt was made to define their area which, in the case of Merton's tenants, was achieved by measuring the length of each selion and its width at each end and then multiplying the length by the average or mean of the two width measurements.

The notes at the end of the 1609 survey show that it was not formally signed off by the tenants until 1612 so it had taken three years to finalise. Even then, further notes indicate that it was doubted whether the terrier had captured all of Merton's land with suggestions that an entire yardland had been lost along with various smaller parcels.

The physical remains of the Barkby common field system survived until this part of Leicestershire was converted from pasture to arable in the middle years of the twentieth century. They were, however, captured by aerial photographs in the 1940s which show a dense mass of small selions concentrated around the village and towards the eastern end of the modern parish.[52] The photographs show little ridge and furrow at the west end of the parish (see map 9). The area to the west was probably given over to meadows and pasture (the Moore) but it is difficult to be certain because the growing modern Leicester had already started to envelop the villages in its orbit, Syston in particular.

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[51] MCR, 4381, transcribed in R. H. Tawney, *The Agrarian Problem In The Sixteenth Century* (New York, 1967), p. 410.

[52] The most helpful series of aerial photographs are Historic England, RAF/CPE/UK/2424 frame nos. 31800–87 and 4179–89 (31 December 1947) and US/7GR/LOCB5, frame nos. 71–122 (4 March 1944), both series being taken with wind-blown snow on the ground which makes the ridge and furrow more visible.

However, the common field system in Barkby probably pre-dated the division of the Domesday manor (held of Belvoir) into separate manors or estates whenever that division occurred. That would explain why selions belonging to different manors were, in Henry Seere's words, *soo mingled* with one another. It also points to the conclusion that whenever (and however) the division of the Roos fee occurred, the division was made on the basis of tenants rather than land with specific tenants allocated to one of the four estates, others to another manor and so on. The administrative convenience of that basis of division is obvious since a territorial division would have left individual tenants holding land from more than one estate. Possible differences between the tenants of the Merton and Leicester Abbey estates will be considered further below.

By contrast, the division of the village house tenements between the Merton manor and the other Barkby estates presents a very different picture because here it seems the division was territorial. The implications will also be considered below.

The modern village of Barkby remains remarkably unchanged since the two Merton maps of the seventeenth century. The 1635 map shows the entire village, as it still appears today, as a linear settlement aligned from west to east alongside and to the north of the Barkby Brook (see maps 7 and 8). At the western end of the village, tightly clustered long tenements stretch back along either side of the main village street (the Main Street of today), also oriented west-east, to the Barkby Brook to the south and to another east-west road to the north of the main street and parallel to it. This pattern is then interrupted by the parish church and a block of land to its west called the parsonage house. When it reaches the church, the main street takes a sharp 90° turn to the south followed by another 90° turn eastwards again skirting a large house belonging to the Pochins and adjacent parkland described as *Mr Puchen's severall* (i.e. enclosure). The north road (referred to above) continues in a more or less straight line eastwards running between the northern boundary

of Mr Puchen's severall and another parcel of about seven acres described as *Mr Puchen's new close – ought to be Lammas* (that is to say, common Lammas pasture). This road then swings away to the north-east but the main street (now called Brookside) returns to its eastward orientation running alongside the Brook. Here, however, in both the 1635 map and in its modern configuration, the eastern end of the village changes quite dramatically. The long and tightly packed house tenements of the west end of the village give way to free-standing houses in large tofts or crofts. Thus, a linear village presents two entirely different settlement patterns.

The main difference between the Barkby shown in the 1635 map and modern Barkby is the disappearance of the northerly road parallel to Main Street. Its disappearance enabled the joining of Mr Puchen's *severall*, the parkland immediately adjoining his house, to his enclosure to the north, *Mr Puchen's new close* of 1635, which the Merton surveyor recorded as having been enclosed from the Lammas common. That certainly looks like the behaviour of an aggressive gentry owner consolidating and extending the park around his house.

The two markedly different settlement patterns in the village become all the more remarkable because the 1635 map attributes ownership of the village house tenements in the west end of the village exclusively to the Merton manor (save for a single freehold house tenement belonging to the Johnson family on the western boundary of the village) along with several of the 'toft and croft' houses at the extreme east end of the village. The Merton village house tenements can be identified in maps 7 and 8. The remaining 'toft and croft' houses in the east end were occupied by the Pochins' tenants. Part of the key to understanding this distribution of house tenements probably lies in the distribution of meadows.

Merton's 1312/13 rental had itemised a remarkably uniform manor of fourteen half-virgate holders each with a modest three or four rods of meadow, and several quarter- and three-

quarter-virgate holdings with varying small parcels of meadow. The sixteenth century survey of Merton's tenements shows much of their meadow, about 40%, lying in the Northings where it was conveniently situated immediately to the north of their house tenements at the west end of the village.[53] That pattern was repeated in the 1781 enclosure awards where the Northings was divided up and allotted to Merton's adjoining copyholders at the west end of the village.

In contrast to the Merton manor, the Leicester Abbey estate looks rather unregimented. The Geryn rental of 1341 had listed six entire bovate holdings, one fragmented bovate holding, two virgate holdings (equivalent to two bovates) and several smaller holdings.[54] It seems likely that the tenants of the Leicester Abbey estate, along with the tenants of the Langley Priory and Willoughby manors, held the differently configured house/messuage tenements with accompanying tofts and crofts at the east end of the village. The only departures from this pattern were the small number of Merton house/messuage tenements with tofts and crofts at the extreme east end of the village. They may have been the successors of the three *placea* holders described in Merton's 1312/13 rental. It is possible this division reflected different tenant-specialisations with those at the east end of the village, with their tofts and crofts, inclining to more animal husbandry than those, predominantly Merton, tenants at the west end of the village. That impression is reinforced by the contemporary documentary evidence. Leicester Abbey's customary tenants' rent in kind included a half-measure of tallow (*medietatem crassenti*) for lighting the church, a typical animal by-product.[55] By contrast, Merton's tenants paid their rents exclusively in cash.[56]

[53] MCR, survey 1609.
[54] Bodleian Library, Laud MS misc 625, ff. ccv/202.
[55] Bodleian, Laud MS misc. 625, ff. ccv/202, the transcript of the 1341 Geryn rental in the *Novum Rentale*.
[56] MCR, 6568, the 1312/13 rental.

The final topographic feature of Barkby is the gentry manor and surrounding park immediately to the east of the church, the presence of which necessitated the right-angle bends in Main Street around its perimeter. It is shown on the 1635 map as *Mr Puchen's severall* of about fourteen acres with a large house, presumably the precursor of the modern Barkby Hall. Two undated quitclaims granted to Langley Priory, one by Matilda, the widow of Thomas de Lincoln, and the other by her son, Peter de Lincoln, refer to the park.[57] Both deal with the grant to the priory of what sounds like a large messuage and buildings between a *placea* which had belonged to Crowland Abbey and the cemetery but specifically reserving (*excepta*) a strip of land measuring three feet by twenty-four feet (which sounds like an access path), leading to a bridge over *the water called Paris*. It is not possible precisely to identify its location but, assuming that the cemetery was in the location of the modern churchyard, surrounding the church, and that *the water called Paris* was the Barkby Brook (there is no other open water in the village), it points to a location more or less identical to the modern park. Some further light may be shed on this park by entries in the Merton manorial court rolls for October 1289 which record the amercement of Merton's tenants for breaking the lord's park, apparently in order to retrieve twenty-five animals impounded there, in contempt of both Merton and Lady de Ros.[58] This incident will be considered further below but it suggests the presence of an aristocratic park in Barkby.

Suella Postles explained the configuration of the park as the outcome of an enclosure of the house tenements of the Langley Priory manor, presumably at some point in the early modern period after the dissolution of the Priory.[59] She also explained the different settlement pattern at the east end of the village as the result of medieval population expansion and colonisation. However, it is impossible to reconcile the references to a park in the medieval documents with that chronology. The sharp distinction of ownership of the village house

[57] TNA, E 326/3468 and 3508.
[58] MCR, 6565 and 6566.
[59] Suella Postles, 'Barkby: The Anatomy of a Closed Township, 1535–1780', unpublished MA thesis, Leicester University (1978), ch. 3.

tenements, broadly speaking between Merton at the west of the village and the other estates at the east end of the village, makes the 'colonisation' theory unlikely: the tenants of the other three estates must have lived somewhere and it seems unlikely they arrived on the scene in Barkby solely as a result of population expansion. The more likely explanation is that the different configurations of the two ends of the village had arisen from different lordly approaches to village formation, or re-formation, and, as has been suggested, agrarian specialisation.

In conclusion, the historical topography of Barkby suggests that its arable common fields, with the intermingled land and selions of all four manors, probably originated at a time when the entire village was held in demesne by a single lord. The chronology puts that back to shortly after, or before, the conquest. The topography of the village itself, however, seems to date from a period after the de Tosny fee had been sub-infeudated to different landholders. That topography also suggests the presence in Barkby of two rather different communities, one at the east end of the village with greater pastoral tendencies and the other, at the west (predominantly Merton) end of the village more concentrated on arable husbandry. As has been observed (table 2), Barkby was favoured with quite extensive meadows and grazing. Seigniorial management strategies will be dealt with below but, briefly, Leicester Abbey was still directly managing its Barkby demesne in 1341 but Merton never did so after its acquisition of the manor in 1271. The College was thus unable to take advantage of the opportunity to exploit the grazing there and probably let its demesne to its tenants for an additional rent. That suggests the different management strategies of Leicester Abbey and Merton may have reinforced the respective pastoral/arable emphases of their Barkby estates although it does not explain the origins of those differing emphases. In the absence of documentary evidence of the management of the Lincoln manor, part of which came to Merton, before 1271, it is probably impossible to explain how that difference came about but it does seem possible to establish the position reached by both estates in the mid-fourteenth century. The following section of this chapter will look at the surviving documentary

evidence concerning the seigniorial management of Barkby before the Black Death and how, and how successfully, that management responded to the social, economic and demographic impact of the Black Death.

4. The Barkby estates and their archives

The Merton manorial court rolls run from 1278 onwards but with a long gap between 1296 and 1341 and only very patchy survivals from 1405 to 1428 and another gap from 1487 until the early sixteenth century. The gap between 1296 and 1341 may convey a misleading impression of sudden change in the 1340s particularly following the first epidemic of the Black Death: had the intervening rolls survived, it is possible they might have demonstrated a more gradual process of change. For the reasons given in the following sections, the arrival of the Black Death did in fact mark an important watershed in the management of the manor, although it is also likely that in some other respects that point marked the acceleration of changes that had been under way before the Black Death.

Usually, the court met only once or twice a year but in some years it met more frequently, in particular during the plague years 1349–51.[60] Merton did not hold the view of frankpledge in Barkby: the *Novum Rentale* lists the view of frankpledge for Barkby and Barkby Thorpe along with Thurmaston, Croxton, Queniborough, Kirkby Bellars and Gaddesby (a chain of villages stretching away to the north-east of Barkby), as the possession of Leicester Abbey and records that it was held at Thurmaston.[61] The absence of any records of the view means that there is limited evidence about, for instance, offending behaviour and presentations. As will be seen, however, the Merton manorial court does contain some such presentations, but they are probably limited to Merton's own manorial land and its tenants.

[60] The dates can be seen in table 2 of the bibliography.
[61] Bodleian Library, Laud MS misc. 625, ff. ccxviii/215.

The relative infrequency of Merton's courts in Barkby probably also meant that it was an unattractive forum for litigation. Again, the Merton courts do contain records of litigation but they are limited in number and the court was probably used mainly by Merton's own tenants.

One of the main subjects of the Merton court rolls is property transactions. The record is laconic and does not usually record the identity of the transferor or many details identifying the land transferred. That makes it difficult to trace the successive holders of individual tenements. The numbers of transactions are also quite low, averaging fewer than one in each court session (see table 6.5). There is very little sign in Merton's Barkby manor of the market in small parcels of land which seems to have been common elsewhere.[62]

The bailiffs' accounts for Merton's Barkby manor run in a remarkably uninterrupted sequence from 1296 to 1493 with significant breaks from 1433 to 1440 and from 1493 onwards.[63] However, like the court rolls, they become increasingly formulaic and uninformative during the fifteenth century. The earlier period does, however, contain much evidence about the administration of the manor, and the record of Merton's expenditure gives some helpful pointers to its priorities and objectives.

Their format is relatively standardised. They commence with the receipts of the manor, comprising the bailiff's arrears carried forward from the previous year, the rents of the manor and the receipts of the court. The rents comprised the *reddiitus assisus* of Barkby and from

[62] See e.g. P.D.A. Harvey (ed.), *The Peasant Land Market in Medieval England*, (Oxford, 1984) and is summarised in Mark Bailey, *After the Black Death: Economy, Society and the Law in Fourteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 2021), pp. 26–32.

[63] The commonly cited references for manorial accounts include P.D.A. Harvey, 'Agricultural Treatises and Manorial Accounting in Medieval England', *The Agricultural History Review* 20.2 (1972), pp. 170-82 and P.D.A. Harvey 'Introduction, part ii, Accounts and Other Manorial Records' in his (ed.) *Manorial Records of Cuxham, Oxfordshire circa 1200-1359* (London, 1976), which deals with another Merton manor, along with B.M.S. Campbell, '2.11 Manorial Accounts' pp. 26-37 in his *English Seigniorial Agriculture, 1250 – 1450* (Cambridge, 2000) but all concern manors with directly managed demesnes with accounts concentrating on demesne production unlike Barkby where Merton never directly managed its demesne. Thus the Barkby bailiffs' accounts contain no account of labour services or works accounts.

the manor's forinsec holdings in Leicester and Thurmaston (both very small and only recovered with difficulty if at all). The only *firme* were mill-rents, The bailiff's arrears reflect the medieval assumption that the account represented the accounting position between the bailiff personally and the College, so that any arrears were the bailiff's personal liability. In the case of Barkby, where there was no demesne farm, any such arrears could only have arisen from a shortfall in the rent receipts of the manor. Thus, the rent item in the receipts recorded not what was *actually* received by the bailiff but what he ought to have received – a figure derived from the most recent rental.[64] In contrast, the receipts of the court (*perquisita curie* - usually rather modest) represent *actual* receipts.

The debit side of the account usually sets out expenses, comprising expenditure ranging from the bailiff's out-of-pocket expenses and the steward's fees for the court sessions to costs incurred in repairing the manorial mill. The other main item debited to the account (and again reflecting the personal nature of the account between the bailiff and the College) was deliveries of cash to the College. After the Black Death, a further item of 'decayed rents' starts to make an appearance and, although the entries are not easy to follow, they presumably represented an allowance by the College recognising that it was not possible for the bailiff to collect the entire rent shown as due in the rentals and on the other side of the account.

The expenses were netted off against the receipts and usually resulted in a shortfall, the bailiff's arrears, which were then carried forward to the following year and formed the opening entry in the following year's account. In practice, there seems to have been a haggle between the bailiff and the auditor, presumably when the bailiff presented his account

[64] An outcome which was not always precisely achieved: the rental for 1312/12 records the total rent at £11 4s. 5¾d. whereas the account for the year 1313/14 (MCR, 6501) shows the rent at £11 11s. 10¾d. Similarly the rental for 1355 (MCR, 6557) shows the total rent at £12 12s. ¾d. whereas the account for 1356/57 (MCR, 6526) show the rent at £12 12s. 7¾d. The figures are not precisely equal but the principle seems clear.

at Oxford, which resulted in some further allowances being made to the bailiff, but it is not always easy to make sense of the notes recording these negotiations. However, it can be seen that the decayed rents in the expenses section of the account represented an allowance to the bailiff which reduced his ultimate arrears.

Thus, many of the figures in the account, particularly those for rents, were notional rather than actual and it is difficult to establish precisely what Merton derived from Barkby. The account was not a profit and loss account in the modern sense. Probably the best indication of the net profit received by Merton in any year are the cash deliveries to the College during that year.

The final category of Merton documents is the rentals. They date from around 1300 (these manuscripts are heavily damaged with no decipherable date), 1312/13, 1355, 1450, 1452 and 1474.[65] They are supplemented by a series of recognitions in the court rolls for 1413 which provide the same information as the rentals.[66] The rentals tentatively dated to around 1300 are so damaged as to be of little use and the 1474 rental is simply a list of tenants and their rents. However, the other rentals list the tenants and give brief details of their tenements and, as has been observed, the 1312/13 rental is particularly helpful because it gives acreages for the tenements as well as their rents. It makes clear that the only obligation of Merton's Barkby tenants was the payment of a cash rent. Some sample land transactions from the manorial court rolls are set out in appendix 7 (numbers 9 to 14) and beyond some rather formulaic references to suit of court and other services 'according to the custom of the manor' it seems overwhelmingly likely that in practice Merton's Barkby tenements were held for cash alone.[67] There is, however, evidence that the *maritagium*

[65] MCR, 6556 (several rentals of c.1300), MCR, 6568 (1312/13), MCR, 6557 and 6558 (1355), MCR, 6560 (1450), MCR, 6561 (1452) and MCR, 6562 (1474).
[66] MCR, 6559.
[67] Thus suggesting that the tenure at Merton's Barkby manor was a Bailey 'type 1' hereditary tenure with all the non-cash elements of the old rent package such as servile incidents converted to cash.

survived at Barkby although it was rarely claimed after the 1340s. It will be considered further in the following section. Overall, the rentals convey the impression that the number of Merton tenants, the size of their tenements and the rent for each tenement remained remarkably consistent throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

The main documentary survivals relating to the Leicester Abbey manor are the *Novum Rentale* and the *Liber*. The *Novum Rentale* is, in fact, much more than a rental. It contains not only the details of a conventional rental of the abbey's landed property but also details of how each piece of property came into the abbey's hands, the names and details of the donors and similar details for other property such as advowsons, rights of warren, rights to *weyfs and streys* (straying animals), rights to hold views of frankpledge and other incorporeal rights donated to the abbey over many years.[68] The *Novum Rentale* was part of a much larger collection of inter-related documents including a cartulary known as the Chartwary, a register of other rights and pleas known as the *Matriculus Episcopi* and other accounts, court rolls and so on relating to the abbey's property. None of these documents survive except a very heavily fire-damaged *Reportorium Cartarum* in the Cottonian collection which might, in fact, be the Chartwary.[69] Charyte's notes on the use of the *Novum Rentale* urge the user searching for details of these rights *et pro semper provideat bene predictum Rentale fratris Willelmi Charyte*. [70] The *Novum Rentale* is therefore only a partial survival of a much larger complex of documents. The *Liber* is a late fifteenth century transcription of earlier surveys of demesne land belonging to the abbey of which the Barkby estate formed part. The *Liber* may in fact have been a part of Charyte's project.[71]

See Mark Bailey, 'The Transformation of Customary Tenures in Southern England, c.1350 – c.1500', *Agricultural History Review* 62.2 (2014) pp. 210-30.

[68] Bodleian Library, MS Laud misc., ff. vi/9 *et seq*. (gifts and purchases of land and other rights), ff. clii/148 *et seq*. (tithes), ff. clx/157 *et seq*. (mills and mill tithes), ff. clviii/165 (tithe receipts), ff. ccxvi/213 (customs), ff. ccxviii (views of frankpledge and rights to 'weyfs and streys' and, seemingly, several villeins' genealogies).

[69] BL, Cotton MS, Vitellius FXVII.

[70] Bodleian Library, MS Laud misc. 625, ff. 2. This quotation and the complex inter-relationship of these documents was identified by Hilton, *Economic Development.*, p. 19.

[71] A suspicion voiced by Hilton, *Economic Development*. p. 19.

Charyte's interests extended beyond a massive catalogue of all the abbey's rights. He was evidently interested in how those rights and possessions had been exploited in the past. Part of the *Novum Rentale* is a table giving a summary of the historic cash yield of each manor or parcel of land numbering some 171 in all, of which the Barkby estate seems to have been among the larger. Charyte summarised these figures from three earlier rentals, those of Le Pyn (1284), Geryn (1341) and Bathe (1408) along with his own new rental (1477). He also summarised receipts in kind (presumably extracted from the abbey's accounts) from tithes and demesne lands for 1392, 1399, 1401 and 1470.

Charyte recognised that the plague year, 1348/49, represented a watershed in the agrarian affairs of the abbey. He attempted a reconstruction of the *Capelle firme & maneria ante pestilencia*, which is not easy to follow, but he also included a full transcript of the Geryn rental of 1341, presumably the last surviving rental from before the Black Death. Thus, it is possible to compare the tenants and tenements of the abbey shortly before the Black Death with those of 1477.

The *Liber* is less easy to understand. The survey of the Barkby demesne does not include dates, but since it gives the names of occupiers of selions in the arable flanking the abbey's selions it is possible to compare those names with names appearing in the Merton court rolls and elsewhere. That suggests a date in either the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century. There are also some problems with the survey which have already been mentioned suggest that it may have been carelessly transcribed. It does, however, provide further confirmation that in the middle ages the Leicester Abbey selions in the common fields were intermingled with those of the other manors in Barkby and that the common fields were cultivated on a three- course rotation with a configuration similar to that described in Merton's 1635 map.

5. Barkby before the Black Death

As has been said, when Merton acquired its Barkby manor in 1271, it was a 'distressed asset' which probably stood in need of some care and attention to make it profitable. The early manorial court rolls certainly show an administration which was concerned to explore and exploit its customary rights.

Thus at a court held in 1288 or 1289 the tenants:

> *inplorant seneschallo ut sustineantur in eodem statu ut scoleres ipsos* [sic] *emerunt & Seneschallo rogant [eis] consuetudo [sic] eorum & dicunt super sacramentum suum/ quia nullus custumerius daret pro filia sua maritanda super feodum dominorum nihil [cet]/ extra villam ad hominem [extraneum]*[72]

The record then goes on to deal with inheritance rights but ends with the laconic observation by the steward, in a rare appearance:

> *& tunc senescallus Ricardus de Sancto Iohanne dicit quia [peterunt] injuriam & quia noluit istam injuriam sustinere*.

The overall impression is unavoidable: following its acquisition of the manor both Merton and its *custumarii* were anxious to stake out their perceived rights against a background of uncertainty about manorial custom.

The following entries confirm that impression. A series of fines either for the grant of marriage licences or amercements for tenants who had married off their daughters without a licence culminates in what looks like an attempt by the College to bring matters to a head at the court held on 2 April 1289:

[72] MCR, 6565.

Omnes custumarii [quia] in despectu dominorum clamant eo de libere sanguine & quia nihil dabunt/ pro filiis suis maritandis set sine licencia dominorum facient ipsas maritare Ideo omnes/ custumarii in misericordia et ponentur ad voluntatem dominorum dimidiam marcam exceptis preposito & Iohanne Playtur[73]

The fact that Merton's tenants were living in close proximity to the tenants of other manors in Barkby probably gave this issue particular significance: it may be significant that the tenants were careful to assert that they only paid merchet for marriages outside the village (*villa*) rather than the manor. After this initial skirmish, the College continued to enforce its rights to merchet although with diminishing frequency: when the rolls series resumes in 1341 (after breaking off in 1296) it was still receiving fines, six in all in the 1340s, for marriage licences.[74] After 1349/50 there are two such receipts in the second half of the century in 1382 and 1396.[75]

At about the same time, in or about 1289, Merton was also dealing with an incident involving Isabella de Ros's park in Barkby. The incident is recorded thus in the court rolls:

Memorandum quod ad festum Pasche Florida fuerunt in parco [domine] xxv averia & custumarii fregerunt parcum [domine] & abduxerunt dicta averia sine licencia & [pena debita] pro isto [delicta emend'][76]

Reading between the lines, it looks as though Merton's tenants had repossessed their own twenty-five animals (sheep, presumably, and possibly the village flock) from the lady's park – which would explain the reference to the tenants having done so without a licence.

[73] MCR, 6565. The college granted two or three marriage licences per annum: three in 1279, one in 1280, three in 1282, two in 1285 one or two in 1289 and two in 1294 (MCR, 6563 for 1279 to 1282, MCR, 6565 for 1285-1289 and MCR, 6567 for 1204.
[74] MCR, 6510 for c.1340 to 1346, MCR, 6570 for 1347 and MCR, 6571 for 1349.
[75] MCR, 6582 and 6586 respectively.
[76] MCR, 6565.

The matter returned to the court on 1 October 1289:

> *Memorandum de xxv averiiis que fuerunt custumariis de Barky qui fuerunt in parco domine & deliverata fuerunt sine [preposito] quia custumarii fregerunt parcum domini & abduxerunt dicta averia in [disrespectu] dominorum Ideo in misericordia - - - [d.] [finiend] Et dicta [averia] capiantur ut prius quousque [satisfecerunt] dominis & domine de Ros de [disrespectu] facto [versus] dominam de Ros [misericordia dimidia marca] [[Memorandum] de parco]*
> *Et quia [testatum] est per curiam quod Ricardus prepositus non fecit districtionem super tenentes dominorum ut prius habuerit preceptum ad capitulum de Cuxham & dudum ad satisfaciendum dominis & seneschallo de violencia sic facta & de insultu facto [penes sen'm] & pro falsa [licencia] facta ad dominam/ de Ros Ideo dictus prepositus quia noluit facere officium suum in misericordia - - plegii [s] quia [R]*[77]

The text is not entirely clear but confirms the initial impression whilst indicating that attention had shifted away from the tenants to the bailiff. He had failed to distrain upon the tenants' animals as he had been ordered to do at the assembly (*capitulum*) at Cuxham in Oxfordshire and seems to have compounded that default by giving a 'false licence' – which suggests he had attempted to cover up for the tenants or himself by asserting that they had a licence to remove the animals (see the reference to them acting *sine licencia* in the initial report). Merton's response seems to have been motivated in part by embarrassment at their tenants' behaviour towards another manorial lord but, in particular, by real concerns over the behaviour of their bailiff. Merton's estate was highly dispersed with manors in Northumberland and Co. Durham, Cambridgeshire, the west midlands, southern England and Oxfordshire as well as its two Leicestershire manors at Barkby and Kibworth Harcourt.[78] Reliance on local agents, bailiffs in particular, must have been important. It was a

[77] MCR, 6566.
[78] Harvey, *Medieval Oxfordshire Village*, map IV, p. 88.

relationship based on trust and, as events will show, that waxed and waned over the course of the later middle ages.

This also meant that the costs of administration of the estate were high, not least because they included extensive travel and associated costs. Thus, for example, the bailiff's accounts for 1285/86 show payments to the bailiff of Gamlingay (another Merton manor just outside Cambridge), expenses for travel to Oxford to deliver rent and stray animals, a servant's (*garcio*) travel to Oxford as well as travel in the immediate area to and from Leicester (where the manor held several tenements and where the rent was invariably difficult to collect) as well as Kibworth Harcourt (with whom clerical resources were shared). A significant payment was 13s. 4d. to the de Ros court at Winchester *pro respecto suo habendo*; other accounts show travel expenses to a variety of locations apparently connected with the payment of feudal dues connected with the de Ros fee from which Merton held its manor or, as appears in this case, payments to maintain the good will of the de Ros family. Thus, the 1288/89 accounts show John le Pledur (who may have been Merton's local 'man at law') making such visits to various unidentifiable locations as well as London and Winchester.[79] In the same year the bailiff accounted for his routine visits to Oxford (presumably with the rent and his account for audit), a visit to Maldon (reason unstated) and various other visits to Oxford by manorial servants.

Expenditure on the manor itself and its 'plant', such as the mill, was infrequent but heavy when it arose. Thus, in the account for 1294/5 a new mill post (presumably for a windmill) cost £5 to make and 18d. for its carriage to Barkby, possibly from another Merton manor, along with 3s. for beer for the carriers. The labour for work on the mill at Barkby was a further 18d.

[79] For 'men at law' see Anthony Musson and W. M. Ormrod, *The Evolution of English Justice: Law, Politics and Society in the Fourteenth Century* (Basingstoke, 1999), pp. 62–68.

The impression is, thus, of an estate of widely dispersed manors with a tight central administration which was highly dependent on its local agents, particularly the bailiff and steward (as to whom, see below), with correspondingly high administrative overheads. It seems reasonable to assume some level of sharing of resources amongst the Merton manors: the expensive mill post may, as has been suggested, have come from another Merton manor with available timber, and the stray beasts (and, presumably, heriots) which were moved between the manors and Oxford may have been intended for immediate consumption but might also have been used to improve stock.

Merton's Kibworth Harcourt manor had similar origins to Barkby: it was acquired by Walter of Merton for his new foundation between 1269 and 1271, part of the estate also having been mortgaged to a Jew, Cok son of Cresse.[80] Like Barkby, it seems to have been a 'distressed asset'. Like Barkby also, Merton never farmed the estate there and only ever derived a rental income from the manor.

Unlike Barkby, Kibworth Harcourt seems to have become (after some initial consolidation), the only manor in the village. It was also considerably larger than Barkby and produced a significantly larger rental income. In the years before 1349, the cash liveries (which as has been observed, were possibly the best estimate of the net profit) from Kibworth Harcourt averaged £27 17s. 11½d. per annum as against £11 16s. 5d. from Barkby.[81]

There also seem to have been differences between the tenant bodies of Kibworth Harcourt and Barkby. The 1312/13 rental of Barkby presents a picture of a rather uniform village of, in

[80] Howell, *Land, Family, Inheritance*, ch. 1, 'Kibworth Harcourt: its Geography and Early History'.
[81] The average renders from Kibworth Harcourt have been taken from the bailiffs' accounts, MCR, 6196 (1284), 6205 (1290), 6211 (1302), 6216 (1310), 6220 (1317), 6225 (1324), 6230 (1329), 6235 (1335), 6240 (1343), 6242 (1349) and 6243 (1350). The average renders from Barkby have also been taken from the bailiffs' accounts, MCR, 6483 (1286), 6485 (1289), 6490 (1296), 6495 (1301), 6499 (1311), 6501 (1314), 6505 (1320), 6508 (1324), 6511 (1329), 6515 (1336), 6517 (1340), 6522 (1345) and 6525 (1350).

the main, half-virgate holders holding fifteen acres of arable with an additional four or six acres of arable which probably represented a division of the demesne lands. As has been observed, they also owed characteristically servile duties such as merchet and heriot. With the possible exception of records of land transactions (which will be dealt with in the following section of this chapter), no attempt was made to suggest that they owed labour services. They certainly asserted that they were of 'free blood' (see the merchet argument above), but were probably of servile origin.

The position in Kibworth Harcourt was rather different: although labour services were also commuted, Merton continued to record them certainly up to the end of the fourteenth century and seemingly well into the fifteenth.[82] The College's Kibworth Harcourt rentals also distinguished firmly between free tenants and tenants *ad voluntatem*, unlike Barkby where no such distinction was made.[83]

Leicester Abbey's Geryn rental of 1341 records a few labour services but with limited detail: one tenant owing one day's carting in autumn and another owing a day's mowing, weeding and reaping with two men. There are also some rather heavily abbreviated notations relating to the tenants of a fragmented bovate which may record labour services. It seems likely the abbey had long since abandoned claims to labour services on its demesne and those which were recorded in the 1341 rental were light and insignificant: even if they were exacted, which seems unlikely, they would not have gone far on the 157 arable acres of the abbatial demesne. The Geryn rental does not distinguish explicitly between free tenants and tenants *ad voluntatem*. However, the tenants are grouped together with some paying high rents, typically rather more than 8s. for a bovate, along with a description of the (rather light) labour services they owed, who seem to be the tenants a*d voluntatem*. By contrast, some

[82] Howell, *Land, Family, Inheritance*, pp. 50-1 for Merton's final abandonment of the in bondagio formula in 1427.
[83] Howell, *Land, Family, Inheritance*, ch. 2, 'Land and Tenants'.

paid very small rents of only a few pennies for an entire virgate and two acres (in one case) with no labour duties and who are probably the free tenants. This division was repeated in the 1477 *Novum Rentale* where the tenants *ad voluntatem* were specifically distinguished from the free tenants with the former paying higher rents than the latter although both rents were, by then, significantly higher.

This sets the scene for the arrival of the Black Death at Barkby in (probably) late 1348 with a rather uniform body of Merton tenants and a slightly more varied body of tenants of the Abbey of Leicester. Whilst it is possible that the Merton and abbatial estates were derived from different groups of early medieval tenants, the greater likelihood is that the differences were attributable to different knightly approaches to lordly management before both manors found their way into institutional hands in the thirteenth century.

6. Barkby and the Black Death to circa 1420

It is possible that the Black Death arrived at Barkby in late 1348. That seems early but, given the conventional timing of the arrival of the plague at Melcombe Regis in Dorset in about June of that year, it is not entirely impossible, although an alternative path for transmission of the plague is considered below.[84] The Merton College bailiffs' accounts for the year from the feast of the translation of St Thomas the Martyr (7 July) 1348 to the same date in the following year record the receipt of fourteen animal heriots: five cows, four mares, one colt, one sow, one pig and two sheep but do not record the dates on which they were received.[85] The bailiffs' accounts are, therefore of little help in tying down the date of the plague's arrival at Barkby. The manorial court rolls are more helpful. They show courts held on 3 April and 2 July 1348 followed by a further two courts where the date is illegible.[86] The

[84] See for example Ole J. Benedictow, *The Complete History of the Black Death 1346–1353* (Woodbridge, 2021), pp. 330–1 as to the time of arrival of the Black Death in England.
[85] MCR, 6525.
[86] MCR, 6571. This comprises a number of separate membranes bound together: one membrane contains the courts held in 1348 and on 13 January 1349 and another membrane the courts held later in 1349.

second of these two courts contains records of five deaths (five heriots and the transfer of a tenement on death) which seem to be the initial mortalities attributable to the Black Death. That is followed by further courts held on 13 January 1349 and, on a separate membrane, courts held on 9 April, 17 April, and then in June or September 1349 (the date is unclear). No business was transacted at the court on 13 January 1349 other than the approval of the expenses of the steward and others travelling from, presumably, Oxford to Barkby (3s. 1½d. in total). However, the courts from 9 April 1349 onwards record a further twenty-four heriots and the transmissions of tenements on death.

It seems reasonable to assume that the first undated court in 1348 was held in the late summer or autumn (the post-harvest period seems a plausible time at which to hold it) which points to the second undated court, with the first putative plague deaths, being held in late 1348, possibly in November or December but in any event before the court held on 13 January 1349. That court seems to have been abortive (see above) and it was left to the two courts in April 1349 and later in the year to deal with most of the plague mortalities, recorded in the form of heriots and transfers of tenements on death.

The twenty-nine tenant deaths listed in the court rolls contain some complementary entries as where, for instance, a heriot of a sow and 3s. 4d. was payable on the death of Agnes Whysman at the court on 9 April 1349 and her heir, John, then paid a 20d. fine for entry to her cottage tenement at the court in June or September 1349. There seem to be about four such entries so the 'net' tenant mortality was probably around twenty-five. That is, however, over 85% of the twenty-nine tenants and tenements listed in the 1312/13 rental.[87] Some of the tenants, or their heirs, listed there are identifiable amongst the plague casualties. William of Dalby was listed as a bovate holder in 1312/13 and appears in the late-1348 court roll as one of the dead. Henry Mylisant senior appears in 1312/13 as the holder of just over

[87] MCR, 6568.

thirty acres of arable thus making him the largest Merton tenant in Barkby. He died in 1328 but the death of his son, Henry Mylisant junior, appears in the late 1348 court roll.[88] He, like his father, had been Merton's bailiff and his goods were valued at £6. That valuation was unique and may have been carried out with a view to the recovery of arrears in his bailiff's account. The accounts of his successor, William of Hamilton, recorded no arrears in 1349 but the account for 1350 showed arrears of £6 3s. ¼d.[89]

Merton seems to have been able to find heirs or incoming tenants for vacant tenements without too much difficulty. The 1355 rental follows a similar format and ordering of tenements to that of 1312/13 and shows twenty-eight tenements with tenants, many bearing the same family name as before the plague.[90] Where the family name differs, it is impossible to know whether the incoming tenant was an heir or a new tenant from outside the manor because of the possibility of inheritance through the female line. The number of standard half-virgate holdings had increased from fourteen in 1312/13 to eighteen in 1355 suggesting that there might have been some consolidation of the smaller holdings to form four new half-virgates following the plague mortality although the total number of holdings (twenty-nine tenements in 1312/13 and twenty-eight in 1355) remained remarkably unchanged.

This impression of continuity must, however, be contrasted with the remarkably high mortality which suggests something unusual about the first wave of the plague in Barkby. Possibly it was an outbreak of the pneumonic variant of *Yersinia pestis* which, although capable of person to person transmission, tends not to be widely disseminated because of the rapidity of its victims' deaths.[91] That might explain the abortive attempt to hold a court on

[88] MCR, 6511, the bailiff's account for 1329 where 'Henry Mylisant junior' appears for the first time as bailiff.
[89] MCR, 6525.
[90] MCR, 6568 (1312/13 rental); 6557 (1355 rental).
[91] See e.g. Bruce M. S. Campbell, *The Great Transition: Climate, Disease and Society in the Late-Medieval World* (Cambridge, 2016), pp. 234–5 especially.

13 January 1349: conditions were so disrupted and chaotic that it proved impossible, or too dangerous, to hold a court. At Kibworth Harcourt, Merton held courts until 29 December 1348 without any records of unusual mortality. However, the next Kibworth Harcourt court was held on 18 April 1349 and recorded a very high mortality with about forty deaths.[92] It is just possible that the notably early Barkby outbreak could be attributed to pneumonic plague arriving at an east coast port, say Hull, and travelling rapidly down the Fosse Way.[93] That might also account for the high mortality at Kibworth Harcourt (transmission between the two manors would be unsurprising) but the timing is unclear because the plague could have reached Kibworth Harcourt at any time between the court there on 29 December 1348 (with no recorded mortality) and the court of 18 April 1349 (with extensive mortality).

The impact of the first wave of the Black Death on Barkby was, therefore, considerable. It is very likely that the high mortality of the Merton tenants was shared by the entire community. The extent of the disruption was reflected in the apparent abandonment of attempts to hold a court there on 13 January 1349 and in the problems Merton seems to have encountered in selling all the animals received as heriots. The 1349 account reveals that a servant (*garcionis*) was dispatched to drive some of the animals received as heriots from Barkby to Oxford.[94] That points to the disruption extending to local markets where most of the animals received as heriots were sold. However, Merton was able to stabilise the situation and find heirs and replacement tenants during the course of 1349 so that, by 1355, the manor was fully tenanted. The longer term impacts of the plague were more subtle (at any rate, in the documentary record) and will be dealt with in the remainder of this section.

[92] MCR, 6405 (Kibworth Harcourt manorial court rolls) and see also Cecily Howell, *Land, Family, Inheritance*, pp. 42–3 where she also seems to agree that the Kibworth Harcourt outbreak was first recorded at the court held there on 18 April 1349.
[93] This suggestion was prompted by a seminar given to the Ranulf Higden Society by Professor Sarah Rees Jones, 'York and the North: The Black Death', on 7 December 2024 although, as she would accept, it remains speculative. Dr Alex Brown's work at Durham University on the transmission of the Black Death in England may shed further light, one way or another, on this suggestion.
[94] MCR, 6525 (1349 accounts).

The mid-fourteenth century marked an apparent change in Merton's clerical practice with the adoption, in records of land transactions, of the recital that incoming tenants held their land *in bondagio*. This formula was used twice before 1349 (in 1341 and 1347) and then on about seventeen occasions up to 1367 when it abruptly disappeared.[95] An example appears in appendix 7 (no. 9A). The records of transactions do not record rents or services but it seems likely that these were cash tenancies with no other services rendered to Merton, The only other record of the use of the term *bondagium* is in a pre-plague record of an inquisition at which the *bondagium* had confirmed on oath that an incoming tenant, probably an inheriting son, had sufficient strength to manage the tenement.[96] The later thirteenth century rolls frequently made no statement about the terms on which the incoming tenant held the land or, occasionally, stated that the tenant held *secundum consuetudinem manerii*.[97]

It is doubtful whether the change in clerical practice which took hold after 1349 really amounted to a seigniorial reaction in Barkby. It may have marked a rather half-hearted attempt by Merton's clerks to assert their tenants' servile status in circumstances where they were faced with a number of incoming tenants (there is a marked increase in the use of the *in bondagio* formula in the numerous grants of 1349). Those clerks were, possibly, aware of the historical claims of Merton's tenants in Barkby to be *de libere sanguine*.[98] The reality was that, with no demesne estate in Barkby, there was no question of Merton being in a position to extract the labour services associated with the *in bondagio* status.

[95] MCR, 6570 (21.03.1343), MCR, 6571 (24.04.1347) for pre-1349 uses of the phrase. It is then used frequently in MCR, 6571 (e.g. 09.04.1349, 18.10.1349 on numerous occasions). The last recorded use is MCR, 6577 (8.11.1367).
[96] MCR, 6570 (21.03.1343).
[97] For example, MCR, 6587 (5.08.1294) contains no statement of terms; MCR, 6564 (24.10.1285) uses the *secundum consuetudinem manerii* formula.
[98] MCR, 6565, court held on 2 April 1289; the claim was made by the *custumarii* in connection with an argument over the payment of *maritagium* (as to which, see above).

At Kibworth Harcourt it took until 1427 for Merton to agree with its tenants to abandon the *in bondagio* formula and adopt the *ad voluntatem domini* usage.[99] The tenurial background in Kibworth Harcourt was more complex with, as has been observed, a much longer-lived insistence by Merton on its rights to labour services (irrelevant thought they were) and a sharp distinction in its rentals between free tenants and tenants *ad voluntatem* which was never adopted at Barkby. Kibworth Harcourt, unlike Barkby, also seems to have been marked by continuing arguments between Merton and its tenants in the second half of the fourteenth century over the levels of rent.[100]

By contrast, assertions of servile tenure in the Barkby records are rare by the early fifteenth century. Even the use of the term *custumarii* fell out of use after the plague and, as has been said, Merton abandoned the use of the *in bondagio* formula in 1367.[101] The term *in vilenagio* (which also seems to have been used in Kibworth Harcourt) makes only a single, possibly anachronistic, appearance in the record of the court held on 20 June 1413.[102] This contains a series of recognitions by Merton's tenants of the terms of their tenure. All are recorded there as holding *ad voluntatem domini* according to the custom of the manor save the final entry for John Fraunceys who held a messuage and six acres *in vilenagio*. The term seems never before to have been used at Barkby and appeared here in isolation. The Fraunceys family were long-standing tenants of Barkby and, ironically, Postles suggests that their name was derived from the four Frenchmen, possibly freemen, of 1086.[103] It seems unlikely the clerk of 1413 would have been aware of that, but the isolated use of servile terminology is odd and difficult to explain. Perhaps it was simply a case of the clerk settling an unknown score with an awkward tenant.

[99] Howell, *Land, Family, Inheritance*, ch. 4 and especially table 7.
[100] Howell, *Land, Family, Inheritance*, p. 50.
[101] The last uses seem to be in 1347 (MCR, 6570).
[102] MCR, 6592.
[103] David Postles, 'Barkby 1086–1524', p. 50.

The only clear indication of lord-tenant conflict in post-plague Barkby lies in Merton's treatment of the bailiff's arrears. In the case of Barkby, the arrears can only be attributable to shortfalls in the rent collected by the bailiff and delivered to Merton – apart from the relatively insignificant proceeds of the court, there was no other source of income. Typically, in the years before the Black Death, the arrears had fluctuated but generally had been kept under control. Thus in 1294 they reached £7 10s. and in 1314 £7 10s. but these were isolated peaks after which the arrears returned to more manageable figures of less than £2 10s.[104] However, from 1350 onwards they increased steadily, remaining at over £10 from 1380 onwards.[105] The reason was that arrears were carried forward from one bailiff to another and included significant arrears from the years immediately after the Black Death. Rather surprisingly, some retired bailiffs seem to have managed to reduce the arrears on their account but it seems likely that was attributable to tenants paying off arrears of rent. There were some exceptions to the upward trend: the long-serving Richard Samson (bailiff, 1369–1414) seems to have negotiated a reduction of the historic arrears although not his personal arrears between 1400 and 1405.[106] However, from 1405 the historic arrears were re-introduced and in later years reverted to a figure around £19. Some of those arrears dated back to the years after the Black Death but they must have been significantly increased by shortfalls in rent collection throughout the second half of the fourteenth century. In 1425 the College seems to have accepted, finally, that the historic arrears were irrecoverable.[107] Thereafter, the arrears were limited to the shortfall in the rent recoveries for the preceding year and dropped back to almost nothing – any arrears thereafter were attributable, in the main, to late delivery of the final instalment of rent for the financial year in question.

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[104] MCR, 6488 (accounts 1393/4) and 6501 (accounts 1313/14).
[105] MCR, 6538 (accounts 1349/50) shows the arrears at £6 3s. ¼d. and MCR, 6542 (1379/80) shows the arrears at £10 12s. 1d., a figure comprising the arrears of former bailiffs, William Aleyn and Reginald Playtor, as well as those of the current bailiff, Richard Samson.
[106] MCR, 6543. This is a roll containing a series of accounts for, *inter alia*, the first decade of the fifteenth century.
[107] MCR, 6544. This is a roll containing a series of accounts for, *inter alia*, the second decade of the fifteenth century.

Whether the arrears were a source of friction between the College and its bailiffs is unclear: there is no direct evidence in either direction. The episode of the arrears-reduction between 1400 and 1405 suggests that they may have been a negotiating card in the College's dealings with the bailiffs, but it is difficult to believe that Merton's auditors regarded them as anything much more than an accounting oddity. That impression is strengthened by a broader consideration of Merton's treatment of its tenants at Barkby and Kibworth Harcourt in the second half of the fourteenth century.

That treatment becomes apparent in the expenses section of the bailiffs' accounts. After 1350 they change markedly: it has been observed that before 1350 they included frequent expenses for travel not only to and from Oxford but to and from other Merton manors (such as the *capitulum* at Cuxham) and, most notably, on maintaining amicable relations with the owner of the superior fee in Barkby, the de Roos family. This type of expenditure falls away quite sharply after 1350. Expenses were still paid to the sheriff for his services and to the bailiff for his out of pocket expenditure at quite modest levels. However, the journeys to Oxford with the rent disappear and seem to have been replaced with arrangements to deliver it to the College bursar at intermediate locations between Barkby and Oxford. Instead, significant amounts were paid out for equipment at the manor, the mill in particular.[108] As has been said, repairs to the mill were always a significant item but, with the removal of many other items of incidental expenditure after 1349, they achieve a higher profile. The main introduction to the expenses was an item for 'decayed' rents.[109] This is a suspiciously formulaic item which, quite frequently, did not vary from year to year: like the bailiff's arrears, it seemed to become frozen in time and the same sum was adopted year after year. However, it shows that Merton's auditors recognised the problem of recovery of rent and accepted that full recovery of the notional rents in the receipts section of the

[108] MCR, 6538 (accounts 1374/5) include cost of repairs to the mill, 14s. 10d.
[109] For example, MCR, 6531 (accounts 1464/5).

account was not possible. That lends strength to the conclusion that the bailiff's arrears were not a serious item of contention so much as a bargaining chip deployed in the negotiations surrounding the signing off of the account for the year.

The pattern can be seen in table 4.4 which shows the average expenses for both Kibworth Harcourt and Barkby before the Black Death and afterwards along with the average liveries (as has been observed, the nearest figure to the net profit of the manor) and the percentage of expenses to liveries.

Table 4.4 Barkby and Kibworth Harcourt: comparison of expenses and liveries from the bailiffs' accounts[110]

Kibworth Harcourt					Barkby (Merton manor)			
	Exp to Liv (%)	Av. Exp (s.)	Av. Liv (s.)			Exp to Liv (%)	Av. Exp (s.)	Av. Liv (s.)
1284–1350	8.93	49.84	557.95		1286–1350	8.31	21.15	236.41
1351–1421	11.01	72.91	662.36		1351–1420	13.55	26.66	196.87
1422–1466	75.45	234.51	312.05		1421–1493	28.43	39.72	130.37

The averages are taken from accounts at approximately five-yearly intervals in each of the three periods in this table or, where bailiffs' accounts are missing, from the nearest year thereto. The accounts for the years used to calculate these averages are shown in the footnote.

[110] For the years 1284 to 1350 for Kibworth Harcourt the averages have been taken from the bailiffs' accounts, MCR, 6196 (1284), 6205 (1290), 6211 (1302), 6216 (1310), 6220 (1317), 6225 (1324), 6230 (1329), 6235 (1335), 6240 (1343), 6242 (1349) and 6243 (1350). For the years 1286 to 1350 for Barkby the averages have been taken from the bailiffs' accounts, MCR, 6483 (1286), 6485 (1289), 6490 (1296), 6495 (1301), 6499 (1311), 6501 (1314), 6505 (1320), 6508 (1324), 6511 (1329), 6515 (1336), 6517 (1340), 6522 (1345) and 6525 (1350). For the years 1351 to 1421 for Kibworth Harcourt, the averages have been taken from MCR, 6244 (1351), 6246 (1353), 6250 (1359), 6255 (1365), 6260 (1373), 6265 (1378), 6270 (1383), 6271 (1385), 6275 (1389), 6280 (1394), 6290 (1404), 6295 (1409) and 6300 (1414). For the years 1351 to 1420 for Barkby, the averages have been taken from MCR, 6525 (1357), 6543 (1360), 6531 (1365), 6543 (1370), 6538 (1375), 6542 (1380), 6543 (1385), 6543 (1390), 6586 (1395), 6543 (1401), 6543 (1405), 6543 (1410), 6544 (1415) and 6544 (1420). For the years 1422 to 1466 for Kibworth Harcourt, the averages have been taken from MCR, 6305 (1422), 6311 (1429), 6315 (1436), 6320 (1442), 6325 (1449), 6330 (1454), 6335 (1459) and 6340 (1466). For the years 1421 to 1492 for Barkby the averages have been taken from MCR, 6544 (1425), 6544 (1430), 6544 (1433), 6544 (1441), 6544 (1444), 6544 (1450), 6544 (1455), 6543 (1460), 6543 (1465), 6543 (1471), 6543 (1475), 6543 (1480), 6543 (1485), 6549 (1490) and 6549 (1493).

As can be seen, after 1350 the expenses at Barkby increased slightly and at Kibworth Harcourt quite significantly in cash terms and, although to a lesser extent, as a percentage of the liveries. Also, as has been said, the nature of those expenses changed significantly in that they were increasingly directed to the manor itself rather than to the broader Merton estate.

That seems to represent a recognition on the part of Merton that, if it was to maintain its rent receipts from both manors, it needed to invest in them. It also seems that Merton appreciated that the returns from this exercise would be significantly greater at Kibworth Harcourt with its larger rent roll than at Barkby where the rent roll was smaller. That would explain the significantly larger increase in expenses in Kibworth Harcourt. Further, that approach succeeded: the average liveries at Kibworth Harcourt actually increased quite significantly in the seventy years after the Black Death. At Barkby the average liveries decreased over the same period but only by just over 15%.

Thus, there are grounds to believe that Merton overhauled its management of the finances of its Leicestershire manors in response to changed conditions after the Black Death. In addition, there is clear evidence that it overhauled the procedures of its manorial court. The major introduction was the process of presentations by the *homagium*. The first presentation by the *homagium* at Barkby was in 1353 and, initially, its role was modest, making only isolated presentations.[111] However, its role steadily extended and, by 1399, it was making quite extensive presentations, often relating to the dereliction of tenements.

The membership of the *homagium* was, at first, unrecorded but in 1392 the court record started to record its members and that their presentations were made on oath.[112] The

[111] MCR, 6571 (25.04.1353).
[112] MCR, 6584 (06.05.1392).

number of members varied between about twelve and over fifteen.[113] The membership seems to have increased over time reaching a peak in the 1420s. The members are recognisable as comprising, for the most part, the tenants of the standard half-virgate, tenements in Barkby. Since there were only around eighteen half-virgate tenements in Barkby, most of the tenants were members of the *homagium*.

It is unlikely that the creation of the *homagium* represented an attempt by Merton to 'skim off' and recruit the wealthier tenants into some sort of administrative elite in the manor. The size of the *homagium* was too large for that to be the case: it comprised a very significant proportion of the tenants and, if Merton had had that intention, it would have ensured the *homagium* was significantly smaller. On the contrary, it looks like an attempt to involve almost the entire body of half-virgators in the administration of the manor. There is also little indication that, in practice, the *homagium* favoured the interests of its members, or even its wealthier members: it seems to have had no difficulty presenting its own members. Thus, to take a random example, at the court held on 22 January 1421 the *homagium* presented two of its own members, Robert Jonson and Stephen Bokyngham, for allowing defects in their own barns and, further, ordered that 16s. should be raised from the goods of John Mason, another member of the *homagium*, and another.[114] There may have been members of the *homagium* who, on account of their economic or social status, enjoyed some immunity from presentation but that is not obvious. The activities of the *homagium* in the fifteenth century will be considered further in chapter 6 in comparison with the other manors forming the subject matter of this thesis.

As to Merton's agents at Barkby, the bailiffs were invariably recruited from the tenants and, in their case, probably represented the wealthier or even wealthiest tenant: their identities and

[113] MCR, 6587 and 6589 show the *homagium* numbers varying between twelve and fifteen in the 1390s; later rolls, e.g. MCR, 6593, show the numbers increasing to eighteen in 1421.
[114] MCR, 6593.

holdings are traced in appendix 4 and they tended to hold larger tenements with correspondingly higher rents. The stewards are less easy to trace and tend to make only rather fleeting appearances in the records. Cicely Howell traced some of them (Barkby and Kibworth Harcourt seem to have shared the steward) and they seem, in her words, to have been 'professional lawyers and administrators serving the Leicester region and a number of lordships.'[115] Generally, the administration of Kibworth Harcourt seems to have been rather similar to Barkby although, possibly on account of its size, it may have been rather more formal. For example, it is not easy to trace clerks at Barkby and it seems likely that they were shared with Kibworth.

It looks as though the overall changes in the administration of Barkby after 1349 were part of a planned programme aimed at securing the College's income from its Leicestershire manors. The result of those changes must have meant that contact between the manorial officials and the College's administrators was much reduced: for example, the bailiff no longer travelled to Oxford to present his account or to deliver the rent. The cash liveries seem, increasingly, to have been handed over to peripatetic bursars at convenient meeting points. Quite how and where the accounts were finalised is unclear. Likewise, the sense that, before 1349, Merton managed its entire estate as a unified whole with frequent ballival visits to and from other manors, such as Gamlingay in Cambridgeshire and Cuxham in Oxfordshire disappears. After 1249 each manor seems to be treated as an individual 'profit centre' (in modern management jargon). It is possible that the extended role of the *homagium* was part of that process.

Cicely Howell described the relationship between Merton and its Kibworth Harcourt manor as one of partnership between the College and its tenants which, in the early modern period, degenerated into paternalism.[116] 'Partnership' may suggest a rather too amiable

[115] Howell*, Land, Family, Inheritance*, pp. 38–9.
[116] Howell, *Land, Family, Inheritance*, p. 37.

relationship: Merton was surely always well-aware that its real interest in the manor derived from the manor's rental income and its reliance on the tenants (for instance, on their appraisal of an incoming tenant) may have been a matter of necessity rather than 'partnership'. Nevertheless, it is probably correct that Merton's administrators realised that it was necessary to work 'with the grain' of the local community rather than against it: the introduction of the *homagium* may (again) be the best example of that approach. For their part, Merton's tenants, when comparing their lot with the tenants of a demesne farming ecclesiastical or lay estate in the same village, may have felt that there were advantages in having a geographically distant lord anxious to keep on good terms with them.

The absence of documentary evidence makes it impossible to know how the other Barkby manors responded to the Black Death. William Charyte, writing in the late fifteenth century, evidently considered it to have been a watershed in the management of Leicester Abbey's management of its estate. For that reason, he transcribed the immediately pre-pestilence Geryn rental of 1341 in its entirety into the *Novum Rentale*. Charyte must have been born in or around 1420 (if he was 81 in 1501) so he would have been reliant on second- or probably third-hand oral accounts of the first wave of the Black Death along with whatever written material he gleaned from Leicester Abbey's muniments. That probably left him uncomfortably aware that, in the post-plague years, the Abbey had steadily abandoned direct demesne management and had leased out its demesne. That gave rise to the danger that rights which the Abbey had exercised in the course of demesne farming, such as rights of way and access and the complicated provisions for the meadows bordering the Soar, risked becoming forgotten. Recording those rights before they were completely lost probably provided Charyte with the motive for undertaking his massive project, of which the *Novum Rentale* represents the main survivor.

Concluding this section at a cut-off point in the 1420s is arbitrary but it seems to represent an administrative turning point with Merton's abandonment of its claims to ballival arrears in

Barkby and its more significant concessions to its tenants in Kibworth Harcourt in 1427. The importance of those developments should not be overemphasised but it seems as good a point as any to draw a dividing line in the chronology. The following seventy years marked a very different phase in the College's fortunes.

Merton's administration of its Barkby manor in the seventy years after the Black Death seems to have been relatively successful. Faced with difficult circumstances, it maintained its rental income by responding rapidly to the pandemic in 1349/50 and finding heirs and new tenants for vacant tenements. The rapid succession of sessions of the manorial court in 1349 is witness to that. Changes to the administration of the court, the introduction of the *homagium*, and Merton's financial measures, in particular the re-balancing of the manor's expenses, enabled the College to maintain its rental income as far as was possible in difficult circumstances. Its success in that regard in the economically more important Leicestershire manor at Kibworth Harcourt is remarkable. However, the economic, social and demographic conditions of the fifteenth century presented a much more difficult problem. They will be the subject of the next section of this chapter.

7. Barkby in the fifteenth century

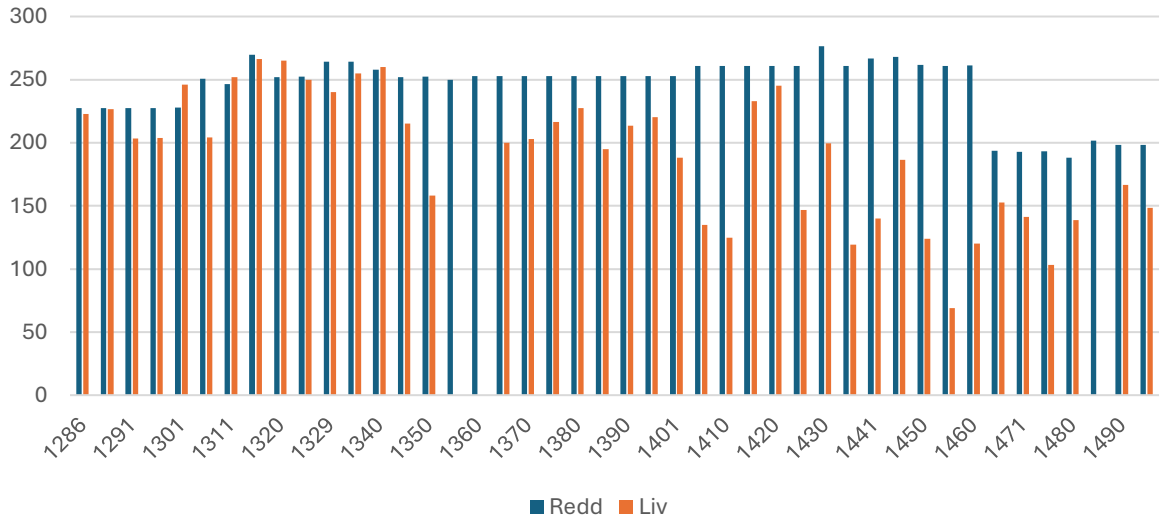
Merton's surviving records for the eighty years from 1420 to 1500 demonstrate the College's concern to preserve its rental income from its Barkby manor, although Merton's records for this period are significantly less detailed than those for previous years. The sequence of bailiffs' accounts is interrupted in the early years of the fifteenth century and tails away completely in the final decade followed by an only partial revival in the sixteenth century and a complete absence between 1545 and 1599. Likewise, the sequence of manorial court rolls is interrupted in the last two decades of the century and then falls away in the sixteenth century with a complete absence between 1509 and 1570.[117] Cicely Howell reports a similar

[117] Merton College Catalogue of Manuscripts, vol. X.

picture in Kibworth Harcourt with courts only meeting at seven yearly intervals in the sixteenth century.[118]

The problem of rental income can be illustrated by a comparison of the rents and cash liveries throughout the later middle ages (figure 4.1).[119] The figures for rent, shown as 'redd' for *redditus assisus*, are taken from the bailiffs' accounts. As has been explained, they are notional figures showing what the College *expected* to receive, not what it *actually* received. The *redditus assisus* was by far the largest element of the receipts with only mill-rents as *firme* and some very small receipts from tenements in Leicester and Thurmaston (seldom recovered in practice). By contrast, the figures for liveries, shown as 'liv' for liveries, are actual figures and, as has also been explained, probably represent the best approximation to the net profit for the year.

Fig. 4.1 Barkby: rents and liveries, 1286–1493 (shillings)



The *redditus assisus* was by far the largest receipt from the manor. The only other category of receipt was the *perquisita curie* (not shown in figure 4.1), but with the exception of the plague year of 1349/50 when they were significantly increased by heriots, they were usually modest. The *redditus assisus* remained at a more or less constant figure of just over £11

[118] Howell, *Land, Family, Inheritance*, p. 37.
[119] The figures in figure 4.1 are a snapshot for each year taken from the bailiffs' accounts set out in the footnote to table 3.

per annum until the early fourteenth century and then at £12 17s. (or slightly more) for well over 150 years from 1301 until the College adjusted its expectations in the 1460s and reduced it to a figure of just under £10 per annum.

The figures for cash liveries remained remarkably constant and at a high proportion of the rent throughout the first half of the fourteenth century but they fell away dramatically in the middle years of the century at the time of the Black Death, before recovering thereafter. There was, however, a reduction in the liveries in the second half of the century compared with the first half. That was probably for the reasons outlined in the previous section of this chapter: the College was able to stabilise its rental income with greater expenditure on the manor, which explains why the liveries drop to a smaller proportion of the rent. However, the liveries then become altogether more volatile in the fifteenth century dropping significantly in the depressed years of the mid-century before making a rather tentative recovery in the final decades of the century.

It is not easy to explain Merton's difficulties in maintaining its income from its Barkby manor. One explanation, manifested in numerous attempts to reconstruct tenant incomes, might be that even the tenants of twenty-acre yardlands existed on a narrow margin producing only just enough surplus grain to fund necessary money purchases and, at times of distress, insufficient cash to pay rent.[120] That does not, however, seem plausible. The proximity of Leicester must have meant that non-seasonal day-labouring work was available there and that animal husbandry, along with artisanal skills, might also boost tenants' cash income. Seen in this light, the attempts to estimate tenant income and its narrow margin of subsistence, may in fact demonstrate the extent to which tenants depended on such

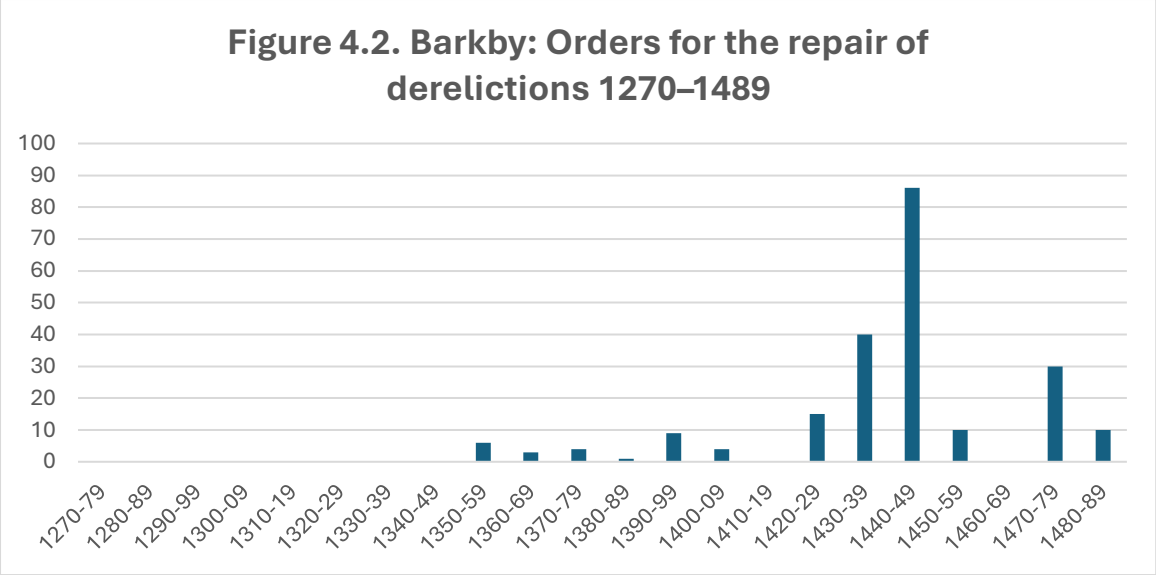
[120] See for example Christopher Dyer, 'The Agrarian Problem, 1440–1520' in Jane Whittle (ed.), *Landlords and Tenants in Britain, 1440–1660: Tawney's Agrarian Problem Revisited* (Woodbridge, 2013), pp. 23–4 for the period under consideration here. For earlier periods see Harry Kitsikopoulos, 'Standards of Living and Capital Formation in Pre-Plague England: A Peasant Budget Model', *The Economic History Review* 53.2 (2000), pp. 237–61 and Christopher Dyer, *Standards of living in the later Middle Ages: Social Change in England c.1200–1530* (Cambridge, 2012), ch. 5.

opportunities to supplement their income and the extent of their market integration. So, also, the fluctuations in Merton's income from Barkby (see the decline in income in the mid-fifteenth century in figure 4.1) may represent recurrent *market* crises rather than *subsistence* crises.

That should probably be qualified by the recognition that market crises were probably quite closely related to weather conditions and crop yields. Thus, the shortfalls in liveries of cash to Merton coincided with periods of adverse weather conditions in the 1430s and economic depression in the mid-century.[121] However, market integration might also explain Merton's ability to maintain the integrity of its half-virgate tenements in Barkby (see below). Merton's ability to find new tenants in the wake of the first wave of the plague and thereafter suggests that those tenements were, in fact, quite attractive to tenants at a time when many landlords found it difficult to fill vacant tenements. Merton's management strategy will be considered further below in comparison to Leicester Abbey's Barkby estate and again in chapter 6 as part of a comparison of seigniorial management strategies.

Dealing with the condition of its Barkby tenements, the College had started to show an interest in the dereliction of tenements from soon after the Black Death. Figure 4.2 shows presentations by the *homagium* for dereliction which, as can be seen, commence as a trickle in the second half of the fourteenth century but then spike significantly in the fifteenth century. These presentations usually took the form of, initially, an order or the tenant to repair the tenement by a given date with the tenant subject to a specific fine if the repair had not been carried out by the specified date. The order was then followed by an amercement if the tenant failed to carry out the repairs.

[121] See for example Kathleen Pribyl, 'Climate Induced Crisis: The 1430s in England, A Difficult Decade' *EdUFF, Editora de UFF, Tempo,* 30.2 (2024) https://doi.org/10.1590/TEM-1980-542X2024v300210.
on climatic problems in the 1430s and John Hatcher, 'The Great Slump of the Mid-Fifteenth Century' in Richard Britnell and John Hatcher, *Progress and problems in medieval England* (Cambridge, 2012) on the mid-century recession.



These figures need to be approached with caution because it is not easy to establish whether the presentation of an individual for disrepair in fact relates to earlier disrepairs and presentations. However, they probably provide a broad picture of the extent of concern on the part of manorial officials, reaching a peak coinciding with the mid-century recession. The presentations usually related to barns (*grangia*) and other ancillary buildings such as sheepfolds (*bercaria*) and pigsties. Frequent references to *domi* probably indicate ancillary agricultural buildings rather than dwellings. A presentation by the *homagium* usually led to a relatively modest fine of a few pence on the first presentation which would be remitted if it was reported subsequently that the tenant had repaired the building adequately. If they failed to do so, the fine would be increased progressively to a quite significant level, 20s. or more. That probably reduced the cash available to the tenant to complete repairs and it seems likely that these fines were rarely recovered. In fact, it is slightly surprising that it is not uncommon to find references to repairs having been completed satisfactorily with the fine remitted.

Another common feature of the repairs is a description of the disrepair (e.g. *ruinosa in meremia et tectura*) frequently coupled with a description of the defective timber members,

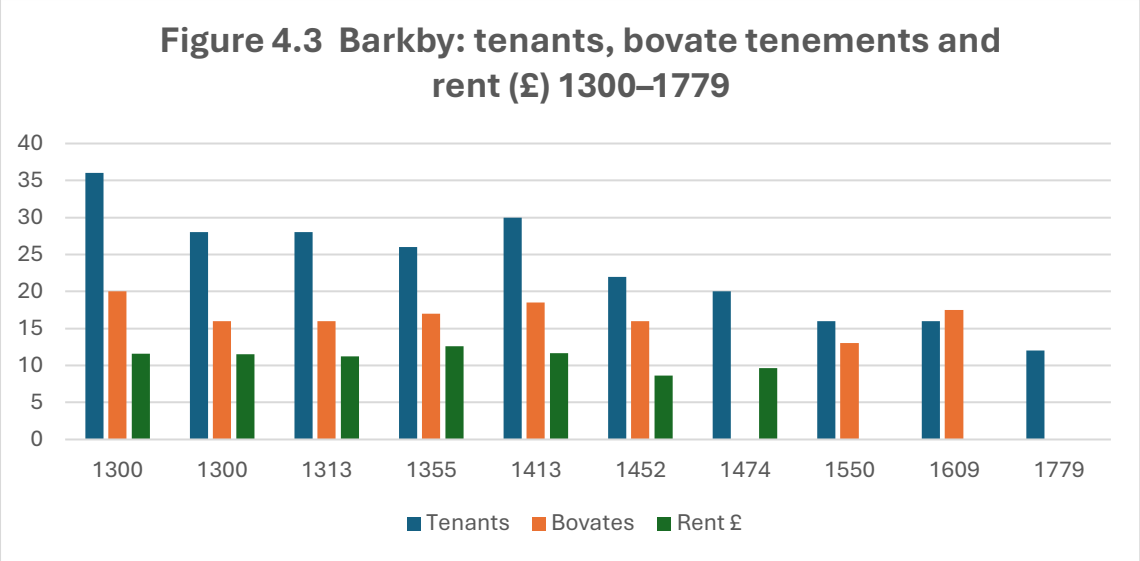
usually in English (e.g. *ribtres, sparres, lathunge*).[122] This suggests the unsurprising progress of dereliction: once the roof failed, its timbers were exposed along with the walls, probably constructed of lathe and plaster, which were highly vulnerable to rain and frost. It also suggests that timber was expensive and difficult to obtain – there seems to have been no timber-producing woodland in Barkby.[123] That was a common problem in Leicestershire. At Barkby, as has been observed, it is possible the *Oulte* was an area of highly managed coppice producing fuel rather than structural timber. Merton rarely offered concessions to tenants to encourage them to repair unless they were new incoming tenants taking over a derelict tenement when they occasionally secured a reduction in the entry fine. Direct subsidy was, however, the only means by which it was possible for Merton to ensure that the manor's windmill was repaired.

Turning to the preservation of Barkby's tenements, figure 4.3 shows that Merton was able to preserve the sixteen or so half-virgate or bovate tenements of 1313/14 remarkably successfully throughout the later middle ages.[124]

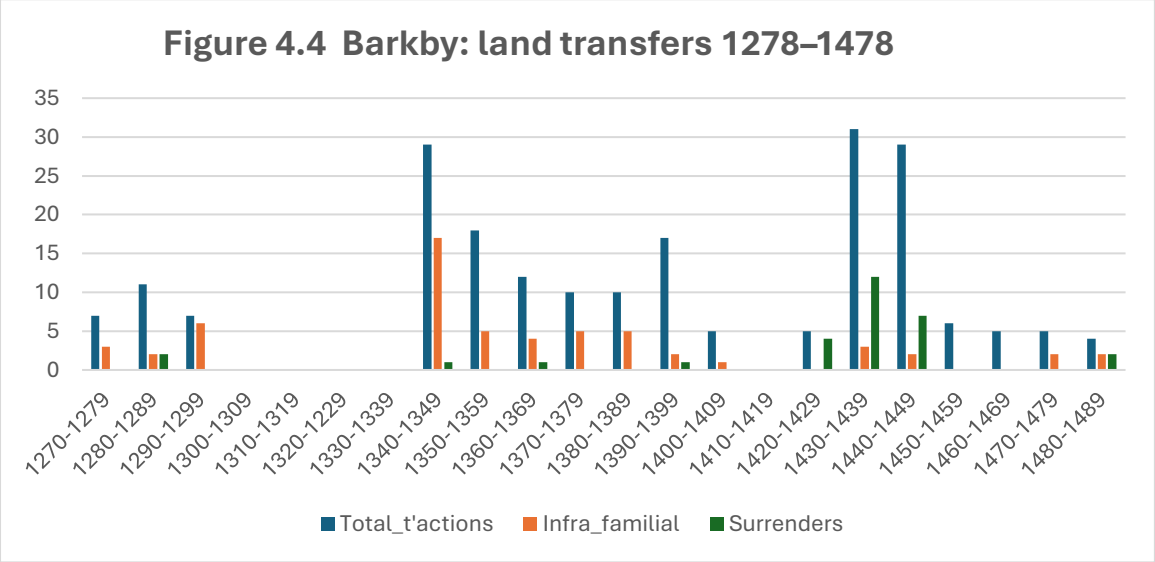
[122] There are almost one hundred references in the court rolls to buildings described as *ruinosa*: examples include MCR, 6584 (28.02.1390 – which seems to be the first reference), 6697 (15.11.1430), 6598 (02.05.1431) and 6601 (10.11.1434). The last also mentions decay to the *perietura* or lath and plaster so presumably this was a reference to the walling. References to a *ribtre* can be found at, for example, MCR, 6603 (16.12.1440); *latthynge* at MCR, 6593 (20.06.1435); *sparres* at MCR, 6605 (12.10.1447) and *walplate* at MCR, 6605 (10.01.1444?). The latter is, in fact, a presentation for the wrongful felling of trees for house repairs.

[123] The only reference to woodland in Barkby in the sources cited in this chapter occurs in the *Novum Rentale*, Bodleian Library, Laud MS misc 625, ff. xiii/17, concerning a grant by Peter de Lincoln to Leicester Abbey of pasture including 'haya sua [sc. Peter de Lincoln's] de Barkby'. In this context, 'haya' may be a reference to wood pasture in, possibly, heavily managed coppice which might produce lathes but probably not structural timber. The felling of what seem to have been hedgerow trees for such timber (see the reference to a wall plate in the previous footnote) reinforces the impression of the absence of woodland providing structural timber, or at any rate woodland available to Merton's tenants.

[124] Figure 4.3 is taken from rentals MCR, 6556 (1300), MCR, 6568 (1312/13), MCR, 6557 (13555), court roll MCR, 6592 (1413), rentals MCR, 6561 (1452), MCR, 6562 (1474), surveys c.1550 MCR, unindexed and 1609 MCR, unindexed and Enclosure Act award MCR, 5.21.



As has been observed, the volume of land transfers at Barkby had always been relatively low: the manorial court rolls record less than one transaction at each court session (see table 6.5). Figure 4.4 shows the distribution of these transfers with, rather unsurprisingly, peaks at the time of the Black Death and again in the mid-fifteenth century.[125]



This suggests that even though Merton was able to maintain its bovate tenements and their tenants (figure 4.3), the mid-fifteenth century was nevertheless a period of volatility with the number of infra-familial transfers dropping away and the number of surrenders by outgoing tenants (presumably abandoning their tenements) increasing. Both figures are likely to be

[125] Figure 4.4 is taken from MCR, 6563–6625, the Barkby manorial court rolls.

underestimates because it is not always possible to be certain which transfers are infra-familial (the numbers here represent transfers which are expressly stated to be such or are between individuals with the same name) or which transfers arose from surrenders (the figures represent grants which are expressly stated to be made from land in Merton's hands). In both cases, there are likely to be transfers where the nature of the transfer goes unstated.

The dominant figures in Merton's management of its Barkby manor in the fifteenth century were the Jonson or Johnson family.[126] They first appear in the court rolls in the mid-fourteenth century where a William Jonson was elected to a minor court position, possibly a messenger (*afferandus annunciamentie in curia domini*) in 1350.[127] Later, a Henry Jonson acquired a half-virgate holding which he held until his death in 1399.[128] John Jonson first appears in the court rolls as a member of the *homagium* and as an affeerer in 1394.[129] He then appears in the 1413 recognitions as Merton's largest landholder at Barkby with holdings of a half-virgate or bovate and two half-bovates (although the reading is not entirely clear).[130] He had acquired one of these tenements in 1390 from Robert Power, a member of a long-standing Barkby family who might have been the twelfth- and thirteenth-century donors of the Leicester Abbey estate in Barkby.[131] John Johnson died in 1437 but another member of the family, Robert, had also appeared as a member of the *homagium* in 1421 and went on to become bailiff in around 1428.[132] Robert continued to occupy that office until around 1462.

[126] Their names were spelt in various ways, these being the two commonest variants. The medieval documents seem to use the 'Jonson' variant but the manorial court rolls are inconsistent. In the early modern period, their name seems to have settled as 'Johnson'.
[127] MCR, 6580. The wording is plainly *afferand'* and the reference to 'announcements' suggests he was a messenger or server of documents.
[128] MCR, 6577 and 6589.
[129] MCR, 6587.
[130] MCR, 6592.
[131] Bodleian Library, Laud MS misc ff. xii/16.
[132] MCR. 6602 (death of John Jonson reported on 8 November 1437); MCR. 6593 (Robert Jonson appears as a member of the *homagium* and in presentations for dereliction). See appendix 4 for details of the Jonson family as bailiffs.

At some point between 1452 and 1474 the Jonsons ceased to be tenants of the Merton manor but their association with Merton continued (see below).[133]

The Jonson family held land elsewhere in Barkby: a William Jonson was recorded in the *Novum Rentale* (1477) as holding a messuage and virgate from Leicester Abbey along with another messuage, a croft and a *quartrona* (a quarter of a bovate).[134] However, the family do not appear in the Geryn rental (1341) as tenants of Leicester Abbey so, as with the Merton manor, they probably became tenants of the Abbey either in the later fourteenth century or the earlier fifteenth century.

The Jonson family's involvement with Merton continued long after 1474 despite them having ceased to be tenants: they remained as the College's bailiffs into the sixteenth century.[135] A John Johnson is identified in Merton's 1609 map as the freeholder of a house tenement at the extreme west end of the village and the family appear as owners of a few small pieces of land in both the 1609 and 1635 maps. Their tenure there is unknown although their land was certainly not held from Merton.[136] It may well be that the Johnsons held a free tenement which formed their core family holding and took land in addition from the various Barkby estates from time to time when it suited them to do so. That may explain why the Johnson family disappear as tenants of Merton after the 1452 rental, are absent from the 1474 rental and do not appear as tenants in the surveys of circa1550 or 1609.[137] The emergence of the Pochins as the increasingly dominant, and possibly rather aggressive, landowners at Barkby in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries may thus have encouraged the College to maintain its strategic alliance with a smaller freeholder there.

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[133] MCR. 6561 (1452 rental), MCR. 6562 (1474 rental).
[134] Bodleian Library, Laud MS misc 625, ff. xii/16.
[135] See appendix 4.
[136] Suella Postles, *Barkby,* pp. 59–60 traces the Jonson or Johnson family's ownership of a single yardland in Barkby from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century with a faint suggestion that it might have been part of a yardland in Barkby held by St John's Hospital in the middle ages.
[137] MCR, 6561 (1452 rental), MCR, 6562 (1474 rental).

The *Novum Rentale* supplements the picture of Barkby in the fifteenth century with data concerning Leicester Abbey's estate there. The *Novum Rentale*, despite its name, is much more than a rental. It includes a catalogue of all the rights enjoyed by the Abbey, including its rights to churches and tithes which were, in fact, the Abbey's most valuable possessions at Barkby. These gifts are summarised and cross-referenced to individual charters in the Chartwary, the Abbey's lost cartulary, so that the text and details of the charters are lost. As has been said, Charyte's concern seems to have been that, with the Abbey's transition away from direct demesne management, its various rights which had been so important to the demesne farms, were in danger of being forgotten. The result, however, is that the rental element of the *Novum Rentale* is, in fact, rather confused so far as Barkby is concerned. Charyte was also interested in the past yields of the estate's spiritualities and temporalities. He extracted figures from earlier rentals (the Geryn rental of 1341 was the only one to be transcribed in full) and accounts which are summarised in a series of tables. The basis of his selection is unstated but it seems likely he used whatever material seemed to him to be the clearest and most complete. Without being able to see the material from which Charyte extracted his figures, it is difficult to be sure about the reliability and meaning of the figures he quotes. When it comes to his historic figures for tithe and demesne income, in particular, it is probably best to treat them as giving a broad impression of the estate's receipts from Barkby rather than as precise figures.[138] Thus the following paragraphs will look first at the extent of Barkby's spiritual and temporal possessions in Barkby, the income they generated and then, in the broad terms indicated, at the tithe and demesne yields.

The Abbey's land at Barkby comprised the 156 acres and three-and-a-half rods arable along with its meadow which seems to have been glebe, although it is treated as demesne land

[138] Hilton, *Economic Development*, p. 62–3 encountered problems with the figures for the entire Leicester Abbey estate although his analysis is not without problems: he includes a table VII at p. 66 which is not referred to in the text and where something seems to have gone seriously wrong with the proof reading.

which, by 1477, was let to William Steven for five marks per annum.[139] This land is further detailed in the *Libe*r which confirms that the 156 acres odd was arable and was accompanied by meadow, the precise extent of which is not stated (it is quantified in carucates, presumably meaning the meadow attributable to a carucate of arable) but might have been around eighteen acres.[140] In addition, the *Novum Rentale* itemised a further 196 acres arable and seventeen acres of meadow let to twelve tenants, distinguishing between four tenants at will (*ad voluntatem*) and eight free tenants.[141] The Geryn rental of 1341 seems to follow a broadly similar pattern save that the demesne/glebe does not seem to have been let then and no clear distinction was made between tenants at will and free tenants.[142]

Charyte's table for Barkby is set out, with adaptations, in table 4.5 below.[143]

Table 4.5 Leicester Abbey's receipts from Barkby estate and church (£ s. d.)

	Pyn (1254)	Geryn (1341)	Bathe (1407)	Charyte (1477)
Rent	£1 16s. 8d. 6 hens	£2 17s. 8d. 6 hens	£5 3s. 7½d. 9 hens	£4 0s. 6¾d.
Demesne rent				£3 6s. 8d.
Pencio	£1 0s. 0d.	£1 0s. 0d.	£1 0s. 0d.	£1 0s. 0d.
Tithe of hay and hemp	*inter grangia*	£50 0s. 0d.	*inter grangia*	£20 0s. 0d.
Summa	£2 16s. 8d.	£53 18s. 8d.	£6 3s. 7½d.	£28 [8s. 8¾d.]
Common fine		1s. 0d.	1s. 0d.	

The figure for rent in the transcript of the 1341 Geryn rental is around £2 19s. 3d., slightly more than the figure in Charyte's table.[144] Further, although the figure for demesne rent in Charyte's table tallies with the figure for the demesne rent in the rental section of the *Novum Rentale*, five marks or £3 6s. 8d., the figure for the rent of the remainder of the Barkby land

[139] Bodleian Library, Laud MS misc 625, ff. xii/16.
[140] BL, Galba E III, ff. 81 *et seq*.
[141] Bodleian Library, Laud MS misc 625, ff. xii/16. This assumes a fifteen arable acre half-virgate/bovate.
[142] Bodleian Library, Laud MS misc 625, ff. ccv/202.
[143] Bodleian Library, Laud MS misc 625, ff. clii/158. Hilton, *Economic Development*, also reproduces the table at p. 21.
[144] Bodleian Library, Laud MS misc 625, ff. ccv/202.

in the rental section of the *Novum Rentale* is again slightly more than in Charyte's table at £4 6s. 11½d.[145] The comparison is not straightforward because the record of rents in the rental section of the *Novum Rentale* is rather casual – a reminder that, despite its name, its main function was not that of a conventional rental. In broad terms however, rents of tenements outside the demesne remained largely unchanged between 1341 and 1477 at 8s. for a half-virgate tenement in 1341 and 18s. for a full virgate tenement in 1477. Thus, rental income was increased by the abandonment of direct demesne management at some point between 1341 and 1477 which led to the receipt of a further five marks or £3 6s. 8d. The rental figures for the Pyn (1254) and Bathe (1407) rentals are less easy to explain in the absence of transcripts of those rentals. The earlier, 1254, figure may represent a period when rents were largely paid as services and the later, 1407, figure may contain an element of rent from letting of the demesne. Overall, the rather casual treatment of rental income probably also reflects the fact that it was relatively insignificant by comparison with the income from spiritualities which is dealt with next.

The *pencio* was a payment reflecting the abbey's ownership of the church at Barkby and remained constant throughout the period. The largest element of the Abbey's Barkby income derived from its right to the greater and lesser tithes. The greater tithe was assessed on grain and seems always to have been taken in kind and delivered to a central barn (*inter grangia*) and presumably for that reason does not appear in table 4.5. The lesser tithe seen here, the tithe of hay and hemp (*feni et canabi*), seems sometimes to have been commuted for cash, as happened in 1341 and 1477, although the widely varying cash yield is difficult to explain.

The receipts from the great tithe and demesne in Barkby are shown in table 4.6 which reproduces Charyte's separate table of receipts in kind from the demesne and greater

[145] Bodleian Library, Laud MS misc 625, ff. xii/16.

tithe.[146] Charyte gives figures for these receipts for the years 1393, 1399, 1401 and 1470 but the reason for his selection of these years is unknown. Further, it is surprising to find that Leicester Abbey continued to receive yields from its Barkby demesne as late as 1470. On the face of it, that suggests it only leased the Barkby demesne between 1470 and 1477, when the *Novum Rentale* confirms that it was leased to William Stevun for five marks.[147] The problems with Charyte's figures increase with closer scrutiny. In particular, the strikingly low demesne yield of 1393 does not seem to be explicable by reference to more general climatic and agrarian conditions: the national statistics for 1393 show grain prices dropping rather low that year, suggesting a good harvest, which had followed a period of very high prices (and correspondingly poor harvests) in 1390/91.[148] Likewise, the national statistics suggest nothing particularly remarkable about any of the subsequent years of Charyte's table. The problem seems to be that Charyte's tabulation of statistical material looks, at first sight, strikingly 'modern', and leads to the expectation that he intended it to demonstrate particular aspects of the Abbey's finances and administration. If so, he failed to explain them and it is very difficult to draw meaningful conclusions from the material he presented. That rather points to the conclusion that his selection was largely random and dictated by the surviving material he could find. If so, that also points to the suggestion advanced previously that it is only safe to draw very general conclusions from Charyte's material.

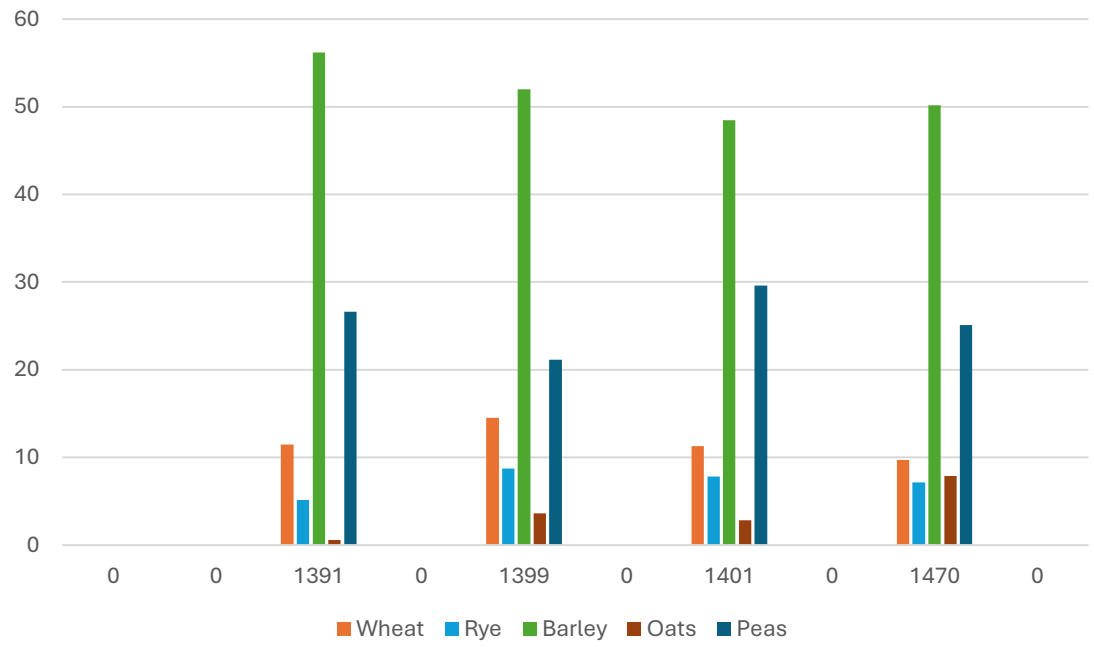
[146] Bodleian Library, Laud MS misc 625, ff. clxviii/165.
[147] Bodleian Library, Laud MS misc 625, ff. xii/16.
[148] Edward Miller (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, vol. III, 1348–1500 (Cambridge, 1991), Appendix D to the Statistical Supplement at pp. 502–5, a position which seems to be reflected in the table of harvest successes on the Winchester manors, Appendix E at pp. 506–7.

Table 4.6 Barkby: Leicester Abbey estate – tithe and demesne yields of grain 1393–1470 (quarters)									
			1393		*1399*		*1401*		*1470*
Wheat	Tithe		17		31.5		13.5		13
	Demesne		2		28.5		36		14
Rye	Tithe		4.5		22		9.5		14
	Demesne		4		14		25		6
Barley	Tithe		66		95		67		90
	Demesne		27		120		146		50
Oats	Tithe		0		15		6.5		18
	Demesne		1		0		6		4
Peas	Tithe		13		45.5		15		40
	Demesne		31		42		115		30
			165.5		413.5		439.5		279
Total tithe yield			100.5		209.0		111.5		175.0
Total demesne yield			65.0		204.5		328.0		104.0
Approximate cash value of tithe and demesne yields[149]			£15 2s.		£43 4s.		£24 15s.		£26 3s.

What can be derived from the figures in table 4.6 is an indication that the ratios in which crops were grown at Barkby remained remarkably unchanged. Barley remained as the main crop, accounting for about 50% of the yield and that typical fodder crops accounted for around 30% of the yield. The former suggests that barley was the staple food crop and the latter probably points to the significance of animal husbandry. Cicely Howell observed a similar pattern at Kibworth Harcourt.[150]

[149] Calculated from the indices at Appendix D of the *Agrarian History*.
[150] Howell, *Land, Family, Inheritance*, p. 96.

Figure 4.5 Barkby: Leicester Abbey estate – grain receipts from tithes and demesne combined, 1393–1470 (percentages)



Moving on from Charyte's problematic statistical evidence, he provides rather more helpful anecdotal evidence. The *Novum Rentale* records that (at Barkby) *solebamus habere unum gregem multonum pascentium in campis ibidem scilicet xx^xx & ultra*.[151] The use of the past tense is probably explained by the Abbey's abandonment of sheep farming on its Barkby demesne at some unknown earlier time. The refence to rams, presumably mature males separated from their mothers and other ewes pastured elsewhere, suggests sheep raising and wool production on a significant scale: Hilton put the Abbey's total flock at 2,000 sheep in the mid-fourteenth century relying on Charyte's implication that this was the peak of the Abbey's wool production.[152] That seems plausible and suggests that about 20% of the Abbey's flock was pastured at Barkby. In a rather confused note, Charyte put the Abbey's income from wool sales in the years around 1353 at between £120 and £200 per annum.[153]

[151] Bodleian Library, Laud MS misc 625, ff. xii/16 and xiiii/18.
[152] Hilton, *Economic Development*, p. 68.
[153] Bodleian Library, Laud MS misc 625, ff. clxiiii/161. Hilton, *Economic Development*, p. 67 puts the figures as £100 to £200.

Presumably, the flock became uneconomic and was abandoned in the later fourteenth or fifteenth century although, frustratingly, Charyte does not make it clear when that happened. It seems unlikely that the tenant of the Barkby demesne in 1477, William Stevun, could have undertaken sheep husbandry on anything like this scale, even if it had been economically attractive.

Charyte also observed in his rental that the *decima garbarum* (presumably the greater tithe) at Barkby should produce £34 per annum but now produced only £26 with the tithes of Barkby Thorpe and Thurmaston.[154] It is not entirely clear how that statement could be reconciled with the figures in table 4.6 (see the bottom line): the cash value of *both* the greater tithe *and* demesne production in 1470 was £26 but the basis for his historic value of £34 is wholly unclear. His statement is probably best interpreted as Charyte's subjective impression that the cash value of the greater tithe was declining.[155] That is consistent with Merton's diminishing income from its Barkby manor and, more generally, with the economic historiography of the mid-fifteenth century depression continuing into the early 1470s.[156]
In summary, Leicester Abbey abandoned direct farming of its Barkby demesne and its flock of sheep there at some point between the 1350 and 1477. That probably resulted in an overall diminution in animal husbandry at Barkby. The yields of the greater and lesser tithes, the Abbey's most valuable possessions at Barkby, were probably under attack (see tables 4.5 and Charyte's observation about the greater tithe above). However, even if yields had diminished by 1477, the basic pattern of arable husbandry at Barkby probably remained largely unchanged (see figure 4.5). A significant reason for its survival may have been the presence in Barkby of three other manors and the configuration of the common arable fields

[154] Bodleian Library, Laud MS misc 625, ff. xii/16.
[155] Application of the indices at Appendix D of the *Agrarian History* to the tithe yields in table 5 gives cash values for the greater tithes in table 5 of £15 2s. in 1393, £43 4s. in 1398, £24 15s. in 1401 and £26 3s. in 1470 so it looks as though Charyte's figure for the value of the greater tithe in 1470 was correct but his figure for its historic value doubtful.
[156] John Hatcher, 'The Great Slump of the Mid-Fifteenth Century' in *Progress and Problems in Medieval England: Essays in Honour of Edward Miller*, eds. Richard Britnell and John Hatcher (Cambridge, 1996) in particular.

with the selions of all four estates randomly distributed across those fields. Any changes to the customary use and cultivation of those fields would have been difficult as it would have required the agreement of both estate owners and, possibly, their tenants.

Merton was also exposed to similar influences and it is notable that its income also dropped significantly to rather more than half its pre-plague income (see figure 4.1): cash liveries dropped from a pre-plague figure hovering around £10 per annum to much more volatile figures in the fifteenth century at around £6 5s. Merton was, however, more successful in retaining its rather regimented half-virgate holdings and, possibly, in ensuring they retained their value (by its concentration on remediation of dilapidations) which probably meant that Merton was in a better position to take advantage of the rising rental market of the early sixteenth century. There are some faint indications in Langley Priory's late-fifteenth-century court rolls that it pursued a similar strategy to Merton: the presentations almost all relate to dilapidation of its tenements.[157]

9. Barkby in the early modern period and after

The dissolution of the monasteries was the major agent of change in early modern Barkby: it resulted in two of the village's four estates coming onto the market. By the mid-seventeenth century both were in the hands of the Pochin family who had inherited the medieval Willoughby manor in the late fifteenth century. The Leicester Abbey estate in Barkby was sold by letters patent in 1544 to a consortium headed by Philip Gunter or Gunton and Richard Stanfelde and then to the Stanfield family who held it until 1633 when it passed to the Pochins.[158] The lands of Langley Priory are less easy to trace but two grants of the former priory's land in Barkby to Robert and Anne Catlynge and to Thomas Farneham and

[157] TNA, SC 2/183/38 and 39.
[158] Nichols, *County of Leicester*, p. 45 (although he is rather evasive about the fate of the monastic land); Farham, *Village Notes*, p. 129.

Thomas Morryson in 1553 probably represent the Priory's manor.[159] Suella Postles reports the Priory's land passing to the Pochins in 1556 which seems plausible.[160]

That left the Pochin family and Merton as the two main estate owners in Barkby. From the mid-seventeenth century the Pochins agitated for the enclosure of the common fields, in the face of resistance from Merton's tenants and, possibly, the College.[161] The reasons for the College's reluctance are revealed by its mid-eighteenth century advice from a barrister, Mr Wright.[162] He pointed out that the tenants had held their land for, in some cases, many generations and probably did not know the origin or tenure of each selion, but would be tempted to exaggerate their freehold holdings at the College's expense in any allotment of their land. That reinforces the impression that there were a number of free tenants at medieval Barkby and that the College's tenants were numbered amongst them although the College's rentals and other medieval records are silent on this subject and, indeed, are rather non-committal about their tenants' servile or free status.

However, in 1779 Barkby was finally enclosed by statute.[163] The actual outcome was the award to the freeholders of over 80% of the land in Barkby, the Pochins receiving almost 54% or 925 acres. Merton's copyholders received just over 19% of the land (just over 327 acres). They held by copyhold for a term of years which, as the award carefully recited, reverted to Merton on expiry.[164] Nathaniel Palmer Johnson, a descendant of the Jonson family, was prominent amongst the freeholders receiving land: he was awarded 121 acres

[159] *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Edward VI,* vol. V, (London, 1926), pp. 208–9 and 305.
[160] Suella Postles, *Barkby*, p. 28.
[161] The sequence of events can be followed in MCR's unindexed bundle entitled 'Barkby Inclosure Papers, 1648–1779' which contains a number of petitions from the tenants against enclosure and alleging underhand behaviour by the College's bailiffs, the Johnson family.
[162] MCR, Barkby Inclosure Papers, 1648–1779', opinion marked on the backsheet 'Mr Wright's Opinion on the Barkby Inclosures', undated.
[163] See MCR, 'Barkby Inclosure Papers, 1648–1779', letters from William Pochin to the College of 8 January and 16 February 1760 demonstrate the College's wary approach to enclosure and MCR, 5.21 for the Enclosure Act award of 1779. The accompanying map appears in two slightly different versions, one at MCR, unindexed, and another at ROLLR, DG 7/MA/19/1.
[164] MCR, 5.21.

for his freehold, seventy-five acres for his leasehold land held from Merton and fifteen-and-a-half acres for his copyhold, also held from Merton.

The enclosure award swept away the pre-existing landscape of common fields and creeping old enclosures excepting only the village house tenements and two small 'ancient' enclosures. In fact, and as the 1635 map demonstrated (map 6), there had been quite extensive enclosure in Barkby, concentrated at the eastern and western extremities of the common field system. It seems likely that process had continued after 1635 but its extent is uncertain.

10. Conclusion

This chapter has largely concerned lordly management of their estates rather than the manorial tenants and their relations with one another and with their lords. The reason is that, in respect of the two Barkby estates from which any significant volume of archival material survives, both the Merton manor from the outset of Merton's ownership, and the Leicester Abbey estate from the point the demesne was let out at farm, were essentially rent-producing assets. No doubt this chapter would have looked very different if the court rolls of Leicester Abbey's Thurmaston view of frankpledge had survived. Instead, what survives is, essentially, management material, of which Merton's run of bailiffs' accounts is the best example. That inevitably influences the outcome of any examination of Barkby but, nevertheless, provides an insight into the management of a manor by a rentier lord.

Cecily Howell described the relationship of Merton and its tenants at Kibworth Harcourt as one of 'partnership' which degenerated into 'paternalism' in the seventeenth century.[165] Both Barkby and Kibworth Harcourt were managed by Merton on similar lines but it is difficult to characterise Merton's management of Barkby as one of 'partnership' if that suggests that

[165] Cecily Howell, *Land, Family, Inheritance*, p. 37.

Merton and its tenants were, in any sense, *equal* partners. The overall impression, however, is that Merton's approach to Barkby did change with the passage of time. Initially, in the thirteenth century, it manifested itself as a determined attempt by Merton to assert its customary rights associated with the servile status of its tenants, such as merchet. It is difficult to be sure how that developed in the first half of the fourteenth century in the absence of most of the manorial court rolls for that period. As has been described, Merton responded quite rapidly and decisively to the first wave of the Black Death by rearranging its management of its estate, or at any rate its more remote estate, with a re-allocation of its expenditure. That re-allocation, unsurprisingly, recognised that Kibworth Harcourt was far more valuable to Merton than Barkby, with the result that, surprisingly, the College was actually able to increase its returns from Kibworth Harcourt by a small margin and at least to contain any reduction in the returns from Barkby.

The most significant development, in terms of manorial management, was Merton's introduction of the *homagium* in the later fourteenth century. That might be interpreted as indicating a 'partnership' between the College and its tenants. However, it seems more likely that it represented a recognition by the College that, as an absentee rentier landlord, it depended on a degree of local co-operation which was best achieved by an association with the body of tenants rather than with single individuals. As can be seen in the tenants' anti-enclosure petitions of the seventeenth and eighteenth century, reliance on individuals such as the Johnson family led to allegations of underhand behaviour on the part of those individuals.[166] Merton probably wanted to avoid involvement in such local squabbles so that reliance on a group of tenants was probably a preferable option.

That of course gives rise to the question why Merton seems to have abandoned the *homagium* in favour of its close association with the Johnson family in the fifteenth century

[166] MCR, 'Barkby Inclosure Papers, 1648–1779' contains numerous examples.

and beyond. The reason was probably that, with an increasingly rapid turnover of tenants of the half-virgate holdings, the manorial court lost power and significance and the *homagium* ceased to be capable of discharging its functions of supervising and managing the manor. The position of Leicester Abbey was rather different because it was actively involved in demesne farming in the period before the Black Death and for some time thereafter (how long is unclear). However, that involvement had ceased by 1477 when William Charyte started work on the *Novum Rentale*.[167] Charyte's motivation for the production of this substantial work of reference was, at least in part, his realisation that the abandonment of demesne farming meant that many of the rights associated with the abbey's possessions would be forgotten and lost. At Barkby, those rights were particularly associated with the management of meadows and pasture. These were complex and involved the sharing of some of the river meadows with Thurmaston. Elsewhere, in the Northings, those rights involved complicated arrangements for their opening and closing and grazing and mowing at specific times of the year. Charyte was careful to summarise them in the list of gifts within the *Novum Rentale* but referred the reader to the main cartulary, presumably the Chartwary, for further details. Thus, the rationale for Charyte's work was not purely antiquarian but rested on what appeared to him to be practical considerations related to recording the Abbey's rights which might otherwise be lost or forgotten.

Unlike Merton, the Abbey was less able to maintain the integrity of its tenements. There is evidence that even before 1341 its larger virgate tenements in Barkby had started to break up. The reasons for that are probably numerous. First, Leicester Abbey's most valuable rights in Barkby were its tithes and the 157 acres of glebe and its rental income was less important. Secondly, Leicester Abbey's estate seems to have been managed on much more traditional lines than Merton's manor with lingering vestiges of service tenures and rents in

[167] Bodleian Library, Laud MS misc 625, ff. clii/148 for the date for the *Novum Rentale* of 1477 although according to a slip sewn in at ff. 11 he continued work on it until he was eighty years old in 1502.

kind that may have made its tenements less attractive to prospective tenants. Thirdly, in that context, Leicester Abbey's very proximity and local power and influence may have made it a less attractive manorial lord in the eyes of prospective tenants. Finally, Merton's carefully maintained half-virgate tenements may have been more attractive for agrarian or commercial reasons than Leicester Abbey's more fragmented holdings.

The underlying problem faced by both Merton and Leicester Abbey in the fifteenth century was the abundant supply of land and the shortage of tenants able or willing to take on tenancies. This problem afflicted rentier owners such as Merton and Leicester Abbey in particular because there was little they could do to remedy the problem. Merton had probably done as much as it could in terms of estate administration in the late fourteenth century but the problem, ultimately attributable to the complex consequences of the Black Death, continued into the fifteenth century and had, seemingly, reached the point where it could no longer be resisted. By contrast, the owners of favourably situated smaller manors who continued demesne farming had greater scope for manoeuvre in production for the market which the rentier lord did not enjoy.[168] The most the rentier could do was buckle down and hope for better times. Merton probably had the advantage of the early abandonment of direct demesne management before its purchase of the manor and (probably) the apportionment of the demesne amongst its tenants. Although Merton could not avoid a reduction in its income in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, it was probably a more attractive landlord for prospective tenants than the more ponderous and traditional Leicester Abbey although, as has been said, the Abbey was less dependent on its rental income and more dependent on, in particular, its tithe income. Hilton rather suggests

[168] See for example Andrew Watkins, 'Landowners and their Estates in the Forest of Arden in the Fifteenth Century', *Agricultural History Review* 45.1 (1997), pp. 18–33 and Christopher Dyer, 'A small landowner in the fifteenth century', *Midland History* 1.3 (1972), pp. 1–14.

that his comparator Leicestershire estate owner, the smaller Owston Priory, was more adaptable and successful.[169]

In all of these developments, Merton's yeomen and husbandmen seem an unlikely advance guard for the 'great transition' in Barkby and it is difficult to see any other indication of its advent until after the Pochins consolidated their grip on Barkby in the mid-seventeenth century. It is not clear how the Pochins farmed their newly expanded estate but it seems to have involved a combination of direct farming with some tenanted farms – in other words, the introduction of wage labour, contractual farm tenancies, with a limited, degree of enclosure of the common fields.

In summary, the period from 1350 to 1500 can be seen as one in which rentier landlords initially adapted to the demographic disaster of the Black death and then, in the fifteenth century, merely survived its longer term consequences. From William Charyte's perspective, an older world was disappearing from view and in which the new one held no certainties.

[169] Hilton, *Economic Development*, p. 15–16. His overall thesis seems to have been that medium-sized estates (such as Owston Abbey) found it easier to manage a transition from labour services to wage-labour than large estates (such as Leicester Abbey).

Chapter 5

Catesby

1. Topography, archival material and historiography

Topography

The modern parish of Catesby is on relatively high ground in the west of Northamptonshire on the Warwickshire border (see map 10). The east and south of the parish is ringed by hills, Steppington, Sharman's and Arbury Hills, rising to just over 700 feet. Most of the parish lies under these hills on around the 400-foot contour although the land rises to the north, around the deserted medieval village of Newbold, to around 500 feet. More hills lie to the west, outside the parish boundary, before the land declines, eventually, to the Warwickshire felden.

The River Leam, a tributary of the Avon, rises just to the west of the parish and forms part of its western boundary before swinging eastward separating Upper and Lower Catesby from Newbold by a valley, the floor of which was known as the 'Gose medow' in the middle ages. Much of the parish is heavy and rather intractable clay but with some lower-lying areas of lighter loam. The heavy clay probably accounts for the numerous ponds in the lower parts of the parish.

The modern hamlets of Upper and Lower Catesby lie roughly in the middle of the modern parish: Lower Catesby on a bend of the Leam where it forms the western boundary of the parish and Upper Catesby about half a mile to the east on rather higher ground. The surrounding villages are Staverton, to the north-east, Badby to the east, with Helidon to the south-west, all at a distance of about a mile from Upper Catesby.

In the middle ages, the main settlements were the Priory at Lower Catesby with an adjoining service settlement known as 'Shopes'. Upper Catesby formed the agrarian centre with the messuages of the dozen or so half-virgators. The manor was owned by the Priory of Catesby, a Cistercian nunnery, and comprised just over 1,200 acres. It was roughly coterminous with the modern parish. The Priory also owned land in Staverton and Hellidon which was administered as part of the manor of Catesby throughout the later middle ages. Newbold was a separate settlement, a now-deserted medieval village, and a sub-manor of about 570 acres.

Today, Catesby feels remote with a population probably less than that of the later middle ages. The Gough map of circa 1390–1410 shows the settlement identified as Catesby at the end of the route running north from Banbury and Oxford with no connecting routes to the west.[1] That was certainly one of the Priory's main routes of communication leading to the Thames valley although many of the Priory's purchases in the fifteenth century were made at Stratford-upon-Avon and Warwick, to the west. As will be shown, the population of Catesby declined significantly between 1350 and 1500. By the time of the dissolution of Catesby Priory in 1536, the manor was extensively enclosed, probably because conversion to sheep walks was the only use which could be made of arable land with insufficient human resources for cultivation. Following the sale of the Priory and its lands to an emergent gentry family, the Onleys, the Priory itself was probably partially demolished, and a house built on the site, which was demolished in 1861 along with almost all the buildings on the Priory site. A new house was then built on higher ground between Lower and Upper Catesby. In the eighteenth century, Bridges described the estate as 'all old enclosure' so that parliamentary enclosure was unnecessary.[2] The landscape of today is thus the result of late medieval and early modern enclosure and remains predominantly pasture.

[1] https://goughmap.uk/contact.php The editors of the website have identified Catesby which can be located by searching against that name.
[2] John Bridges, *The History and Antiquities of Northamptonshire* (Oxford, 1782), p. 27.

Archival material

The surviving archives of Catesby Priory are held by TNA and, presumably, represent the material collected and taken away by the commissioners at the dissolution. The manorial court rolls run from 1313 to 1431.[3] In general, their survival seems to be patchy until 1371 to 1400 when there is a reasonably complete run of rolls. After 1400, they are, again, rather patchy until 1431 when the main run ceases. After that, there are sparse surviving court rolls from 1461, the last two decades of the fifteenth century (in poor condition) and several from 1534, two years before the dissolution of the Priory.

There is a series of rentals with varying amounts of detail and in variable condition dating from 1339, 1399, 1428/29 (probably), a run from 1483 to 1492 and one undated from around the late fifteenth century.[4] There are also some charters which document the bequests received by the Priory and its land purchases.[5] Finally, there is a series of detailed accounts from the first half of the fifteenth century although, as will be seen, they present problems.[6] There is also the prioress's account book for the years 1433 to 1436 which sheds further light on the financial management of the Priory.[7] In short, there is relatively good survival of fourteenth century material but a significant survival of fifteenth century material, particularly the Priory's accounts for the first half of the century. There is a miscellaneous selection of documents dealing with the later fifteenth century and the dissolution of the Priory which will be dealt with in section 5 of this chapter.

The surviving early modern and modern material is limited and scattered. Letters patent recite the estate sold to the Onley family in 1537.[8] NAS holds a field map and terrier of

[3] TNA, SC 2/195/1-10 and see Bibliography, table 3.
[4] TNA, SC 11/506-514 (1339, 1399 and 1483–1492), SC 11/515 (date uncertain) and SC 12/3/29 (undated but probably dating from 1428/29).
[5] The charters are now found randomly distributed at TNA across the E series.
[6] TNA, SC 6/946/16-26 and SC 6/947/1-5.
[7] TNA, SC 6/1257/1.
[8] TNA, C 66/671, mm. 11.

1638 (presumably prepared for the Onley family), and, finally, some photographs taken in 1861 immediately before the demolition of the gentry house of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries which may depict some of the ancillary barns and other buildings of the Priory.[9]

Historiography

The two antiquarian histories of Northamptonshire by Bridges and Baker, writing in the early and late eighteenth century respectively, provide significant material about the Priory, the latter printing in translation the entirety of the first of the series of fifteenth century Priory accounts for the year 1414/15.[10] Baker noted that Catesby was a manor of 'old enclosure' but, rather surprisingly, also said that it was extremely fertile and could be cultivated continuously without a fallow season. This observation seems to be traceable to an earlier work, Morton's *Natural History of Northamptonshire*.[11]

The Priory has attracted the attention of antiquarians and historians: its basic history can be found in the *Victoria County History*.[12] It also provided some material, particularly that relating to the 1442 visitation by the bishop of Lincoln, William Alnwick, for Eileen Power's *Medieval English Nunneries* (Cambridge, 1922). The identity of the prioresses and nuns, and their management of the Priory and the manorial demesne at Catesby will be considered further in the final section of this chapter.

The most significant modern work on Catesby is found in two articles by Jane Laughton and Brian Giggins adopting an interdisciplinary approach to the surviving archival material and

[9] NAS, map 6388 (the 1638 field map), NAS, XYZ/1346 (the 1638 terrier), D/5668 (the 1849 sales particulars), and NAS, 48/15-23 (the 1861 photographs).
[10] John Bridges, *Northamptonshire*, Catesby at pp. 27–30 and Newbold, p. 31; George Baker, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Northampton* (London, 1822–30), pp. 276–92, Newbold p. 293 and the Catesby Priory 1413/14 accounts at pp. 278–83.
[11] John Morton, *The Natural history of Northamptonshire* (London, 1712).
[12] 'Houses of Cistercian nuns: The Priory of Catesby', in *A History of the County of Northampton*: vol. II, ed. R. M. Serjeantson and W. R. D. Adkins (London, 1906).

the archaeological remains of the Priory at Catesby.[13] Laughton and Giggins' main interest was the site of the medieval Priory and its reconstruction from both manuscript and archaeological sources, but they also did much work on the agrarian history and management of the manor by the prioresses. This chapter differs from some of their conclusions about the agrarian arrangements of the Priory, but the main body of their work on the Priory itself and its environs is extremely helpful.

Jane Laughton returned to Catesby with a further article about the Priory's transactions in local markets: Daventry and Northampton to the east for everyday necessities and more sophisticated goods such as vellum respectively and, in particular, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwick and Coventry to the west for building materials and sales and purchases of stock and wool.[14] Mike Thornton has also looked at the important role of the messor or hayward at Catesby and elsewhere, an office that takes on some importance in connection with trespasses with animals which is dealt with below.[15]

Another recent article by David H. Williams deals with the ecclesiastical organisation of the Priory, its relationship with the outside world and the dissolution.[16] This chapter departs from one of David H. Williams' conclusions, that the prioress played little part in the day to day management of the demesne farm, for reasons given below.

In this chapter, section 2 (Domesday Book and after) deals with Catesby after Domesday and section 3 (Catesby in the fourteenth century) addresses both the field system and the

[13] Jane Laughton, 'Catesby in the Middle Ages: an interdisciplinary study', *Northamptonshire Past & Present*, 54 (2001), pp. 7–32 and Brian L. Giggins and Jane Laughton, 'Catesby: an interdisciplinary study, part II', *Northamptonshire Past & Present*, 56 (2003), pp. 36–55.
[14] Jane Laughton, 'Catesby Priory as Consumer in the First Half of the Fifteenth Century' in Sylvia Pinches, Maggie Whalley and David Postles (eds.), *The Market Place and the Place of the Market* (Leicester, 2004), pp. 34–43.
[15] Mike Thornton, 'Lord's Man or Common Servant? The Role, Status and Allegiance of Village Haywards in Fifteenth-century Northamptonshire' in Sam Turner and Bob Silvester (eds.), *Life in Medieval Landscapes: People and Places in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 219–234.
[16] David H. Williams, 'Catesby Priory, Northamptonshire: Its Nuns and Wider Community', *Citeaux – CommentariiCcistercienses*, 68 (2017), pp. 73–103.

evidence derived from the manorial documents before and after the Black Death. That provides the background for section 4 which deals with Catesby in the first half of the fifteenth century including, in particular, the evidence derived from the accounts of that period and the light they shed on the management of the manor by the Priory and the Priory's internal economics. Finally, section 5 deals with the scant evidence from the second half of the fifteenth century and the more substantial evidence pre-dating and arising from the dissolution, a period in which the parish took on much of the form and field pattern seen today.

2. Domesday Book and after

Domesday Book records that Sasfrid held four hides in Catesby from William Peverel.[17] Later commentators have assumed that Sasfrid or Saxfrith was the progenitor of the de Esseby family who are credited with the foundation of Catesby Priory, a Cistercian nunnery, in about 1175.[18] That seems plausible because Domesday Book also recites that Sasfrid held land from William Peverel in Aceshille in Northamptonshire, Ashby Magna in Leicestershire, Empingham in Rutland and Old Basford in Nottinghamshire.[19] The churches and associated land in Ashby Magna and Basford formed part of the de Esseby family's endowment of Catesby Priory along with Catesby itself.[20] The Priory's possessions in the early fifteenth century, and the income it derived from them, are set out in appendix 5.

[17] TNA, E 31/2/2/827. Translation Phillimore edition, *Domesday Book, 21 Northamptonshire*, Frank and Caroline Thorn (eds.) (Chichester, 1979), 35.10 .
[18] *VCH, Northants* II, p.121 and K. S. B. Keats-Rohan, *Domesday People: A Prosopography of Persons Occurring in English Documents, 1066-1166*, vol. I, (Woodbridge, 1999), p. 417 where Sasfrid is stated to have been the father of Philip de Essebi.
[19] PASE (Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England) database, https://pase.ac.uk/domesday/person/49562/
[20] Sir William Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, vol. 4, (London, 1846) (online at https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uiug.30112109884426&seq=7 (30 March 2026), p. 637 quoting the confirmatory charter of Henry III, Cart. 57 Hen III m. 25. It appears to be calendared at *Calendar of the Charter Rolls*, vol. I (London, 1903), p. 372.

Domesday Book went on to record that there was land for eight ploughs in Catesby with two in the demesne with two slaves and a female slave. Then there were seventeen villeins, a priest and four bordars with six ploughs. There were two mills rendering 16d. and four acres of meadow. A knight held one hide and had two ploughs – presumably in addition to the four hides mentioned previously. The entire holding was worth 40s. in 1066 and £4 in 1086. In 1066 Gytha had held it freely.

The four hides suggest a total arable of 480 acres if the conventional Domesday hide was 120 acres. If so, the 480 acres was broken down into eight ploughlands (the eight ploughs referred to above) of sixty acres arable (or sixteen half-virgates of thirty acres arable). That tallies quite well with the Priory's early rentals which recorded two virgate and eleven half-virgate holdings in 1339 (the equivalent of fifteen half-virgates), four virgates and eight half-virgate holdings in 1399 (the equivalent of sixteen half-virgates) and two virgate and ten half-virgate holdings in 1428/9 (the equivalent of fourteen half-virgates). All three rentals also recorded other tenements of various sizes and omitted the demesne holding, so the equivalence is only approximate and probably masks the colonisation of additional arable land in the three centuries after 1086. As will be seen, there are also suggestions that the Catesby virgate comprised an unusually large fifty or sixty acres of arable.
The knight's holding of a hide may refer to Newbold. The de la More and later the Newnam families held it from the prioress. Thus, a memorandum of 23 October 1361 attached to the court rolls recorded that:

> *Thomas de la More filius & heres Thome de la More militis [dominus] de Newbolde venit ad/ Catesby in ecclesiam Sancti Edmundi coram domina Iohanna Branneber tunc Priorissa domina Iohanna Schepey subpriorissa domina Peronella/ [sacartisste], Elizabethe Breton & pluribus de [conventa], et coram Symone de Fleccenoe Iohanne Warde Symone [Orburgher] &/ aliis & coram quibus dictus Thomas fecit omagium*

eidem Priorissa pro manerio suo de Newbold quod de ipsa tenet pro/ talis serviciis & inde satisfecit prout eius antecessores fecerunt.[21]

Elsewhere, the de la More family were recorded as holding Newbold *per servicia militaria* which, again, suggests they were the descendants or successors of the knight referred to in Domesday Book.[22]

The memorandum also sheds some light on the organisation of the Priory. One of the early prioresses, Margaret Rich (elected 1245, died 1257) was the sister of St Edmund, the canonised archbishop of Canterbury.[23] Margaret and her sister, Alice, had become nuns at the Priory and, on the death of Edmund, the Priory received from him the gift of a cloak (a 'camlet') and a silver tablet with sculptures of the Blessed Virgin Mary nursing the infant Jesus and other religious iconography. These items seem to have formed the basis for a collection of relics which attracted pilgrims to the Priory. That explains the dedication of the Priory church to St Edmund and the presence in Catesby of a *Pulgrymys Wey*, possibly the modern footpath between Upper and Lower Catesby.[24]

The men present when Thomas de la More made his homage to the prioress in 1361 may have been canons of the Priory who had a hall within the Priory precincts. The canons' hall features on several occasions in the fifteenth century accounts for 1452/3 and 1453/4.[25] There are also several references to a *dominus*, who was described as a chaplain: Dominus William Howles in 1383 and Dominus John Bradwelle in 1392.[26] An even more shadowy figure, the *magister* of Catesby, appears un-named on two occasions as a pledge provider in

[21] TNA, SC 2/195/3 m. 3.
[22] TNA, SC 2/195/5 m. 5.
[23] *VCH Northamptonshire II,* pp. 121–5.
[24] TNA, SC 2/195/4 m. 3 for instance.
[25] TNA, SC 6/947/3 and 1.
[26] TNA, SC 2/195/4 m. 6 and SC 2/195/5 m. 4.

1389 and 1390.[27] The term is capable of a number of different interpretations so it is unhelpful in determining his specific role.[28] On the whole, these male presences are fleeting and, as will be explained below, it seems likely that the prioress was responsible for the day to day running of the Priory's demesne farm.

3. Catesby in the fourteenth century

The Priory and its settlements

By the early fourteenth century the manor of Catesby comprised three settlements: Upper Catesby, Lower Catesby and Newbold. The following description is based on the rather confused account in the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments survey and Laughton and Giggins' more cogent description and observations of the parish as it still appears today (2025).[29]

Upper Catesby or *Catesbe Superiora* was the location of the messuages of the fourteen or so virgate and half-virgate holders and several cottage tenements. It was, essentially, an agrarian settlement with its own church (now ruined). Some traces of the medieval village remain, and the road leading to the ruins of the church probably follows the course of the medieval spinal road through the centre of the village with messuages and cottages on either side.

Lower Catesby was almost invariably described as 'Shopes' (there were various spellings but this name will be used in the remainder of this chapter) and appears in the earliest court rolls of the 1310s and 1320s as *selda* (booths or shops).[30] It probably originated as a service settlement to the Priory (providing artisanal services) and as the location of the

[27] TNA, SC 2/195/5 mm. 1 and 2.
[28] See DMLB at https://clt-brepolis-net.ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/dmlbs/pages/QuickSearch.aspx.
[29] RCHM, *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the County of Northampton, vol. III Archaeological Sites in North-West Northamptonshire* (London, 1981) pp. 37–43, Laughton, *Catesby, part I* and Giggins and Laughton, *Catesby, part II*.
[30] TNA, SC 2/195/1 m. 2 (court, 06.05.1323).

market and fair for which Henry III had granted charters to the prioress in 1246 and 1248 respectively.[31] The 1379 poll tax records show that Catesby had a number of higher rate tax payers: William Smith, a merchant (6s. 8d.), four *scissores* (cloth cutters, 6d. each), a butcher (12d.), a *sutor* (shoe maker, 6d.), two *scherman* (presumably involved in cloth making, 6d. and 12d.) and two *latorni* (possibly carriers, 6d. each).[32] It seems likely they lived in Shopes and their presence suggests continuing commercial activity there. However, the fifteenth century accounts (from 1414 onwards) make no reference to market tolls or receipts so it seems likely the market and fair had disappeared by then.

Shopes lay just to the north of the Priory complex. All its tenants held cottage holdings, presumably accompanied by some land in the common fields and grazing rights on the common grazing. Some traces of the abbey and village remain although it is difficult to distinguish the former from the remains of the early modern house and its gardens. Its main features today are a series of ponds, conventionally described as fish ponds but possibly used for retting flax for linen production, a small nineteenth century church, and two cottages, containing the gable wall of an earlier building. That is plausibly identified by Laughton and Giggins as the west gable wall of 'St Edmund's hall', the Priory guesthouse which, according to the accounts for that year, was rebuilt in 1452/3.[33] The nineteenth century church incorporates some earlier material, including a series of blank arches which Laughton and Giggins identify as taken from either the canons' chapel or, more probably, the nuns' church.

Newbold, just over half a mile to the north of the Priory, Shopes and Upper Catesby, lay on the north side of the Leam valley facing south. It was largely or completely deserted by the end of the middle ages and traces of the village (house platforms and the site of a larger

[31] See the gazetteer of markets and fairs to 1516 at https://archives.history.ac.uk/gazetteer/nhants.html#Cat.
[32] Carolyn C .Fenwick, *The Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381*, *part 2* (Oxford, 2001), p. 230.
[33] TNA, SC 6/946/24.

building, possibly a manor house) were largely obliterated by ploughing in 1967, although earlier aerial photographs indicate the extent and nature of the remains which survived until then.[34]

The field system of Catesby and land holdings

The Domesday attribution to Catesby of eight large ploughlands or virgates of sixty acres or sixteen half-virgate holdings of thirty acres has already been noted. It is less clear how the common field system was organised because the records of land transactions seldom identify parcels of arable land by reference to the field in which they lay: the usual description is by reference to the furlong where they lay. On the rare occasions on which specific fields are mentioned, their names vary: on one occasion, reference is made to a south and a north field and, on two occasions, to an east and a south field.[35] However, none of these transactions refer to holdings in more than two fields, so it seems possible that a two-field system operated in Catesby, but the evidence is uncertain.

The reconstructed distribution of land in Catesby shown in table 5.1. This is based on the assumption that the land held by the manorial tenants in Catesby amounted to two virgates of sixty acres each and eleven half-virgate holdings of thirty acres each (as in the 1339 rental).[36] This calculation does not make any allowance for free land and, as will be seen, one of the two virgates was probably free. Alternatively, there was an additional free sixty-acre virgate which should be added to the calculation in table 5.1 giving a total acreage of 1,190 acres. The figures for the demesne are taken from the accounts for 1415/16 which showed 310 acres sown that year (in fact, the highest acreage in any of the fifteenth century accounts) and assume a two-field system in Catesby.[37]

[34] English Heritage, RAF/CPE/UK/1994, frames 1155–1282 (13 April 1947) is the best series of photographs showing the area in driven or part thawed snow.
[35] TNA, SC 2/195/2 m. 4; SC 2/195/4 m. 3; SC 2/195/9 m. 2.
[36] TNA, SC 11/506.
[37] TNA, SC 6/946/17.

The total acreage of Catesby (excluding Newbold) given by the 1638 terrier was 1,220 acres and John Bridge's estimate in the late eighteenth century was 1,330 acres.[38] The extent of the meadow and pasture is uncertain but, as will appear below, may have been limited.

Table 5.1 Catesby: distribution of land	
Tenanted land	*acres*
2 virgates @ 60 acres each	120
11 half-virgates @ 30 acres each	330
Cottages: say 30 @ 2 acres each	60
Demesne	
Demesne sown in 1415	310
Demesne fallow in 1415	310
	1,130

This picture of extensive arable combined with the modest availability of pasture is borne out by aerial photographs dating from the 1940s showing ridge and furrow covering most of the manor but with some areas unridged (see map 13).[39] The unridged areas were, presumably, meadow, closes and common pasture although in some areas the ridges may have been ploughed out or obliterated in modern times. The meadow mostly bordered the Leam but was supplemented by meadow at 'Arlychbrooke', placed by Loughton and Giggins as bordering a brook immediately to the north of Upper Catesby, and which the aerial photographs show as unridged. The closes were enclosures (*clausure*) located around the Priory itself and used for animal husbandry and pasture. The common pasture known as the 'Grove' was at the extreme south-east corner of the manor on Sharman's Hill.

Documentary evidence of the *clausure* around the Priory comes from a charter of 1307 made by Adam de Bradewelle confirming his gift to the Priory of two *clausure*, known as the Wellesiche (described as lying *subtus Catesby*) and the Newbiggenge, (described as lying

[38] NAS, XYZ 1346; Baker, *Northampton*, p. 276.
[39] Historic England, RAF/CPE/UK/1994 1155–1282 (13 April 1947).

retro fabricam quondam Nicholai Fabri placing it close to Shopes).[40] The charter also confirmed Adam's abandonment of any right of way with animals (*communicandi cum averiis*) which suggests that the *clausura* were pasture. The Newbiggenge is identifiable in the 1638 field map and terrier as an enclosure of about eleven acres called the Lower Bigin (often the 'Netherbigging') next to the remains of Shopes and just to the north of the Priory. The Wellesiche is less easy to identify but probably lay to the east of the Priory and 'below' Upper Catesby. The 1940s aerial photographs show rather faint traces of ridge and furrow in this area (unlike other parts of Catesby where they are well defined) which may indicate that some parts of Catesby, such as this, oscillated between arable and pasture (a theme that will be followed up in the fifteenth century).

The land market in Catesby was reasonably active during the fourteenth century. The manorial court rolls record about 200 land transfers during the century from the inception of the roll series in 1313 until the end of the century.[41] During that period, the manorial court rolls survive for about forty-two years which suggests an average of about 4.8 transfers per annum. A small number of these transactions, about fifteen (or 7.5%), related to land in either the further flung possessions of the Priory or, more usually, in Hellidon or Staverton. They were both villages adjoining Catesby where the Priory's land seems always to have been dealt with in the Catesby court. In about forty-four cases (22%) the location of the land cannot be identified but sixty-five cases (32.5%) related to tenements in Upper Catesby and seventy-six (38%) to tenements in Shopes. This bears out the impression that cot holdings in Shopes changed hands slightly more frequently than the larger virgate and half-virgate holdings of Upper Catesby. That would be consistent with the presence of a more mobile, possibly artisan, population in Shopes. There is, however, no sign of the active

[40] TNA, E236/722.
[41] For the total transactions recorded in *all* the surviving court rolls, see table 6.5.

market in small parcels of agricultural land either before or after the Black Death which characterised many midland manors of the period.[42]

The status of the Priory's tenants

The best starting point for an examination of the status of the Priory's tenants is a custumal incorporated in the manorial court rolls on the same membrane as the record of a court held on 4 March 1412.[43] For the reason given below, it is almost certainly a copy of an earlier document made at least twenty years earlier. As will be seen, it sets out the customary tenants' obligations as the manorial officials hoped or wanted them to be rather than as they actually were. The custumal runs to just three paragraphs. The first two deal with the obligations of the sole free tenant and of the *nativi* of Upper Catesby respectively and the third paragraph deals with the obligations of the *tenentes* of Shopes.

Upper Catesby is recorded as having only one free tenant, John de Warde, who held one of the two full virgates in Catesby for which he owed fealty (*fidelitatem*) and suit of court *de tribus in tres* to the prioress. He and his heirs were liable to pay heriot and he paid an annual rent of 10s. An earlier court roll for 23 September 1393 records the death of John Warde.[44] Thus, it seems clear that what was copied into the rolls in 1412 was taken from a historical document at least twenty years old.

The 1412 court roll then goes on to deal with the obligations of the *nativi* of Catesby (as distinct from John Warde, the only free tenant). Like John Warde, they owed suit of court *de*

[42] The literature on the peasant land market in the midlands starts with C. N. L. Brooke and M. M. Postan (eds.) *Carte Nativorum: a Peterborough Abbey Cartulary of the Fourteenth Century*, (Oxford, 1960), extends through *The Peasant Land Market in Medieval England*, P. D. A. Harvey (ed.) (Oxford, 1984) and is summarised in Mark Bailey, *After the Black Death: Economy, Society and the Law in Fourteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 2021), pp. 26–32. See also H.E. Hallam (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, II, 1042-1350*, pp. 599, 670-3, Edward Miller (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, III, 1348-1500*, pp. 562-8 and Jane Whittle, 'Individualism and the Family-Land Bond: A Reassessment of Land Transfer Patterns among the English Peasantry c.1270-1580', *Past & Present* 160 (1998) pp. 25-63.
[43] TNA, SC 2/195/6, m.12.
[44] TNA, SC 2/195/5 m. 5.

tribus in tres and heriot. Their annual labour duties were mowing in the meadow for one day (without lifting the hay), reaping the prioress's grain for one day and carrying her grain for one day. In each case, each service was to be performed *cum uno homine* and so amounted to labour service of two man-days on each day (or six man-days in total per tenant) and the mowing and carrying duties were carried out *ad sumptum domine priorisse*. This probably indicates that those performing boon works were fed by the prioress. The sons and daughters of the *nativi* were not to marry without the licence of the prioress nor were sons to take orders (which is, presumably, what was meant by the expression *nec ponent filios ad literas*) without the prioress's licence. They were liable to a fine of 4d. if they sold their oxen or horses without the prioress's licence. They were obliged to pay their rent by four equal instalments at the feasts of St Michael, the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Pentecost and St Peter *ad vincula*. Finally, if their daughters were *corrupta*, they were liable for merchet (which seems to be the intended extension of *'mch'*) at the will of the prioress.

The duties of the *tenentes* of Shopes were slightly different: their labour service was reaping for a single day in autumn, again with one man (so two man-days in total per tenant), again *ad sumptum domine*. They were liable for a heriot of a single animal if they possessed one. They were required to grind their grain at the prioress's mill and to bake their bread in the communal oven (presumably in Shopes). They were obliged to pay suit of court *de tribus in tres* and not to sell anything from their tenements or withhold rent without the prioress's licence. And they were required to pay rent by two equal annual instalments at the feasts of St Michael and the Annunciation.

These provisions have been set out at length because they make it clear that there were, in the minds of the manorial administrators, differences between the tenure of the *nativi* of Upper Catesby and of the *tenentes*, sometimes referred to in the manorial court rolls as the

liberi tenentes, of Shopes.[45] Thus, the labour duties in the two communities were different, their heriot obligations may have been slightly different, there were minor differences in their other obligations (mill suit and baking in the communal oven in Shopes; marriage licences in Upper Catesby) and even the days on which they paid the rent. That distinction can be traced in the court rolls: for instance, a 1323 order pointedly compelled the men (*homines*) of Shopes and the *villani* of Catesby to mill their grain at the manorial mill.[46] The differences are, however, quite striking because the two communities were barely more than half a mile apart. The overall impression, however, is that despite the similarities in the terms of their tenure, the *nativi* of Upper Catesby were not free whereas the *tenentes* of Shopes enjoyed a free tenure. Their tenements were small, probably around two acres, and examples of transfers of tenements in Shopes can be found in appendix 7 (nos. 17, 18, 21 and 22), which can be contrasted with the transfers of the usually much larger virgate or half-virgate tenements in Upper Catesby (nos. 15, 16, 19, 23 and 24).

The relatively light labour services specified in the custumal are slightly different from those recorded in the land transactions in the court rolls. Those records are quite brief but almost always include a recital of the labour service owed by the incoming tenant. In almost every case, the labour duty recorded there, even before 1349, was no more than one day's labour, almost invariably mowing, in autumn. These differences between the custumal and the land transactions may be simply a clerical peculiarity, but the lack of precision suggests that labour services were not, in fact, taken very seriously. There were relatively rare occasions when tenants were fined for failing to perform their autumnal services, usually 3d. or 4d., but they die away completely in the fifteenth century.[47]

[45] TNA, SC 2/95/6 m.3 for an example of one amongst many references to *liberi tenentes*.
[46] TNA, SC 2/.195/1 m. 2.
[47] For example, TNA, SC 2/195/4 m. 2 (1379, fines of 3d. each); SC 2/195/4 m. 8 (1379, fines of 3d.); SC 2/195/5 m. 6 (1394, fines of 4d.).

Performance of the work services was thus rather erratically enforced with quite modest fines.[48] Why the manorial administration apparently became concerned about services and labour duty in 1412 when the custumal was copied into the court rolls is unknown, but may have more to do with concerns about the cost and availability of waged labour in the fifteenth century than any serious attempt to revive or enforce labour services.

The impression that the 1412 custumal reflected the ideal rather than the actual administration of the manor is reflected by the other presentations. In particular, it has not been possible to trace any grants of marriage licences or for the ordination of sons, and leyrwite was only presented on two occasions.[49] Breaches of mill suit and suit of court were quite frequently presented, but they seem to be the only two services which were enforced with any enthusiasm.

The custumal is oddly silent about rents and entry fines. In fact, the transactions recorded in the court rolls show that the fourteenth-century rents at Catesby were relatively standard: 10s. per annum for a virgate, 5s. for a half-virgate and cottages (the normal holding at Shopes) around 12d. to 18d. Heriots were, unsurprisingly, very variable but entry fines were also high and variable (up to 20s.).[50]

The manorial court in the fourteenth century

The manorial court rolls probably provide the best picture of changes in the manorial administration during the fourteenth century. The discontinuities in the sequence of rolls

[48] For example, SC 2/195/4 m. 2 (10 November 1379) and m. 8; SC 2/195/4 m. 9 (17 May 1385); SC 2/195/5 m. 6 (30 March 1394).
[49] TNA, SC 2/195/1 (23 February and 10 October 1314).
[50] For standard rents see e.g. TNA, SC s/195/4 m. 8 (28.09.1383, Prioress to Juliana Vickers) and SC 2/195/5 m. 7 (24.07.1397, Prioress to John Cok). For heriots see e.g. SC 2/195/4 m. 6 (01.08.1383, Thomas Vickers to Prioress, bull valued at 12s.), SC 2/195/5 m. 1 (28.03.1390, Roger Shepreve to Philip [Rewater], ox and cow valued at 16s.), SC 2/195/5 m. 5 (23.09.1393, John Ward to Prioress, cow valued at 8s.). For entry fines see e.g. SC 2/195/4 m. 10 (27.10.1384, Prioress to John and Juliana Eventon, fine 20s. of which 10s. remitted), SC 2/195/5 m. 1 (28.03.1390, Roger Shepreve to Philip [Rewater], fine 26s. 8d.), SC 2/195/4 m. 5 (01.08.1383, Prioress to Juliana Vickers, fine 6s. 8d. of which 40d. paid), SC 2/195/5 m. 6 (04.04.1396, John Shepreve to Richard Hakyn, fine 20s.).

have already been mentioned but there are also suggestions that the prioresses may have found that the administrative effort of holding regular courts, or at any rate of recording them, was challenging. For example, the membrane containing the record from mid-1328 to early 1330 records courts in June and December 1328, a single court in September 1329 and then a court in April 1330.[51] It is possible there were further court sessions in 1329 which were recorded on separate membranes, now lost, but it is equally possible there were not. In the period before the Black Death, the patchily surviving rolls demonstrate the usual run of court business: land transfers, litigation, enquiries to determine the rights of the prioress as lady of the manor and presentations for infringements.

The overall impression of the prioresses' manorial administration before the Black Death is that it was quite intrusive with several presentations for leyrwite (for example) and, more often, slander (in this context, presumably 'scolding').[52] The jurisprudential basis of slander in the Catesby court was odd. It was usually presented by the *homagium* as an offence either *contra consuetudinem* or *contra ordinacionem* but, very occasionally, it appears as a conventional suit (presumably a *placitum* or *querela*). In the case of presentations, the *homagium* either imposed a fine (*pena*), usually 12d., or, more usually, amerced the offender for a modest sum, usually 2d. In neither case is there any suggestion that the victim received any compensation. These allegations were almost always highly formulaic: women were described as whores (*meretrices*) and men as robbers (*latrones*). However, these incidents rarely escalated into violence – there are only two presentations involving the shedding of blood, both in the same early court roll for 1323.[53]

[51] TNA, SC 2/195/2 m. 2.
[52] For example, TNA, SC 2/195/1 m. 1 (18 October 1313 on two occasions) for slander as a suit and TNA, SC 2/195/1 m. 1 (30 January 1313), SC 2/195/4 m. 2 (10 November and 13 December 1379) and SC 2/195/4 m. 6 (13 December 1379) and SC 2/195/4 m. 6 (29 January 1380) for slander as a presentation. For leyrwite, see footnote 47. There was a pillory in Shopes (see e.g. SC 2/195/6 m. 13, court 14.12.1413, referring to the Pylory Water – presumably one of the ponds around the abbey) which suggests a rather early modern concern with the 'reform of manners' although, curiously, its use was never referred to in the court rolls.
[53] TNA, SC 2/195/1 m. 2.

Much of the litigation, however, concerned relatively small debts and minor trespasses. The details are rarely stated but when they are, they seem typical of a rural community.[54]

It is not clear to what extent the first wave of the Black Death in 1348/49 affected Catesby. The manorial court rolls for the period 1348 to 1350 are either missing or in poor condition. A possible hint of disruption is provided by a number of rolls written in the same hand for the period 1339 to 1349 which contain only the records of land transactions.[55] It seems these transactions had been transcribed from the full series of rolls for this period (almost all of which are missing) in order to reconstruct land transfers and holdings in the decade preceding the Black Death. Analysis of the names of the transferees recorded during this period is not easy because many of them are either locational or vocational names which tended to vary over time. Of some eighteen names which do not follow this pattern and are probably more or less unique, about eleven (61%) fail to appear at all in the court rolls following 1349 whilst seven names (about 39%) continue to appear after 1349. That might suggest a familiar profile of heavy mortality in the first wave of the Black Death, but that conclusion needs to be approached with caution: of the 61% who fail to re-appear in the court rolls, the great majority only appear once in the decade preceding the Black Death in connection with the grant of their tenement. This may be as much a testament to the transient nature of the population in the period after 1349 as to their mortality.

In the period after the Black Death, the court rolls show a change of content and become limited to records, at least initially, of a trickle of litigation and land transactions. The language of the rolls also changes: the tenants were typically referred to as *nativi* before about 1378. The term fell out of use in the early 1380s and its last recorded use was at the

[54] For example, TNA SC/2/195/4 m. 12 (14.04.1388, William Sadler -v- Ralph Bayly, damage caused by pigs) or SC 2/195/2 m. 11 (03.11.1348, William le Writh -v- Richard le Northerne, failure to pay rent in kind for, presumably, subletting of a selion and sub-subletting the selion without consent).
[55] TNA, SC 2/195/2 mm .4, 7, 8 and 10.

court held on 2 June 1390.[56] There were also changes of form as well as language. In particular, in the early court rolls of 1313 to about 1330, presentations had been made by the *nativi* at inquisitions. Their role was that of jurors (as they were often also described) and was usually restricted to specific single issues such as customary inheritance, heriots, theft or ordinances, such as making a pinfold.[57]

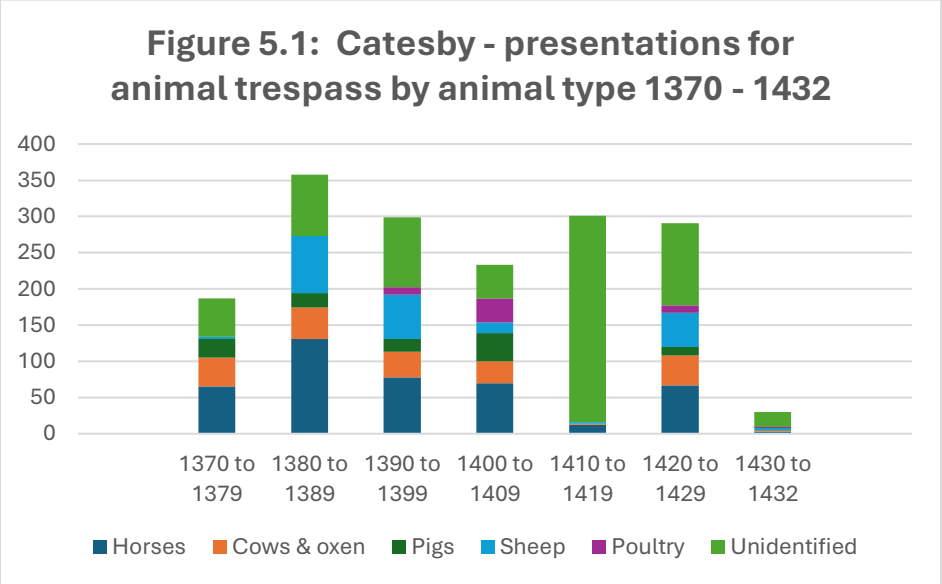
The *homagium* was a post-Black Death introduction in the Catesby court. The term first appears there in 1358, sometimes with references to *homagium et decenarii* (tithingmen). The juxtaposition of the two terms is slightly peculiar because the prioress did not hold the view of frankpledge with which tithingmen are usually associated. The confusion is, however, easy to understand: although the *homagium* initially dealt with inquisitions and enquiries, it came to make the presentations, usually in a series, in a very similar manner to tithingmen's presentations at views of frankpledge. For a period, from 1383 to about 1405, the record preserved the distinction between Catesby and Shopes where presentations were made by the *iuratores* or, with increasing frequency, the *liberi tenentes*. From 1408, presentations were also made by the *homagium* at Hellidon.

However, on the face of the record, the pre-Black Death *nativi* had shifted from a passive role as jurors to an active role as prosecutors after the Black Death. Their more active role was manifested in the increasingly lengthy series of presentations made by them.

The most noticeable feature of presentations in the Catesby court in the late fourteenth century is the dramatic growth of cases involving animal trespass. Presentations for animal trespass were not unknown before the 1370s but they increased significantly then and in subsequent decades. The presentations took two forms. For the most part, they were

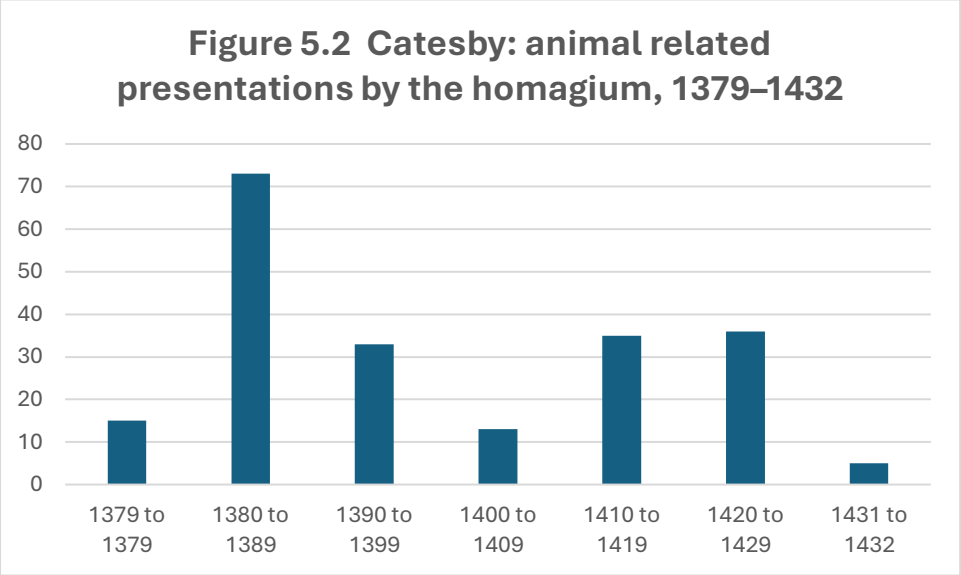
[56] TNA, SC 2/195/5 m. 2.
[57] TNA, SC 2/195/1 m. 1: inheritance (31 June 1313), heriot (13 October 1313), theft or making a pinfold (both 23 February 1314).

presentations by the messor (*attachia messoris*) of stock owners or keepers who had allowed animals to stray onto arable or other land from which they were supposed to be excluded (figure 5.1).[58] The figure for the 1370s should be approached with caution: there is a gap in the rolls between 1373 and 1378 so it is impossible to be certain that there was a surge of presentations in the 1380s. That surge might have occurred in the 1370s or possibly in earlier decades although the surviving rolls from the late 1350s suggest the surge occurred later.



The other category of presentations, those made by the *homagium*, was directed at tenants who had over-stocked their tenements (figure 5.2).[59] After a flurry of presentations in the 1380s, these presentations settled down into routine presentations of, usually, the tenants of Catesby for holding one or two colts (*pullani*), presumably in excess of their stint. Those presentations were supplemented from time to time with presentations for pigs, again seemingly based on exceeding the stint.

[58] Figure 5.1 is derived from TNA, SC 2/195/3 to SC 2/195/8, the manorial court rolls for the period 1371 to 1432.
[59] Figure 5.2 is derived from the same court rolls as those used for figure 5.1.



The extent of the messors' presentations (figure 5.1) had grown again by the second decade of the fifteenth century and were no longer itemised in the court rolls but in a separate document tabulating the trespasses. For the most part, those tables no longer survive but they are summarised in the court rolls. That is why it is impossible to identify the type of animal involved in the trespass in the decade 1410–1419. In the following decade, the court returned to its earlier practice of setting out the full presentation in the court rolls so it is once again possible (usually) to identify the animals involved.

A comparison of the rentals for 1399 and 1428/9 with the manorial court rolls sheds light on the identity of the trespassers.[60] There are problems with both rentals – both are heavily damaged. However, comparison of the messor's presentations at the court held on 4 March 1429 with the rental for 1428/9 reveals that of the nineteen or so individuals presented by the messor for animal trespass, only two are clearly identifiable as tenants. By contrast, of the five individuals presented by the *homagium* for over-stocking with colts, four are identifiable in the rental as tenants of virgate or half-virgate tenements in Catesby. The position in 1399

[60] TNA, SC 111/507 (1399 rental), SC 2/195/5 m. 9 (court roll 09.09 and 28.10.1399), SC 2/195/6 m. 1 (court roll 22.07 and 12.10.1400) and SC 12/3/29 (1428/9 rental) and SC 2/195/8 m. 7 (court roll 04.03.1429).

is less clear. At the courts held on 9 September and 28 October 1399 and 22 July and 12 October 1400 sixteen individuals were presented by the messor for animal trespass but none are identifiable as tenants of the manor. Three individuals were presented by the *homagium* for over-stocking with colts but none is identifiable as a tenant from the rental. The section of the rental dealing with Catesby is particularly heavily mutilated which may explain the problem. However, two of the three can be identified as tenants from land transfers in the court rolls.[61]

There were occasions when tenants were presented by the messor for animal trespass. Sometimes the animals came from the prioress's own flock (in which case her shepherd was fined).[62] However, it seems likely that the majority of the trespassers were graziers from surrounding villages. Sometimes they are identified as such: John Straunge of Staverton or John Barker of Badby.[63] It is possible that they were grazing their stock on manorial arable leased by the prioresses as *frisca*. As will be seen, by the second decade of the fifteenth century land at both Catesby and Newbold was being let in this way and it seems possible that graziers both over-grazed the land they rented and found themselves unable to control their stock on un-enclosed former arable. The fines were usually modest, 1d. or 2d., but occasionally they were higher, presumably reflecting the extent of the damage caused by the straying animals.

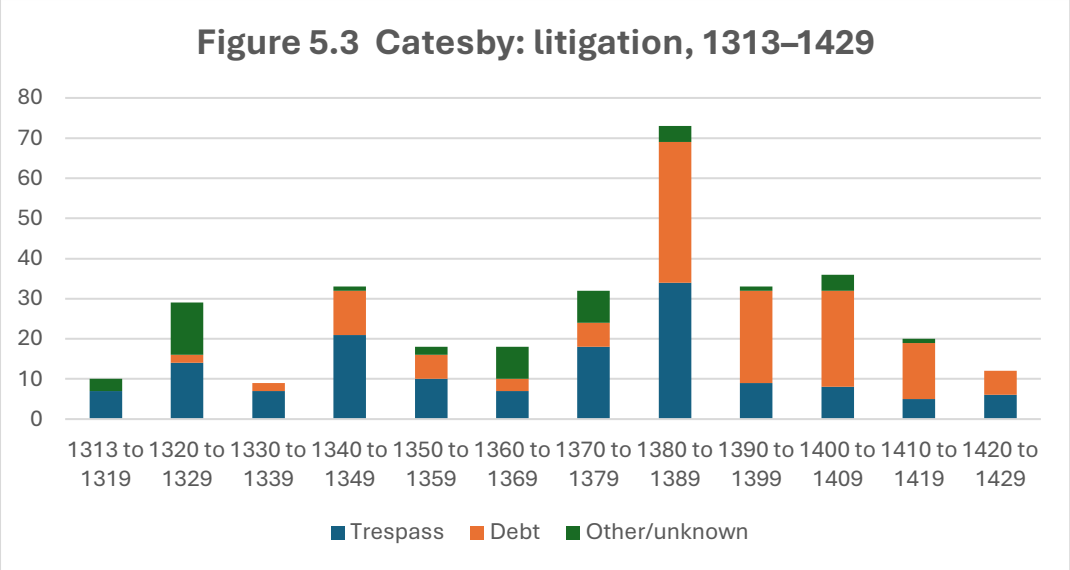
The contrast between the messors' presentations and those of the *homagium* is striking. Whereas the trespassers mostly came from outside the manor, the *homagium* presented manorial tenants, and more specifically, those of Catesby, and in particular the virgators or half-virgators. The type of animals was also different: the messor's presentations related to

[61] TNA, SC 2/195/7 m. 1 (surrender by Richard Schepherd of a messuage and three *quartrona* in Catesby on 27.06.1415), SC 2/195/5 m. 7 (grant of a messuage and virgate to John Branndeston on 24.07.1397).
[62] See e.g. TNA, SC 2/195/4 m. 12.
[63] TNA, SC 2/195/8 m. 7.

a wide variety of animals (see figure 5.1) whereas the tenants' animals were almost exclusively colts, *pullani*. That suggests they were the offspring of the tenants' draught animals bred either for the tenants' own use or for sale. The fines were larger, usually 6d. per animal but that probably reflected a longer period of grazing. The messor's presentations seem to have related to brief incidents when animals strayed whereas the tenants were presumably grazing their animals permanently.

The animal trespass statistics end abruptly with the end of the sequence of court rolls in 1432, which will be considered in the next section of this chapter.

Litigation or dispute resolution is another significant feature of the manorial court rolls (figure 5.3). The figures before 1350 need to be approached with particular caution because the court rolls for that period are fragmentary. That remains a problem with the figures up until the late 1370s after which confidence in the statistics increases. However, figure 5.3 bears out the subjective impression given by the rolls that litigation in the Catesby court spiked in the 1380s, possibly the result of a short-lived attempt by the prioresses to encourage litigation there. There was also a marked increase in debt claims from the 1380s onwards which may reflect increased market integration, possibly associated with a shift to pastoral agriculture and sales of animal products along with loans for the purchase of stock and other items.



The overall impression created by the Catesby manorial court rolls for the second half of the fourteenth century is one of attempts by the prioresses to balance appeasement of their tenants against the preservation of their income from the manor's demesne farm. Appeasement was manifested in the manorial court and took the form of protection against incursions by graziers from outside the manor and the (probably) extended provision of a forum for dispute resolution. It also took the form of a regime which slowly became less intrusive with the disappearance of presentations for slander and leyrwite but continued, if rather half-hearted, attempts to enforce light labour services.[64] That probably represents the point at which the prioresses' financial interests started to intrude but, even here, their position was equivocal. On the one hand, they probably regarded labour service as necessary to continue demesne farming but, on the other, they needed to ensure the presence on the manor of a waged labour force drawn from their tenants. That may explain the reference in the 1412 custumal to paid (*ad sumptum*) day works. The real threat to the prioresses was depopulation in a period of increased mobility. There are suggestions, which will be explored further below in the context of the fifteenth century, that depopulation was becoming a problem in the late fourteenth century.

[64] For example, TNA SC 2/195/4 m. 2. (10.11.1379, failure to perform autumn works, fine 3d.), SC 2/195/4 m. 8 (26.09.1380, failure to perform works, fine 3d.).

The population figures derived from the 1377 and 1379 poll tax returns will be considered further in chapter 6. In summary, the 1377 returns showed 172 taxpayers at Catesby 'with members' suggesting a total population of around 315 to 345 and 127 taxpayers in 1379.[65]

In conclusion, possibly the most significant procedural development in the fourteenth-century Catesby manorial court rolls was the emergence of the *homagium* and its evolution into the body making presentments in the manorial court. Alongside that, the (probable) expansion of litigation suggests attempts by successive prioresses at appeasement of their tenants. It was probably manifested in changes to the 'vocabulary of tenure' moving away from the noticeably 'servile' language of manorial courts before the Black Death which has been noted elsewhere (see appendix 7, nos 15-24, and the notes thereto relating to Catesby for changes in and the development of records of land transfers; similar changes are apparent in other records elsewhere in the rolls and will be considered further in the following chapter). The significant spike in presentations for animal trespass may reflect problems arising from tenant departures from the manor, the leasing of arable as *frisca*, and the problems arising from that. That may, however, distract attention from deeper problems with the prioresses' need for a labour force with which to manage their demesne farm at Catesby. The following section of this chapter goes on to examine the fate of demesne farming in the challenging conditions of the fifteenth century.

4. Catesby in the first half of the fifteenth century

At the court hearing on 4 March 1429 ten men and two women were presented for breaking the prioress's enclosures to collect firewood.[66] They were fined 40d. each, an unusually heavy fine by the standards of the Catesby court. In the court roll, the presentation by the *decenarii* of Shopes recited that the offenders:

[65] Carolyn C. Fenwick, *The Poll Taxes* part 2, p. 230 and ch.6, pp. 253-5.
[66] TNA, SC 2/195/8, m. 7 and SC 2/195/8 m. 6.

clausuras domine apud le Coteyerd & in le Asshes [&] in le Netherbigging fregerunt & [lingnicula] colligerunt & asportaverunt sine licencia domine seu officia suorum ideo ipsi in misercordia.

Presentations for gathering firewood were not unusual but usually attracted a fine of around 2d.[67]

The Netherbigging has already been encountered. The Coteyerd and the Asshes were probably other *clausure* in the vicinity of the Priory. Of the offenders, six of the twelve (Isabella Treypas, Thomas Hyncle, Mathew Smyth, William Mekyn and Thomas and Elena Chapman) lived in Shopes and form quite a close-knit group. Isabella Treypas held a tenement in Shopes which was next door to a tenement transferred to Thomas Hyncle so they were neighbours.[68] Another messuage in Shopes was transferred to Matthew Smyth who makes a number of appearances as a pledge provider and was also elected as tithingman for Shopes.[69] William Mekyn was the transferor of the tenement transferred to Thomas Hyncle so he too had been a neighbour of Isabella Treypas.[70] Thomas Chapman is less easy to identify but a John le Chapman had held a tenement in Shopes seventy years earlier and he seems to be associated with Elena Chapman who is definitely stated to be 'de Shopes' in the 1429 presentations.[71] Of the remaining offenders, John Glover had associations with Hellidon.[72] The origins and dwelling places of the remaining five, Hugo Dutton, Thomas Abbeyhous, William Cotes, John Wells and Richard Baseford, are largely

[67] e.g. TNA, SC 2/195/8, m. 1.
[68] TNA, SC 2/195/10 m. 10, court 02.04.1410.
[69] TNA, SC 2/195/6 m. 3, court on 03.07.1402 (transfer of messuage); SC 2/195/6 m. 11, court on 29.10.1410 (appearance as pledge-provider); SC 2/195/6 m. 6, court 07.07.1405 (election as tithingman).
[70] TNA, SC 2/195/6 m. 10, court 02.04.1410.
[71] TNA, SC 2/195/2 m. 6, court 07.01.1342, SC 2/195/88 m. 7, court 04.03.1429.
[72] His father, Richard, was presented at a court on 04.03.1429 for dilapidations to his tenement in Hellidon – SC 2/195/8 m. 7.

untraceable although some had affiliations with the Catesby manor.[73] It is tempting to infer from Thomas Abbeyhous's name that he was employed in some capacity at the Priory and Richard Baseford's name presumably identifies him as coming from one of the Priory's more significant possessions in Nottinghamshire. Perhaps they were servants of the Priory.

It is not clear why the manorial court responded to this incident with such large fines. The Bigging, in particular, had been the scene of numerous animal trespasses over the preceding twenty years or so without attracting this level of fine. Possibly the hedge-breaking was on such a scale that the hedges were no longer stock-proof and that enabled rams or bulls to get amongst ewes or cows outside the breeding season (the offence must have taken place in March or earlier), but the record gives no indication. Likewise, there is no record of whether the fines were, in fact, paid although that absence is not unusual. The incident does, however, seem to indicate that the prioresses could respond quite sharply where their own interests were concerned. In considering their relations with their tenants, that has to be set against the concessions they were prepared to allow the latter.

The fifteenth-century accounts

The accounts series is fragmented.[74] There are accounts for three years 1414/15, 1415/16 (probably) and 1416/17, then for two years, 1422/23 and 1423/24, an account dating from 1426–31 (the date is missing) and then for 1443/44. The position then becomes confused with several accounts in differing formats for the same years, 1447/48 and 1448/49. Subsequently, the position is clearer with accounts for 1449/50, 1452/53 (two) and 1453/54

[73] A William Abbeyhous was presented for trespass with a flock of sheep at a court on 01.08.1394 – SC 2/195/5 m. 5 – but that is the only other reference to a member (seemingly) of the family. William Cotes probably came from a family with a long association with Catesby. He was presented for animal trespass at a court on 13.04.1418 – SC 2/195/7 m. 3 – and was a pledge provider at a court on 19.02.1422 – SC 2/195/7 m. 6. A John Cotes had held a cottage and four acres in Catesby (court held on 18.10.1403 – SC 2/195/6 m. 4 – and a Thomas Cotes was an affeerer e.g. at a court on 09.04.1407 – SC2/195/6 m. 7. John Wells only other appearance in the rolls was as a pledge provider for John Cotes at a court on 21.10.1420 – SC 2/195/8 m. 3. Richard Baseford's only other appearance in the court rolls was as a pledge provider on a single occasion at a court on 08.11.1429 – SC 2/195/8 m. 7.

[74] See appendix 6 for details and references.

(two). The confusion arises from a combination of mutilated headings thus rendering the dates illegible and what seems to have been a practice of preparing separate accounts for rent receipts and for the entire Priory. In all cases, the accounting year ran from either St Michael's day (29 September) or its eve or morrow. Finally, there is an account book recording day-to-day expenses kept by the then prioress, Margaret Wavere, commencing on 20 January 1433 to 1436 (according to a later label on the cover of the book – which may have been bound later).[75] The entries are undated and not clearly related to accounting years. Presumably items of expenditure were extracted from the account book and used to prepare the annual accounts.

This material does however make it possible to examine the finances of the Priory over the first half of the fifteenth century and how they changed during that period.
Dealing first with the receipts in the accounts, the Priory had accumulated a number of landed possessions and other rights since its foundation (see appendix 5). In the period 1414–17 they produced a fixed rent (*redditus assisus*) of just over £43 per annum along with *firme* from land and income from churches of around £27 to £29 per annum.[76] Thus, the various rents which formed the basis of the Priory's income totalled around £70 per annum and could be supplemented by sales from the manor, which were variable but could exceed £20 in any year. Along with other relatively minor sources of income from the sale of grain, stock and the *perquisita curie* the prioress could expect to receive as much as £100 in a good year, dropping to £83 in 1415/16 which seems to have been a bad, or less good, year.[77]

Another feature of the Priory's income from land deserves attention. In the first accounts of 1414/15, the receipt of 35s. 10d. for land lying *frisca* and let as pasture to various tenants

[75] TNA, SC 6/1257/1.
[76] TNA, SC 6/946/16-18 (accounts for 1414/15, 1415/16 and 1416/17).
[77] TNA, SC 6/946/17 (accounts for 1415/16 – the date is mutilated but this is probably the correct date).

was listed amongst the 'issues of the manor'.[78] This item was repeated in the accounts for the next two years, increasing to 45s. 5d. in 1416/17. No other rental income was listed for Newbold so it seems likely that the village at Newbold had been deserted by this point. That impression is strengthened by the manorial court rolls. It was reported that Thomas de la More, the lord of the manor there (held from the prioresses of Catesby), had died in 1388 and it was only after threats of distraint that his heir, also Thomas, was persuaded to pay homage to the prioress in 1390.[79] The impression is that the lordship had become more of a liability than an asset. It is also at about this time that references in the court rolls to individuals described as 'de Newbold' fade away. This sequence of events, taken together with the treatment of Newbold in the accounts beginning in 1414/15 suggests that Newbold was deserted in the last decade of the fourteenth century or the first decade of the fifteenth. This sets the scene for further consideration below of enclosure and conversion to pasture and whether, as in Tawney's account, it was the cause of depopulation or whether, in fact, the reverse was the case and depopulation led to enclosure and conversion to pasture.[80]
It is not clear how much the Priory actually received in each year because these are the notional rents reflecting what the prioress *expected* to receive rather than what she *actually* received – no indication is given in the accounts of actual liveries of cash at Catesby. Despite that problem, the *summa* at the end of the receipts probably gives a reasonably accurate indication of the Priory's actual receipts in each accounting year.

The receipts fell away over the years: in 1422 to 1424 and 1443/44 they were around £80 per annum and in the years 1447 to 1454 they diminished still further to around £55 to £63 per annum.[81] From around 1426–31 the accounts started to make an allowance for decayed

[78] TNA, SC 6/946/16 (accounts for 1314/15).
[79] TNA, SC 2/195/4 m. 12 (court 27.10.1389 – report of death of Thomas de la More); SC 2/195/5 m. 1 (court 27.10.1389 – order to distrain Thomas's heir); SC 2/195/1 (court 14.02.1390 – Thomas de la More junior admitted to the lordship and pays homage to the prioress).
[80] R. H. Tawney, *The Agrarian Problem In The Sixteenth Century* (reprint New York, 1967).
[81] TNA, SC 6/946/19 (accounts for 1422/23 and 1423/24), SC 6/946/20 (accounts for 1443/44), SC 6/946/22 and 23 (accounts 1447/48), SC 6/946/21, 24 and 25 (accounts 1448/49), SC 6/947/5

rents of about £10 per annum.[82] This was probably an attempt to address the problem of the fixed *redditus assisus* which has been referred to above. It also suggests that those preparing the accounts were becoming concerned by a reduction of that amount in the rents actually received. How the Priory coped with this shortfall will be dealt with below.

Turning to the debit side of the accounts, the expenses of the Priory fell into four main categories although that was not how they were presented in the accounts.[83] First, there were the usually rather modest expenses incurred by the nuns in their devotional duties, such as pittances distributed at various feasts and the more expensive stipends of their chaplains, supplemented by miscellaneous expenses such as beeswax for the altars of the Priory and canons' chapels. Then, secondly, there were the costs of running the house and its labour force. For the main part, this was the cost of food for an unknown number along with items such as clothing for the nuns and their *stipendarii*. The numbers of the Priory household are difficult to estimate: there seem to have been around six nuns (nine at the time of the dissolution), an unknown number of canons and other religious together with the *famuli*. By far the largest item of expense (usually around £17 per annum) was the stipends paid to the *famuli* who included a small number of 'indoor' servants such as brewers and bakers (usually combined), cooks (later in the sequence), milkmaids and other 'administrative' staff (such as the bailiff and barnreve) along with a much larger number of 'outdoor' agricultural labourers such ploughmen, cowmen, shepherds, pigmen and labourers. The stipends were not broken down in the early accounts and it is only possible to see precisely who was included in the later accounts. This will be addressed further below but it is worth noting that most of the *famuli* received clothing and food (*ad mensam*) along with their cash remuneration. Food, where it could not be produced on the demesne,

(accounts 1449/50), SC 6/946/26 and SC 6/947/3 (accounts 1452/53) and SC 6/947/1 and 2 (accounts 1453/54).

[82] TNA, SC 6/947/4 (the accounts for this year are undated but date from 1426 to 1432 – see appendix 6).

[83] This paragraph and the following paragraph rely on all the accounts itemised at appendix 6.

was another expensive item and included quantities of salt fish for Lent (the *emptiones quadragesimale*) and Advent. The third category of expense was the maintenance costs of the Priory which included everything from running repairs and services (such as the cost of the Priory carts) as well as much more significant items for the repair and reconstruction of the Priory fabric. Finally, the fourth category of cost was that of running the demesne farm. That included a large part of stipends of the *famuli* and the cost of day labourers at critical points of the year (mowing the hay, washing and shearing the sheep, harvest and autumnal ploughing and harrowing) which were itemised separately. There were also costs (e.g. the *custus husbondrie*) for the maintenance and upkeep of equipment such as ploughs and harrows as well as collars for horses and oxen (for example).

The accounts categorised expenses in a rather formulaic manner which makes it difficult to establish the actual cost of the four main areas of expenditure set out above. It is, however, just about possible to break out the costs associated with the farming of the demesne and also to establish in a rough and ready way the benefit to the Priory in a rather crude demesne farm account. Since most of the produce was consumed and not sold, it is necessary to attribute a value to the produce (essentially grain and stock) consumed by the Priory. The value of stock can be established from elsewhere in the accounts where the Priory made outside purchases, and the price of grain is derived from sales by the Priory. Purchases of grain by the Priory would have included the profits and expenses (e.g. transport) of middlemen, so the Priory's sale price of grain may be an under-estimate of the value of demesne-produced grain to the Priory.

The results of this exercise are set out in table 5.2. The accounts only contain sufficient data of grain and stock consumed in kind to make this possible for the years 1414/15 to 1416/17 and 1449/50. Only the first, 1414/15, and the last, 1449/50, of these accounts are shown here. The accounts for 1415/16 and 1416/17 are broadly similar to those for 1414/15. Benefits and payments in kind are shown in italics *a*lthough items which have proved

impossible to cost have been left blank. They were probably quite minor and do not significantly affect the broad picture. The selection of items in the left hand, debit, column is difficult because, as has been explained, the categories of expenditure in the accounts do not segregate specific expenses for farming the demesne.

Broadly, such costs have been determined by asking whether or not the costs in the account would have been incurred if the Priory had not farmed its demesne. Items marked with an asterisk (*) are the cases where it has not been possible to identify demesne farming costs. Greater problems are posed by the stipends which are not broken down in the 1414/15 accounts and which undoubtedly include *famuli* who worked on the demesne and some who did not. There is no solution to that problem and the entire cost of the stipends has been debited to the demesne account. There are thus many areas of uncertainty but, broadly speaking, table 5.2 probably gives a reasonable broad picture of the economics of demesne farming.

Table 5.2a Catesby demesne farm accounts 1414/15 (decimalised £s)[84]

	Dr £		Cr £
Sheep shearing	0.61	Produce of the manor	24.43
Carts	3.43	*147 qt wheat @ 6s. 8d per qt.*	*49*
Rewards*	0.06	*158 qt malt @ 6s. per qt.*	*47.4*
Tedding & hay making (prev year)	0.35	*5 oxen @ 9s. 8d. ea.*	*2.42*
Autumn costs (prev year)	3.49	*3 cows @ 7s. 6d. ea.*	*1.13*
Stubble (prev year)	0.43	*5 calves @ 4s. 6d. ea.*	*1.13*
Tedding & hay making	1.58	*14 sheep @ 1s. 4d. ea.*	*0.93*
Autumn costs	9.57	*14 ewes @ 1s. 4d. ea.*	*0.93*
Stubble	0.55	*53 pigs @ 1s. ea.*	*2.65*
Threshing	3.78		
Stipends*	19.24		
Wages in kind: 15 qt wheat @ 6s. 8d. per qt.	*5*		
Wages in kind: 10.75 qt peas @ 3s. 4d. per qt.	*1.79*		
Wages in kind: 7 qt oats @ ? per qt.			
	£49.88		£130.02

Table 5.2b Catesby demesne farm accounts 1449/50 (decimalised £s)[85]

	Dr £		Cr £
Purchase of stock	3.46	Stock sales	3.1
Stipends	15.3	Wool sales	3.68
Husbandry costs	3.28	Grain sales	1.87
Day labourers' cost	2.29	*Wheat 71 qt 6bs @ 3s 8d per qt.*	*13.15*
Haymaking	0.92	*Malt 150 qt @ 2s 10d per qt.*	*21.25*
Autumn costs	6.49	*Oats 9 qt @ ? per qt.*	
Threshing	2.99	*Peas 3 qt @ 2s per qt.*	*0.3*
Carriage*	0.17	*2 bullocks @ 3s 9d per qt.*	*0.38*
Wages in kind: 1/2 qt peas	*0.05*	*2 cows @ ? ea.*	
		24 sheep @ 1s 3½d ea.	*1.55*
	£34.95		£45.28

[84] TNA, SC 6/948/16.
[85] TNA, SC 6/947/5.

It can be seen that in the second decade of the fifteenth century the cost of demesne farming was about 40% of the value of the benefits or a profit ratio of about 60%. By the middle of the century those costs had expanded to about 78% of the value of the profits or a profit ratio of about 22%. For the reasons which have been explained above, the profits of demesne farming are probably under-stated because the value of grain consumed by the Priory is under-stated and the stipends over-stated.

The results show that, although the prioresses of Catesby depended on an income as rentiers, they used that income to fund their demesne farm rather than living on it directly. As table 5.2 shows, the cash cost of demesne farming was always more than the cash income from the demesne farm. The funding for the demesne farm came, therefore, from the Priory's rental income. That income diminished during the period from 1415 to 1450 so that demesne farming was eating up an increasing proportion of that dwindling cash income although, as the 1450 income shows (table 5.2b), it still remained a 'profitable' option in the sense that the value the Priory received from the demesne farm still exceeded the cost of the input. Presumably for that reason, the prioresses bucked the trend away from direct demesne farming in the late-fourteenth and early-fifteenth centuries, unlike larger institutional estates which abandoned direct farming. They were probably able to do so precisely because the scale of their operations was small, their farming operations were largely funded by a cash rental income and because they were conducted at Catesby in close proximity to the centre of the manorial administration. In short, the prioresses were able to avoid the problems of administering a remote estate and the transport and sale of its produce at some distance from the administrative centre of the estate. It was probably an advantage that the Priory consumed rather than sold the bulk of the produce of its demesne farm.

The accounts in table 5.2 also demonstrate that labour costs formed by far the most significant part of the demesne farm’s expenses. The 1414/15 accounts do not contain a

breakdown of the stipends paid to the *famuli*, but they do record payments in kind (of grain) to four individuals who probably formed the core of the demesne labour force: Walter Boy, Nicholas Hardy, John Bythwater and Richard Nayleston. In addition to their payments in kind, they would have received a cash payment, probably around 16s., which was the going rate for ploughmen, shepherds, cowmen and the pigman when the accounts started to itemise payments to individuals in 1443/44. All four were probably of the generation born in the late fourteenth century and who feature in presentations for over-stinting in the second decade of the fifteenth century (figure 5.2). All were tenants of the manor: Walter Boy surrendered a cottage holding at Catesby in 1419, Nicholas Hardy took a messuage and five acres in 1409, John Bythwater held a *clausura* and a cottage and four acres at Catesby and Richard Nayleston a messuage and half-virgate also at Catesby.[86] All four, therefore, supplemented their earnings in cash and kind from the prioress with the produce of their holdings. The benefits in kind which they received from the manor were significant: the four received eight or ten quarters of wheat divided between them and a further ten quarters of peas for pottage.[87] They may also have been fed *ad mensam* and were probably clothed by the Priory. By tradition, the prioress also gave a pair of sandals or cash in lieu, 'sandel selver', to those working on the demesne at harvest.

The 1449/50 accounts are less specific about the *stipendia* than those for the following years but they state that stipends were paid to eighteen individuals: a baker, a maltman, a cook, two carters, seven ploughmen, two shepherds, a wright and a smith along with two

[86] TNA, SC 6/946/17 (accounts for 1415/16) gives their names. All four make frequent appearances in the court rolls in various presentations. Walter Boy surrendered a cottage in Catesby in 1419 and was recorded in 1422 as the former holder two cottages and gardens and three acres (court 02.05.1419 – SC 2/195/7 m. 4 and court 19.02.1422 – SC 2/195/7 m. 6). Nicholas Hardy took a messuage and five acres paying 3s. per annum and six pullets as entry fine (court 11.01.1409 – SC 2/195/6 m. 9) and became an affeerer in 1419 (SC 2/195/7 m. 4). John Bythewater held a *clausura* abutting the Over Byggyng but failed to maintain it (court 09.04.1407 – SC 2/195/6 m. 7) and died in 1420 holding a cottage and for acres in Catesby (court 28.10.1420 – SC 2/195/7 m. 5) although a John Bythewater, possibly his son, continued to appear in the court rolls thereafter. Richard Nayleston died in 1422 holding a messuage and half virgate on which his widow and heir, Juliana, paid a mare (value 40d.) as heriot (court 19.02.1422 – SC 2/195/7 m. 6).
[87] TNA, SC 6/946/17 (accounts for 1415/16).

unidentifiable occupations.[88] As can be seen, the demesne labour formed the bulk of the *famuli*. Their numbers were supplemented by day labourers including twenty 'couples' washing and shearing the sheep (cost 6s. 8d.) and various individuals for mowing the Over Bygyng, one of the larger meadows, over twenty-three days (cost 2s. 10½d.). The other, quite significant, payments to day labourers for haymaking and 'autumn works' can be found in table 5.3b. By the mid-century, the Priory was making use of itinerant labourers and, in 1449/50 it paid John Browne of Coventry 1s. 8d. for five days work or 4d. a day – which seems quite a high rate. Likewise, John Sylkoke of Coventry was paid 19s. 9d. for reaping the peas.

The first reference to payments to itinerant labourers comes in the accounts for 1443/44 record with a payment of 5s. to William Barker of Coventry for threshing (*trituracione*).[89] This was a straw in the wind: the accounts for 1447/48 show payments of 4s. 6d. to John Iryshman for reaping twenty-three acres of peas.[90] He returned the following year, 1449, when he was paid 10s. 5d. for reaping thirty-nine acres of peas.[91] The accounts for 1447/48 also show a number of payments to John Barnack totalling 9s. 5d. for hedging. Barnack is in the far north of Northamptonshire, about sixty miles from Catesby. John then appears in the accounts for 1448 (at this point, it is not possible to work out how the accounts for this year inter-relate) being paid 15s. for mowing hay and reaping and gathering barley and peas.[92] The following year, 1349, he was employed on a stipend of 26s. 8d. as barnreve but was also paid 4s. 9d. along with John Lilburne for harvesting 19 qt. wheat (presumably because this work was in addition to his employment as barnreve).[93] Finally, in 1452/3 he was paid a stipend of 16s. for husbandry and ploughing from 29 September to 24 June.[94]

[88] TNA, SC 6/947/5 (accounts for 1449/50).
[89] TNA, SC 6/946/22 (accounts for 1443/44).
[90] TNA, SC 6/946/21 (accounts 1448).
[91] TNA, SC 6/946/24 (accounts 1448/9).
[92] TNA, SC 6/946/21 (accounts for 1448).
[93] TNA, SC 6/946/24 (accounts for 1449).
[94] TNA, SC 6/947/3 (accounts for 1452/3).

These sums referred to in the two preceding paragraphs probably represent payments to gangs of labourers rather than individuals. So, for example, in 1448, 4s. 2d. was paid to seven 'cokars' for gathering sheaves of grain at just around 2d. per day. They were unnamed and probably also came from outside Catesby. Reliance on itinerant labour reached its peak in the final account for 1453/4 when £2 15s. 1½ d. was paid to sixteen men from Coventry and Warwick at a rate of 3d. per day.[95] They feature in the autumnal costs so presumably they were either reaping at harvest or ploughing subsequently.

The explanation for the Priory demesne's increasing reliance on itinerant labour probably lies in depopulation. The position at Newbold has already been described but was followed at Shopes. There are early indications of 'decayed rents' there from the 1420s but in the accounts for 1447/48 and again for 1448/49 it was stated that *tota villa devastata* and that the rent recovered there was only just over 13s. and 9s. respectively.[96] The notional rent from Shopes in the early accounts of 1414–17 was over £4, so that indicates that the decline in population had, indeed, been dramatic.

Depopulation in Shopes and Newbold would have left the prioress heavily dependent on labour from Upper Catesby, its surrounding villages and, as the accounts show, further afield. Upper Catesby was probably never a very large settlement: the rental of 1428/9 shows fifteen virgate and half-virgate tenants and eighteen or so cottage tenants, many holding multiple cottage tenements which suggests a number were lying empty and that their tenants held them for their accompanying curtilage. Some of these tenants undoubtedly worked on the demesne, but the Priory's employment of relatively expensive itinerant labour

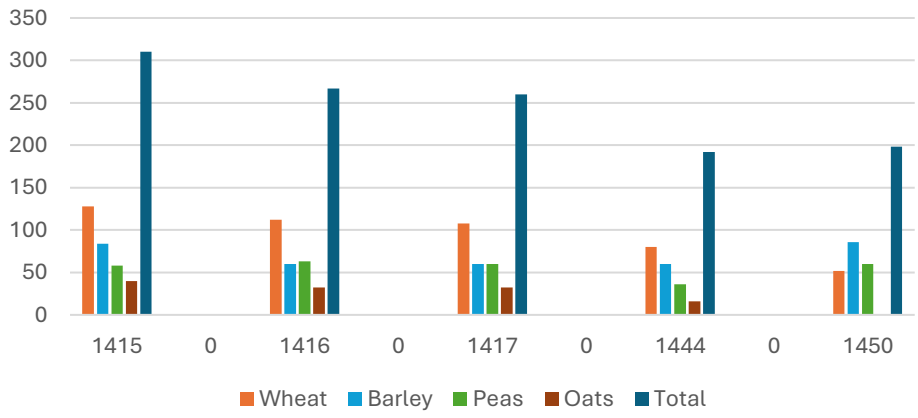
[95] TNA, SC 6/947/1 (accounts for 1453/4).
[96] TNA, SC 6/946/23 (accounts for 1447/8) and SC 6/946/25 (accounts for 1448/9) both use this phrase.

from outside the village suggests that the reserves of labour within the village were inadequate for its needs at pinch points in the agrarian year, such as harvest.

Against this background, and (as has been observed) with a falling rent roll, it would be natural to expect the prioresses to resort to widespread conversion to much less labour-intensive sheep walks and to generate a cash income from wool sales. In fact, the evidence from the accounts is that this only happened rather slowly in the first half of the fifteenth century.

The evidence is limited because only the accounts for 1414–1417 and for 1443/4 and 1449/50 include sufficient information about crops and crop yields to examine this question.[97] What those accounts show (figure 5.4) is that for the harvests of 1415–17 between approximately 250 and 300 acres had been sown to various crops in either the preceding autumn or spring. By 1444 and 1450, that acreage had dropped to around 200 acres, indicating a reduction of, at most, 100 acres or a third of the acreage for 1415 or, at the lowest, fifty acres or a sixth of the acreage of 1417.

Figure 5.4 Catesby: area sown (acres), 1415 – 1450

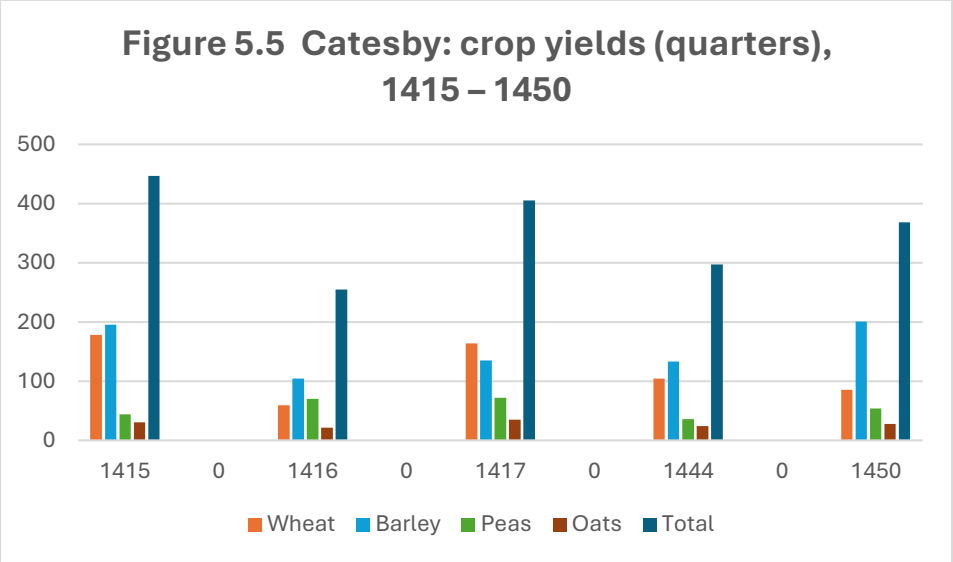


[97] TNA, SC 6/946/16 (accounts 1414/15), SC 6/946/17 (accounts 1415/16, probably), SC 6/946/18 (accounts 1416/17), SC 6/946/20 (accounts 1443/4) and SC 6/947/5 (accounts 1449/50). These accounts provide the material for figures 5.3 and 5.4.

Although that is a significant reduction in the arable acreage, it does not look like a headlong flight from arable cultivation. The reason was probably that even if the economics of demesne farming were less favourable to the Priory by the mid-century (see tables 5.3a and 5.3b), it still needed grain crops for subsistence and for its bread and beer. Thus, any shift away from arable farming happened rather slowly and only to a rather limited extent during the first half of the fifteenth century.

It also follows from this profile that depopulation at Newbold (see above) preceded this rather slow conversion to pasture. The devastation of Shopes (also see above) is reported rather suddenly in the accounts of 1447/48. The tenants of Shopes (in contrast to the tenants of Catesby) held only small tenements of agricultural land. Their main importance for the agrarian economy of the Priory may have been that they provided a labour force. However, it seems unlikely that the two depopulation events, at Newbold (in the late fourteenth or very early fifteenth centuries) and at Shopes (probably in the later 1440s) had much causal impact on the slow developments between 1415 and 1450 shown in figure 5.4. The conclusion is, however, inescapable that it was depopulation that caused conversion of land in Catesby to sheepwalks and not conversion to sheepwalks that caused depopulation. That conclusion is reinforced by the clear impression that the absence of a labour force in Catesby was an expensive problem for the Priory and that it is unlikely that the prioresses would have encouraged depopulation. The need for a labour force was, in turn, dictated by the Priory's economic model (see table 5.3) which involved production for consumption. That probably necessitated the maintenance of a minimum area of arable cultivation. As is observed elsewhere in this thesis (see p. 5), one of the inflexible features of a common field system was that it required a basic minimum number of tenants to maintain the fields and the institutions needed to maintain them. With that in mind, the following paragraphs return to a consideration of the Priory's agrarian economy.

Figure 5.5 shows the crop yields. It should be remembered when comparing figures 5.4 and 5.5 that the yields for one year are the produce of the area sown the previous year so that, for instance, the area sown for the 1415 harvest (table 5.4) gives rise to the yield for 1416 (table 5.5).



The main crops grown were wheat, which seems to have been used for bread and payments in kind (see above), and barley, which was entirely converted to malt for beer. In fact, despite the reduction in acreage between 1414/17 and 1450, the barley yield held up well and in 1450 equalled that of 1415. The entire community from the prioress down seems to have drunk ale: the induction of a new prioress, Agnes Allesly, in 1452/3 was celebrated with an eel feast (cost 10d.) and ten gallons of ale (cost 10d.).[98] The only other crops grown were peas and oats, both in rather small quantities: the peas were probably a fodder crop, and the oats were fed either to the stock or to the *famuli* (for their pottage).[99]

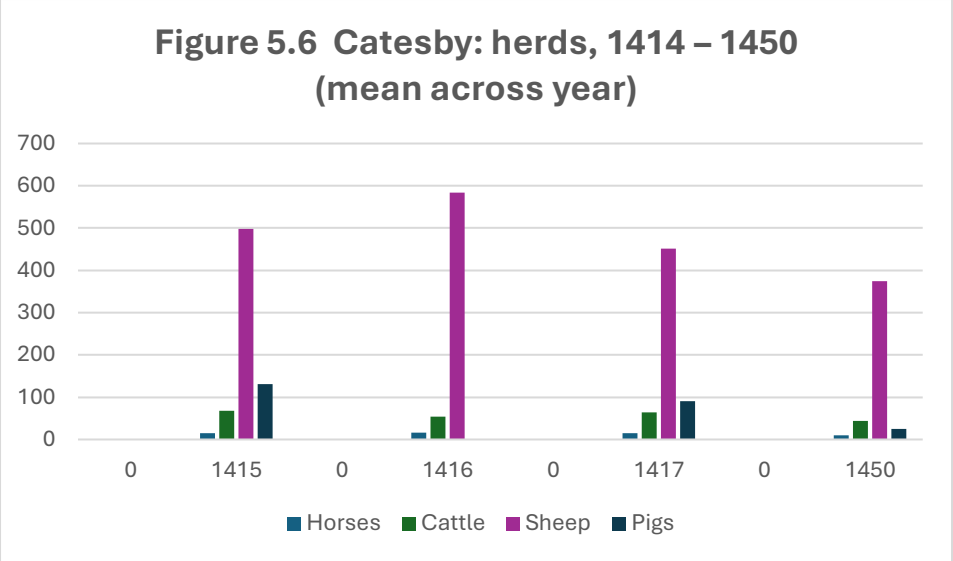
The same group of accounts also provide information about the Priory's stock (figure 5.6). Unsurprisingly, sheep were by far the most numerous livestock on the demesne pastures. The Priory does not seem to have sold wool every year, and on occasions it was sold to

[98] TNA, SC 6/947/3 (accounts 1452/3).
[99] TNA, SC 6/946/17 (accounts 1414/15), for instance.

local fullers and processed into yarn before being returned to the Priory, where it was used to provide clothing for the *famuli*.[100] When the wool was sold, it provided a useful addition to the Priory's income of around £6 to £7 in the second and third decades of the fifteenth century, but dropping to around £4 or £5 per annum in the middle years of the century. It was usually sold in a single batch of rather more than thirty stone in the latter period to a single merchant in London or Stratford-upon-Avon.[101]

As well as wool, sheep provided hides and meat for the Priory. There is a suggestion in the 1414/15 accounts that they may also have provided milk, probably for cheese-making, as there is a reference to the purchase *de tripida… pro lactantia* for the *bercarium* costing 8d.[102] Certainly, by the middle years of the century the Priory employed a milkmaid: in 1452/3 Joanna Walche and the following year Helen Yardley, both paid a stipend of 12s.[103] Neither are local names, and it seems possible that Joanna Walche was the wife of Hugo Walsheman who was employed in the same year as a cowman at a rather small stipend of 5s.[104] This seems to reflect the now-familiar broadening of the English diet in the fifteenth century but may also demonstrate an attempt to increase the Priory's income in the depths of the mid-fifteenth century recession.

[100] For example, TNA, SC 6/947/1 (accounts 1453/4) records the delivery of wool for the servants' clothing.
[101] For example, thirty-one stone of wool was sold to Thomas Hancok of London in 1448 for £5 3s. 4d. (TNA, SC 6/946/21 – accounts for 1448) and thirty-two stone was sold to him in 1449 for £4 5s. 4d. (SC 6/946/24 – accounts for 1348/9); thirty-one stone of wool was sold to John Handes of Stratford-upon-Avon in 1450 for £3 17s. 6d. (SC 6/947/5 – accounts for 1449/50) and thirty-four stone was sold to hm for £5 2s. (SC 6/947/3 – accounts for 1452/3); thirty-eight stone was sold to Phillip Harries, also of Stratford-upon-Avon, for £5 2s. 4d .in 1454 (SC 6/947/2 – accounts for 1453/4).
[102] TNA, SC 6/946/16 (accounts for 1414/15).
[103] TNA, SC 6/947/3 (accounts for 1452/3 for Joanna Walche); SC 6/947/1 (accounts for 1453/4 for Helen Yardley).
[104] TNA, SC 6/947/3 (accounts 1452/3).



This rather brief review of the Priory's activities confirms that it could generate a modest income from wool sales and certainly experimented with milk products (although they do not seem to have been sold). The nuns and *famuli* enjoyed a general broadening of diet like many in fifteenth-century England but still remained dependent on arable grain as their main source of sustenance. That also confirms that the prioresses were unlikely to have depopulated their manor because they needed a workforce to cultivate it.

The management of the Priory estate

The mid-fifteenth century recession may have been exacerbated by problems with the management of the Priory and its estate. In 1431 Margaret Wavere became prioress following two earlier prioresses, Elizabeth Swynford (1405–1426) and Agnes Terry (1426–1431), both of whom seem to have been capable managers of the Priory.[105] Margaret Wavere's record is more equivocal: her account book covering the period 1433 to 1435/6 survives and shows that she was able to write in what looks like reasonably competent Latin.[106] However, a 1442 visitation by the bishop of Lincoln, William Alnwick, revealed a number of problems with the administration of the Priory.[107] Many of the complaints were

[105] VCH, *Northants*, p. 125.
[106] TNA, SC 6/1257/1.
[107] A Hamilton Thompson (ed.), *Records of Visitations held by William Alnwick, Bishop of Lincoln, Pt I* (London, 1919), pp. 46–53.

probably the familiar subject matter of such visitations: failure to adhere to the rule, various forms of immoral behaviour and so on.

However, a common theme that emerged in the sisters' evidence concerned the financial management of the Priory. They included complaints that Margaret Wavere had pawned the jewels of the house (possibly silver plate), had failed to provide clothing for the nuns (testimony of Juliana Wolfe), had also failed to account for the receipts and expenses of the house and to carry out repairs to its fabric. and had further failed to account for money given for that purpose and one and a half sacks of wool (testimony of Isabel Benet).[108] Finally and possibly most significantly, there had been a fall in the revenue of the Priory from £60 per annum to £50 (testimony of Agnes Allesley).

Margaret Wavere's defence to some of these allegations was that she did not have a scribe who was able to write. That may have been the case and might explain the ending of the main series of court rolls in 1431 and a noticeable gap in the Priory accounts of the same period. Alnwick's solution was to leave Margaret Wavere in office as prioress, where she remained until 1453, but to remove her from financial control: in the words of Alnwick's commission to the auditor, *nos in ea parte mouentes priorissam loci illius ab omni administracione bonorum spiritualium et temporalium dicte prioratus.*[109]

The upshot of William Alnwick's inquisition was that two of the sisters, Isabella Benet and Agnes Allesley (both subsequently prioresses following Margaret Wavere's resignation in 1452/3), were appointed to prepare an account. They managed to so and the account for the following year, 1443/44, bears their names in the mutilated heading.[110] Subsequently, the financial affairs of the Priory were placed in the hands of two *ministri*, Robert Catesby

[108] Hamilton Thompson, *Visitations*, p. 47 (Juliana Wolfe), pp. 47–8 (Isabel Benet) and pp. 48–9 (Agnes Allesley).
[109] Hamilton Thompson, *Visitations*, p. 52.
[110] TNA, SC 6/946/20.

and Richard Willoughby, who appointed a local collector of rent, John Fyndern, a member of a family with a well-established connection with the Priory and its manor in the fifteenth century.[111] It is not clear to what extent these arrangements were successful: the quality of the documentary record diminishes with the end of the accounts series in 1454, but Catesby's supposed position as the second wealthiest Cistercian nunnery at the dissolution, ninety years later, suggests a reasonable degree of success.[112]

It appears some attempt was made in the mid-fifteenth century to tackle the problem of the Priory's diminishing rent roll. A large part of its rental income had always come from Catesby and its satellite villages of Hellidon and Staverton. Thus, in 1414/15 the *redditus assisus* from all four villages had been £16 12s. 3d.[113] By the mid-century, in 1453/4, it had increased slightly to just over £18 together with almost £1 from letting land lying fallow (*frisca*), although that was offset by decayed rents of £2 12s. 7½d. bringing the net total rents for the four villages back to £16 10s. 8d. – almost the same as the 1414/15 rental income.[114] On the face of it, that seems a rather remarkable achievement given the evidence of depopulation: the desertion of Shopes, the vacant cottage tenements in Upper Catesby and the adverse climatic conditions and the slump of the mid-fifteenth century.[115]

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[111] John Fyndern appears in the accounts in a variety of roles: collector, presumably of rents (TNA, SC 6/946/23 – accounts for 1447/8, SC 6/946/25 – accounts for 1448/9), bailiff (SC 6/946/26 – accounts 1452/3) and steward (SC 6/947/2 – accounts 1453/4). By the 1480s a John Fyndern appears in the manorial court rolls as a juror (SC 2/195/9).
[112] Jane Laughton, 'Catesby, I', p.9 although the basis of this assertion is uncertain.
[113] TNA, SC 6/946/16.
[114] TNA, SC 6/947/2.
[115] For adverse climatic conditions, see Kathleen Pribyl, 'Climate Induced Crisis: The 1430s in England, A Difficult Decade', *EdUFF, Editora de UFF* 30.2 (2024) https://doi.org/10.1590/TEM-1980-542X2024v300210 , and C. Camenisch, K.M. Keller, M. Salvisberg, B. Amann, M. Bauch, S. Blumer, R. Bràzdil, S. Brönimann, U. Büntgen, B.M.S. Campbell, I. Fernàndez-Donado, D. Fleitmann, R. Glase, F. Gonzàlez-Rouco, M. Grosjean, R.C. Hoffmann, H. Huhtamaa, F. Joos, A. Kiss, O. Kotyza, F. Lehner, J. Luterbacher, N. Maughan, R. Neukom, T. Novy, K. Pribyl, C.C. Raible, D. Riemann, M. Schuh, P. Slavin, J.P. Werner, and O. Wetter, 'The 1430s: A Cold Period of Extraordinary Internal Climate Variability during the early Spörer Minimum with Social and Economic Impacts in North-Western and Central Europe', *Climate of the Past.* 12 (2016), pp. 2107-16 and, for economic circumstances, see John Hatcher, 'The Great Slump of the Mid—Fifteenth Century in Britain' in Richard Britnell and John Hatcher (eds.), *Progress and Problems in Medieval England,* (Cambridge, 2012). For an overview of the process, see Bruce M.S. Campbell, *The Great Transition: Climate, Disease and Society in the Late-Medieval World* (Cambridge, 2016). For the implications of these developments on manorial tenure, see Mark Bailey, 'Extreme Weather and Economic Crisis in the

The answer probably lies in a re-arrangement of the Priory's tenurial arrangements in and around Catesby. The rentals on which the rental income in the accounts was based have not survived but the rental for 1483, thirty years later, shows that the Priory was still receiving a broadly similar rental income from the four villages of £17 6s. 5d.[116] The rental does not show the size of the tenements but it is possible to make some guesses. John Fyndern, the largest tenant in Catesby, paid a rent of 30s. per annum, probably for a virgate and a *quartrona* (the evidence for his holding is reasonably clear – see below). Other tenants, probably the holders of half-virgate tenements, paid rents of around 13s. 4d. That rent was considerably more than the *redditus assisus* of 5s. for a half-virgate and 10s. for a virgate paid by the customary tenants in the late fourteenth and earlier fifteenth centuries.[117]

A hint of tenurial changes is given in the 1453/4 accounts where tenants are referred to as holding *ad voluntatem* – tenants at will.[118] That change is mirrored in the transactions recorded towards the end of the court rolls (see appendix 7, no. 23, from 1422) but it is difficult to track this change further because the main run of court rolls ends in 1431. Those transactions towards the end of the court rolls also suggest a change in the level of rents and, in particular, entry fines. The basic annual rent of 10s. for a virgate and 5s for a half-virgate remained common then but even modest increases in the rent of a half-virgate holding to 5s. 6d. were accompanied by either modest fines (20d.) or no fine at all.[119] Equally, where the rent for a virgate holding increased significantly to 20s. per annum, it was

1430s in England, and the Implications for Tenurial Change', *Economic History Review,* (2026), pp. 1-27.

[116] TNA, SC 11/508. The format of the late-fifteenth century accounts is confusing because they give the rent for a half-year (from September) followed by the rent for the preceding half-year (from March).

[117] TNA, SC 11/507 and SC 12/3/29.

[118] TNA, SC 6/947/2.

[119] TNA, SC 2/195/8 m. 3 (Prioress to Thomas Rede, 21 October 1426, rent 5s. 6d. and entry fine 20d.); SC 2/195/8 m. 8 (Prioress to John Withibed, 29 January 1431, rent 5s. 6d. no entry fine but heriot of 40d.). In the last case it is simply stated *nihil dat ad ingressum* so it is not clear whether the entry fine was waived or permanently removed. The former seems more probable.

accompanied by no fine at all.[120] In these cases, it appears the hereditary tenant had died and an incomer was admitted. That provided an opportunity for the prioresses to substitute a market rent for the customary rent of 5s. for a half-virgate or 10s. for a virgate. Even if the market rent was depressed, it was still slightly higher than the old customary rent and further increases in rent could be achieved by making concessions. In short, remission of entry fines and labour services was traded off for higher, and increasing, rents. That would not be an entirely surprising strategy in the conditions of the fifteenth century where lords were anxious to escape from sub-economic rents but found it difficult to attract tenants.[121]

Before leaving Catesby in the mid-fifteenth century, it is worth pausing to consider two entries in the account for 1453/4, the year in which Agnes Allesley became prioress.[122] The first records the expenditure of £14 14s. 3¼ d. on the reconstruction of the hall of the Priory. The second records costs of £7 12s. 5d. for work on the hedge between Catesby and the common fields of Hellidon. That work included the construction of 331 perches (1,820.5 yards, or over a mile) of *fundarum*, boundary ditching, and the planting of 180 perches (990 yards) of hedging. The hedging used twenty cartloads of hawthorns (*spinarum vocatis hauthorns*) from the common pasture in the Grove. Presumably that involved digging up hawthorn whips there and transplanting them to plant the hedge, which would have improved the quality of the pasture in the Grove. The work took over a fortnight and included in the expenses was the cost of providing lodging for the workers with one of the manorial tenants. This was unusual: the accounts often refer to the provision of food for day labourers, but this is the only reference to lodging. Presumably, unlike the other frequent

[120] TNA, SC 2/195/8 m. 8 (Prioress to John Harryes, 23 April 1431, rent 20s., no entry fine and relieved of all labour services).
[121] See e.g. Barbara Harvey, *Westminster Abbey*, ch. X, 'From Villeinage to Customary Tenure, c.1390 to c.1490'. This also suggests that, by about the 1420s the tenurial arrangements at Catesby conformed to Bailey's category 2 tenures, a mix of hereditary and fixed-term (in this case life-term) tenancies with the service elements of the hereditary tenures still being recorded although it seems unlikely they were extracted – see Mark Bailey, 'The Transformation of Customary Tenures in Southern England, c.1350 to c.1500', *Agricultural History Review* 62.2 (2014-01) pp. 201-30.
[122] TNA, SC 6/947/1.

items of day-work, this work was done in winter and the labourers needed shelter overnight. The ditch and hedge, unlike the hall, survive to this day.[123]

The extent of the work suggests that it was becoming necessary to control livestock movements on what had, previously, been a boundary between the arable fields of Catesby and Hellidon and which had probably been marked only by a balk.[124] That, in turn, suggests a shift to more extensive pastoral agriculture.

On any basis, these were significant works of capital expenditure incurred in the depths of the mid-fifteenth century recession and at a time when the Priory's rental income was diminishing. This and other work undertaken in the same year threw the account into deficit which, according to a note at its foot, was funded by a series of loans from knights, clerics and others totalling £43 6s. 9d. The largest loan, £13 13s. 4d., was from Alionare Allesley, presumably a relative of Agnes, the prioress. The significance of this work and the role of the successive prioresses will be considered further in the final section of this chapter. However, the very fact that this work was undertaken suggests an active approach to administration of the Priory and its demesne with a view to their future and at a time when the economic outlook must have been far from certain.

The accounts of Catesby Priory have been dealt with at length in this section but that is because of the light they shed on its manor and how it was managed in the difficult conditions of the first half of the fifteenth century. Those difficulties included depopulation and loss of tenants and rent at Newbold and Shopes and shortage of labour, leading to the employment of expensive, transient day labour. The prioresses' response seems to have been a continuation of the broadly conciliatory approach they had adopted in the late

[123] Author's observations, 3 November 2023.
[124] For the ridge and furrow on the Catesby side of the boundary, see map 13. A similar exercise at Hellidon shows ridge and furrow on the Hellidon side of the boundary – see Jennifer Fell, *Three Ells in Hellidon* (Hellidon, 2000), map at p.14.

fourteenth century (the extended use of the *homagium* and encouragement of litigation in the manorial court). In the fifteenth century that took the form of attempting to protect themselves and their tenants against animal trespass (for instance). That was, however, balanced by the need to protect their own interests (as in the 1429 hedge-breaking incident). It probably became increasingly difficult to maintain that balance in the economic depression of the mid-fifteenth century. However, the prioresses embarked on significant capital expenditure (building and hedging and ditching). The Priory had probably always survived from hand to mouth so it is not entirely surprising that expenditure was funded by a series of loans. However, as the following section shows, the Priory did survive and entered a slowly improving economic climate.

5. Catesby from the mid-fifteenth century to the dissolution

The materials for this period are the isolated manorial court rolls for 1461, from circa 1481 to 1493 and two sessions from 1534, shortly before the dissolution in 1536.[125] There is also a series of rentals from 1483 to 1492.[126] Then, in the sixteenth century there is the evidence given to the inquisition of inclosures in 1517 followed by episcopal visitations of 1520 and 1530 and material relating to the dissolution: the commissioners' report on the Priory and the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, a survey of 1536 (in English), ministers' accounts of 1536/7 and the letters patent of 1537 granting the Priory site and manor to John Onley, an attorney of the court of augmentations and, seemingly, from a local family.[127]

[125] TNA, SC 2/195/8–10.
[126] TNA, SC 11/508 (1483), SC 11/509 (1484), SC 11/510 (1485), SC 11/511 (1487), SC 11/512 (1486), SC 11/513 (1492), SC 11/514 (1488) and SC 11/515 (date missing but probably from this period).
[127] I. S. Leadam (ed.), *The Domesday of Inclosures, 1517–1518*, (New York and London, 1971), vol. I, pp. 315–16 for the evidence given to the inclosure commissioners; Dugdale, *Monasticon*, pp. 631–40 for the 1536 survey (pp.639–40), transcripts of the commissioners' report (p. 638), the *Valor* (pp. 639–40) and ministers' accounts (p. 640) and TNA, C 66/671 for the 1537 letters patent. There are problems with the transcript of the *Valor* in Dugdale and the version used here is that appearing in *Valor Ecclesiasticus Tempore Henrici VIII*, vol. IV (London, 1821, reprint 2001), p. 339.

The manorial court rolls are discontinuous: the roll for 1461 contains a record of Thomas Fyndern's entry into a messuage, a virgate and *quartrona*, formerly held by John Warrde, presumably the John Warde recorded in the 1412 custumal as the late fourteenth-century free tenant of a messuage and virgate (see above).[128] This is, in fact, the only direct indication of the size of the Catesby virgate. The land granted to Thomas Fyndern totalled about sixty-three acres of arable, minutely detailed, selion by selion, and some twenty headlands (area unspecified) either arable or pasture, along with various parcels of meadow (area again unspecified). On the face of it, that suggests a virgate of about fifty acres of arable plus (presumably) some meadow. That may understate the size of a virgate because some of the description of pasture in the 1461 transaction (e.g. headlands) suggest arable converted to grazing. Taking that into account, the Domesday ploughland of sixty acres may have developed into a virgate of about that size.

It also looks very much as though this court roll was commissioned by Thomas to record the grant of the land to him: it is the work of a competent clerk, readily legible and on parchment, unlike the other surviving late fifteenth century rolls which are on paper. It is almost the only item in this court roll and omits all the financial details of the grant to Thomas. This also carries the implication that the recording of courts was becoming increasingly haphazard [129]and, possibly also, the frequency with at which courts were held.

The nature of Thomas Fyndern's tenure is, however, clear. The 1412 custumal records the previous holder of this tenement, John Warde, as the only free tenant of the manor. The 1393 record of his death confirms that he held his virgate holding *libere* and goes on to record his herriot, a cow valued at 8s., which had been delivered to the prioress. The entry ends with the opaque observation *Et super hoc seisiti sunt omnia predicta in manu domine*

[128] TNA, SC 2/195/6 m. 12 (1412 custumal) and SC 2/195/8 mm. 9 and 10 (1461 Fyndern transaction).
[129] SC 11/506.

quosque aliquis veniat ad calumpniandum omnia predicta. That is obscure but it is likely that Warde's free virgate was one of only two full virgate tenements at Catesby: the 1339 rental records only two, one at an annual rent of 10s. and the other of at an annual rate of 5s. (presumably the free virgate). If so, it looks as though free land at Catesby was recorded in the manorial rentals and treated as manorial land. In the light of the 1393 record of Warde's death and the 1461 transfer to John Fyndern it is clear that transfers of free land were recorded in the manorial rolls.

The remaining rolls for 1481 to 1493 are in poor condition.[130] By now, the court was mainly concerned with recording land transactions and presentations by the jury or *homagium* for dilapidation of manorial tenements. Animal trespass had disappeared but that was probably the result of depopulation removing the earlier pressure on pasture and meadow. Litigation, too, had disappeared along with the pledge system. The overall impression, however, is that the court was now largely run by the *homagium*, probably holding a balance between their own interests and those of the prioresses.

The most informative documents are the rentals of 1483 to 1492.[131] The earliest surviving rental before this series was that of 1428/9 which recorded the presence in Catesby of fifteen virgate and half-virgate holders and about eighteen cottagers subject to the qualification mentioned above: many of them held multiple cottage tenements.[132] However, by 1483 they had almost completely disappeared leaving a total of only fifteen tenants in Upper Catesby alone who, to judge by the rents (no details of the tenements are given), seem to have been the successors of the earlier virgate and half-virgate holders paying the increased rents detailed above.

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[130] TNA, SC 2/195/9 mm. 1–9, which probably runs from the early 1480s to 1493 but the heading of the first membrane is damaged. SC 2/195/10 records two courts from 1534, the last surviving Catesby manorial court rolls.
[131] TNA, SC 11/508 to 515.
[132] TNA, SC 12/3/29.

This suggests that although Catesby was extensively depopulated and although some arable had been converted to pasture, the common field system was still working reasonably effectively. The grant to Thomas Fyndern of 1461 certainly seems to suggest that as it identifies each selion forming Thomas' holding along with the other tenants, about twelve of them, occupying neighbouring selions or land. However, it seems unlikely that it still covered the manor as extensively as it had done in the fourteenth century.

The evidence given to the inquisition commissioners in 1517 presents problems. It recites that the prioress was seized of ten messuages, four cottages and sixteen virgates of twenty acres each in Catesby. Pausing there, the description of the number of messuages and cottages looks plausible in the light of the earlier rentals as does the number of virgates. The attribution of only twenty acres to each virgate seems unlikely but may reflect the requirement that an enclosure had to affect more than twenty acres to fall foul of the 1488 statute of 4 Henry VII c.19 (as Leadam observes in a footnote).[133]

The evidence continues:

> *Et sic seisita quinto die aprilis anno decimi predicti nuper Regis henrici septimi Mesuagiis et Cotagia ad terram prosterni et devastari fecit ac terras predictas sepibus et fossis circumquaque inclusit et ab vsu culture et iconomie in pasturam animalium conuertit*.[134]

In other words, in April 1495 the prioress had demolished all the messuages and tenements, enclosed the sixteen virgates and converted them to pasture. It is not possible to reconcile that account with the pre-dissolution survey of 1536 which records the presence in Upper

[133] *Domesday*, Leadam, p. 315, footnote 2.
[134] *Domesday*, Leadam, pp. 315–16.

Catesby of five tenements, four rented at £1 6s. 8d. per annum each and another at farm at 12s. per annum, along with a cottage rented at 10s. per annum.[135] In short, nineteen years after the evidence to the inquisition commissioners that Upper Catesby had been completely depopulated there were still seven tenants there. A partial explanation may be that the evidence given in 1517 was confused because it related to events over twenty years earlier.

It does seem clear that there had been a significant reduction in the number of tenants between the time of the 1492 rental and the 1536 survey, but it also seems unlikely that that resulted from a single dramatic act of clearance by the prioress. As has been said, the manor had been significantly and continuously depopulated since the late fourteenth century, and it seems likely that that process had continued in the period between 1492 and 1536. It also seems unlikely that process would have been encouraged by the prioresses given their need for labour both on the demesne farm and within the Priory precinct.

The two episcopal visitations of 1520 and 1530 capture the Priory immediately before the dissolution, in the hands of the last prioress, Jocosa Bykley.[136] They revealed the continuing failure of the prioress to prepare accounts and, in the case of the 1530 visitation, that the dormitory, cloister and chapter-house were in need of repair (*in decasu*). The accounts of the first half of the fifteenth century showed that the Priory buildings needed constant repair, so that deterioration was unsurprising. However, the series of financial problems revealed by Bishop Alnwick's visitation seem to have faded away.

The 1536 survey is quite detailed and sheds light on the demesne which was the primary focus of the valuation.[137] It deals first with meadow and pasture: just over 253 acres of enclosed pasture, 135 acres of unenclosed pasture over which the tenants had rights of

[135] Dugdale, *Monasticon*, p. 639.
[136] A. Hamilton Thompson (ed.) *Visitations of the Diocese of Lincoln, 1517–1531*, vol. II(Hereford, 1944), pp. 101–4.
[137] Dugdale, *Monasticon*, pp. 638–9.

common (presumably to graze their animals there in the open season) and to 'certen loods of heye', and 83 acres of meadow in demesne or just over 471 acres of pasture in all. To this should be added a further 161 acres of surviving demesne arable (a significant reduction from the possible 620 acres of 1414/15 – see table 5.1). The total demesne is, therefore, just over 632 acres, which corresponds remarkably well with the theoretical reconstruction of the manor in table 5.1 at 620 acres arable to which some meadow should be added. These figures suggest about twelve acres and, although that seems surprisingly modest, it would accord with earlier suggestions that there had only been a relatively small area of meadow and pasture in Catesby. It does, however, indicate that between 1414/15 and 1536 there had been a significant reduction in the arable with an accompanying conversion of land to pasture, much of which, 253 acres odd, was enclosed.

The survey contains the strong suggestion that, by 1536, the prioresses had abandoned demesne farming. It is dated 28 April 1536 which seems to precede the actual suppression of the Priory which did not occur until shortly after 27 June 1536.[138] That is because it gives figures for the rent of all parts of the demesne except the Priory itself which is said to be *estemed off yerely rente to be worthe £1 1s. 0d.*.[139] The total rent, including the estimated rent of the Priory itself, and the *arented* tithes of Catesby, Hellidon and *Newbold Felde*, was £86 2s. 10¼d.[140] The *Valor* shows that, by the time of the dissolution, the Priory's income from both *temporalia* and *spiritualia* was £132 1s. 11¼d.[141] It is not easy to establish the Priory's income in the mid-fifteenth century: the full accounts for 1453/4 show a total income (presumably including items in addition to rent) of almost £63 although the separate rent account for that year points to a total of £85.[142] Whatever the income then, it looks as

[138] *Letters and Papers Foreign and Domestic of the Reign of Henry VIII*, vol. X, ed. James Gairdnere (London, 1887), letter from George Gyffard (one of the authors of the survey of 28 April 1536) to Thomas Cromwell dated 27 June 1536 saying he was at Catesby and about to begin the suppression.
[139] Dugdale, *Monasticon*, pp. 638–9.
[140] Dugdale transcribes the total as £84 4s. 10¼d. which seems to be an error.
[141] *Valor Ecclesiasticus Tempore Henrici VIII*, vol. IV (London, 1821, reprint 2001), p. 339.
[142] TNA, SC 6/947/1 (full accounts for 1453/4) and SC 6/947/2 (rent account for 1453/4).

though the prioresses had managed to increase it significantly in the following eighty years, presumably in part the result of renting out their demesne. The survey, with its reference to the arrented tithe of Newbold field of £6, implies that they had even managed to rent out all or part of Newbold.

The survey records that there were five tenants paying rent of £1 6s. 8d. each, presumably for holdings formed by consolidating the old half-virgate holdings. Much of the demesne pasture, almost 254 acres, had been enclosed but the demesne arable, 161 acres, was distributed across five fields. Of those five fields, only one (Church Field) can be traced in the terrier and field map of 1638.[143] The 1638 field map seems to show an enclosed field system that followed the outline of some of the furlongs, so it is just possible that areas of common arable remained surrounded by enclosed pasture even into the seventeenth century. On the whole, the most likely course of events was that the Catesby arable common field system survived until the Dissolution in a much-reduced form and was then enclosed by agreement sometime after 1536. That enclosure took the form of enclosing various furlongs from the common fields, as appears in the 1638 field map. Much but not all of the demesne pasture had been enclosed before the Dissolution (see the 1536 survey).

The coda to the history of the Priory comes with the report of the commissioners, Edmund Knightley, John Lane, George Gyffard and Robert Burgoyn who found:

> [the whole House of Catesby] *in verry perfett order, the priores a sure, wyse, discrete, and very relygious woman, with ix nunnys under her obedyencye, as relygious and devout, and with as good obedyence as we have time past seen or belyke shall see. The said howse standyth in such a quarter much to the releff of the kyng's people and his graces pore subjects, their likewyse moo relieved, as by the*

[143] NAS, XYZ 1346 (the terrier) and map 6388.

report of dyvers worshypful nere ther unto adjoyning as of all other yt ys to us openly declared. Wherefore, yf yt shuld please the kyng's highnesse to have eny remorse that eny such relygous howse shall stande, we thinke his grace cannot appoynt eny house more mete to shew his most gracious charitie and pitey over than one the seyd house of Catesby.[144]

Their words fell upon deaf ears: the dissolution proceeded and the following year, 1537, the manor was sold for £400 to John Onley, attorney of the court of augmentations, although he only lived to enjoy it for a few months.[145] He was succeeded by his son, Edward Onley.[146]

6. Conclusion

At the Catesby manorial court held on 29 October 1410 the *homagium* presented John Shepherde (his name is not fully legible, but this was a common Catesby byname) for baking bread in an oven he had built in his tenement in Shopes.[147] This was a breach of the manorial ordinance compelling tenants to use the communal oven. He was fined 12d. None of this was particularly unusual but the entry goes on to record that the communal oven was, in fact, not working. The outcome was a compromise: John could continue to bake 'pyes tartes and flawnes' in his oven until the prioress mended her oven (called the *pyeoven*) and gave his oath that he would not bake bread of any type whatsoever. He was to pay 8d. a year for this concession and would be fined half a mark for any breach of the condition restraining him from baking bread. Taken in conjunction with the custumal of 1412, just two years later, it suggests that this may have been a period in which the prioresses were struggling to manage and assert their control over their manor.

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[144] Dugdale, *Monasticon*, p. 638. Joyce, the last prioress, had offered the king 2,000 marks for the house with a gelding worth 100 marks for Thomas Cromwell and her prayers. The king was 'displeased' by the commissioners' report and thought they had been bribed: *Letters and Papers*, Gairdner, pp. 154 and 487.
[145] Baker, *Northampton*, p. 287 and C 66/671 mm. 11 (letters patent for the sale to John Onley).
[146] Baker, *Northampton*, p. 287.
[147] TNA, SC 2/195/6 m. 11.

This is a rare example of a record of a compromise as the outcome of a presentation. It also begs a number of questions: how charitable, or benevolent, was the prioresses' administration of their manor and, further, who were the prioresses? And how did they manage the Priory estate?

As to the first of these questions, the evidence of the dissolution commissioners' report to Thomas Cromwell is quite clear. At least one of them, Edmund Knightley, was a local landowner at Fawsley (not far from Catesby) and an upwardly mobile lawyer.[148] It also seems quite likely that, even though the Elizabethan poor law lay some time in the future, their observations about the Priory were prompted by their awareness that if the burden of supporting the poor did not fall on the Priory, it would fall on shoulders of the local gentry.

It would go well beyond the available evidence to suggest that the Priory's capital expenditure of the mid-fifteenth century was intended to support employment and the local economy but successive prioresses probably realised that there was an inevitable relationship between the survival of the Priory and the survival of the local community – which must have seemed increasingly doubtful throughout the fifteenth century given the demographic decline of Catesby. That may explain in part the transactional relationship between the manorial administration and its tenants, of which the case of the communal oven is a relatively trivial example. The prioresses' use of the *homagium* and, to some extent, litigation in the manorial court also points to a realisation on their part that they needed to make some concessions to their tenants in the adverse economic conditions of the late-fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

[148] J. H. Baker, 'Knightley, Sir Edmund', ODNB, https://doi-org.ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/15743 .

This also raises questions about the background of the prioresses (and the nuns), their view of the surrounding community and their relations with it. As to their background, it is difficult to be certain because none of the late fourteenth and fifteenth century prioresses are identifiable as belonging to gentry or similar families. It would be tempting to draw some association between Elizabeth Swynford (prioress, 1405–26) and John of Gaunt's mistress but there is no evidence to support that. Agnes Terry (prioress, 1426–31) bore the same name as a family of fifteenth century manorial tenants. Margaret Wavere (prioress, 1431–52/3) was, despite the shortcomings of her administration, certainly sufficiently literate to keep an account book in basic Latin. Of course, a series of account book entries do not really provide a fair measure of ability but she must have come from a background which provided her with at least a basic education. Agnes Allesley (prioress from 1452/3) was presumably related to Alionare Allesley who lent the Priory over £13 the following year, which indicates a reasonably wealthy background. On the other hand, none of these names suggests that the prioresses, and the nuns from amongst whom they were appointed, came from elite landowning families.

This rather fragmentary account seems to correspond to Marilyn Oliva's conclusion that, in East Anglia, the nuns of late medieval England were drawn from the gentry and yeomanry.[149] It was a background which would have equipped them with the knowledge and experience to manage both the Priory and its demesne farm.

Despite David H. Williams' view that the prioresses played little part in the day to day administration of the Priory, the evidence points in the opposite direction.[150] Thus, for example, the accounts for a year in the period 1526–31 showed that the prioress, Agnes

[149] Marilyn Oliva, *The Convent and the Community in Late Medieval England: Female Monasteries in the Diocese of Norwich, 1350–1540* (Woodbridge, 1998).
[150] Williams, 'Catesby', p. 94: 'There was little, if any, involvement by the nuns in the management of and agricultural activities on their lands: that was in the latter days [sc. the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries] the concern of their steward and bailiffs.'

Terry, had travelled to Northampton with Thomas Bydenill (possibly Brudenell), John Catesby, William Tresham, Thomas Drake, William Coquott (the spelling is uncertain), Robert Knyghtley and 'many others' to give evidence against malefactors who had broken into the Priory, damaged its fabric and assaulted the prioress's servants.[151] John Catesby was presumably John Catesby (ii) from a family with strong local connections in Flecknoe and Ashby St Ledgers, both places close to Catesby and where the Priory owned land, and possibly the same family as the de Essebys, the Priory's founders.[152] William Tresham was one of two MPs for Northamptonshire and a lawyer in royal service since 1415 and with affiliations to Cardinal Beaufort.[153] As has been said, the Knightley family were local landowners. That all suggests the prioress was able to mobilise a powerful body of local gentry to support the Priory, when assistance was needed, in the royal courts.

Likewise, the account for 1452/3 shows the that the newly-installed prioress, presumably Agnes Allesley, travelled to Basford in Nottinghamshire to oversee repairs to the Priory's parish church there and also to Coventry for the purchase of bullocks – which suggests she took an informed interest in the Priory's herd and stock-breeding.[154] Indeed, the account of William Alnwick's visitation (see above) proceeds on the assumption that the prioress was directly responsible for the financial management of the Priory, the safeguarding and repair of its assets and the preparation of accounts. The proposed remedy to Margaret Wavere's, the prioress's, shortcomings in these regards was to appoint two of her nuns to deal with them. Even Margaret Wavere's own account book indicates her 'hands on' involvement in the day to day management of the Priory. These examples demonstrate successive prioresses' active involvement in the management of both Priory and demesne.

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[151] TNA, SC 6/947/4 (date missing but reconstructed from an internal reference to Agnes Terry as prioress).
[152] Christine Carpenter, 'Catesby family (per. c.1340–1505)', ODNB https://doi-org.ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/52779 .
[153] Henry Summerson, 'Tresham, William', ODNB, https://doi-org.ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/27713 .
[154] TNA, SC 6/947/1.

Thus the prioresses of Catesby fall into a pattern of small but relatively resourceful and adaptable landowners and manorial lords in the fifteenth century who have been identified in other parts of the country (Warwickshire and the forest of Arden) by Christopher Dyer and Andrew Watkins.[155] Dyer's small landowners, the Bromes, survived the fifteenth century by a mixture of subsistence farming and production for nearby markets. Watkins' forest of Arden landowners exploited the pastoral advantages of forest manors, spent money on the hedging and ditching (at Maxstoke Priory) which was necessitated by increased pastoral agriculture and, again, exploited the flexibility and adaptability of smaller estates. This all sounds rather like the approach of the prioresses at Catesby. In the difficult conditions of the mid-fifteenth century, in particular, the best survival technique was probably a significant degree of self-sufficiency which meant that a small landowner could avoid over-dependence on both falling rents and unreliable markets for surplus production.

Depopulation was one factor which the prioresses were unable to control. It is not easy to find hard evidence of the underlying cause of Catesby's depopulation from the later fourteenth century up to the early sixteenth century. The process seems to have been quite long drawn out with Newbold and Shopes disappearing, probably in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries respectively, and then what seems to have been a significant collapse in Upper Catesby in the very late fifteenth or early sixteenth centuries. Remoteness was probably a significant factor: both Dyer's and Watkins' landowners were able to take advantage of proximity to the relatively dense network of Warwickshire markets, whereas for Catesby the distance was considerable: Warwick, Coventry and Stratford-upon-Avon, which were the most significant markets in which the prioresses participated, were all between

[155] Christopher Dyer, 'A small landowner in the fifteenth century', *Midland History,* 1.3 (1972), pp. 1–14 and Andrew Watkins, 'Landowners and their Estates in the Forest of Arden in the Fifteenth Century', *The Agricultural History Review*, 45.1 (1997), pp. 18–33.

twenty and thirty miles distant and probably connected to Catesby by rather poor roads.[156] Whilst that may have been less of a problem for the Priory (witness its well-maintained fleet of carts), it would have made Catesby a less attractive option for peasant cultivators dependent on sale of their surplus products. Probably their only option was the rather small and limited but nearby market in Daventry. Other uncontrollable factors included adverse climatic and epidemiological circumstances (there are sixteen references to livestock losses from *morina* throughout the run of fifteenth-century accounts in appendix 6) and the accompanying economic slump.[157]

Another factor weighing on the minds of peasant cultivators may have been the sheer proximity of the Priory and the prioress at Catesby. Successive prioresses' use of the manorial court suggests they were prepared to compromise with their tenants. Set against that, they had also maintained a rather intrusive regime attempting to enforce labour service well into the fifteenth century. The fifteenth century was, after all, a period in which the supply of land exceeded the appetite of potential tenants so it would not have been difficult for them to find alternative holdings. Finally, environmental factors probably played a part: Catesby is relatively high by comparison with other parts of the midlands, and much of its soil relatively heavy (despite the views of the eighteenth-century commentators). There is also evidence in the Priory accounts that animal disease was a problem: the sheep, in particular, suffered persistent mortality from *morina*, murrain and it is probable that would have affected tenants' stock as well.[158] That too might have been a contributory factor in Catesby's relatively slow decline.

Despite all these problems, the prioresses managed to hold on through the period surviving the epidemic, economic, climatic and demographic thunderbolts thrown at them. The 1536

[156] Jane Laughton and Christopher Dyer, 'Small Towns in the East and West Midlands in the Later Middle Ages: A Comparison', *Midland History,* 24.1 (1999), pp. 24–52.
[157] See footnote 115 above for the growing literature on this subject.
[158] For evidence of murrain, see the accounts where it is mentioned on sixteen occasions.

value of the manor in the *Valor* suggests that the prioresses had in fact managed the manor relatively successfully through the particularly difficult period of the mid-fifteenth century. Ultimately, the thunderbolt they could not dodge was political.

Chapter 6

A comparison: Barkby, Catesby and Geddington, 1350–1500

1. Introduction

On Friday, 3 August 1352 *ad horam nonam* Agnes de Brechale discovered her husband, Hugo, hanging in his barn in Geddington.[1] According to the record of the coroner's inquest, she called two neighbours, Thomas Skotneye and William Terry, who viewed the body and acted as her pledge providers. Hugo, Thomas and William were probably all virgate holders. The coroner viewed the body the following day, a jury was sworn and found that Hugo had committed suicide. It was ordered that Hugo should be buried by the villagers at 'Landimire', a remote part of the forest to the north of Geddington. His estate, comprising grain and livestock, was valued at £33 6s., a surprisingly large sum.[2]

The incident sheds light on the village topography: Geddington was, and remains, a nucleated village clustered around the Eleanor Cross and the parish church (see map 3). The church bell had, presumably, enabled Agnes and her neighbours to establish the time of her discovery. The Brechale family is identifiable in the Geddington manorial court roll of 24 February 1327, twenty-five years earlier, when Richard and Matilda Brechale surrendered a house called *le Shoppe* which stood *in medietate ville de Geytington* to their daughter, Julia or Juliana, and she immediately granted a life interest to her parents – an early example of such transactions which are quite common in the later court rolls.[3]

The reason for Hugo's suicide is not explained by the record of the coroner's inquest but it seems reasonable to suppose that he was suffering from some form of psychiatric illness.[4]

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[1] TNA, JUST 2/113.
[2] See appendix 1 for the inventory of Hugo's estate.
[3] NAS, X 235A (court, 24.02.1327).
[4] Alice Seabourne and Gwen Seabourne, 'Suicide or Accident – Self-killing in Medieval England: Series of 198 Cases from the Eyre Records', *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 178 (2001), pp. 42–7 suggest that many in their sample of suicide verdicts were attributable to 'non-psychotic or quietly

His suicide came three years after England had been struck by the first wave of the Black Death so it is also possible his illness was provoked by an epidemic which killed about half of the population of communities it afflicted. It is a reminder that whilst some historical themes originated before the Black Death and continued after it, notably the decline of servile tenure and the market integration of manorial tenants, other themes were new, such as, in the longer term, the transition to a low-price, high-wage economy and the abandonment of direct demesne farming. In short, the Black Death was a traumatic intervention unleashing new social and economic forces.

The written record for all three manors in this thesis remained, however, completely silent about the plague until over a hundred years later. In 1455 the jurors at Geddington gave evidence to the inquisition that much land lay untenanted due to the death of numerous tenants *causa frequentarii morbi pestilenciali ibidem* combined with the high rents (a rather typical complaint at Geddington).[5] Likewise, it was only in the second half of the fifteenth century that William Charyte identified the *pestilencia* as a turning point in Leicester Abbey's agrarian fortunes at Barkby and elsewhere when he transcribed the earlier Geryn rental of 1341. His concern was to record the Abbey's position, in his own words, *ante pestilenciam*.[6] Only the records of Merton's Barkby manor make it possible to estimate the plague's impact: a tenant mortality of over 60% in the first wave of 1348/49 alone. There are, however, reasons to believe that its impact on Catesby and Geddington was significant and long-lasting. The steady depopulation of Catesby with the abandonment of Newbold, the emptying of Shopes and the diminished tenant population at Catesby itself points to that conclusion. The depopulation of Barford and Glendon, two of the townships comprising the medieval manor at Geddington, points in the same direction as does the testimony of the tenant jurors at the 1455 inquisition.

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psychotic illnesses' (relying on Barraclough, B, Bunch J, Nelson B, et al. (1974), 'A Hundred Cases of Suicide: Clinical Aspects, *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 125 (1974), pp. 355–73).

[5] NAS, X 345B.

[6] Oxford, Bodleian, Laud MS misc.625, ff. clxxxviii.

The manorial court rolls indicate the evolution of the three manors in the period between 1350 and 1500. The vocabulary of servility slowly disappears from the rolls in the half-century after 1350. At Barkby, the use of the term *in bondagio* in connection with tenants' holdings disappeared in 1367 and references to tenants as *nativi* not long afterwards with only an isolated example in 1413.[7] At Catesby, use of the *in bondagio* formula continued until 1402 although references to *nativi* died away in 1390.[8] These terms were never used at Geddington where the only reference to a tenant *in bondagio*, in 1360, seems to refer to a tenancy on a different manor.[9] The practical impact of servile tenure at Barkby and Geddington had disappeared long before the first wave of the Black Death with the abandonment of direct demesne farming, probably at some point in the thirteenth century in both cases. Direct demesne farming, and with it labour service, seems to have continued at Catesby into the late fifteenth century although labour services were increasingly fitfully enforced.

A broader comparison of the court rolls of the three manors before and after 1349 is hampered by the patchy survival of pre-plague rolls. At Barkby, there is a reasonably good run of rolls from the last two decades of the thirteenth century but that is followed by a lengthy gap until the series resumes in the 1340s. At Catesby, the series of rolls commences in 1313 and continues into the 1330s but the rolls for the 1340s appear to be later copies containing only records of land transactions. At Geddington, the sole survival from the pre-plague era is a single roll of 1326–7. There is, however, just about sufficient material to form an impression of the pre-plague manorial regime and its marked shift of emphasis after the plague. The pre-1349 rolls exhibit a determination to regulate almost every aspect of the tenants' lives with presentations for leyrwite (Catesby), failure to pay

[7] MCR 6577 (last use of *in bondagio*); MCR, 6592 (last use of *nativus*) but with a single recurrence in 1413 in MCR, 6588.
[8] TNA, SC 2/195/5 (last use of *nativus*); SC 2/195/6 (last use of *in bondagio* but rare by then).
[9] NAS, X 351A.

merchet (Barkby) or just looking suspicious (Geddington) where the luckless carter of Oundle, Geoffrey Modde, was found carrying five hides, arrested and held until local jurors swore that he was 'good and faithful'.[10] Possibly the most controlling aspect of manorial management in the pre-plague era was the tithing and pledging system by which the manorial tenants stood as sureties for one another.

This chapter considers how this pattern evolved after the 1349 period with a broad comparison of the three manors (section 2), changes to seigniorial management strategies (section 3), the tenants' response to those changes with particular reference to law and legal systems (section 4) and, finally, questions of tenant identity and 'culture' (section 5). It is, however, important to put the changes of the post-1349 era into context. Some of the changes, the abandonment of seigniorial direct farming of demesnes and the decline of servile status for example, had been under way long before 1349 (as has been observed). It is probable that the move from an agrarian economy based on labour service to one based on cash rents was accompanied (but not necessarily caused) by increased market integration as tenants sold their labour and surplus produce to raise cash to pay those rents. At Barkby and Geddington, the early transition to cash rents was probably attributable to the abandonment of direct demesne management, and the relatively late transition at Catesby to the prioresses' need to maintain their rental income. These changes are not easily traced in the written record although there are suggestions of a micro-economy at royal forest manors, such as Geddington (chapter 3, pp. 56-7). If correct, it was based on the sale of surplus from animal husbandry made possible by extensive common grazing rights in the royal forest that pre-dated 1349. Nevertheless, the broader post-1349 demographic changes and their economic results, the rising wages and reducing prices which took hold rather slowly after 1349, probably bore more heavily on lords than on their tenants. In particular, lords

[10] Barkby (*maritagium*) e.g. MCR, 6563 (courts of 11.04.1279 and 09.12.1279 and MCR, 6565 for the tenants' petition that custom limited the *marigagium* to marriages outside Barkby). Catesby (leyrwite, SC 2/195/1 m. 1 courts of 23.02.1314 and 18.10.1314 for presentations). Geddington NAS, X 351A (court, 16.12.1326 for Geoffrey Modde).

faced the problems of declining rent rolls as tenements fell vacant with the death or migration of their tenants. Their response is addressed in section 3 but it is important to bear in mind that the pre-1349 shift away from an agrarian economy based on customary labour services meant that some degree of seigniorial adaptation to changed circumstances had always been inevitable. Depopulation and its economic consequences added to that pressure for change, probably quite significantly, but also determined the nature of that response because the main problem became one of falling rental income, which had not been a problem before 1349.

Manorial tenants' responses to these changes are less easy to chart. The manorial court rolls are, manifestly, not a record of 'everything that happened'. Large areas of manorial administration went unrecorded in the court rolls, notably the day-to-day management of the common field system and critical decisions about when to plough, when to sow, when to reap and when to throw open meadows and fallow. That is not to say that the court rolls are wholly unhelpful when it comes to the lives of the tenants but, rather, to recognise their limitations. Their primary purpose seems to have been to provide a written record of matters such as land transactions and infringements of manorial customs in an uneasy balance between the interests of lords and tenants. Shifts in that balance in the period after 1350 will be considered further below but for present purposes the main point is that the rolls shed more light on interactions and relations between lords and tenants than on the 'internal' lives of the tenants. Law certainly played an important part in tenant culture but it is difficult to know whether that is because so many of the surviving records, the manorial court rolls especially, by their very nature concern law or custom and their application.

Further problems with the manorial court rolls are that they fade away in the later fifteenth century. The main sequence of Barkby rolls ends in 1487, only to resume in the later sixteenth century. The main sequence of Catesby rolls ends in 1431 with only isolated survivals thereafter until the dissolution when the manorial court probably ceased to exist; no

rolls or other documents survive to suggest its continued existence after 1536.[11] Likewise, the main sequence of Geddington court rolls ends in 1423 with only two survivals from 1490 and 1505.[12] This seems to be more than an accident of survival. It is likely the fading was accompanied by, and resulted from, a reduction in the scope of the manorial court's business alongside a failure in record-keeping. The final rolls of all three courts reflect that reduced scope. The Barkby rolls of 1487 and 1542 contain records of several land transactions and presentations by the *homagium* or jury (whose role is considered in section 3), mostly relating to cutting down trees.[13] The final Catesby rolls contain no land transactions and only a thin scatter of jury presentations relating to animal trespass and dilapidation of tenants' tenements. The late Geddington rolls contain rather more extensive presentations by the tithingmen, some arising from violence and a few land transactions. The pledging system had, by the end of the fifteenth century, disappeared from the records of all three manors and it is likely that the tithing system had largely disappeared although the office of tithingman continued in existence in Geddington.

These changes will be analysed further below following a largely factual comparison of the three manors in the following section.

2. Barkby, Catesby and Geddington

The previous three chapters have attempted to demonstrate how a combination of environmental conditions and manorial structures could produce differing outcomes in, superficially, similar villages all within forty miles of one another in the East Midlands of England. 'Environmental' differences at Barkby and Geddington are clear: the availability of meadows and grazing along the banks of the Soar at Barkby and access to large areas of forest at Geddington. Catesby's location on higher, and heavier, ground probably

[11] TNA, SC/195/10 (1534).
[12] NAS, X 350 (1490 and 1505).
[13] MCR, 6024 (1487) and 6025 (1542).

determined its fate: extensive arable cultivation that proved difficult to maintain in the changed economic and social conditions of the later middle ages and which led, ultimately, to depopulation and desertion.

These broadly environmental differences were matched by differences in the administrative structure of the manors. All three possessed deceptively similar tenurial systems earlier in the middle ages involving relatively light day-works in summer and autumn. At Merton's Barkby manor and Geddington those day works had been commuted for cash long before the mid-fourteenth century alongside the abandonment of direct demesne farming if it had ever been practised there (which is uncertain). At Catesby, the prioresses' continued direct demesne farming resulted in the rather hesitant enforcement of labour services into the early fifteenth century and a transition to wage labour, probably as a response to depopulation. 'Free' tenants make very rare appearances in the court rolls of the three villages: rarely in Barkby (although their presence there was probably disguised) and Catesby and never in Geddington. Even there, the distinction is often more one of inference than express statement. At Barkby, the Merton manor's documents make a fleeting reference to the *liberi tenentes* of its tenements in Leicester who are contrasted with the *custumarii* of Barkby.[14] The *Novum Rentale* of Leicester Abbey is, however, quite explicit in distinguishing *tenentes ad voluntatem* and *tenentes liberi* although no explicit distinction is made in the earlier 1341 Geryn Rental.[15] Similarly, at Catesby the manorial court rolls refer rather pointedly to the presentations by the *tenentes* of Shopes and the *homagium* of Catesby, possibly an allusion to their differing status.[16] Other 'structural' differences included, at Barkby, the presence of four very different estates in the same village, on two of which (Leicester Abbey and the gentry manor) direct demesne farming probably continued until (respectively) late in the middle ages and well into the early modern period. That probably left Merton, as an

[14] MCR, 6568, undated rental of the early fourteenth century.
[15] Laud MS misc. 625, ff. xii/16 (*Novum Rentale*) and ccv/202 (Geryn Rental).
[16] TNA, SC 2/195/5 m. 1 (court of 14.10.1390) for one of numerous examples.

absentee lord, uneasily attempting to maintain its position, and rental income, against local rivals. At Geddington, the structure was even more complex with a combination of its status as a manor of ancient demesne, the letting of the royal manor at farm to, initially, a tenant oligarchy and later to a single emergent-gentry family.

The main source of information about the post-plague population of the three communities comes from the poll tax records of 1377 and 1379.[17] For Barkby and Catesby, records survive of both the number of taxpayers in 1377 and nominal rolls of individual taxpayers (with the amounts paid by each taxpayer) in 1379. For Geddington, only the numbers of taxpayers in 1377 survives. No returns for the 1381 poll tax survive for any of the three communities. The returns are summarised in table 6.1 with factors of 1.75 and 1.9 being applied to the numbers of taxpayers in 1377 in the fourth and fifth columns to provide an approximate bracket for the total population.[18]

The taxpayer numbers for Barkby and Catesby decline significantly between 1377 and 1379. Whereas the 1377 poll tax was charged at a flat rate of 4d. on all married and single laymen and women over the age of fourteen, the 1379 poll tax was charged at variable rates on married and single laymen but only on unmarried laywomen over the age of sixteen in both cases.[19] However, the Leicestershire nominal rolls for 1379 state the marital status of taxpayers and, in the case of Barkby and Barkby Thorpe, identify only two unmarried daughters and two unmarried sons as taxpayers. By contrast, the Northamptonshire nominal rolls omit details of family status but at Catesby name thirty-three presumably

[17] Carolyn C. Fenwick (ed.), *The Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381*, pts 1 and 2 (Oxford, 1998 and 2001), pt 1, Barkby and Barkby Thorpe p. 507 (1377) and p. 538–9 (1379); pt 2, Catesby and members, p. 211 (1377) and pp. 230–1 (1379); Geddington, p. 205 and Barford and Glendon p. 201 (both 1377).
[18] These factors were used by D. M. Palliser (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, vol. I 600–1540 (Cambridge, 2008), p. 760 based on 'a consensus of authorities' and adopted by Stephen Mileson and Stuart Brookes, *Peasant Perceptions of Landscape: Ewelme Hundred, South Oxfordshire, 500–1650* (Oxford, 2021), p. 235.
[19] Fenwick, *Poll Taxes* 1, p. xiv.

unmarried women as taxpayers. It seems unlikely that the marriage rate at Barkby was so significantly higher than Catesby unless the prioress had a policy of taking on only unmarried women as Priory servants. That seems improbable because the fifteenth century accounts contain nothing to suggest that and many of the *stipendarii* at that time were married. On the whole, the most likely explanation is that in 1379 there was widespread evasion of the poll tax by unmarried men and women at Barkby but not at Catesby. That also suggests the higher figures for total numbers of taxpayers in 1377 are a more accurate reflection of the total number of adults in both communities than the significantly smaller total figures of 1379.

Table 6.1 Barkby, Catesby and Geddington: poll tax returns for 1377 and 1379

	Number of taxpayers	Population Factor; 1.75	Population Factor 1.9
Barkby			
1377			
Barkby	140	245	266
Barkby Thorpe	51	89	97
		334	363
1379			
Barkby	79		
Barkby Thorpe	28		
Catesby			
1377			
Catesby with members	172	301	327
1379			
Catesby with members	127		
Geddington			
1377			
Geddington	153	268	291
Barford with Glendon	52	91	99
		359	390

The figures in columns three and four of table 6.1 probably need to be rounded up to allow for some evasion in 1377 and for paupers and other non-taxpayers. That would make Catesby the smallest community with a population of between 315 and 345 allowing for the Priory community of around a dozen nuns and other religious. Barkby was probably slightly larger with a total population of between 340 and 375 and Geddington, with Barford and Glendon, the largest with a population between 370 and 400.

It is not possible to make any sensible estimation of the pre-Black Death population of the three communities. As has been said, the only community where there is clear evidence of the Black Death is Barkby which was clearly hard-hit by the first wave of the Black Death although Merton was able to find new tenants for vacant tenements at both Barkby and Kibworth Harcourt without difficulty. That rather hints at the presence of a significant 'surplus' population at both communities, some of whom survived to take on the vacated tenements of tenants who died. The position at Catesby and Geddington is less clear but, as has been said, it would be surprising if they escaped the successive waves of Black Death following 1348/9 and they too probably had had a larger population before 1349 but it is impossible to say how much larger.

Equally, it is not possible to say what happened to the population of the three communities after 1377. Again, it seems likely it followed national demographic trends and continued to decline until a nadir in the middle of the fifteenth century but that is largely guesswork although, as has been said, the depopulation of outlying settlements in the vicinity of all three communities (including the desertion of Hamilton in the case of Barkby) suggests they followed national trends.

Turning to agricultural acreage, the immediate problem is that acreages of meadow and pasture (in particular) are often omitted in medieval documents and where they are given, it is unclear whether they are reliable. The case of the Geddington forest acre (chapter 3, p.

45) is one example of the problems that can arise. It seems safer, therefore, to rely on acreages extracted from modern Enclosure Act awards (in the cases of Barkby and Geddington) and an early modern terrier and field map of 1638 (in the case of Catesby). The results are summarised in table 6.2.

Table 6.2 Barkby, Catesby and Geddington: comparative acreage	
	Acres, rods and perches
Barkby (1781 enclosure award)	1,728a. 1r. 24p.
Catesby (1638 terrier)	1.220a. 2r. 20p.
Geddington (1808 enclosure award)	1,192a. 0r. 24p.

These figures need some qualification. The figure for Barkby includes both of the then surviving manors: the Pochin family and Merton manors. The latter represented only a small part of the total area enclosed: about 327 acres of copyhold along with 21a. 1r. 15p. of Merton land enclosed by the Syston enclosure award or almost 350 acres in total. The Barkby award also omitted several 'ancient enclosures' although they were small and relatively insignificant, so a figure of around 1,750 acres, including Merton's Syston land, for the total extent of the two early modern manors and the four medieval estates, seems reasonable. Of course, the Merton manor formed only a relatively small part of this total (see table [3.]) making it the smallest of the four estates there.

The Catesby figure derived from the 1638 terrier is probably a roughly accurate measurement of the land representing the medieval prioresses' manor, although it omits the sub-manor of Newbold, about 500 acres, and the lands held by the prioresses in the neighbouring villages of Hellidon and Staverton, amounting to about nine-and-a-half virgates or, assuming a sixty-acre virgate in Catesby, a further 570 acres. Thus, the total extent of

the medieval manor, including the Newbold sub-manor and the lands in Hellidon and Staverton, was possibly around 2,290 acres.

The Geddington figure omits the lands in Barford and Glendon which , by 1808, had been lost to the manor, so the figure in table 6.2 reflects only the Geddington 'core', the common fields and closes around the village and extending about two miles to the west along the valley of the Ise. The medieval manor included land further to the west in Barford and Glendon which was possibly equal to the figure for the Geddington 'core' in table 6.2. It is impossible to be certain about the extent of the Geddington manor's lands in Barford and Glendon (no records survive), but a total medieval extent of over 2,380 acres seems plausible, thus making Geddington by far the most extensive manor of the three.

The ratio between arable and grazing must have been particularly important for the medieval tenant because it determined how much livestock, and of what type, he could keep. On the face of the medieval documents, the figures vary quite widely from the three rods of meadow forming the standard half-virgate holding at Barkby to the more generous three acres of meadow allocated to the standard virgate holding at Geddington. The position at Catesby is unknown but the aerial photographs of the 1940s show very extensive ridge and furrow with only limited meadow or grazing along the floor of the valley of the Leam (the 'Gosemede'), the higher slopes of the hills surrounding the village and Priory and the common grazing (the 'Grove).[20]

These figures may, however, be somewhat misleading. Despite the modest allowance of meadow at Barkby there was quite extensive pasture available on the Moor and the New Cow Pasture shown on the 1635 map.[21] The 1940s aerial photographs show these areas devoid of ridge and furrow, so it seems possible they were available for common grazing by

[20] Historic England, RAF/CPE/UK/1994 1155–1282 (13 April 1947).
[21] MCR, Barkby, 1635 map (uncatalogued).

the Merton tenants in the middle ages.[22] At Geddington, the rather limited meadows bordering the Ise to the south and west of the village were supplemented by the vast area of common grazing in the woods, totalling over 1,400 acres.[23] As has been said, this probably explained the seeming prosperity of the Geddington tenants (see the inventories of Peter de Deen and Hugo de Brechale at appendix 1). By contrast, the only inventory available for Barkby is the valuation of the goods of Henry Milisaunt senior, a casualty (probably) of the first wave of the Black Death at Barkby. He was the long-standing bailiff and appears in the 1312/13 rental as the largest tenant holding three-quarters of a virgate and other pieces of arable totalling thirty acres and just over one-and-a-half acres of meadow.[24] However, his goods were valued on death at a relatively modest £6, lower than the two Geddington tenants for whom inventories survive.[25] Nevertheless, the Barkby tenants may have been able to take advantage of non-seasonal day work and access to the market in Leicester, only five miles away. The relative wealth of the Catesby tenants is entirely unknown but it would not be surprising if the tenants there were the least well-off of the three manors. Catesby looks very like the pre-plague manors described by Postan and Campbell and characterised by 'extensive' cultivation of poor soil (heavy clay) with limited meadow and grazing. It was also situated some distance from surrounding markets.

In short, and unsurprisingly, commercial and agrarian advantages before the plague remained advantages after the plague. The reduction of population in the second half of the fourteenth century did not leave all communities on an equal footing: some were better placed to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the post-plague economy than others. The tenants of Geddington and, possibly, Barkby were advantaged in the ways that have been considered. Catesby, by contrast, lacked those advantages and, despite the

[22] Historic England, RAF/CPE/UK/2424 frame nos. 31800–87 and 4179–4189 (31 December 1947) and US/7GR/LOCB5, frame nos. 71–122 (4 March 1944).
[23] Philip Pettit, *The Royal Forests of Northamptonshire: A Study in Their Economy, 1558–1714* (Gateshead, 1968), p. 12.
[24] MCR, 6568.
[25] MCR, 6571 and appendix 1.

presence of a cluster of higher-tax-rate artisans in 1379, never caught up. The significant numbers of animal trespass presentations in the Catesby manorial court rolls of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries probably reflect the degradation of the field system there. The dead hand of the past weighed more heavily on some survivors than others.

Turning to the 'standard' half-virgate and virgate tenements of each manor, the main details of size, rent and entry fine are shown in table 6.3 with the Geddington forest acres converted to conventional acres.

Table 6.3 Barkby, Catesby and Geddington: 'standard' tenements			
	Area (acres & rods)	*Fixed rent*	*Typical entry fines*
Barkby – half-virgate holding (usually supplemented with three or four acres arable and a rod of meadow – probably apportioned demesne)	Arable 15a. Meadow 3r.	Approx. 9s. 8d.	Often nil; 3s. 4d.; 6s. 8d.; 13s. 4d.
Catesby – half-virgate holding	Arable and meadow 30a.	5s.	Very variable 2s.–40s.
Geddington – virgate holding	Arable 15a. Meadow 3a. [24.3a. and meadow 4.86a. conventional acres]	6s. 6d.	1s.; more usually 5s. (Barford)

Differences between the three manors are immediately apparent. The large Catesby virgate is probably explicable by its relatively intractable soil so that larger areas had to be cultivated than on lower and more favourable ground in Barkby and Geddington. Also noticeable is the difference between the meadow portion of the Barkby half-virgates (three rods) and the Geddington virgates (three acres).

Likewise, there are marked differences in the fixed rent of standard holdings between Barkby on the one hand and Geddington and Catesby on the other. In fact, the Geddington fixed rent had been the same as that at Catesby, 5s., because the Geddington fixed rent included 1s. 6d. for the compounded value of labour services. The most striking difference is the rent of the standard half-virgate holdings at Barkby which was significantly higher than at Catesby and Geddington. Proximity to Leicester (five miles away) may have played a major part in the higher rents there with Merton's tenants able to take advantage of a large and active market in which to sell their surplus produce and their labour. Environmental factors may also have played a part: Barkby stands on relatively light clay and riverbed sands which seem to have been easily cultivable and fertile. At Kibworth Harcourt, on the other side of Leicester, Merton's tenants paid around 6s. 3d. for a half-virgate holding together with a further 3s. 4d. for the commutation of their labour service, so their rent for a very slightly smaller, 12 acre, virgate was almost the same as at Barkby.[26]

Geddington was, however, rather different: tenants there enjoyed rights in the 'great wood' to gather housebot (timber for house repairs), haybot (wood for hedge-mending) along with pannage (pasture for pigs) and gablish (gathering fallen wood for fuel). They also enjoyed rights to pasture their stock in the woods.[27] As has been observed, the meadow at Geddington was actually rather limited but the availability of extensive pasture in the woods and in closes assarted from the woods more than compensated for that shortage (see map 4). The inventories of Peter de Deen (1287), a half-virgate holder, and Hugo de Brechale (1352), probably a virgate holder, suggest livestock holdings significantly in excess of what might be expected given the size of their holdings (see appendix 1). That is not surprising given the availability of woodland pasture. However, their inventories also point to a more vibrant economy in Geddington. Peter de Deen was probably producing dairy goods for the

[26] Cecily Howell, *Land, Family and Inheritance in Transition: Kibworth Harcourt, 1280–1700* (Cambridge, 1983), table 2, pp. 16–17 and pp. 88–9 for virgate size.
[27] TNA, C 145/5 (1251 forest inquisition), in particular.

market and the significant grain holding of Hugo de Brechale (valued at £20 or probably more than eighty quarters of grain) was much larger than he could have grown on a virgate holding and points to significant market involvement. As has been suggested, that might explain the curious incident of market-breaking in Geddington in 1350.[28]

The figures for entry fines are also telling. The way in which entry fines were manipulated and concealed by (probably) the wealthier tenants in Geddington has already been described in chapter 3 (see pp. 69-70), so the fine of 1s. on the transfer of a virgate holding is taken from Barford. By comparison, the entry fines for Barkby and Catesby were higher. At Barkby they tended to be a mark or fractions thereof but frequently no fine was charged. At Catesby, the fines varied wildly between 2s. and 40s. for a half-virgate and suggest the prioress charged whatever she thought she could get away with. All this is quite consistent with the managerial strategy for both manors. At Barkby, the Merton administrators were more concerned with the long-term ability of the tenant to pay rent whereas the prioresses of Catesby were more concerned to maximise their income from fines in the short term. The fines at Geddington probably reflect the holding of the manor at farm by its own tenants and their interest in keeping fines low.

The other main form of holding in all three manors was cottage tenements. They are not easily identifiable, particularly in the later fifteenth-century rentals where the description of the tenement is frequently omitted. However, table 6.4 attempts to capture the picture from as early a date in the fourteenth century to as late a date in the fifteenth century as the records permit. The numbers reflect cottage *tenements*, regardless of whether the record suggests they were occupied: very frequently, in the case of Catesby and Geddington in the fifteenth century, they are either specifically recorded as unoccupied or are shown in the

[28] TNA, C 66/230.

rentals lumped together with other cottage holdings in the hands of a single tenant. In the latter case, it is unclear whether the cottages were unoccupied or sublet.

Table 6.4 Barkby, Catesby and Geddington: cottage tenements (numbers)		
Barkby	1313: 4 (2 with 2 acres)	1452: 0 (but 4 messuages with no land or 2 acres)
Catesby	1399: 9 (Upper Catesby) 20 (Shopes)	1481: 2 (based on rent)
Geddington	1327: 10 (Geddington) 1 (Barford) 3 (Glendon)	1461: 32 (Geddington) 2 (Barford)

Characteristically, Barkby shows the least apparent change between the early fourteenth and late fifteenth centuries with four cottage holdings which seem to have metamorphosed into messuages by the late fifteenth century. That is probably a reflection of the small size of the Merton manor and Merton's anxiety to prevent the fragmentation of the larger 'standard' tenements. The apparent collapse in the number of cottage tenements in Catesby between the late fourteenth and late fifteenth centuries reflects the disappearance of Shopes, where almost all the tenements were cottage holdings, probably with several acres of arable land. Equally striking is the near doubling of cottage tenements in Geddington between the early fourteenth and mid-fifteenth centuries. That is probably a feature of the rather marked polarisation of holdings in Geddington over the period from 1350 to 1500 and by the suggestion advanced in chapter 2 that waged labour was becoming increasingly common in Geddington in the later middle ages.

A word should also be added about other manorial assets: woodland, mills and, on a rather more modest scale, ovens. There is no documentary evidence that the Merton manor at Barkby or the prioresses' manor at Catesby had access to woodland either for fuel or building materials. At Barkby today, there is a small area of woodland, Barkby Holt, at the

north-east end of the parish but it is not clear whether this was present in the middle ages or, if it was, whether Merton's tenants had access to it. The position is rather similar at Catesby: none of the medieval or early modern documents mention woodland and the fifteenth-century accounts suggest that most of the structural timber for the extensive and continuous repairs to the Priory, along with other building materials, had to be bought in from outside the manor.[29] The position at Geddington (see pp. 45-6), where the manorial tenants enjoyed significant rights to both fuel and structural timber in the forest, was entirely different.

All three manors possessed water- or windmills which were a source of significant rent for the lord. The cost of maintaining the mill, particularly on manors without access to structural timber, was high but was usually borne by the tenant, sometimes with a subsidy from the lord.[30] That probably explains the continued enforcement of mill-suit at Barkby and Catesby as it made the tenancy of mills an attractive proposition with a guaranteed customer-base (assuming the enforcement of mill suit was effective).[31] At Geddington, the position was, characteristically, reversed. The manor owned watermills, probably at least two on the Ise. They seem to have been kept in repair but the levying of mill suit was rare whereas fines

[29] For example, *Close Rolls of the Reign of Henry III, AD 1227–1231* (London, 1902), p. 181. Gift of ten tree trunks to the prioress from the forest of Silverstone.

[30] At Barkby there was a windmill which was let in 1347 for £1 4s. per annum but was in disrepair, Merton agreeing to pay for the major items (*grossum meremium*) needed for repair and the incoming tenant, William of the Trent, for the lesser items (court, probably 15.02.1347, MCR, 6570 m. 4). At Catesby in the fifteenth century there were two windmills and a watermill for which the costs of repair in 1415/16 were £1 6s. and for which the miller, Thomas Milner, was paid a stipend of 16s. per annum (accounts 1415/16, TNA, C 6/947/17). The income in 1422/23 the *firma* from the mills was £2 16s. 8d. (accounts 1422/23, TNA 6/966/19) which was reasonably representative: over the course of the fifteenth century the income varied considerably and on occasion significantly exceeded this figure but also dropped beneath it. At Geddington, in 1327 the income from the rent of a mill on forinsec land (probably at Islip but possibly Kelmarsh) was £1 with two watermills worth £4 per annum lying in ruins and the mill at Barford yielding £1 14s. per annum (1327 extent, TNA, SC 12/13/29). By 1383 the rent actually received was £3 11s. although the mills had historically yielded £5 7s. per annum (1383 inquisition, TNA, SC 145/227/11).

[31] For Catesby see prohibition to men of Shopes and villeins of Catesby against milling other than in the prioresses' mill (court, 19.08.1323, SC 2/195/1 m. 2) and fines of 2d. each imposed on William Garlyk and William Dawer for milling elsewhere (court, 12.06.1391, SC 2/195/5 m. 2). For Barkby see fines of 6d. each imposed on Richard de Brueby and William Faber for milling other than at the lord's mill (court, 13.10.1296, MCR, 6567), and subsequent fines of 6d. along with an order to mill at the lord's mill (court, 25.01.1355, MCR, 6573).

were regularly imposed on the miller for charging excessive mill fees or tolls.[32]. That is, however, consistent with a manor where the tenants held the manor at farm and were probably more anxious to restrict the miller's tolls than to exact fines for breach of mill suit.

Likewise, the treatment of ovens can be quite telling about the internal economy of the manor. There does not seem to have been a common oven at Barkby and fines for failure to repair the ovens of individual tenements were quite common.[33] If, as seems likely, one of the functions of a common oven was to protect manorial woodland by reducing the tenants' need for fuel, its absence in Barkby might be attributable to the absence of manorial woodland there. Presumably Merton's tenants either foraged for fuel in the hedges or bought it. By contrast, at Catesby, as has been seen (pp. 238-9), failure to keep the oven in repair could give rise to problems.[34] In this case, the presence of a communal oven might be attributable to the prioresses' need to control hedge-breaking for fuel (pp. 208-10). Geddington had a communal oven but presentations of tenants who built their own ovens were rare. The relaxed approach there may be attributable to the ready availability of fuel in the forest.

Presentations for absence from the manor hint at different seigniorial approaches to management. At Geddington such presentations are unknown, although modest amercements, usually a few pence, were regularly levied for breach of suit of court. In fact, the most frequent references to prolonged absence arise from payments for licences to relax suit of court, usually 40d. per annum, which were regularly paid by the gentry holders of the

[32] See for example fine of 2d. imposed on John Elys for charging excessive tolls at Barford mill, probably the mill where Peter de Deen was drowned (view, 03.10.1377, NAS, X 351B) and fines of 3d. imposed on John Gryndell and Robert Launcelyn, the millers at Geddington mill, for charging excessive tolls (view, 07.10.1378, NAS, X 351B), subsequent fines being typically 2d. or 3d. and continuing in the court of 11.01.1490 (NAS, X 350).
[33] For example, threatened amercement for failure to repair a tenement's ovens in 1448: MCR, 6610.
[34] See also, for example, enforcement of mill suit in 1323, TNA, SC 2/195/1.

forinsec land of the manor (such as the Green or Grene family).[35] It looks very much as though the grant of such licences was treated as an opportunity to raise revenue rather than as an expression of concern about tenants' absences from the manor. That is unsurprising in the case of a manor held at farm by its tenants. Likewise, at Merton's Barkby manor there were only six presentations for absence all during the period 1367 to 1372 and, of those six presentations, five related to a single individual, Robert Heryng.[36] That, again, seems unsurprising in the case of an absentee lord whose main interest was to secure its rent from tenants who remained on their tenements and to re-let tenements vacated by absentees. Unsurprisingly, the manorial rolls at Catesby (where the prioresses were probably anxious to retain their workforce) provide the largest number of such presentations, fourteen in all spanning the period 1313 to 1429.[37] Even here, the court rolls record only one or two such presentations per annum at irregular intervals. Overall, these manorial lords seem relatively unconcerned by desertion from the manor, even in circumstances (Catesby in particular) where they might be expected to show more concern. That is probably because they recognised that attempts to force the return of absentees were futile.

Ordinances and by-laws might be expected to provide an insight into another aspect of manorial management. The ordinances found in the court rolls of the three manors can be found in appendix 8. They reflect the differing concerns of the manorial lords. At Geddington, the main concern was communal regulation by the tenant *firmarii* of the manor. At Merton's Barkby manor the college was almost completely uninterested in the day-to-day management of the manor so that only two ordinances survive (nos. 11 and 12) asserting the jurisdiction of Merton's court against (probably) its rivals in the village. The commonest use of the ordinance there was to record the outcome of litigation (no. 10 is an example). At

[35] For example, NAS, X 351A (court held on 4 October 1387) for a fine of 40d. paid by Sir Henry Green.
[36] MCR, 6576 (1367/8), 6577 (1369 and 1371), 6578 and 6579 (1372).
[37] TNA, SC 2/195/1 m.1 (1313), SC 2/195/3, m.1 (1358), SC 2/195/4, m.1 (1378), SC 2/195/4 m.6 (1383), SC 2/195/5 m.2 (1390), SC 2/195/5 m.2 (1391), SC 2/195/8 m.2 (1424), SC 2/195/8 m.5 (1428) and SC 2/195/8 m.7 (1429).

Catesby the scope of the ordinances is rather more extensive and rather more concerned with the protection of the prioresses' interests but that is not surprising on a manor where the demesne was managed by the lord and whose interests were more extensive and needed to be protected (see e.g. nos. 13 and 17).

The tenurial arrangements of each of the three manors, and how they changed over time, have been dealt with in the three preceding chapters (see in particular pp.69-73 and 94 for Geddington, pp. 151-2 for Barkby and pp. 227-9 and 232-7 for Catesby). It should be added that none of the manorial court rolls make any reference to copyhold. Indeed, the only reference to copyhold is found at Barford in the 1517 inquisition (see p. 103). That may be because the court rolls for the later fifteenth century are lacking, but also because tenure per copiam was not always recorded on the court roll: recent research on early copyhold is based mostly on the rather scant survivals of the copies themselves.[38] In reality, it is highly likely that copyhold had emerged at Geddington and Barkby before 1500. Certainly, there were copyhold tenants at both manors in the early modern and modern period.[39]

A final statistical comparison of the three manors is the number of land transactions recorded in the manorial court rolls per annum. The figures are inevitably inaccurate: the calculation depends on a necessarily subjective assessment of the number of years for which complete manorial rolls survive and an accurate count of the number of transactions recorded in the rolls. In the case of Geddington, there is also the problem of the apparent under-recording of transfers on death (pp. 69-70). The figures for all three manors need to be approached with caution but probably give a broad impression of the land market. The results of this exercise are shown in table 6.5.

[38] See C.R.J. Currie, 'Tenants' Copies of Court Rolls in England and Wales Before 1400', *Archives*, LVI.1 (2021), pp. 1-22.
[39] For Geddington, TNA, LR 2/221 (1607 survey) and NAS, uncatalogued (terrier to John Booth's 1717 map). For Barkby, MCR 5.21 (1779 Enclosure Act award).

Table 6.5 Barkby, Catesby and Geddington: land transactions per annum			
	No. of transactions	*No. of courts*	*Average transactions per court*
Barkby	245	189	0.77
Catesby	373	281	0.75
Geddington	238	502	2.11

Geddington, with its active land-market for small parcels of land, emerges with, rather unsurprisingly, the highest number of transactions in each court. Barkby, equally unsurprisingly given Merton's apparent resistance to tenement fragmentation, emerges with a significantly lower rate. Catesby's ranking, with the smallest number of transactions per court, probably reflects the relatively frequent transmission of small cottage tenements in Shopes but the much less frequent transmission of the larger tenements at Upper Catesby. The nominal roll for the 1379 poll tax revealed the presence in Shopes of a community of artisans probably involved in cloth-making who may have been relatively mobile and unattached to their tenements. These statistics may also give a broad picture of the extent of market integration in all three communities: the money for land purchases had to be generated somehow and could only come from sale of surplus produce, artisan manufactures or employment including day-labour. All three involved different forms of market integration. That rather supports the earlier suggestion that Geddington was part of a micro-economy of communities in Rockingham forest. The result in Catesby is probably more equivocal and may simply reflect the presence in Shopes of (as has been said) a more mobile artisan workforce. Finally, the position in Barkby confirms the continuing importance there of seigniorial influence, or more specifically Merton's estate-management policy.

This overview of the three manors illustrates their diversity in terms of size, standard virgate or half-virgate holdings and the changing pattern of cottage tenements in villages of broadly

similar size in the East Midlands. Some of these differences are attributable to broadly 'environmental' factors and some may have originated in early seigniorial decision-making about manor- and village-formation some considerable time before the mid-fourteenth century. Barkby had an absentee but quite intrusive lord; Catesby had a resident and (possibly) all-too-intrusive lord farming the demesne; Geddington had an almost completely detached lord, the crown, which had devolved its powers to a tenant oligarchy. The next section of this chapter goes on to consider the changing seigniorial influences on these three very different manors in the period after the Black Death whilst section 4 considers the tenants' response to those changes.

3. Lords and the agrarian landscape

Andrea Trevisano, a Venetian diplomat, reported in about 1497 that the population of England bore little proportion to the fertility and riches of the country.[40] On journeys from Dover to London and then from London to Oxford he noted that the country seemed very thinly inhabited and its considerable productive capacity was under-exploited. In making these observations, Trevisano had, probably unconsciously, identified the main problem confronting the manorial lords of the fifteenth century. The widespread availability of land, depressed prices for its produce and relatively high wages had reduced their rental income. After some general consideration of this problem, this section will deal firstly with seigniorial strategies for addressing it and then with the outcomes at the three manors.

Manorial lords responded to the loss of rental income in different ways which will be considered further below in the cases of Barkby, Catesby and Geddington. Before considering those specific cases, it is worth considering the position of manorial lords more

[40] *A Relation, or Rather a True Account of the Island of England*, trans. C. A. Sneyd (London, 1847), p. 31. The author was subsequently identified as Andrea Trevisano in *Notes and Queries* 12 8 III, (Feb. 17, 1917), p. 135.

generally. Land carried with it status and the rent yielded by the manor provided them with an income. Further, the manor was probably the only economic institution which could provide that income in a way that was consistent with that status. The problem for lords in the fifteenth century, against a background of chronic climatic and economic adversity, was how to maintain that income. The position of their tenants was only slightly easier: the tenant budget depended on the sale of surplus produce to pay for cash expenditure on items the tenant could not produce (ironwork, for instance), taxes and, in particular, rent. That left wealthier tenants vulnerable to declining prices and increasing wages for labour which they needed on larger holdings at peak points in the agricultural year for harvest and ploughing. Campbell and Bailey are undoubtedly correct to qualify the 'silver-lining' and 'golden age' of the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[41] None of this is to deny that tenants' standards of living improved significantly in the fifteenth century but rather to emphasize that manorial lords' scope for the extraction of increased rents from their tenants was limited. That probably accounts for the rather quiescent seigniorial response to the problem of declining rents.

The most obvious example of that approach is found in Merton's management of its manor at Barkby. The College was able to resist reducing rents in the later fourteenth century but ceased to be able to do so in the fifteenth century (pp. 153-5 and 158-60). Its strategy combined investment with attempts to ensure that its rental income was not further eroded by the decay and fragmentation of tenements. That was manifested in the College's struggles to prevent dilapidation. At Merton's other Leicestershire manor at Kibworth Harcourt, Howell views the preservation of tenement sizes there as part of tenant-families' inheritance strategies to preserve viable agricultural holdings.[42] In other words, she attributes the preservation of tenement size there to the tenants rather than their lords.

[41] Campbell, *Seigniorial Agriculture*, p. 430 and Bailey, *Black Death*, pp. 251–4.
[42] Cicely Howell, *Land, Family and Inheritance in Transition: Kibworth Harcourt 1280–1700* (Cambridge, 1983), ch. 10 'Inheritance Strategies' and pp. 249–52 especially.

Ultimately, there is no evidence to determine whether the preservation of tenement size on Merton's Leicestershire estate was attributable to the College or its tenants. Possibly it was a question on which both the College and its tenants agreed. It is, however, unlikely that the College had no views or influence on the matter. That would be difficult to reconcile with Merton's frequently manifested concerns about dilapidations. Both manors preserved standard holdings through the fifteenth century which were then engrossed in the sixteenth. Merton's strategy might be attributed to blind conservatism but it seems rather more likely it was driven by the realisation that there might be adverse consequences if the standard tenements were allowed to fragment. In particular, reduction of tenement size would lead to the increasing reliance of their tenants on income from artisan trades or day-labour at nearby Leicester. That in turn held out the danger for Merton that its Leicestershire tenants would cease to be wholly dependent on their holdings and the College's land. In short, the maintenance of tenement size helped Merton to 'bind in' its tenants to dependence on the manor and its institutions. That strategy will be considered further in the next section of this chapter.

In summary, and whatever uncertainties there may be about the details of Merton's strategy, the College pursued a long-term strategy based on the hope that, at some uncertain point in the future, there might be an improvement in its rental income. It was a strategy only available to the larger estate with the flexibility to accommodate a reduction in its income. The position of the prioresses at Catesby was very different. Here, a combination of the rental income from a smaller estate and the produce of the demesne farm was essential to the maintenance of the Priory. Against the background of the depopulation of the manor, this proved difficult in the trying conditions of the mid-fifteenth century. The Priory's rental income was under pressure and its demesne farming was becoming more reliant on transient and expensive day labour. The different management approaches of Merton and the prioresses were reflected in their accounting systems. Merton had always used a

relatively sophisticated running account carrying forward their bailiffs' arrears from year to year (at least until that became unrealistic) and which fed the yield of each manor into the bursars' accounts.[43] That level of sophistication was probably not necessary at Catesby where the prioresses' concerns were simply to record income against expenditure in each year and to find some means of covering any shortfall.

At Geddington the royal exchequer was unresponsive to the long-term decline in the farm of the manor which reached its lowest point in 1462 (appendix 2). The steward's accounts of 1460/61 showed a slight recovery in the rent received by the *firmarii* of the manor, the Mulso family, since the inquisition of 1455, but that did not result in any increase in the farm.[44] In the case of Geddington, it is probably appropriate to treat the *firmarii* as proxies for the manorial lord. It is also probable that the farmers, rather than the royal administration, were responsible for the management of the manorial court and for its records, the rolls, which survive as the most tangible aspect of their management. As has been suggested, they probably relied on outsiders with the necessary skills, literacy and familiarity with customary law in particular, for the smooth running of the court. The record is incomplete but across the period from 1350 to 1500 the identity of the *firmarii* changed from an oligarchy of wealthier tenants to, by 1454, the Mulso family exclusively (appendix 2). With the failure of the male line of the Mulsos of Geddington in 1460, the farm of the manor passed into other gentry hands: initially William Weldon and then the Downall and Malory families and, ultimately, the Montagu family. The Mulsos' manorial tenements in Geddington passed separately to the Pultney and Tresham families, the latter also inheriting the Mulsos' manor at Newton.

[43] In the fifteenth century, the balance on Merton's bailiffs' accounts for each manor was credited to the bursars' accounts: see John M. Fletcher and Christopher A. Upton, 'The Domestic Accounts of Merton College, Oxford, 1482–1494', *Local History*, 28.1 (1980), pp. 16–23 at p.18. That reflected earlier practice: see J. R. L. Highland (ed.), *The Early Rolls of Merton College, Oxford* (Oxford, 1964), pp. 215–22.
[44] NAS, X 345B (1455 inquisition) and X 351A (1460/61 accounts).

Nothing is known about the Mulsos' management of their holdings at Geddington apart from the different approaches of Thomas (iii) and Margaret Mulso to their holdings of five virgates each (pp. 96-100). It is not clear whether these holdings had been built up as part of an aggressive strategy of expanding their holdings or whether, in fact, the Mulsos pursued a default strategy of taking virgate holdings when they fell vacant. On the whole, it seems unlikely that the virgate holdings, in conjunction with their extensive cottage holdings, had been amassed by default. Thomas's strategy does not seem to have stretched beyond (probably) subletting his five virgates in their entirety. By contrast, Margaret may have pursued a more entrepreneurial approach taking only the land and meadow and leaving the messuages to be held by others.

It is also unknown what the Mulsos did with the produce of their holdings. They probably had a significant household at Geddington, possibly on the site of the modern Priory, and at Newton, which required provisioning. No doubt similar considerations applied to the Mulsos as to the prioresses of Catesby: the cost of production of provisions for consumption was considerably lower than the cost of their purchase on the open market. However, it seems likely that the Mulsos were also producing a reasonably substantial surplus for sale on the market. Whatever their motives and *modus operandi*, the Mulsos plainly needed the significantly increased number of cottage holdings in Geddington (see table 6.3) to house a workforce for their holdings although it is not clear precisely how that workforce was employed, either by the Mulsos or their sub-tenants.

There are indications that the agrarian economy of all three manors was adapting to changed circumstances in the late fourteenth century. The conversion of arable to *frisca*, fallow or rough grazing, at Catesby and Geddington was probably a response to depopulation and consequent economic changes, in particular the reduction in the price of agricultural produce. In both cases, that land seems to have been the remoter and less easily cultivated arable. Its conversion to pasture was also consistent with the transfer to a

more pastoral agrarian economy. Barkby was the exception in this process. The cropping and (in particular) tithe records of Leicester Abbey (figure 4.5) suggest that the arable common fields remained functioning at more or less the same level and extent from the last decades of the fourteenth century until the preparation of the *Novum Rentale* in 1477. Barkby's seeming resistance to change may have been the result of it being a multi-manorial community in which it was difficult to introduce changes to a common field system shared between four estates. Alterations to the common field system there were delayed until after the dissolution which led, sometime later, to the emergence of a dominant gentry manor in the seventeenth century.

By contrast, the process of demographic change and adaptation is much more apparent at Catesby. From the start of the sequence of accounts in 1414/15, the prioress was receiving 35s. from the rent of *frisca* in Newbold and by 1447/48 it was reported that Shopes was *devastata* and producing only a fraction of its potential rent (13s. 2d. as against historic rents of £4 per annum).[45] With no surviving accounts from the fourteenth century, it is difficult to know when this process had commenced but the significant increase in presentations for animal trespass in the last two decades of that century may reflect the abandonment of parts of an extensive common field system, its conversion to pasture and the problems of controlling the animals grazing it. The response of successive prioresses seems to have been to try to maintain the demesne arable – which was probably necessary to supply the Priory with grain – but that could only be achieved with difficulty. The sown demesne arable shrank slightly over the first half of the fifteenth century (figure 5.4) but it looks as though, by the mid-century, the prioresses could only cultivate their demesne arable with expensive itinerant day labour from outside the manor. The course of events in the second half of the fifteenth century is less easy to trace but, to judge from the rentals and dissolution-era surveys, it looks as though the tenants continued to reduce in numbers and that at some

[45] TNA, SC 6/946/16 (rent of *frisca* in Newbold in 1414/15); SC 6/946/48 (first report of devastation in Shopes).

point before 1536 the prioresses finally abandoned direct demesne farming (pp. 236-7). It is not clear whether the common field system was still in operation by the time of the dissolution in 1536. If it was, it must have been significantly reduced in its extent. This course of events strongly suggests that, despite the evidence given to the commissioners in 1517, depopulation at Catesby preceded enclosure. It follows that depopulation was the cause of enclosure and that enclosure was not the cause of depopulation.

The position at Geddington was more complex because the common field system around its Geddington 'core' survived but at Barford it collapsed completely and at Glendon was significantly reduced. On that score, there seems no reason to doubt the report of the 1517 commissioners.[46] The process by which this had happened is less clear than at Catesby. It is apparent from the manorial court rolls up to 1423 that there had been a steady merger of the Barford virgate holdings, as also happened in the Geddington 'core'.[47] There are also several presentations in the later rolls relating to enclosure of pasture at Glendon.[48] By the mid-fifteenth century, there are reports in the 1455 inquisition and the 1460/61 accounts of quite extensive areas, apparently concentrated in Barford, lying untenanted and *frisca*. Henry German's 1486 will indicates that he held a significant flock of sheep along with (probably) a virgate holding in the Geddington 'core'.[49] It is unlikely that he would have been able to pasture so many sheep on the common grazing in the woods, so it is reasonable to suppose that he rented the *frisca* for that purpose, possibly at Barford. Once again, the sequence of events suggests depopulation preceding the abandonment of arable and the renting out of the resulting *frisca* for grazing. In fact, Geddington could also be seen as a microcosm of a reversal of the Ricardian process of colonisation with the abandonment of arable land of secondary and tertiary choice.

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[46] I. S. Leadam (ed.), *The Domesday of Inclosure 1517–1518*, vol. I (Port Washington, 1971 reprint), pp. 309–11 (Glendon) and pp. 316–18 (Barford).
[47] See appendix 3.
[48] Three presentations of Andrew Neubotill on 25 October 1404, 7 November 1405 and 15 April 1407, NAS, X 351B.
[49] NAS, Northamptonshire Wills, Henry German, 1486 NEW F45.

This section has considered how different manorial lords responded to the problems facing them in the later middle ages. Confronted with significant economic and social changes, they were left with little room for manoeuvre. Their approach has been described above as 'quiescent' but that was because there was little they could do to address demographic decline, the consequent shortage of tenants and the decline of their rental income. They were, however, far from inactive as this review of their responses at Barkby, Catesby and Geddington has shown. They were able to resist fragmentation of tenements and cajole tenants to repair dilapidations (at Barkby), to continue demesne farming in difficult circumstances (at Catesby) and to preserve the common field 'core' at Geddington along with a high-functioning manorial court. These were not insignificant achievements and suggest that whilst manorial lords' grip over their tenants diminished after the Black Death, they had both the will and the power to influence the course of events. The next section of this chapter will look at lords' and their tenants' response to the changing scene of the later middle ages.

4. Culture and Law

On his visit to England in the closing years of the fifteenth century, Andrea Trevisano was struck by some curious features of the English legal system. In particular, he noted with some surprise the jury, an institution which he had evidently not encountered previously in his travels, and its role in determining both civil disputes and criminal cases.[50] He was also surprised to find that England had only a single Chief Justice (presumably he meant the Lord Chief Justice) and that the nobility played no part in the administration of justice, being no more than rich gentlemen in possession of a great quantity of land. Trevisano's perspective may have been somewhat distorted, but his observations about the operation and importance of the jury were entirely correct.

[50] *A Relation*, pp. 324.

The jury or *homagium* can be seen evolving in the manorial court rolls of Barkby and Catesby from 1350 until the late fifteenth century. The term *homagium* had acquired a number of meanings over the course of the middle ages. Originally, it referred to the ceremonial act of allegiance to a lord but it came to identify the persons owing homage to a lord at a manorial court.[51] In fact, its use in the manorial court was more specific and identified the jury derived from the tenant body who owed homage to the lord for their land. That is certainly the sense in which it is encountered in the manorial court rolls of the later middle ages.[52]

At both Barkby and Catesby, the term had been used from the 1340s and 1350s to denote the inquisition jury selected to decide individual cases.[53] However, from about the 1380s its form changed and the *homagium* made its own multiple presentations, sometimes in a quite lengthy sequence. It acquired a similar formal introduction at both Barkby (in the early 1390s) and at Catesby (in the late 1370s) recording that the *homagium* had been charged with various matters (*oneratum de diversis articulis*) and, having been sworn, made its presentations. Both the novelty and the form of the wording are striking and suggest a widespread change to clerical practice as well as a more profound change in the courts' procedures. Part of that change seems to have been that the presentation jury acquired autonomy in deciding on presentations. At Barkby, the *homagium* came, rather inevitably, to deal with the common round of presentations for dilapidations and continued in use there until the sequence of Merton court rolls falters in the 1440s; but it was still present in the

[51] DMLBS, https://clt-brepolis-net.ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/dmlbs/pages/ArticlePrinter.aspx?dict=BS&id=34935 '*homagium*'.
[52] John S. Beckerman, 'Procedural Innovation and Institutional Change in Medieval English Manorial Courts', *Law and History Review*, 10.2 (1992) pp.197–252 charts the development of both inquisition and presentation juries (see 'The Introduction of Jury Trial' at pp. 212–19 and especially pp. 215 *et seq*. for the presentation jury). He traces the origins of the development to the early fourteenth century so its late emergence at Barkby and Catesby might be seen simply as evidence of their relative 'backwardness' but see below for an alternative explanation.
[53] For this paragraph, see chapter 4, pp. 157-8 and chapter 5, p. 203-4.

isolated 1542 court roll.[54] At Catesby, the role of the *homagium* was rather more limited. As at Barkby, the *homagium* first appears in the late 1350s in relation to discrete cases but came to make a series of presentations using the formula described above.[55] Initially, those presentations were largely concerned with failures to pay suit of court or mill suit but they steadily extended to reporting on the death of tenants, identifying the heir and recording the heriot.[56] The Catesby *homagium* did not, however, deal with livestock trespass (which was the responsibility of the messor who made his own presentations separately) but it did deal with tenants holding livestock exceeding their stint. It still existed there when the main series of court rolls ends in 1431 but also appears in the isolated court rolls for 1461 and the 1480s.[57]

Geddington was, typically, different. The term was used there only on several occasions in connection with ordinances, expressed as being made with the consent of the *homagium*.[58] In practice, the role of the *homagium* in Geddington was discharged by the tithingmen, the *decenarii*, selected from the wealthier tenants. The reason for the difference may be that Geddington had its own view of frankpledge with its own procedural rules for making presentations. It is difficult to be certain about the origins of the view at Geddington because the main run of court rolls starts quite late, in 1377, and the earlier survivors, of 1326/7 and 1360, do not include records of a view.

That may, however, explain the extended role of the *homagium* in the late fourteenth-century manorial courts of Barkby and Catesby. The scarcity of reports of extensive, low-level offending against manorial custom before the Black Death suggests that it often went

[54] MCR, 6614.
[55] TNA, SC 2/195/3 m. 1, 20 October 1358 appears to be the first use of this formula.
[56] TNA, SC 2/195/8 m. 3 (1402/3, death of tenant and heir) and SC 2/195/6 m. 10 (1410, heriots).
[57] TNA, SC 2/195/8 m. 8 (1431); SC 2/195/8 mm. 9–10 (1461); SC 2/195/9 mm. 1–9 (1480s and 1490s).
[58] References to the term *homagium* are clustered together in courts held on 12 July, 1 October and 15 November 1382 (NAS, X 351B) and an isolated instance on 8 April 1401 (NAS, X351B).

unrecorded: it is difficult to believe it did not happen. The introduction of the presentation jury after the Black Death probably represented the importation of the procedure of the view of frankpledge into the *curia parva*, so as to deal efficiently and expeditiously with numerous minor infractions of custom. It was probably made at the initiative of the lord but a more interesting question is *why* this change came to be made. It may represent a recognition by manorial lords that a hierarchical system of management from steward to bailiff to tenants was no longer practicable with the changed balance of economic power between lords and tenants after the Black Death. This thesis argues that the extended role of the *homagium* formed part of a process of seigniorial realignment.[59] As the relationship between lords and tenants shifted, lords who wished to shore up manorial institutions, particularly the manorial court, found it necessary to adapt them to that changed balance of power. That, in turn, entailed the delegation of some authority to their tenants for the presentation of numerous and varying offences. Some of those offences (failure to pay suit of court or mill suit) only affected seigniorial interests but others (a wide variety of nuisances, for example) directly affected tenants themselves. It is also clear, however, that a by-product of this change was that by the end of the fourteenth century the tenants of Barkby and Catesby had extensive experience of jury service in the manorial courts.

All three courts dealt with litigation between their tenants and others from outside the manor in the fourteenth century.[60] In dealing with litigation, the clerical formulae used in the

[59] Spike Gibbs' work on the attitudes of manorial tenants to office holding, their involvement in manorial presentment juries and the involvement of an emergent 'middling sort' in manorial institutions seems to fit quite well with this perspective of seigniorial adaptation: see Spike Gibbs, 'Lords, Tenants and Attitudes to Manorial Office-Holding, C1300-c.1600', *Agricultural History Review* 67.2 (2019), pp. 155-74, '"Open" or "Closed"? Participation in English Manorial Presentment Juries, C.1310 – c.1600: A Quantitative Approach', *English Historical Review* 137 (2022), pp. 1003-52 and 'Limits to the Power of Economic Elites?: Wealth, Authority, and Inequality in Eastern English Villages, c.1350 – c. 1550', *Economic History Review* 79.1 (2026), pp. 247-80.

[60] The historiography of litigation in manorial courts is extensive. The starting point is the two Selden Society publications, *Select Pleas in Manorial and Other Seigniorial Courts, vol I, Reigns of Henry III and Edward I,* ed. F. W. Maitland (London, 1888) and *Select Cases in Manorial Courts 1250–1550*, eds. L. R. Poos and L. Bonfield (London, 1998). Understandably, these works concentrate on the development of substantive and procedural law rather than its context in the relations of manorial lords and tenants. Other works such as Chris Briggs, *Credit and Village Society in Fourteenth Century England* (Oxford, 2009) similarly concentrate on the period before 1350 and on specific parts

manorial rolls evolved and steadily became more formulaic. By the later fourteenth century, the common formulae used in all three courts to describe litigation were *X queritur de Y in placito debiti/transgressionis/detentionis catalle* as the case might be, or, alternatively *X querens optulit se in placito debiti/transgressionis versus Y*. The method of resolving disputes was, almost universally, either by jury inquisition or wager of law. The clerical records of litigation were, however, haphazard (despite the emergence of the common formulae described above) so that, for example, what is almost certainly the same dispute between the same individuals can fluctuate being described in one entry as a plea in trespass and in the following court as a plea in debt. These problems are compounded by the patchy survival of court rolls at Barkby and Catesby which mean that attempts to count the number of pleas tends to end up mapping the survival of court rolls. What follows is, therefore, a qualitative rather than a quantitative analysis of dispute resolution in the Barkby, Catesby and Geddington manorial courts.

At Barkby, litigation formed only a small part of the court's business in the late thirteenth century and entries relating it are quite rare. Thus, in the short run of rolls from that period, such disputes concerned hedge-cutting, defamation, horse-theft and the seizure of land.[61] The number of such disputes is rather larger when the Barkby rolls series revives in the 1340s, just before the first wave of the Black Death. Then, between 1350 and 1370, there was a minor surge of cases which fell away towards the end of the century. After the end of the fourteenth century, the court increasingly concentrated on presentations by the *homagium* and land transactions. It is difficult to avoid the impression that Merton's court at Barkby was never a particularly attractive or popular forum for dispute resolution, probably

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of England. Thus, the University of Cambridge project, 'Private Law and Medieval Village Society: Personal Actions in Manor Courts, c.1250–1350'.(https://www.campop.geog.cam.ac.uk/research/projects/privatelaw/) deals only with the period before 1350. It is also heavily concentrated on the eastern counties and west midlands and omits the East Midlands.

[61] MCR, 6563 (1278/9) Robert le Player -v- Samson (hedge-cutting) and Robert le Playter -v- Robert de Holond (defamation); MCR, 6564 (1285) Robet Stywrard -v- Radulphus Franceys (horse-theft) and Robert Styward -v- William Pleytor (land).

because the Merton court met relatively infrequently and was only one of four in the village, so there may have been problems over the extent of the court's jurisdiction.

At Catesby litigation was more common than at Barkby but followed a broadly similar profile. When the court rolls series starts in 1313, disputes formed only a small part of the court's business. The record here is rather laconic with several claims for debt (unusual amongst the three manors in the period before 1350), trespass, *falsa querela* and defamation.[62] However, such cases became more numerous in the surviving rolls of the 1340s, increasing in numbers over the following twenty years before falling back in the 1370s and 1380s. Over the following forty years, until the main series of Catesby court rolls ends, there were occasional revivals (which might represent attempts to revive a source of income) but litigation had largely disappeared from the court's business when the series ends in 1431 with no sign of a revival in the scattered rolls of 1461 and the 1480s.

At Geddington only a single pre-Black Death court roll survives from 1326/7 but it conveys a similar picture with very little litigation.[63] That changes dramatically with the main series of Geddington rolls from 1377 to 1414 where litigation formed a large part of the business of the *curia parva*. In a royal manor of ancient demesne, where tenants had direct access to the royal courts that is somewhat surprising. However, it probably reflects the attractions of dispute resolution in a high-functioning local court where, with a court meeting at three-weekly intervals, the process was rapid and cheap. There are faint signs of a falling away in litigation towards the end of that period, an impression which is confirmed by the rather perfunctory rolls of 1420–3.[64] Litigation had almost completely disappeared from the

[62] TNA, SC 2/195/1 mm. 1 and 2, date unknown, Richard of Blekensle (debt), 1313, John Handes -v- Richard Sutor (debt), Richard Faber -v- unknown (trespass) and William le Mason -v- Thomas de Nethertoun (debt); SC 2/195/2 m. 1 1323 John Stappok -v- Agnes, wife of William Hayward (defamation – 'ribald persone').
[63] NAS, X 351A, (1326/7), Richard Andreu -v- Henry le milnere (trespass), Hugo de Wecket -v- Robert Bole (trespass, Edmund son of Le Boure of Rowell -v- Richard Passelewe (debt).
[64] NAS, X 350.

isolated surviving rolls of 1490 and 1505.[65] It is not easy to explain that disappearance but it may have resulted from a combination of a decline in the reputation and efficiency of the manorial court and the increasing attractions of other *fora* for litigation, such as the royal and ecclesiastical courts. This will be considered further below.

The profile of litigation in these three courts before the Black Death is rather different from that of the villages in Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely analysed by Chris Briggs.[66] Briggs identifies his sample as 'midland' villages' because they lay west of East Anglia proper, or Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex, and he seems to have had no difficulty finding numerous debt cases there before 1350. That suggests the process of 'commercialization' and market-integration represented by rural credit became progressively more developed from west to east across the midlands to East Anglia.

The trajectory of litigation in the manorial courts at Barkby, Catesby and Geddington is thus similar to that of the expanded role of the *homagium* in making presentations. Both show a marked increase in the second half of the fourteenth century. During the fifteenth century, the expanded role of the *homagium* proved to be enduring whereas litigation faded away. The origins of this development probably lie in the shift away from manorial tenancies based on labour service to those based on cash payments, as at Barkby and Geddington. That shift in turn weakened the network of customary rights and obligations and, further, undermined the authority of the manorial court, the forum where those obligations had been enforced. Seen in this light, the expanded role of both the *homagium* and litigation may represent attempts by manorial lords to reinvigorate the institutions of the manor, the manorial court in particular, in changing social and economic circumstances: the 'seigniorial realignment' suggested previously. The term is used to imply a probably rather grudging

[65] NAS, X 350.
[66] Chris Briggs, *Credit and Village Society in Fourteenth Century England* (Oxford, 2009), ch. 1 in particular.

lordly recognition that their relations with their tenants were shifting to a looser, non-customary, contractual and cash basis combined with a desire to preserve and find new ways of binding their tenants to manorial institutions.

Merton's preservation of its tenements at Barkby was probably another aspect of that process of 'binding in' their tenants there: the preservation of relatively large half-virgate tenements meant that their tenants were kept fully occupied tending them and had little opportunity to seek waged employment in, for example, Leicester. Instead, their tenants remained dependent on their tenements alone for sustenance and production of a cash surplus.

'Binding in' their tenants may also have been intended to secure a reliable workforce for those lords who continued direct demesne farming. The prioresses of Catesby were in just that position. The custumal of 1412 may represent a rather half-hearted attempt to revive labour services with the concession that they were provided at the cost, *ad sumptum*, of the prioresses, although possibly in kind as food.[67] An additional problem for the prioresses was that, in analytical terms, they presided over at least three separate entities: the Priory itself, its demesne farm at Catesby as well as the manor and its tenants. In fact, they probably did not distinguish these three entities very clearly and, as has been observed, there was, for instance, an overlap between their tenants, the *stipendarii* of the Priory and of the demesne farm (pp. 217-8). Certainly, the prioresses' accounts did not distinguish these three entities and rolled them all into a single body. The prioresses' attempts to 'bind in' their *stipendarii*, *famuli* or *servientes* (all three terms were used in the accounts) were characteristically idiosyncratic and, literally, colourful. Along with other fringe benefits such as food *ad mensam*, they offered clothing manufactured, usually by others, from the demesne farm's

[67] TNA, SC 2/195/6 m. 12 (1412).

wool and dyed russet (in 1448/49) or blue (in 1452/3).[68] The prioresses' objectives were, probably, to secure a workforce of *stipendarii* employed on annual contracts at lower pay-rates than the transient day labourers on whom they increasingly relied in the mid-fifteenth century.

If the preservation of manorial institutions (and rental income) was the objective of manorial lords in pursuing this 'binding in' strategy, it had only limited success. The rental income of the manorial lords of Barkby, Catesby and Geddington declined remorselessly across the period 1350 to 1500, particularly in the fifteenth century. The 'realignment' process did, however, leave a situation in which their tenants had gained quite considerable experience of the law both as jurors and litigants. It will be suggested below that this formed part of a process by which manorial tenants became increasingly familiar, and at ease, with, initially, the manorial court system and, later, the royal courts in a process of 'legal integration'. It is unlikely that the development of the *homagium* and litigation in the manorial courts initiated this process (as will be shown below, there are reasons to think it was part of a much longer-term development) but it certainly accompanied it.

The best evidence of tenants' integration into the legal system comes from Geddington, a manor of ancient demesne whose tenants had always had access to the royal justice system.[69] Thus Julia, the wife of Peter de Deen, petitioned the king in 1287 to overturn the coroner's (apparent) verdict of suicide following her husband's death by drowning.[70] Likewise, Joanna Botelyr appealed to the King's Bench in 1383 following the murder of her husband although her status in Geddington is unclear: she was probably not a tenant.[71]

[68] TNA, SC 2/946/24 records the purchase of 'walshe russet' cloth for the servant's clothing and SC 6/497/3 records payments to John Cobbe of Coventry for dying the cloth *colore blodir'* (probably *blodius* or blue) and a smaller quantity *sangwen*.
[69] Frederick Pollock and F. W. Mailtand, *The History of English Law Before the Time of Edward I*, vol. I (Cambridge, 1923), pp. 383–412.
[70] TNA, C 145/46.
[71] TNA, JUST 3/167 m.67.

Both are interesting because they were actions by women, commonly regarded as marginalised by the court system, who, at traumatic moments, turned to the legal system for a remedy.

A more every-day example of tenants' integration into the legal system is provided, also at Geddington, by their use of the manorial court in relatively complex land transactions implementing their inheritance strategies.[72] That also led to the Geddington tenants' increasing use of attorneys to represent them in the manorial court in land transactions and litigation.[73] The prominence of Geddington in this respect may be due, in part, to the survival of remarkably extensive court rolls but the frequent appearance of Geddington tenants in the royal courts was probably attributable to their status as tenants of a royal manor of ancient demesne. Both sources combine to make it possible to trace the short career of John Botelyr in Geddington.[74] As has been observed, the arguments over the silver brooch he found in the fields were probably intensified by Botelyr's 'outsider' status and the fact that he was not a manorial tenant. However, it is remarkable that outbreaks of violence led rapidly to a court appearance either by way of a presentation or litigation. The quality of justice in the manorial court might not have been high (Botelyr seems to have had misgivings about it) but it was quick and cheap. In the fourteenth century the Geddington court was controlled by an oligarchy who probably used the court to protect their own interests.[75] The frictions this generated within village society may also explain the tendency of violence to ripple outwards and generate further outbursts but, for these purposes, the important point is that they kept manorial tenants closely involved in the processes of the manorial court, not just

[72] For example, William and Agnes Corby transferred land to their son, Thomas, and daughter, Julia, in two separate transactions on 23 January 1378 (NAS, X 351B) and William Hough transferred land to Nicholas Chaumbre who then transferred it to William and Agnes Hough and John Bole for life with the remainder to John Bole and his hears in separate but linked transactions on 29 November 1410 (NAS, X 351B).
[73] Appearances were made by attorney in Geddington in the first surviving court roll of 1326/7 (NAS, X 351A) and Edmund Byfeld first appears by name as an attorney on 11 January 1399 (NAS, X 351B).
[74] See chapter 3, pp. 73-7.
[75] See chapter 3, p. 65-9.

as litigants but also as tithingmen and jurors or, at Barkby and Catesby, as members of the *homagium* and, to varying degrees, as litigants.

In the fifteenth century, control of the Geddington court shifted to a single family from amongst the oligarchs of the fourteenth century, the Mulsos, who by the middle of the century were the sole farmers of the manor (see appendix 2). That may explain why the tenants were making increasing use of the royal courts and the shift of litigation away from the manorial court. The tenants' response to Thomas (ii) Mulso is particularly significant: confronted with a violent member of the dominant family in the manor, the tenants resorted to the royal courts. Given the prompt royal pardon given to Thomas after the multiple rapes and violence for which he was indicted in 1441, their faith in royal justice was misplaced, but it is notable that, unlike Thomas (ii), they did not resort to a self-help remedy.

The following section of this chapter goes on to consider whether and how the changes outlined in this section, and the previous section, of this chapter affected tenants' sense of identity and, indeed, whether it is sensible to talk of a 'tenant identity'.

5. A Sense of Identity?

When Joanna Botelyr appealed John Webstere for the murder of her husband in 1383, she stated that Webstere had acted *ex malicia precogitata*.[76] The phrase was critical because in order to convict Webstere of murder it was essential to establish that he intended to kill Botelyr or, in legal terms, that Webstere possessed the necessary *mens rea* or wrongful intention.[77] The point is significant because it demonstrates that the court and legal system attributed an individual identity, and accompanying personal responsibility, to Webstere in

[76] TNA, JUST 3/52/10 and JUST 3/167 m. 67 (AALT image http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT7/JUST3/JUST3no167/aJUST3no167fronts/IMG_0145.htm).
[77] For a recent consideration, see Elizabeth Popp Kamali, '*Felonia Felonice Facta*: Felony and Intentionality in Medieval England', *Criminal Law and Philosophy*, 9(3) (2015-09), pp. 397–421. Pollock & Maitland, *English Law*, vol. II, pp. 476–8, had attributed less significance to *mens rea* but that view is questionable.

just the same way as the Church with its requirement for confession.[78] The recognition of individual identity is important because the conception of individual identities shaped by external events opens the way to the formation of group identities comprised of individuals sharing broadly similar experiences.

It is not difficult to find such groups in fifteenth-century Geddington: Thomas (ii) Mulso, the professional soldier, and his followers (pp. 91-3) or Henry German, the drover and grazier, with his *famuli* who, along with communities stretching from the west midlands to Royston, benefitted from his will (pp. 104-5). Similar occupational groups of (in this case) itinerant labourers can be identified in mid-fifteenth century Catesby: John Iryshman and (probably) his companions, the seven 'cokars' or the sixteen men from Coventry and Warwick who worked on the 1454 harvest (pp. 219-20).

In part, these identity groupings become apparent in the later fifteenth century because, with the fading away of the record of the manorial court, it becomes necessary to rely on other sources, such as wills and royal court records, which are more likely to shed light on identity groups outside the manor. It is, however, impossible to avoid the impression that the changing economic and social conditions of late medieval England significantly increased the number and importance of these groups.[79] Nevertheless, it is also an important reminder that identity groups had always been present within the manor: the tenant community responsible for the maintenance and management of the common fields and other common resources are a conspicuous example.

[78] Miri Rubin, 'Identities' in *A Social History of England, 1200–1500*, eds. Rosemary Horrox and W. M. Ormrod (Cambridge, 2006) is particularly helpful on the Church's approach to individual identity.
[79] See Mark Bailey, 'Rural Society' in Rosemary Horrox (ed.), *Fifteenth-Century Attitudes: Perceptions of Society in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1994) for a helpful commentary on violence, social friction (both between tenants and lords and between tenants), and attitudes to work (in particular) in fifteenth-century rural England.

The formation of such groups was accompanied by the marginalisation or exclusion of 'outsiders'. The case of John Botelyr has been described (pp. 73-7) but Geddington furnishes further examples. John Walsheman features in the aletasters' presentations as a brewer from 1403 to 1406 when he was replaced by Alice, possibly his wife or daughter.[80] From August 1406 onwards she was referred to in the rolls as 'Alice Walshewoman', a distancing if not hostile description. The John Iryssh who was one of Thomas (ii) Mulso's henchmen later in the fifteenth century may also fall in the same category. It is possible that the John Iryshman, the itinerant labourer who appeared in the prioresses' accounts at Catesby (see above), was so described because he spoke little if any English.

This overview provides a polychromatic corrective to a monochrome view of the fifteenth century manorial landscape of the East Midlands comprising only yeomen and husbandmen. As has been said, it is difficult to avoid the impression that identity groups were multiplying and that this, in turn, was due to changed and changing economic and social conditions accompanied, as the preceding paragraph suggests, by greatly increased mobility and the development of national rather than local markets.

It is certainly possible to find yeomen and husbandmen in the fifteenth century at Barkby, Catesby and Geddington as defendants in litigation in the royal courts.[81] Their description

[80] NAS, X 351B, courts from 22.02.1403 to 12.06.1406 (John Walsheman), 25.06.1406 (Alice Walsheman) and then from 28.08.1406 to 18.06.1407 (Alice Walshewoman).

[81] A random selection (in which it is much easier to find husbandmen than yeomen) includes the following. Richard Coverndon -v- John Jonson of Barkby, husbandman, claim for assault/taking of grazing (TNA, CP 40/634 (Trinity, 1419); AALT image http://aalt.law.uh.edu/H5/CP40no634/aCP40no634fronts/IMG_0330.htm). Margaret atte Merssh -v- William Kyng of Barkby, husbandman, trespass (TNA, CP 40/634 (Trinity, 1419); AALT image http://aalt.law.uh.edu/H5/CP40no634/aCP40no634fronts/IMG_0897.htm). Thomas Andrewe -v- William Buston of Shopes iuxta Catesby, husbandman, debt (TNA, CP 40/732 (Hilary, 1444); AALT image http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT1/H6/CP40no732/aCP40no732fronts/IMG_0501.htm). William Benet -v- Thomas Cokkes, lately of Catesby, husbandman, trespass (TNA, KB 27/926 (Hilary, 1493); AALT image http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT2/H7/KB27no926/bKB27no926dorses/IMG_0242.htm). Thomas Pyrly -v- John Baumburgh of Geddington, yeoman, assault/taking of grazing (CP 40/621 (Easter, 1416); AALT image http://aalt.law.uh.edu/H5/CP40no621/bCP40no621dorses/IMG_1858.htm). William Egton -v- John Champeneys of Geddington, husbandman, assault/sheep-worrying with dog (CP 40/641 (Easter, 1421); AALT image http://aalt.law.uh.edu/H5/CP40no641/bCP40no641dorses/IMG_1422.htm). For a helpful review of

was, however, applied to them by the plaintiff or by the Chancery clerks who drew up the writ or other originating process. The Statute of Additions 1413 had provided that original writs of action 'personals', appeals and indictments should identify the 'estate, degree or mystery' of defendants and the places with which they were 'conversant' (presumably where they lived).[82] The statute went on, in two short provisions, to deal with the effect of non-compliance and, finally, to impose a fine on the Chancery clerks if the documents for which they were responsible failed to comply with the statute. The statute contains no preamble so its purpose is not clear. The documents to which the statute applied were those which had to be served on the defendant, presumably in person so it is likely that one purpose was to assist the sheriff's officer (or whoever served the document) to identify the correct defendant. Presumably the Chancery clerks preparing the documents obtained this information from the plaintiff. The statute was not prescriptive so that it was left to litigants to decide how to describe their opponents. Plaintiffs were not required to self-identify and, in practice, did not do so except for those with an honorific title.

It is possible that a further purpose of the statute was to enable anyone consulting the court record (Chancery clerks, sheriffs' officers and judges, for example) to identify at a glance the *type* of person with whom they were dealing. That further suggests a society in which class-consciousness had achieved rather greater significance than hitherto, combined, possibly, with the appearance of a rather broader cross-section of the population in the royal courts than had previously been the case.[83]

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yeomen in connection with the Robin Hood literature of the later middle ages, see Louisa Foroughi, 'Robin Hood: Yeoman Status and Yeoman Service', in Stephen H. Rigby (ed.), *Historians on Robin Hood: The Outlaw's Legend in the Later Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2024).

[82] *Statutes of the Realm*, vol. II (London, 1816), p. 171.

[83] For the expansion of litigation in the royal courts in the fourteenth century, see Anthony Musson and W. M. Ormrod, *The Evolution of English Justice: Law, Politics and Society in the Fourteenth Century* (Basingstoke, 1999), 'Consumer Demand', pp. 116–19 and for the expansion of the scope of remedies and writs see Robert C. Palmer*, English Law in the Age of the Black Death, 1348–1381: A Transformation of Governance and Law* (Chapel Hill, 1993). Statistics of litigation in the royal courts in the fifteenth century are obscure and seem reliant on casual observation of the declining quantity and quality of manorial court rolls (observable at Barkby, Catesby and Geddington) in the second half of the fifteenth century and a corresponding growth of cases in Common Pleas (TNA, CPA 40 series).

Defendants were not therefore 'self-identifying': they were being identified by their opponents in litigation as yeomen or, more frequently, husbandmen. It is much more difficult to find occasions where individuals self-identified as 'yeomen' or 'husbandmen'. Neither term was used in the manorial court rolls for the three manors, even on occasions such as the grant of land, when it might be expected that an incoming tenant would want to establish his status or estate, and, in particular, his ability to manage the land. During the fifteenth century, with the abandonment of servile terminology, the rolls certainly tended to use more neutral language to describe the inhabitants of the manor collectively, such as *tenentes* or the *homagium*. By the end of the fifteenth century it is possible to find rather rare occasions where individuals apparently self-identify, such as Robert German in Geddington whose will described him as a 'husbondman'.[84] Even here, it is unclear whether this was really a case of self-identification or whether the clerk who, presumably, prepared the will had inserted the term into the text. Generally, wills did not identify the 'estate, degree or calling' (to use the terminology of the 1413 Statute) of the testator unless it was in some sense honorific, such as *armiger* or *miles*.[85]

The Oxford English Dictionary's entries for the terms 'yeoman' and 'husbandman' point to a late fourteenth century origin for both terms.[86] 'Yeoman' seems to appear from 1411 onwards in the sense used in this thesis, that is as a man holding a small landed estate. The later use of the term to denote a freeholder under the rank of gentleman seems anachronistic in the late middle ages. The term also seems to have derived from its

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For growing anxieties about behaviour, see Marjorie McIntosh, *Controlling Misbehavior in England, 1370–1600* (Cambridge, 1998).

[84] NAS, Northamptonshire Wills, Robert German 1486 NE F138.

[85] For example, at Barkby TNA, PROB 11/2B/236, John Lardener, *armiger*, and in connection with Geddington, TNA, PROB 11/4/211, Edmund Mulso (probably the half-brother of Thomas (ii) Mulso), *knyght*.

[86] "Yeoman, N." *Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford UP, September 2025, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/3585216809 . "Husbandman, N." *Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford UP, December 2024, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1168876433 .

alternative, and slightly earlier, use denoting a rank in a noble or royal household or, more specifically, a member of the sovereign's bodyguard. 'Husbandman', denoting a worker tilling and cultivating the soil, had slightly earlier origins but, again, the later use of the term to denote a farmer seems anachronistic in the later middle ages. In summary, both terms emerged, in the senses used in this thesis, in the later middle ages, at more or less the same time. It also seems reasonable to conclude that both were terms used as substitutes for the more 'servile' terminology that remained current (although probably increasingly archaic) in the early fourteenth century. It is interesting to note that the emergence of both terms suggests a recognition that there were, within the class of manorial tenants, at the very least two distinct subgroupings.[87]

This diversion into linguistics cautions against the easy categorisation of manorial tenants. The terms 'yeoman' and 'husbandman' were certainly used to self-identify much later in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries but the adoption of these terms for self-identification happened rather slowly and then only in the late fifteenth century. One reason might be the lack of opportunity for self-identification but that is uncertain. Whatever the position, it might also be sensible to consider the whole question of identity in a much broader context.

The oldest, probably most deeply engrained and largest manorial identity grouping was that of the tenants of the common fields, pastures and meadows of the manor. The operation of these common resources, including decisions about ploughing, sowing, harvesting and animal-husbandry, have left almost no record. The main exception is in cases where the common pool resource rules (to use Ostrom's terminology) had been breached or appeared to need reinforcement in the manorial court. By and large, these occasions tended to concern animals and the need to control their movement so as to prevent them straying into, and destroying, crops.

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[87] Christopher Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages: The People of Britain, 850–1520* (New Haven, 2009), p. 358.

The other occasions on which agrarian management appears in the manorial court rolls are in the ordinances recorded there. At Catesby, the prioresses' ordinances are predictably prescriptive and concern gathering wood in the prioresses' closes (1410), washing wool and hides in the Priory ponds (1410), stopping up gaps in garden hedges, probably to control animal movement (1410), tethering (the verb used is 'halcare' which may be a coinage for 'haltering' or tethering) animals in the prioresses' pasture (1413), moving boundary markers (1414), stopping up gaps (again, 1423) and the spaying of dogs in Catesby (1429).[88] Only a few of these ordinances directly concern the common fields and probably reflect the somewhat solipsistic concerns of the demesne-farming prioresses. They do, however, form a marked contrast with the ordinances of the court at Geddington which deal with taking others' beans in the common fields (1382), taking a neighbour's herbage in his corn (1387), managing pasture (1396), taking wood from a specific wood (1403) and grazing scabby (*scabiosus*) horses in the woods (1413).[89] In the context of Geddington, ordinances relating to woods and woodland can probably be taken to refer to common resources. The contrasts between Catesby and Geddington can probably be explained as those between a manor with a directly farmed demesne where the prioresses were anxious to protect their own position and a manor where at least some of the tenants held the farm of the manor and were able to use the manorial court to regulate the use of the common fields. The further contrast between Catesby and Geddington on the one hand and Barkby on the other could not be more complete. At Barkby only three ordinances are recorded in the surviving court rolls: one deals with an unjust claim but the other two deal with the jurisdiction of the court by prohibiting tenants from bringing suits in other courts which supports earlier suggestions

[88] TNA, SC 2/195/6 m. 10 (gathering wood), SC 2/195/6 m. 11 (washing wool etc.), SC 2/195/6 m. 13 (gaps in garden hedges and tethering animals in pasture), SC 2/195/7 m. 1 (boundary markers), SC 2/195/8 m. 1 (gaps in garden hedges) and SC 2/195/8 m. 7 (spaying bitches).
[89] NAS, X 351B - 12.07.1382 – beans; X351A – 20.05.1387 – herbage, 22.05.1396 – pasture, 20.04.1403 – wood; X351B – 29.04.1413 – horses.

about the various manorial courts jostling for jurisdiction there. The main point, however, is that Merton was almost completely uninterested in the management of the common fields. This makes the identification of any identity grouping around the common fields there very difficult because of the lack of written records of their day-to-day operation. It does, however, seem reasonable to suggest that these three very different manorial structures engendered very different tenant mentalities. At Catesby, it occasionally led to tenant-lord friction but, more often, to friction between tenants and graziers. At Barkby, at the other end of the scale, it looks as though lord-tenant friction was largely absent, certainly after Merton's initial endeavours in the late thirteenth century to assert its control of its newly acquired manor. Geddington lay somewhere between the two. With an absent royal lord, it seems likely that friction arose between the oligarchy controlling the manor and other tenants or, in other words, within the tenant body.

Conflicts involving opposing groupings supply rather more evidence about such groupings. Here, it is helpful (particularly in the light of the previous conclusion about internal conflicts) to re-visit some of the Geddington conflicts. The 1382 case of John Botelyr (pp.73-7) provoked conflicts between rather shadowy groups which were probably based on opposing family groups and relationships within the tenant community. The subsequent Busshey and Baskirvil (pp. 82-4) cases were probably also occasions when outsiders provoked a unified hostile response from the community, probably over grazing and grazing rights.

The pattern of unified resistance repeats itself with Thomas (ii) Mulso in 1440 and the evidence of the inhabitants of Geddington and elsewhere in support of the long list of indictments (pp. 90-3).[90] That list is curious because it set out nine charges of rape, sometimes accompanied by violence against others, followed by at least fifteen more miscellaneous charges. They arose from violence and theft but were accompanied by two

[90] TNA, KB 9/233/1 m. 133.

accusations, one of failure to repair mills and another of seizing eighteen acres from the queen, which sound like makeweight charges. All, or almost all, of the offences were said to have taken place at Geddington and there is a strong local association in many cases: three of the nine rape victims bore the names of families who appear in the fourteenth century court rolls (Elena Gryndell, Joanna Godpage and Joanna Barker) and only one, Alice Ostler the servant of Thomas Sese 'of Lincoln', was an outsider. One of the theft victims, John Godpage whose bullock was stolen, bore the same name as one of the rape victims. Only one of the victims of the thirteen or so non-rape charges is clearly identified as coming from outside Geddington: Richard Cleyton of Oxendon, a village about twelve miles west of Geddington. He was the victim of an assault by Thomas Mulso at Geddington whose long beard was cut off (which suggests humiliation was the objective). The only other victim whose place of origin was clearly identified, John Souter of Newton *iuxta* Geddington, was presumably a tenant of the Mulsos' manor there. One of the victims, Thomas Downale (the subject of two assaults), a gentleman and probably a landholder in manors adjoining Geddington.[91] As has been said in chapter 3, the background to these indictments is opaque and may have been manipulated by others outside Geddington although the date, 1440, seems rather early for Thomas (ii)'s Yorkist association to have aroused opposition.

However, the villagers' resistance was not entirely unified. The subsequent 1446 inquisition into the murder of William Shirwode shows that there was also a group of tenants at Geddington who were alleged to have carried out the murder at the instigation of Thomas (ii) Mulso. The position of the Mulso family was complex: in Geddington they were both tenants of the manor and, as has been said, probably *de facto* lords of the manor. The position was further complicated by the Mulsos' lordship of the adjoining manor of Newton, where the family of at least one of Shirwode's murderers, Walter Freman, had been tenants since at least the beginning of the fifteenth century. It seems likely that Geddington had been for

[91] TNA, C 1/868/59. William Downall was the farmer Geddington in 1494 (appendix 2).

some time divided into pro- and anti-Mulso factions, a hint of which appears in the family's rather shadowy appearance in the cycle of violence that erupted around John Botelyr in 1382. Ultimately, much of this friction is probably attributable to class-conflict between the Mulso family and the manorial tenants, including the growing body of cottagers. However, as the Botelyr case suggests, there were also divisions within the tenant community.

There were other occasions when a much broader community might come together. The jurors at the coroner's inquest into the suicide of Hugo de Brechale, with which this chapter opened, were drawn from four townships surrounding Geddington: Newton, Boughton, Weekly and Barford.[92] It is noticeable that their inventory of his possessions omitted any household goods or agricultural tools. It is inconceivable that Hugo possessed none so it rather looks as though they colluded to conceal them, presumably for the benefit of Hugo's heirs.

The intertwined groupings and identities at Geddington gives way to much simpler conflicts between lords and tenants at Merton's manor at Barkby with the tenants' liberation in 1289 of their animals from Isabella de Ros's park (pp. 142-4) and at Catesby with the tenants' 1429 hedge-breaking (pp. 208-10). Both incidents stand out because of the unusually sharp seigniorial response, probably prompted by a sense that, on these occasions, the tenants had gone too far and that an example needed to be made of the offenders. Both occasions were, however, exceptional, and it is likely that relations between lords and their tenants were more usually characterised by heel-dragging and low-level non-compliance with manorial regulations, characterised by exceeding the stint at Catesby, and attracting only modest fines.

[92] TNA, JUST 2/113.

In conclusion, one way of thinking about tenant identities in the later middle ages may be to see them as an almost infinite number of spheres, intersecting and constantly changing, sometimes dividing and sometimes amalgamating, One probably more or less constant identity group was that of the tenants of the common fields, but there were others such as family or 'interest' groupings (for instance, anti-seigniorial, pastural or arable) which were more volatile. This seems a more satisfactory and multi-dimensional view than the rather flat division of the tenants into yeomen, husbandmen and day labourers or artisans although they too were probably identities which seized the attention of manorial tenants as the fifteenth century progressed and then went on to become more significant in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

In this firmament, law – what it was, what it ought to be and how it might be changed – achieved the significance that religion attained in the sixteenth and, especially, the seventeenth century. The ready and frequent resort to law and increasing familiarity with it, particularly in the royal courts, proved enduring and, as E. P. Thompson observed, extended into the late eighteenth century with his re-discovered 'moral economy'. It also had a significant impact on the rebellions of the late middle ages which will be re-considered briefly below.

6. Conclusion

Barkby, Catesby and Geddington went largely untouched by the events of the Great Rebellion of 1381 and subsequent risings such as, in particular, Cade's Rebellion of 1450. It is, however, difficult to ignore these events in the context of any examination of manorial society in the later fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Recent commentators have stressed the ‘political’ or 'social' rather than the ‘economic’ causes of the revolt. Thus, Bailey sees it as the response to a failing royal administration sparked off by, in particular, the sale of jurisdictional franchises and an inept tax imposition,

compounded by the unpopularity of certain prominent politicians (John of Gaunt, especially) and minority groups (Flemings and lawyers, especially).[93] It is probably not surprising, given that the discovery of a silver brooch at Geddington could generate a minor crime-wave, to find that incompetent attempts at tax-raising at Fobbing in Essex could spark off a more serious insurrection in 1381 or that a combination of rumour and resentment could spark off the rising in Kent in 1450. Those events led rapidly to the articulation of an agenda that was probably wilfully obscured by the chroniclers who provide almost the only record of it. Given what has been said above about the increasing 'legal integration' of the manorial tenantry, it is also unsurprising that their agenda took on a remarkably legal form: demands for 'an end to lordship' and 'no law but the law of Winchester' in 1381 and compelling the trial of unpopular officials by the guildhall sessions in 1450.[94]

However, there is little evidence at Barkby, Catesby or Geddington of popular unrest in any way comparable to the events of the south-east of England in either 1381 or 1450. Three individuals, one from Barkby (William Barkby or Gibson) and two from Catesby (William Baxter and William Smyth) appear in the pardon rolls.[95] Their appearances there may indicate little more than proximity to the events of the rebellion (in itself testimony to the mobility of late medieval manorial tenants) which encouraged them to seek pardons as insurance against being swept up in any subsequent retribution. The presence amongst them of William Smyth of Catesby, 'knight', is puzzling. A man bearing the same name but described as *mercator* had appeared in the poll tax records for 1379 paying 6s. 8d., the

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[93] Mark Bailey, *After the Black Death: Economy, Society and the Law in Fourteenth Century England* (Oxford, 2021), ch. 5.
[94] See in particular Mark Bailey, *After the Black Death*, p. 201 for 'no law but the law of Winchester' in 1381, R. A. Griffiths, *The Reign of King Henry VI* (Stroud, 2004), ch. 21 and in particular p. 215 and I. M. W. Harvey, *Jack Cade's Rebellion of 1450* (Oxford, 1991), p. 92 for the trial of Saye and Crowmer in 1450.
[95] *The People of 1381* website: TNA, C 67/29 mm. 24-1 https://data.1381.online/projects_database/pr_participants_ro/?action=view&id=14382 (William Barkby or Gibson of Barkby; TNA, C 67/29 mm. 24-1 https://data.1381.online/projects_database/pr_participants_ro/?action=view&id=14410 (William Baxter of Catesby); TNA C 67/29 mm. 24-1 https://data.1381.online/projects_database/pr_participants_ro/?action=view&id=15719 (William Smyth of Catesby).

highest assessment to poll tax in Catesby and one appropriate for 'all lesser merchants and artificers who have profit from the land'.[96] His surname is very common but it seems likely that the same individual appears in the pardon rolls. Possibly he was a travelling merchant who saw some advantage in elevating his status. William Baxter makes appearances in the court rolls at Catesby: a John Baxter had been a tenant of the manor and had died in July 1380 and a William Baxter makes quite frequent appearances during the years 1380 and 1381, usually (and rather suggestively) in fines for failure to pay suit of court.[97] William Barkby or Gibson does not appear in the Merton manorial court rolls at Barkby but might have been a tenant of another Barkby estate. Beyond this low level of involvement there are only rather limited suggestions that the Great Rebellion extended to Northampton or Leicester and none to suggest it extended to their rural hinterland.[98]

At Geddington, the royal lease of the manor 'at farm' was in a sense a variant of the sale of jurisdictional franchises identified by Bailey as one of the causes of the Great Rebellion. That might explain, in part, the internal friction leading to outbreaks of violence there in the 1380s. That was not sufficient, however, to spark off anything more than purely local disturbances and Geddington had to await the early seventeenth century and ill-advised enclosures by the Tresham family, heirs to the Mulsos, to spark off an uprising at their Newton manor and elsewhere.[99] That may contain a clue to the nature of the English 'peasant' risings of the later medieval and early modern periods: they required a rather local and quite specific flashpoint and targets. In the later middle ages, the counties of the south-east and the hinterland of London provided a number of obvious targets with a concentration of royal officials and other unpopular groups. In 1450, the vulnerability of Kent to French

[96] Fenwick, *Poll Taxes*, vol. I, p. xv.
[97] TNA, SC 2/195/4 m. 3 (death of John Baxter) and mmm. 4 and 5 (appearances of William Baxter).
[98] See e.g. André Reville, *Le Soulevement des Travailleurs d'Angleterre en 1381: Etudes et Documents Publié avec une Introduction Historique par Charles Petit Dutaillis* (Paris, 1898), pp. 276–7 for William Napton's activities in Northampton and p. cii for Leicester. Also, Juliet Barker, *England, Arise: The People, The King and The Great Revolt of 1381* (London, 2015), pp. 364–5.
[99] See e.g. Steve Hindle, 'Imagining Insurrection in Seventeenth-Century England: Representations of the Midland Rising of 1607', *History Workshop Journal*, 66 (2008), pp. 21–66.

attack combined with the incompetent management of the war in France provided a similar flashpoint as grievances about incompetent tax-raising and corruption in 1381. War was a common factor in both cases and may have been just too distant to arouse manorial tenants in the East Midlands.

That underlines a point made earlier: it is incorrect to view manorial tenants, yeomen or husbandmen as forming specific groupings and acting as one body. Manorial tenants probably formed part of numerous different 'identities' – as tenants with rights in the common fields, as members of the *homagium*, as members of family groups and, no doubt, other less identifiable entities – all of which pulled them in different ways at different times. Geddington, in particular, suggests that friction within the tenant community was as important as conflict between tenants and lords although the division between tenants and lords was blurred there.

This also points to the sheer diversity of the manors of the East Midlands and, no doubt, other parts of England. The differences between Barkby, Catesby and Geddington were partly due to broadly environmental factors. Catesby's location on high and rather intractable land, Barkby's relatively extensive meadows and pasture, and relatively tractable soil and Geddington's proximity to extensive woodland all had important consequences. However, in all those cases, they had those consequences not solely because of environmental conditions but because of the combination of those conditions with specific aspects of manorial management. Thus, at Catesby, the combination of unfavourable soil conditions, extensive cultivation, an intrusive management of the manor by resident prioresses led to the long-term depopulation and degradation of the manorial structure which failed to survive the dissolution. At Barkby, a conservative but distant manorial lord, Merton, combined with the presence of three other estates in the village resulted in an inflexible tenurial structure. Geddington's proximity to woodland was important precisely because of

its tenants' extensive rights there which, as has been suggested, may account for its relative prosperity.

In all three cases, seigniorial authority remained of considerable importance, even if diminished, until the end of the fifteenth century. The responses of the manorial lords at Barkby and Catesby have been described. The position, and distribution of power, at Geddington was rather different in the ways that have been described but it provides an interesting example of how manorial tenants, left very largely to their own devices, might act. In particular, they did not act as a single body but developed, ultimately, into dominant gentry, a small number of wealthier tenants and a much larger number of nearly landless cottage holders who probably relied on wage labour for subsistence.

As has been described, the changed conditions after the Black Death swung changes already under way before the first wave of the plague in new directions. Attempts by manorial lords at Barkby and Catesby to 'bind in' their tenants to the manorial structure by the use of the jury or *homagium* and the provision of dispute resolution in the manorial court had little success. However, those attempts engendered a tenantry with a high level of awareness of law and the legal system. That awareness resulted in the steady seepage of litigation away from the manorial court and into the royal courts during the fifteenth century, a process which can be traced at all three manors.

Despite the disappearance by the late fifteenth century of much of the manorial structure that is so evident at the beginning of the fourteenth century, one significant aspect of lordship remained unchanged: ownership of and a strong element of control over land. For much of the fifteenth century, this was a diminishing asset as rents fell away at Barkby and Catesby. Control of land was of limited value in circumstances where it was difficult to keep existing tenants or find replacement tenants for vacant tenements. However, the slow recovery from the mid-fifteenth century recession changed the position but the dissolution meant that most

of the benefit was enjoyed by the gentry successors of monastic institutions at Catesby and Barkby.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

The current historiography depicts England at the end of the thirteenth century as a country with a large and growing rural population, correspondingly high demand and prices, a burgeoning but febrile system of local markets but under-developed national and international markets which were heavily dependent on the export of a single raw material, wool.[1] The Black Death with mortality rates of, possibly, 50% of the population relieved the pressure of high prices and low wages but its effect was delayed by the adverse weather conditions of the mid-fourteenth century until the final quarter of the century. That led to Bailey's 'comfortable – but not unbridled - golden age' and Campbell's 'silver lining' for the tenant population characterised by a broadening and improvement of diet with better quality grains and animal protein (such as dairy products and meat) becoming more affordable and leading to a shift away from extensive arable towards an increasingly pastoral agrarian economy. These changes also created conditions favourable to the growth of more sustainable national and international markets during the fifteenth century, marked most obviously by the shift from the export of a raw material, wool, to the manufacture and export of a finished product, woollen cloth. There were, however, qualifications to this. Population remained low, reaching a minimum in the mid-fifteenth century. That was accompanied by significant climatic problems, probably connected with the Spörer solar minimum in the mid-century, leading to a significant and extended slump. Demand for land remained slack and rents low thereby creating significant problems for manorial lords which proved difficult to

[1] The summary in this and the following two paragraphs is based upon Bruce M. S. Campbell, *English Seigniorial Agriculture, 1250–1450* (Cambridge, 2000), ch. 9 especially for the weaknesses of the pre-plague economy, particularly on the 'demand side', Richard Britnell, *Britain and Ireland, 1050–1530: Economy and Society* (Oxford, 2004), for the general background and ch. 16 especially for the wool and cloth trades; Mark Bailey, *After the Black Death: Economy, Society, and the Law in Fourteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 2021) for the transition away from service tenancies and current views on the 'seigniorial reaction'; John Hatcher, 'The Great Slump of the Mid-Fifteenth Century' in Richard Britnell and John Hatcher (eds.), *Progress and Problems in Medieval England* (Cambridge, 2012) for the mid-fifteenth century slump and Bruce M. S. Campbell, *The Great Transition: Climate, Disease and Society in the Late-Medieval World* (Cambridge, 2016) for the climatic background and the emergence of the new economy of the early modern period.

address. Only at the beginning of the sixteenth century were there were signs of more sustained and sustainable growth based on firmer foundations, essentially larger and broader markets, than those of two hundred years earlier.

Dyer's contribution has illuminated the problems confronting tenants in the mid-fifteenth century: arable production from a typical virgate holding was insufficient to produce the necessary cash surplus which could only be raised by increased animal husbandry.[2] Geddington was certainly able to absorb that extension, although even there it resulted in depopulation at Barford and Glendon. Barkby certainly had quite extensive resources of meadow and pasture which possibly enabled it to absorb the extension of animal husbandry, although its proximity to Leicester may have made it possible for tenants to generate a cash income from employment there. Catesby, by contrast, experienced significant difficulties with the expansion of animal husbandry and the ensuing problems of pressure on grazing may have contributed to its declining population and early enclosure. The tenants of communities that were able to make the transition, Geddington and Barkby in particular, entered a new phase in which they were able to take advantage of new, national markets and opportunities for increased involvement in manorial administration.

Considerable stress has been placed throughout this thesis on the sheer diversity of manors. That diversity arose from many causes: environmental, economic, seigniorial and tenurial (to name only some). Unsurprisingly, and as has been shown in the previous chapters, that diversity meant that individual manors responded differently to the challenges of the period and with varying degrees of success. In some cases, as at Catesby where the manor seems to have disappeared with the dissolution, that response ended in failure. However, at Barkby and Geddington the manor and its institutions continued into existence into the modern period. That survival is a testimony to the adaptability of the institution which, in

[2] Christopher Dyer, 'The Agrarian Problem, 1440-1520', in Jane Whittle (ed.), *Landlords and Tenants in Britain, 1440-1660: Tawney's 'Agrarian Problem' Revisited* (Woodbridge, 2013).

evolutionary terms, could be seen as in part the product of diversity. However, this has important consequences for the way in which the economic history of the later middle ages is written. Attempts to generalise and impose profiles from the top down are likely to end in failure as are attempts to look in isolation at single aspects of manorial administration (individual courts or processes, such as the hue and cry, come to mind). A holistic view of the entirety of any one manor is essential to understand its operation and that is what I have attempted in this thesis.

Developments at the three manors which form the subject-matter of this thesis over the period from 1350 to 1500 seem broadly consistent with this picture. Geddington, in a way the most vibrant of the three, demonstrates the changes under way in the late thirteenth century with its possible forest micro-economy, local market and long-established shift to cash tenancies, possibly also associated with the legal privileges enjoyed by the tenants of a royal manor (pp. 45-8). Merton's Barkby, also a manor without a directly farmed demesne and where rents had long shifted to cash, vividly demonstrates the impact of the Black Death with its high mortality. Along with its companion manor at Kibworth Harcourt, it also illustrates how a responsive and adaptable manorial lord could take steps at least to minimise the impact of demographic catastrophe (p. 147). Catesby was the one manor of the three where direct demesne management and farming continued until, probably, the late fifteenth century (pp. 210-25 and 236-7). It was probably the type of small manor that, with careful and adaptable management, survived rather better than larger and less agile ecclesiastical estates.[3] Even there, however, it ultimately proved impossible to escape the consequences of one of the notable features of the changes outlined above, increased tenant mobility, with the consequences of depopulation and desertion and, ultimately, large-

[3] See e.g. Christopher Dyer, 'A Small Landowner in the Fifteenth Century', *Midland History*, 1.3 (1972) pp. 1–14 and Andrew Watkins, 'Landowners and Their Estates in the Forest of Arden in the Fifteenth Century', *Agricultural History Review*, 45.1 (1997), pp. 18–33.

scale enclosure. It was the only manor of the three which was, probably, enclosed by the sixteenth century.

None of the three manors shows any significant sign of the now historiographically marginalised 'seigniorial reaction'. On the contrary, both Barkby and Catesby provide indications of lordly adaptation to changed circumstances, characterised above as the 'seigniorial realignment' (pp. 276-80). The term is intended to convey the sense that, whilst the changes of the fourteenth century were probably not welcomed by lords, they were recognised as largely irresistible. It was better to swim with the prevailing current rather than against it. That strategy, at both Barkby and Catesby, proved relatively successful in the late fourteenth century at Barkby and well into the fifteenth century at Catesby. Later, however, both suffered from characteristic but different economic problems of the period: diminishing rents (at Barkby) and depopulation leading to loss of the labour force (at Catesby). Seigniorial management at Geddington is much more difficult to characterise but that is probably attributable to its curious tenurial structure where, in a sense, the leading tenants became the manorial lord. That structure was attributable to a combination of factors: its status as a royal manor and the privileges that afforded to its tenants and, probably, a comparatively favoured local economy. The enigma at Geddington is why the tenants' favoured status gave way to dominance by a gentry family in terms of both landholding and (probably) influence in the local community. The most likely explanation is that the tenant oligarchy of the second half of the fourteenth century was always unstable and vulnerable to takeover by a single ambitious and aggressive family.

The 'seigniorial realignment' took the form, at Barkby and Catesby, of lordly appeasement of tenant ambition in the expanded role of the *homagium* and encouraging the use of the manorial court for dispute resolution (litigation). That supports the suggestion that the manorial lords of the second half of the fourteenth century recognised that turning back the clock, the 'seigniorial reaction', was simply not possible. Both phenomena suggest,

however, that manorial lords remained anxious to 'bind in' their tenants to the institutions of the manor, the court in particular (pp. 280-2). That was probably because they were unable to conceive of their property rights in any other context than what had, historically speaking, been the only institution of economic extraction, the manor itself. Attempts to tie together more tightly the bundle of rights that comprised the manor must have seemed an attractive, and possibly the only, course of action.

Those attempts were largely unsuccessful. Although the manor continued in existence as a legal institution for some four hundred years, it did so in a form largely shorn of its power and influence over its tenants. As has been described, with the shift to money rents, that was a process that had been under way for some time before the Black Death and was one especially visible in two of these manors, Barkby and Geddington, where direct demesne farming had been abandoned at a relatively early stage. However, the evolution of the relationship of lord and tenant to a cash basis meant that the court was reduced in its scope. That took different forms but the court's survival as a land registry is apparent at Barkby and Geddington as is its transition to a 'folk court' for the resolution of grievances within the tenant community rather than its previous role as an instrument of lordly control.

Nevertheless, these changes had a lasting effect on the tenant community. The process of 'legal integration' took place alongside tenants' market integration and led to tenants' increased familiarity with legal process. This process probably started in the manorial court, with the encouragement of lords in the ways described above, but the knowledge obtained there could later be transferred to the royal courts. Geddington provides a striking example. It might be expected that the tenants there, with their rights in the royal court, would have ignored the manorial court. However, on the contrary, they made very extensive use of the manorial court and it is very likely it was supported by the tenant oligarchs using the administrative skills of men such as William Bernak and Edmund Byfeld (pp. 66-8). It is not difficult, though, to understand the advantages to the tenant oligarchs of Geddington of a

local court which they could dominate – unlike the more distant royal courts in which they could not hope to obtain the same influence. However, that may also explain why, as the Mulso family came to dominate the manor, the main forum for litigation at Geddington seems to have shifted, by the mid-fifteenth century, into the royal courts.

In the midst of these developments, changes based around culture and identity start to become apparent. Again, Geddington provides the most vivid material. Henry German (died c. 1486) seems a very different type of man from either Peter de Deen (died 1287) or Hugo de Brechale (died 1352) (pp. 104-5, 46-7 and 56-7). There are reasons to believe that all three were relatively wealthy by the standards of manorial tenants. Part of the difference is undoubtedly because Henry German's will provides personal details that build up a picture of his extended household and his trading activities that is absent from the bald accounts of the deaths of Peter de Deen and Hugo de Brechale. However, it seems unlikely that either of them enjoyed the large household of servants who benefitted from Henry's will. Although there are reasons to think that Peter de Deen was producing dairy goods for the market and that Hugo de Brechale was holding large quantities of grain possibly for baking or some other trade, it is unlikely that either participated in a national market in the way Henry German must have done.

This change is undoubtedly attributable, in part, to the changing nature of the surviving archival material. However, part is also attributable to the changing, and growing, number of identities towards the end of the period: Catesby's itinerant day labourers (possibly a foretaste of Belich's early modern 'crew culture') and Thomas (ii) Mulso (possibly a disinhibited professional soldier) are just two examples.[4] If opportunities were becoming more varied with developing and larger markets, it is also important to remember that some identity groups remained relatively unchanged. This thesis started with Laxton in

[4] James Belich, *The World the Plague Made: The Black Death and the Rise of Europe* (Princeton, 2022), pp. 161–5 in particular for 'crew culture'.

Nottinghamshire, England's only remaining open-field system, and it seems appropriate to end there with its standing reminder of an identity group that was built around rules and mechanisms for enforcing them that formed part of the common experience of manorial tenants in midland England. The common field systems that were an essential part of so many manors, endured at the core of Geddington and at Barkby until the modern period. It is a reminder of the adaptability, and hence the durability, of the manor: parts of it could evolve almost out of recognition whilst other parts remained unchanged.

Appendix 1
Geddington - inventories from inquisitions

Peter de Deen - 1287[1] Half-virgate holder	
Livestock	
Two horses at 4s. each	8s 0d
Four oxen	£1 6s 8d
Two cows	8s 0d
Two calves, from the two cows	1s 6d
Eight sheep	9s 0d
Twenty pigs	£1 0s 0d
Twenty hoggets	10s 0d
Two heifers of two years age	2s 6d
Two heifers of one year age	1s 0d
Goods	
Oarca – possibly an arc	2s 0d
Brass pot or ewer	5d
Patella - pot	3d
Lavator – washing bowl – and *pelve* – smaller bowl	8d
Two *arca*, caskets	
Grain and crops	
Six qt. wheat (*frumentum*) and rye (*silignum*)	18s 0d
Five qt. barley (*ordeum*)	12s 6d
Five qt. oats (*avena*)	7s 6d
Ten rods wheat and rye in Newton field	5s 0d
Two-and-a-half acres wheat and rye in Geddington field	5s 0d
Other goods	
Three *cune* – pots or vats, possibly for brewing	1s 6d
Two *barells* – barrels, for brewing	8d
Two *alnea ad pastum* – rising bowls for baking	8d
One broken box	2s 0d
One plough and harness; one harrow; three baskets or fish traps; one ladder or bowl	1s 0d
One *lectum* – bed with covers [?]	2s 0d
One table with *pensal* – scales or weights [?]	1s 0d
	£7 6s 10d

[1] TNA, C 145/5.

Hugo de Brechale - 1352[2] Probably a virgate holder and possibly a miller or baker	
Grain of all types	£20 0s 0d
Sheep	£6 0s 0d
Bulls, cows, bullocks, calves, draught horses, calves, horses, draught horses, foals and pigs	£7 6s 8d
	£33 6s 8d

[2] TNA, JUST 2/113.

Appendix 2

Farm of Geddington manor

Date	***Content***	***Farm or value (£ s d)***
20.11.1312[1]	Grant to John Comyn for sustenance and in consideration of the fidelity of his father killed in the king's service in Scotland and because his lands in Scotland are laid waste of, *inter alia*, the manor of Geddington to the value of	£52
16.08.1314[2]	Grant to Margaret, late wife of John Comyn, and Aymer, her son, of, *inter alia*, the manor of Geddington to the value of	£52
01.02.1327[3]	Grant to Queen Isabella [m. Edward II, 1308] of, *inter alia*, the manor of Geddington to the value of	£52
15.11.1331[4]	Grant to Queen Isabella of, *inter alia*, the manor of Geddington	[value unstated]
01.03.1333[5]	Grant to Queen Isabella in enlargement of the previous grant including the manor of Geddington	[value unstated]
13.03.1345[6]	Surrender by Queen Isabella of previous grants including the manor of Geddington	[value unstated]
15.08.1369 to 29.09.1383 and 29.09.1383 to 29.09.1384[7]	Ministers' accounts recording the farm of Geddington to Edmund Bifeld and other men of Geddington	Apparently £32
17.05.1374[8]	Petition of the poor tenants of Geddington: in the time of Queen Philippa [m. Edward III, 1326; d. 1369] they used to pay £52pa for the manor and its appurtenances; now lands lie empty by death and removal of tenants; praying for discharge of part of farm as a matter of charity; many tenants have left	
17.05.1374[9]	Inquisition: manor not worth £52; total value	£30 17s 10d
22.12.1384[10]	Grant to Queen Anne [m. Richard II, 1382; d. 1394] of, *inter alia*, manor of Geddington (vacated by her by surrender but presumably re-granted)	[value unstated]
08.07.1401[11]	Commitment of the King's manor of Geddington to John Mulso, Henry Mulso, William Juhet,	

[1] Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Edward II, 1307–1313 (London, 1894), p. 510.
[2] Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Edward II, 1313–1317 (London, 1898), p. 164.
[3] Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Edward III, 1327–1330 (London, 1891), p. 68.
[4] Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Edward III, 1330–1334 (London, 1893), p. 195.
[5] Calendar of the Patent Rolls, 1330–1334, p. 530.
[6] Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Edward III, 1343–1345 (London, 1902), p. 447.
[7] TNA, SC 6/948/1.
[8]Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous (Chancery), vol. III, (London, 1937), p. 345, item 912; TNA, C 145/204/3.
[9] TNA, C 142/204(3).
[10] Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Richard II, 1381–1385 (London, 1897), p. 511, p. 513.
[11] Calendar of Fine Rolls, vol. XII, Henry IV, 1399–1405 (London, 1931), p. 130; m. 10.

	Edmund Byfeld, William Howe, Thomas Lamberd, Thomas Elyot, William Knight and other tenants of Geddington for three years rendering per annum Provision for maintenance of buildings and support of charges and provision for housebote and haybote of tenants in the woods of Geddington and for the mills.	£36
04.06.1403[12]	Grant to Queen Joan [m. Henry IV, 1403; d.1437] of, *inter alia*, manor of Geddington to the value per annum of	£36
17.11.1439[13]	Commitment to Richard Leek, John Reyncroft and Robert Caylflete (by mainprise of others) of the keeping of the manor of Geddington with Barford, Clonden, Cranesley and Islep in the king's hands following the death of Queen Joan for seven years at annual farm of With an increment of	£32 £4
02.06.1450[14]	Commitment of Richard Wodevyle, Lord de Rivers, Knight, of the town and manor of Geddington for ten years at farm to be agreed	[farm unstated]
12.11.1454[15]	Commitment to Thomas Mulso Esq. and Philip Nell (by mainprise of Thomas Knyston of Myrceston, Co. Derb. Esq and John Mulso of Neuton) of the manor of Geddington in the king's hands for ten years at annual farm of	£29
08.02.1456[16]	Orders to farmers of the manor and lordship of Geddington to pay £30 per annum to James, Earl of Douglas	
05.11.1461[17]	Commitment to William Weldon (by mainprise of others) of the manor of Geddington committed by the king on 10 April last from Easter last to hold for 12 years at farm of	£23 3s 9½d
30.07.1462[18]	Commitment of John Derlyngton (by mainprise of others) of the manor of Geddington except five pieces of land with headlands containing 7 acres in Kitlyngesmedow and the several fishery there for 12 years at (annually) With increment of William Weldon having surrendered	£22 18s 9½d 3s 4d
30.07.1462[19]	Commitment to William Weldon of the five pieces of land above for 12 years at (annually)	5s
16.03.1465[20]	Grant to Queen Elizabeth [m. Edward IV, 1464] of, *inter alia*, From the farm of the manor of Geddington.	£24

[12] Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Henry IV, vol. II, 1401–1405 (London, 1905), p. 234; m. 21.
[13] Calendar of Fine Rolls, vol. XVII, Henry VI, 1437–1445 (London, 1937), p. 107; m. 32.
[14] Calendar of Fine Rolls, vol. XVIII, Henry VI, 1445–1452 (London, 1937), p. 158/9; m. 14.
[15] Calendar of Fine Rolls, vol. XIX, Henry VI, 1452–1461 (London, 1939), p. 117; m. 13.
[16] Calendar of the Close Rolls, Henry VI, vol. VI, 1454–1461 (St Andrew's, 2024), p. 99; m. 2.
[17] Calendar of Fine Rolls, vol. XX, Edward IV, Henry VI, 1461–1471 (London, 1949), p. 42; m. 18.
[18] Calender of Fine Rolls, 1461–1471, p. 77.
[19] Calendar of Fine Rolls, 1461–1471, p. 77.
[20] Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Edward IV, 1461–1467 (London, 1897), p. 430; m. 18.

18.12.1470[21]	Grant to John Plummer, knight, keeper of greater wardrobe, for the custody of the manor of Geddington of	£24
22.05.1484[22]	Commitment to Edward Franke (by mainprise of others) of the manor of Geddington for 20 years at	£23 9½d
22.09.1485[23]	Commitment to Henry Veer (by mainprise of others) of the manor of Geddington for seven years at (annually) With increment of	£23 9½d 8d
23.010.1494[24]	Commitment to William Dounhall (by mainprise of others) of the manor of Geddington for 21 years at With increment of And provision for maintenance and repairs.	£23 17s [??]
16.11.1498[25]	Commitment to Simon Malory (with mainprise of others unidentified) of the manor of Geddington for 40 years at With increment of And provision for increase of farm.	£23 3s 5d 19d

[21] Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Edward IV, 1467–1477 (London, 1900), p. 232; m. 15.
[22] Calendar of Fine Rolls, vol. XXI, Edward IV, Edward V, Richard III, 1471–1485 (London, 1961), entry 822, p. 286; m. 23(2).
[23] Calendar of Fine Rolls, vol. XXII, Henry VII, 1485–1509 (London, 1962), entry 14, p. 9; m. 7; also, entry 76, p. 33.
[24] Calendar of Fine Rolls, 1485–1509, entry 507, p. 213; m. 7.
[25] Calendar of Fine Rolls, 1485–1509, entry 631, p. 277; m. 13.

Appendix 3

Larger (one virgate or more) land transactions in Geddington 1377-1423					
Date	***Inter-family? Y/N***	***Area (virgates or acres)***	***Parties***	***Location***	***Fine***
27.03.1378	N	1	Crown to Henry Mylston (formerly John Wagge's tenement)	Barford	1s
27.03.1378	N	1	Anne Pek to John Chicche	Glendon	
03.05.1382	N	1	Reginald & Anne Aboveton to Richard Maryot (formerly John Mariot's, his father's tenement)	Glendon	7d
29.01.1384	Y	1.5	Agnes Corby to William & Joanna Selot	Geddington	20d
29.01.1384	Y	1.5	William & Joanna Selot to John & Margaret Etbred	Geddington	20d
27.05.1385	N	21 a. 2½ r.	William Skoteney to John Mulso	Geddington	40d
02.12.1385	Y?	1	Emma Dawe to Nicholas of the Chaumbre	Barford	2s
01.09.1386	N	2	Reginald & Anne Aboveton to William & Katherine Iuet	Barford	2s
12.02.1390	N	1	Henry Mikeston to William Iowet	Barford?	
26.03.1390	Y?	1	Richard Weldon to John & Emma Kyng	Barford	6d

23.09.1394	N	1	Anne Peek of Glendon to Crown (no heirs)	Glendon	
24.11.1396	Y	1	John Elyot to Thomas Elyot	Barford	5s
08.04.1401	Y	1	Laurence Peek, son of Anne, admitted as heir to Anne (held by free bench)	Glendon	
08.04.1401	N	1	Laurence Peek to Sarra and Henry Chyche, son of Sarra	Glendon	6s
08.04.1401	Y	1	Thomas Grove presented for failure to make relevium following his mother's, Agnes Grove's, death	Geddington?	
14.10.1401	N	1.5	Thomas Draughton to John Bamborow	Geddington	40d
20.04.1403	Y	1	Crown to Thomas Grove, following death of John Grove	Geddington?	[5s]
24.12.1407	Y?	3	William Iewet to Nicholas Lovet & William [Laurence]	Barford	3s 4d
30.06.1408	Y	1	William & Amicia Knyght to Thomas Smyth	Geddington	8d
30.06.1408	Y	1	Thomas Smyth to William & Amicia Knyght		
03.11.1408	Y	1	Simon Launceles to Robert Launceles	Barford	5s

29.11.1410	Y	1	William Hough to Nicholas Chaumbre	Barford	12d
29.11.1410	Y	1	Nicholas Chaumbre to William & Agnes Hough	Barford	5s
31.10.1411	Y	1	William Gyldeby to Roger & John Gyldeby	Barford	
31.10.1411	N	1	Roger & John Gyldeby to John & Juliana Castlon	Barford	5s
Spring 1414	Y	1	Robert & Anne Launcelin admitted, Anne the heir of John Baron	Barford	5s
18.02.1421	Y	1	Thomas Elyot to Margaret Elyot	Barford	22d
10.02.1422	Y	1	Emma Kynge to William Kynge, her son	Glendon	5s
29.09.1422	Y	1	Sarra Chicche to John Chicche	Glendon	
11.11.1422	Y?	4	Nicholas Lovet and William Barford to William & Agnes Barford	Barford	

1. The date of each transaction (column 1) is the date of the court session in which it appears.
2. Infra-family transactions are marked 'Y' (column 2) or if extra-familial 'N' either because that is stated or on the basis of co-incidence of the transferors' and transferees' surnames.
3. Transactions where no location is given in the record (column 5) are assumed to have related to land in Geddington.
4. A number of transactions apparently relate to the same land which is shown with coloured shading.

Appendix 4

The bailiffs of Merton's Barkby manor, 1285-1493

Bailiff	*Period in office*	*Landholding (or family landholding)*
Richard (of Hamilton)	1285 (or earlier) – 1295	Messuage and one bovate plus four acres; rent 10s.(?) (rental of circa 1300).[1]
William le Platur	1295–1302	Messuage and one half-virgate and one quarter-virgate plus six acres and 3 roods meadow; rent 10s. 9d. (rental of circa 1330).[2]
William of Dalby	1303?–1318	Messuage and one half-virgate plus four acres and 3 roods meadow; rent 9s. 8d. (rental of circa 1330).[3]
Henry Milisaunt senior	1318–1328	Message, one toft, one half-virgate, one quarter-virgate plus six acres and 1¼ acres meadow; rent 16s. 1d. (rental of circa 1330).[4]
Henry Milisaunt junior	1328–1348	
William of Hamilton	1348–1355	Messuage, one half-virgate, one quarter-virgate plus six acres and 1½ acres meadow; rent 15s. 7¼d. (rental of circa 1330).[5]
Henry Hichebon and William Aleyn	1356–1357	*William* Hichebon held messuage and one half-virgate and 1 acre meadow; rent 9s. 8d. (rental of c. 1330).[6]
William Aleyn	1358–1365	Three *quarterna* and six acres; rent 16s. 8½d. (rental of 1355).[7]
Reginald Platur	1365–1369	*Roger* Platur held one half-virgate plus six acres; rent 15s. 9d. (rental of 1355).[8]
Richard Sampson	1369–1414	Robert Sampson held one half-virgate plus four acres; rent 10s. 1½d. (rental of 1355).[9]
John Kyng	1415–1421?	Messuage and one bovate; rent 10s. 7d. (recognition of 20 June 1413).[10]

[1] MCR. 6557 – the rental is undated and the date of 1300 attributed to it in the Merton archival catalogue may be rather late (on grounds of handwriting and format).
[2] MCR, 6568. This rental is also undated and has no date attributed to it. However, from the names of the landholders it lists, it seems to date from the 1312/13.
[3] MCR, 6568.
[4] MCR, 6568.
[5] MCR, 6568.
[6] MCR, 6568.
[7] MCR, 6557.
[8] MCR, 6557.
[9] MCR, 6557.
[10] MCR, 6592.

John Power	1423?–1424?	Robert Power held one half-virgate plus four acres; rent unknown (rental of 1355).[11]
Robert Johnson	1428?–1462?	Three messuages, one virgate, one half-virgate, plus two (?) acres; rent 24s. (?) (rental of 1450).[12]
John Johnson	1465?–1480	See footnote 21 regarding the Johnson holdings.
John Robert	1481–1490	Messuage, one virgate; rent 18s. 4d. (rental of 1452).[13]
Thomas Johnson	1490–1514 (or later)	See [footnote 21] regarding the Johnson holdings.

Stewards of Kibworth Harcourt and Barkby[14]	
Richard of St John	fl. 1288
Robert de Gaddesby	1295–c.1315 c.1323–1345
Thomas of Thurmaston Richard Haburne (view of frankpledge)	1314–1320
Simon Pakman (assisted by Robert de Gaddesby, 1348–9)	1346–c.1371

[11] MCR, 6557.
[12] MCR. 6560. It is not possible to trace any record of separate holdings for John and Thomas Johnson after 1452.
[13] MCR, 6561, assuming 'John Robert' is in fact Robert Johnson.
[14] Taken mainly from Cicely Howell, *Land, Family, Inheritance*, pp. 38–9.

Appendix 5
Catesby Priory: land and rents[1]

Redditus assisus	
Property	*Annual rent*
Redditus assisus: Catesby [Upper Catesby, Northants]	£5 7s 0d
Rent of Shopes [Lower Catesby]	£4 0s 1½d
Rent of Hellidon [Northants]	£2 13s 4d
Rent of Staverton [Northants]	£4 11s 10d
Rent from the lord of Welton [prob. Weldon, Northants]	15s 0d
Rent of Byfield [Byfield, Northants]	£1 13s 0d
Rent of Botyngdon [prob. Boddington, Northants]	£5 3s 5d
Rent of Ashby Ledgers [Ashby St Ledgers, Northants]	£1 6s 8d
Rent of Draicote [poss. Draycott, Derbys]	£1 0s 0d
Rent of Sulgrave [Northants]	14s 4d
Rent of Northampton	11s 8d
Rent of Chorlton [unidentified; poss. Oxon]	12s 0d
Rent of Bydon [unidentified]	1s 6d
Rent of Cold Ashby [Northants]	7s 8d
Rent of Lobenham [Lubbenham, Leics]	£2 1s 0d
Rent of Thedingworth [Theddingworth, Leics]	£2 13s 4d
Rent of Oudby [prob. Oadby, Leics]	5s 11d
Rent of Great Ashby [Leics]	£1 5s 0d
Rent of Little Ashby [Leics]	6s 8d
Rent of Scharneford [unidentified]	£1 0s 0d
Rent of Nottingham	6s 8d
Rent of Esenhull [prob. Easenhall, Warwicks]	16s 0d
Rent of Neuton [prob. Northants]	8s 0d
Rent of Thurlaston [Leics]	2s 0d
Rent of Flekenho {Fleknoe, Warwicks]	6s 8d
Rent of Caldecote [Beds]	8s 0d
Rent of Hull	5s 0d
Rent of Shokeburgh [Shuckburgh, Warwicks]	4s 0d
Rent of Walcote [Walcot, Berks]	6s 8d
Rent of Keyham [Leics]	8s 0d
Rent of Walpole [pres. Suffolk or Norfolk]	13s 4d
Rent of Dodeford [prob. Dadford, Bucks]	7s 0d
Rent of Haroughden [Harrowden, Beds]	£1 4s 0d
Rent of John Mauntell of Haroughden	11s 0d
Summa	**£43 9s 6d**
Farms and pensions	
Farmer of Byfeld [Byfield, Northants]	£2 13s 4d
Farmer of Bodingdon [Boddington, Northants]	£1 12s 0d

[1] Taken from 1414/15 accounts – TNA, SC 6/946/16.

Farmer of Sulgrave [Northants]	16s 0d
Farmer of Parkhouses [prob. at Dadford, Bucks]	£2 0s 0d
Farmer of Great Ashby [Leics]	£2 13s 4d
Church of Basford [Notts]	£6 0s 0d
Church of Great Ashby [Leics]	£10 0s 0d
Customary rents of the farmers of Staverton: 4 qt. wheat 3 qt. maslin 5 qt. barley 2 qt. peas 4 geese 6 hens 2 pigs	
Tithes of Little Ashby	[s]
Wind mill of Catesby	12s 0d
Water mill of Catesby	£1 2s 0d
Mill tolls: 5 qt. 6 bs. wheat 4 bs. maslin	
Pension from the vicar of Catesby	13s 4d
Summa	**£29 2s 1d**

Appendix 6
Catesby accounts

TNA class mark	Period	Contents	Observations
SC 6/946/16	29.09.1414 – 29.09.1415		Transcribed and translated by Baker, *Northampton*. Account of Elizabeth Swynford.
SC 6/946/17	[29.09.1415 – 29.09.1416]		Heading mutilated - date speculative.
SC 6/946/18	29.09.1416 – 29.09.1417		Account of Elizabeth Swynford
SC 6/946/19	29.09.1422 – 29.09.1423 29.09.1423 – 29.09.1424		Heading mutilated.
SC 6/947/4	1426–1431		Accounting year unknown: dated from reference to Agnes Terry as prioress in relation to the sale of hides. Heading mutilated.
SC 6/1257/1	20.01.1433 – [1435]	Out of pocket expenses	Apparently Margaret Waver's account book. Not compiled by reference to accounting year.
SC 6/946/20	29.09.1443 – 29.09.1444		Account of Isabella Benet and Agnes Allesly (apparently).
SC 6/946/22	Possibly 1447/48 or 1448/49		Date speculative but records receipt of legacy from the estate of Cardinal Beaufort so post 11 April 1447. Contents fragmentary. Account of the vicar of Catesby?
SC 6/946/23	30.09.1447 – 30.09.1448	Rent/receipts only.	Account of John Fyndern, collector.

SC 6/946/21	[24.06.1448 – 29.09.1448]	Full	Three months only. Account of Robert Catesby and Richard Willoughby, deputies of the bishop.
SC 6/946/24	28.09.1448 – [13.12.1449]	Full	Twelve months plus three months? Account of Henry Farndon, minister, Robert Catesby and Richard Willoughby.
SC 6/946/25	30.09.1448 – 30.09.1449	Rents/receipts only x 2	Account of John Fyndern, collector of rents.
SC 6/947/5	1449–1450		Dated from reference in section headed ‘expenses forinsece’ to ARR [sc. HVI] 28. Heading mutilated.
SC 6/946/26	29.09.1452 – 29.09.1453	Rents/receipts only.	Fragment only. Account of John Fyndern, bailiff.
SC 6/947/3	1452–1453		Dated from reference in section headed ‘*stipendi* f*amulorum*’ to ARR [sc. HVI] 31. No heading.
SC 6/947/1	29.09.1453 – 29.09.1454		Heading mutilated.
SC 6/947/2	[29.09.1453 – 29.09.1454	Rents/receipts only	Account of John Fyndern, steward and receiver (of rents). Fragment.

Appendix 7

Sample land transactions in the manorial court rolls of Geddington, Barkby (Merton manor) and Catesby

Geddington		
1.	24.02.1327	Fine xij d. Ricardus Brechale de Geytyngton & Matilda uxor sua venerunt in plena curia & dederunt & sursum reddiderunt in manu domini Regis unam domum cum suis pertinenciis ac aysiamentis suam in medietate ville de Geytyngton vocatum Le Shoppe ad opus Iuliana filia dictorum Ricardi & Matilde habendum & tenendum predicte Iulie heredibus suis & [assignatis] imperpetuum per [servicia] inde domino Regi facta Et dicta Iulia dedit domino Regi pro seisina & pro ingressu dicto [domo] [ ] per plegium Roberti le Glovere[1]
2.	14.11.1377	[*fine illegible*] Willelmus Corby venit in plena curia & sursum reddidit in manu domini regis & ballivorum suorum quamdem [parcellam] cuiusdam mesuagium quod quondam fuit Willelmi Terry & [A] in villa de Geydington inter tenementum Roberti Terry & tenementum predicti Willelmi Corby & sex rodas terre divisim iacentes in campis de Geytingdon quarum dimidiam acram iacet apud [Hethene] [Assh] iuxta terram Iohannis Pomfreyt & dimidiam acram iacet in Depedalefelde iuxta terram persone ecclesie de Geydington & dimidiam acram iacet in campis orientalis de Geydington iuxta terram predicti Willelmi de Corby ad opus Thome filii eius tenendam sibi & heredibus de corpore sue legitime

[11] NAS, X 351A. This transaction is immediately followed by Julia's grant to her parents of a life interest in the same property.

		procreatis secundum consuetudinem manerii Et si predictus Thomas sine herede de corpore suo legitime procreato obierit ex tunc predictum [Willelmum] scilicet quod omnia predicta sibi & heredibus suis revertantur inperpetuum tenendam [secundum] consuetudinem manerii Et dat domino ad ingressum pro fine ut supra plegio de fine ballivo[2]
3.	27.03.1378	*[illegible]* [Anne] que fuit uxor Thome Pek venit in plena curia & concessit Iohanni Chicche de Clendon unum messuagium & unam virgatam terre iacentem in Clendon que Thomas Pek quondam tenuit de domino Rege tenendum sibi heredibus seu assignatis suis a festo Sancti Michaelis proximo futuro usque fine octo annorum proximorum sequentorum plenarum completorum Faciendo domino Rege & ballivis suis pro predicta servicia inde debita & de iure consuetudine secundum consuetudinem manerii Et nichil dat ad ingressum[3]
4.	08.03.1382	Fine iiii d. Agnes Bole & Iohannes filius eius veniunt in plena curia & sursum reddiderunt in manu domini regis unum cossetell iacentem in Geydington quod quondam fuit Thome [Calidoner] & iacet iuxta tenementum predictorum Agnete & Iohannis ad opus Thome Smyth & Alicie uxoris eius tenendum eisdem Thome & Alicie uxori eis & eorum heredibus inter eos legitime procreatis Et si predicti Thomas & Alicia sine heredibus inter eos legitime procreatis obierunt ex tunc predicti Agnete & Iohannes filius eius volunt &

[2] NAS, X 351B.
[3] NAS, X 351B.

		concedunt quod predictam cossetell predicto Iohanni & heredibus suis revertatur inperpetuum[4]
5.	05.04.1399	Fine xii d. Eadmundus Byfeld & Matilda uxor eius examinati per senescallum sursum reddiderunt in manu domine unam porcionem unius tenementi vocati Thome Piers ad opus Henrici Mulso tenendam sibi heredibus & assignatis secundum consuetudinem manerii salvo iure cuiuslibet Et habet inde seisinam Et dat de fine prout patet in capite [5]
6.	23.09.1413 or 03.03.1414	Fin<e> iii d. Robertus Bole per Thomam Smyth Bedell sursum reddidit in manu domine regine & ballivorum suorum unam rodam terre iacente in Estmilnesclade inter terram Iohanni Bamburgh ex parte australi & terram Thome Smyth ex parte boreali ad opus Willelmi Knyght habendam & tenendam predictam rodam terre predicto Willelmo heredibus & assignatis suis imperpetuum secundum consuetudinem manerii salvo iure cuiuslibet & habet inde seisinam & fecit fidelitatem et dat de fine pro ingresso prout patet in capite[6]
7.	25.06.1420	Fine xii d. Iohannes Bamburgh venit hic in curia & sursum reddidit in manu domine Regine & ballivorum suorum unam porcionam unius mesuagii cum gardino adiacante quondam Thome Draughton ad opus Roberti Poope & [Alicie uxoris eius [ ] tenendam sibi heredibus & assignatis suis secundum

[4] NAS, X 351B.
[5] NAS, X 351B.
[6] NAS, X351B.

		consuetudinem manerii & admissus est & fecit fidelitatem & dat de fine pro ingresso ut supra plegio ballivi[7]
8.	11.01.1490	Ad hanc curiam venit Thomas Miller & sursum reddidit in manu domini secundum consuetudinem manerii unum [cotagium] ad pedem pontis cum suis pertinenciis ad opus Iohanne Byschop durante via sua [ ] intentione quod predicte Iohanne bene & sufficiente [sustidiet] [suum] [liminam] ante [ ] [ ] Et post decessum dicte Iohanne [dictum] cotagium remanet [capital'] [messuagio] quondam Henrici Taillour modo in tenura Anne Fitsakyrley & heredibus imperpetuum ad sustenandum [liminam] predictam imperpetuum [Etiam] [dominus] concessit seisinam Et fecit finem ad ingressum xv d. Et [admissa][8]
Barkby		
9.	01.10.1289	[*heading illegible*] Willelmus filius Hugonis de Tiltone habet ingressum in tenemento quod fuit quondam dicti Hugonis quod tenementum fuit Ricardi de Hameltone & Cecilie uxoris eius post mortem dicti Hugonis & quia idem Ricardus sursum reddidit dictum tenementum eidem Willelmo [ ] cepit Plegii de ipse ad satisfaciendum dominis pro ingressu ad proximam [curiam] Plegii Ricardus Borcher Ricardus Wysman Willelmus Pleytur Iohannes Pleytur Et habet diem de ingressu usque ad [capien][9]
9A.	18.10.1349	[fine iii s.] Ad istam curiam venit Ricardus de Hamilton & petit se admitti ad terras cum messuagio que fuerunt Willelmi Dalby & concessum est ei tenere eadem in bondagio iuxta consuetudinem manerii pro fine iii s. & fecit fidelitatem plegii Willelmus Hamilton Iohannes Ernald[10]

[7] NAS, X350.
[8] NAS, X350.
[9] MCR, 6566.
[10] MCR 6571.

10.	12.01.1350	Ad istam curiam venit Willelmus filius Iohannis Chapman & cepit de domino illud mesuagium cum i bovatam terre [quod] tenuit Robertus Bate & nichil dat de fine & plegium invenit ad faciendum servicia debita & [consueta] Reparandum & sustinendum domos competenter [ ] [ ] [ ] & Iohannem filium Roberti & fecit fidelitatem & [ ] est ei [ ] [ ] in bondagio & [aper] [solutus] est [p] ad festum Pentecost proximum futurum[11]
11.	01.05.1399	[Ingressus ii s.] [Agnes Nonedeye] que ad voluntatem domini tenet secundum consuetudinem manerii unum mesuagium & unam bovatam terre reddendo per annum vii s. iii d. ad terminos [usuales] venit in curiam & sursum reddidit ad opus Thome [Bereyate] tenendum ad voluntatem domini secundum consuetudinem manerii reddendo per annum vii s. iii d. ad terminos [usuales] Et dat domino de fine pro ingressu habendo ii s. Et Thomas [Fresheby] & Iohannes Jonson [ ] plegii ad solvendam finem predictam & edificandum & reparandum bene & competente totum tenementum predictum & cetera[12]
12.	12.12.1432	[sursum reddidit] Willelmus [Onkel] qui de dominis tenuit i mesuagium & dimidiam virgatam terre reddendo per annum x s. vi d. venit in curiam & sursum reddidit in manibus dominorum dictam mesuagium & dimidiam virgatam terre cum pertinenciis Et super hoc Robertus Ionson venit in curiam & cepit de dominis dictum mesuagium & dimidiam virgatam terre reddendo per annum ut supra & [faciat] secta curia & alia servicia inde debita & consueta Et idem Robertus mesuagium predictum & dimidiam virgatam terre cum pertinenciis reparabit & sustentabit & manutentabit sumptibus suis [perp] & expensis [perp]/ Et fecit fidelitatem [*margin:*

[11] MCR, 6571.
[12] MCR, 6589.

		fidelitatem] per plegios Ioannis Mason & Iohannis Hichebond[13]
13.	05.05.1464	Captio terre fine iiii s. Ad eandem curiam venit Ricardus Shyrlok & cepit de dominis unum mesuagium & unam virgatam terre & dimidiam [pascuram] cum pertinenciis nuper in tenura Willelmi [Honydes] & cetera habendum & tenendum & cetera sibi secundum consuetudinem manerii reddendo inde annuatim xviii s. iiii d. & alia servicia & cetera & dat domino de fine ï iiii s.[14]
14.	06.10.1542	Ad hanc curiam venit Anthonius Beregg & Agnes uxor eius per Willelmum [Brehurst] attornatem suum & cepit de dominis unum mesuagium & unam dimidiam virgatam terre cum pertinenciis in Barkeby predicto nuper in tenura Isabelle Herve habendum & tenendum predictum mesuagium & dimidiam virgatam terre cum pertinenciis prefato Anthonio Beregg & Agnete uxor eius & assignatis suis a festo Sancti Michaelis Archangeli [ultimo] [par] usque ad finem [termini] sex annorum ex tunc proximo sequente & [plenario] [completo] reddendo inde annuatim [sue] & [success'] [eius] quinque solidos ad terminos ibidem usuales Et ad [s] & [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [consueta] & servicia inde prius debitis & de iure consueta Et dat dominis de fine v s. Et fecit dominis fidelitatem & admissi sunt inde [tenamento] [predicto][15]
Catesby		
15.	18.10.1313	[de [as] villanorum] Nativi iurati [ ] Rogerus [Cope] & socii sui de Catesby [dicunt] quod Ricardus le Northerne nativus Priorisse mortuus est & quod Priorissa habebit heriotam melioris animalis & quod consuetudo est quod [totum] tenementum [debet] seysiri in manu Priorisse & quod relicta [S a] [fuerit] propinquior [erat] [h indi] & [idem] [tenenementum] [s] finem quod facere [potuit]

[13] MCR, 6593.
[14] MCR, 6616.
[15] MCR, 6614

		cum Priorissa [Pernelle] [eiusdem] Priorisse et quod nullus alius tenens [suus] habetur ex aliqua antiqua consutudine[16]
16.	05.01.1341	Willelmus vicarius ecclesie de Catesby cepit de domina priorissa unum mesuagium et unam dimidiam virgatam terre arabilis cum omnibus suis pertinenciis adiacantibus in Catesby Superiora tenendum a die [consecutionis] presentis usque ad terminum decem annorum proximo sequente plenariorum completorum ad usum suum proprium Et [ad] quidem mesuagium & dimidiam virgatam terre Thomas Goldyas quondam tenuit in eadem Cepit etiam cum dicto tenemento [curam] & [custodiam] Thome filii Thome Goldyas sub tali conditione quod inveniet dicto [parvo] victualia vestualia & omnia alia [muria] [competente] & renovabiliter pro dicto tempore sicut decet statum suo [sicut] dictum puerum nullo modo maritabit nisi ad proficuum dicti priori Et dictus Willelmus reddet annuatim domine Priorisse vi s. viii d. ad terminos usuales per equales porciones & faciet omnia alia servicia pro dicta terre debita & consueta eodem modo quo dictus Thomas Goldyas consuevit facere [Completo] [a] [decem] [annis] dictus Willelmus vicarius reddet sursum dicto Thome filii dicti Thome de Goldyas dictum mesuagium & dictam dimidiam virgatam terre cum omnibus pertinenciis suis aiacantis in adeo bono statu quo illa recepit [sive] in melior & [inveniet] eidem Thome filii Thome de Goldyas unam dimidiam carucam cum toto apparatu & duos equos precii xiii s. iiii d. & unum bovem precii vi s. viii d.[17]
17.	01.06.1342	Iohannes Russel cepit de domina priorissa unum cotagium in le Schopes iacens inter [ ] Roberti & Iohannis Cobbet & unum alium cotagium iacens iuxta tenemento Petri de Wyrdele [reddendo ad terminos usuales] per annum pro predictis cotagiis vi s. x d. ad terminos usuales per equales porciones et metet in autumpno cum quinque hominibus per unum diem & faciet sectam curie & omnia alia servicia ad dictam

[16] TNA, SC 2/195/1, m.1.
[17] TNA, SC 2/195/2, m.5.

		tenementum pertinentiam & dabet herietam & fecit finem ad dominam & fecit fidelitatem[18]
18.	18.07.1360	Willelmus [Yunge] cepit de domina Priorissa unum mesuagium cum pertinenciis [videlicet] [aliud] quod quondam Iohannes Stot tenuit in le Schopes iuxta tenementum Roberti Leche tenendum ad terminum vite sue & uxoris eius secundum consuetudinem manerii reddendo inde [annuatim] inde de claro duos solidos & sex denarios & opus unius diem cum uno [homine] [*illeg*.] & heriotabit [ ] [ ] & recognovit & [inde] fecit fidelitatem][19]
19.	19.10.1378 or 02.09.1378	[heriot] [ ] vi pulcini Thomas Parkar qui de domina tenuit native ii cotagia & iiii acras terre in overCatysby diem clausit extremum de quo provenit i vacca cum vitulo precii x s. Et super hoc venit Matilda uxor predicti Thome & cepit de domina predicta cotagia & terra tenenda native ad terminum vite sue dum ipsa [solam] [se] tenet nec licebit ei alcui dimitere sine licencia priorisse vel successorum suorum reddendo & faciendo omnia reddita & servicia sicut predictum [ ] Thomas fecit [fidelitatem] & dat pro ingressu vi pulcini & fecit sacramentum[20]
20.	30.09.1396	[ingressus; fine xl d.] Thomas Albon venit in curia & cepit de domina priorissa duo cotagia in Catusby & totam terram que Adam Tailour ulterio tenuit Tenendum secundum consuetudinem manerii reddendo per annum iiii s. & duo opera autumpnale & sectam curie de tribus in tres Et dat domine de fine ingressi xl d. & fecit fidelitatem[21]
21.	30.09.1396	ingressus; [incrementum] vi d. Isabella uxor quondam Willelmi Ricard venit in curia & cepit de domina priorissa unum mesuagium in Shopus quod Willelmus Ricard maritus suus ulterio tenuit &

[18] TNA, SC 2/195/2, m.4.
[19] TNA, SC 2/195/3, m.2.
[20] TNA, SC 2/195/4, m.1.
[21] TNA, SC 2/195/5, m.6.

		quod Robertus Ploureve quondam tenuit Tenendum ad terminum vite sue [ ] secundum consuetudinem manerii Reddendo per annum tres solidos sex denarios ad terminos usuales equales porciones [ ] sustenandum & reparandum dictum mesuagium bene & competente Et si [inventum] fuerit aliquam [ruinosum] [vel] [prostratam] [*illeg.*] & non emendantur infra [quarterum] terminum unius anni post predictum dampnum factum per [concelamentum] priorisse & [*illeg.*] tunc bene liceat predicte priorisse & cuidam loci [conventi] in predicto mesuagio [intrare] & [rehabere] [*illeg.*] Item faciet unum opus autumpnale & sectam curie de tribus in tres & nihil dat pro ingressu [quia] dat [incrementum] [redditus] vi d. & fecit fidelitatem[22]
22.	19.02.1422	[captio terre; fine xl d.] Ad istam curiam venit Iohannes Spycer & cepit de domina unum mesuagium cum pertinenciis in Shopes quod Thomas Hynton nuper tenuit tenendum sibi & suis secundum consuetudinem manerii pro servicia inde debita & consueta & dat domine ad ingressum prout patet in capite & fecit fidelitatem[23]
23.	19.02.1422	[captio terre; fidelitatem] Ad istam curiam venit Iohannes Bradwell & cepit de domina unum mesuagium & <u>iii quartrones</u> [*del.*] <u>dimidiam virgatam</u> terre cum pertinenciis quod Ricardus Nayleston nuper tenuit in Catesby tenendum sibi ad voluntatem domine ad terminum vite sue secundum consuetudinem manerii reddendo inde v s. ad terminos usuales & faciendo omnia alia onera & servicia inde debita & consueta & dat ad ingressum x s. & fecit fidelitatem[24]
24.	17.04.1465	Ad curiam tentam apud Catesby xvii die Aprilii anno regni Regis Edwardi iiii^{ti} post conquestum [quinti] venit [Leonardus] Middilton & Sibilla uxor eius & ceperunt de domina in plena curia dictum mesuagium cum certis percellis terre in Catesby Habendum & tenendum sibi

[22] TNA, SC 2/195/5, m.6.
[23] TNA, SC 2/195/7, m.6.
[24] TNA, SC 2/195/7, m.6.

		ad terminum vite cuiuslibet eorum secundum consuetudinem manerii ibidem reddendo inde domine per annum [ ] xvii s. Et sectam curie cum operibus unius diei cum biga unius hominis per diem cum falco & unius servientis per duos dies cum falcicle & omnibus aliis conseutis & serviciis antiquis Et dabit nomine herriette v s. vi d. Et fecit fidelitatem[25]

This appendix comprises transcriptions of sample land transfers recorded in the manorial court rolls of Geddington, Merton's Barkby manor and Catesby as far as possible, and subject to the survival of those rolls, across the period from before the first wave of the plague to as near as possible to 1500.

The Geddington transfers (nos. 1-8) are reasonably consistent throughout the period: land was transferred from the transferor through the hands of the bailiff (on behalf of the king or queen) to the transferee and his or her heirs and assignees in perpetuity and was held according to the custom of the manor. Only rather brief reference was made to services owed by the landholder and they tend to disappear later in the period. The terminology probably reflects the rather light duties owed by the crown's tenants on a manor of ancient demesne.

The Barkby transfers (nos. 9-14) usually record that the land was transferred subject to the services owed and following the custom of the manor. Later in the period they tend to stress the need for the incoming tenant to keep the tenement in repair (a particular concern to Merton).

In the case of the Catesby transfers (nos. 15-24) an attempt has been made to capture transfers of land in both Shopes and Upper Catesby to illustrate possible differences in the tenure of land in the two settlements (see in particular nos. 20 and 21 (from 1396) and 22 and 23 (from 1422)), but, in fact, the formulae used for both settlements in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries are remarkably similar despite possible differences in the tenure (see chapter 5, pp. 227-9 and 232-7). What is noticeable across the period is the steady abandonment of servile terminology. Thus in 1313 the tenant is referred to as a *nativus* (no. 15) but that term disappears thereafter rather slowly (see no. 19 from 1378). The incoming tenant's duty to provide labour service continued to be asserted in 1396 but had disappeared by 1422 by which time it had been replaced by the much vaguer reference to 'services and duties' owed to the prioress. No. 16 from 1341 has been included because of the light it sheds on the prioresses' approach to their tenants. The charge to the chaplain taking the land on behalf of Thomas Goldyas, a minor, to ensure that he only married to the profit of the prioress hints that, even before the plague, the retention of tenants in Catesby may have been seen as a problem by the prioresses (see pp. 211-12 and 220-1 for the post-plague period). It is not easy to see how Thomas's future marriage could be to the detriment of the prioress unless he married, and moved, outside the manor. Doing so would have resulted

[25] TNA, SC 2/195/9, m.9.

in a very obvious loss to the prioress of a tenant, rent and labour (waged or servile). No. 24 from 1465 has been included as a very late example of a transfer in which labour services were recorded even though it seems unlikely the prioresses continued to extract them at that date. The transfer is inserted at the end of the paper folio recording the court held on 18 October 1493, some twenty-eight years later, and in a different hand. No reason was given for its inclusion in the later roll. It seems likely that it had been copied from an earlier, now lost, roll and was recognised as unusual either because of the anachronistic record of labour services or for some other reason.

Appendix 8

Ordinances in the manorial courts of Geddington, Barkby (Merton manor) and Catesby

Geddington		
1.	12.07.1382 (probably)	Ordinatus est per totum homagium quod nullus nec nulla quem habent fabas in campis colligat fabas in fabis alienis set in fabis suis propriis sub pena de ii s.[1]
2.	02.08.1382	xl d. Ordinatus est per dominum & tenentes quod si quis tenens infra dominium tractaverit de cetero gladium vel cultellum contra pacem quod solvat domino ut supra totiens quotiens per presentationem in curia presentatus sit & inventus culpabilis de transgressione predicta[2]
3.	15.11.1382	Pena xl d. Ordinatus est per totum homagium quod omnes braciarices que vendunt cerivisie quod adeo bene vendant cerivisiam extra domos suas proprias quam in domibus suis propriis [dum] habeant cerivisiam ad vendandam & hoc cum mensuris sigillatis cum sigillo domini sub pena totiens quotiens [delinqueverint] ut supra
4.	20.05.1387	[ ] inquisitio Ordinatus est ex assensu totius villate quod nullus colligat herbas in bladum vicinorum suorum ab hac die instanta usque festum Michaelis proximam futuram sub pena xii d. [solvendo domine] [ ] et suis ballivis totiens quotiens & cetera[3]
5.	22.05.1396	[Pena]

[1] NAS, X 351B.
[2] NAS, X 351B.
[3] NAS, X 351A.

		Ordinatus est ex assentione totius [communitate] villate de Geytyngton quod nulla de cetero metat herbagium in pratis alienis sub pena vi d. solvitur tenentibus tociens quotiens[4]
6.	20.04.1403	[preses] [inquir] Ordinatus est ex assensu totius villate quod nulla asportet de cetero [meremium] frangetur [ ] ex bosci vocati Wodererd sub pena cuiusque eorum xii d. solvendum fabricam ecclesie [ ][5]
7.	29.04.1413	pena Ordinatus est ex assensu domine & totius villate ibidem quod nulli villati predicti ponent equos suos scabiosos in boscis de Geytygton usque festum Sancti Michaelis sub pena cuiusque eorum vi d.[6]
8.	24.05.1414	[Electi officiis] Ordinatus est ibidem ex assensu & consentione totius villate ibidem quod Ricardus Thorn & Iohannes Pykeryng colligent stipendias inclusas extra aquam Et Henricus Lambert & Nicholaus Bocher ex altera parte[7]
9.	05.05.1422	Et ordina<us est ex assensu omnium tenentium ibidem quod quilibet habens terram in campis vel bestias euntes in comuno sit hac instans crastino die [ ] [sit] ad obstupandum gappas [ ] sub pena cuiusque ab [ ] amendere xii d.[8]

[4] NAS, X 351A.
[5] NAS, X 351A.
[6] NAS, X 351B.
[7] NAS, X 351B.
[8] NAS, X350.

Barkby		
10.	12.06.1346	Compertus est per inquisitionem quod Willelmus Arland iniuste prosecutum est versus Willelmum Rose de [*mutil.*] Compertus est per curiam quod Willelmus [Rose] vadiant Willelmo Arland [*illeg.*]/ Compertus est per curiam cuod Willelmus Arland fregit clausuram & [ ] [Willelm][9]
11.	16.01.1448	Item ordinatus est in plena curia per avisamentum Seneschalli quod si aliquis tenens infra [dominium] predictum prosecutus fuerit aliquem visinorum suorum nisi [tenens] in ista curia quod solvet seu supportabit istis [d] totiens quotiens sic prosecutus fuerit/ vi s. viii d.[10]
12.	17.01.1448	Item ordinatus est in plena curia pro avisamento Seneschalli quod <u>quilibet</u> [*del.*] si aliquis tenens infra [dominium] predictum prosecuturus fuerit alique visinorum suorum nisi in ista predicta curia quod [sol] seu supportabit dominis istius [dominii] totiens quotiens sic prosecuturus fuerit vi s. viii d.[11]
Catesby		
13.	12.10.1400	pena Preceptus est omnibus tenentibus quod non lavant vestes [di cetero] in le Fisshwer sub pena xl d. Et quod non habent [porcos] euntes sine yokes sicut ordinatione antiquo constituatur sub pena xl d. [ ][12]
14.	02.04.1410	Ordinatus est huc in curia quod nullus tenens nec aliquis serviens ullius de cetero colligent lignum in aliquibus clausuris domine sub pena cuiuslibet defecto [ ] xl d.[13]

[9] MCR, 6570.
[10] MCR, 6605.
[11] MCR, 6611.
[12] TNA, SC 2/195/6 m.1.
[13] TNA, SC 2/195/6 m.10.

15.	29.10.1410	[Ordinatio] Ordinatus est hic in curia per totum homagium quod si quis cuiuscumque [status] sit [lavante] de cetero aliquos pannos laneos lineos corria][pell] vel aliud [oribilias] in aqua vocata Pylory water [solvet] domine pro quilibet vice xii d.[14]
16.	28.06.1413	Ordinatus est hic in curia per senescallum quod si aliquis tenentium de Schopes habuerit ingressum & egressum de cetero ex parte campi aliquo tempore anni nisi emendata fuit infra tres dies [solvet] domine xx d.[15]
17.	14.12.1413	[Ordinacionem] Ordinatus est hic in curia quod nullus tenens de Catesby hultet bestias suas in pastura domine [in pe' seperal'] ante quam illa [domina] bestias suas hultare incepit sub pena dimidia marca[16]
18.	08.05.1414	Ordinatus est ad istam curiam tam per omnes tenentes huius [dominii] quam per dominam quod si quis [tenentium] amoverit metas & bundas consuetas super terras domine priorisse & eas non sustentaverit solvet domine qualibet vice dimidia marca[17]
19.	16.03.1423	Ordinatio; pena pendenda xl d. Ordinatus est de assensu tenentium quod nullus habent exites apertas ad finem gardinam sue ad nocumentum sub pena

[14] TNA, SC 2/195/6 m. 11.
[15] TNA, SC 2/195/6 m.13.
[16] TNA, SC 2/195/6 m.13.
[17] TNA, SC 2/195/7 m.1.

		cuiuslibet eorum xl d. Et quod eas obstupent citra festum Pasche proximam futuram sub pena predicta[18]
20.	04.03.1429	Ordinatio tenentium Ordinatus est ex communis assensis omnium tenentium quod nullus tenens tenet alique canes vocatos le bicches sub pena quilibet eorum contrarium faciendum xl d. infra villam de Catesby & cetera nisi sunt spayed & cetera[19]

This is a reasonably comprehensive catalogue of all the ordinances in the surviving manorial court rolls of Geddington, Barkby (Merton manor) and Catesby. There were clearly other ordinances, the text of which has not survived, which were intended to prevent the decay of tenements (Barkby, in particular) and straying animals (Catesby, in particular) because the court rolls contain, in both cases, a number of presentations relating and referring to infractions of those ordinances.

It is not always easy to distinguish between ordinances and the orders of the inquisition jury. The Barkby (Merton) rolls provide a number of such instances of which no. 10 above is an example. The impression (see nos. 11 and 12) is that the preservation of the jurisdiction of Merton's manorial court was a major concern of the administration there. No other ordinances survive at Barkby.

[18] TNA, SC 2/195/8 m.1.
[19] TNA, SC 2/195/8 m.7.

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C 145/204/3	Inquisition, 1374 (Geddington)
C 145/227/11	Inquisition, 1383 (Geddington)
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CP 40/708	Chief Justice's Roll, 16 Henry VI, Hilary Term, 1438
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Table 1 - Geddington manorial court rolls

The Geddington manorial court rolls are found in three boxes held by the Northamptonshire Archives Service (formerly the Northamptonshire Record Office): X 351 A and B and X350. The main series of rolls are found in the first two boxes and are uncatalogued in modern times. At some point in the nineteenth century the rolls were catalogued and numbered with arabic numerals, shown here in red, but the sequence is not comprehensive. The rolls are not allocated to the boxes in chronological order.

NAS ref.	Date	Visus Curia	Arabic nos.	Comments
X 351 A	29.11.1326	C		
	16.12.1326	C		
	Unknown	C		Date illegible
	14.11.1327	C		
X 351 A	07.03.1360	C		
	28.03.1360	C		
X 351 B	03.10.1377	C	2?	
	03.10.1377	V		
	24.10.1377	C		
	14.11.1377	C		
X 351 B	02.01.1378	C	3?	
	23.01.1378	C		
	13.02.1378	C		
	06.03.1378	C		
X 351 B	27.03.1378	C	1?	
	17.04.1378	C		
	22.04.1378	V		
	08.05.1378	C		
	29.05.1378	C		Date illegible and uncertain
	19.06.1378	C		
	10.07.1378	C		
	31.07.1378	C		
	21.08.1378	C		Date uncertain
[X 351 B]	07.10.1378	V		Mutilated at foot; not clear which side is recto/dorse
	16.10.1378	C		
	15.01.1379	C		Date uncertain

	05.02.1379	C		Date uncertain
X 351 B	26.09.1379	C	4?	Date uncertain
	19.03.1379	C		
	Unknown	C		
	16.04.1379	C		
	02.07.1379	C		Date uncertain
	23.07.1379	C		
X 351 A	07.04.1380	C	9	
	04.04.1380	V		Date uncertain
	28.04.1380	C		
	19.05.1380	C		Date uncertain
	11.06.1380	C		
X 351 A	30.06.1380	C	10	
	21.07.1380	C		
	11.08.1380	C		
	13.10.1380	V		
	13.10.1380	C		
	01.12.1380	C		Date uncertain
	22.12.1390	C		
	12.01.1381	C		
X 351 A	09.02.1381	C	11	
	02.03.1381	C		
	23.03.1381	C		
	13.07.1381	C		Probable clerical error over date
X 351 A	13.04.1381	C	13	Or 20.04.1381
	13.04.1381	V		Or 20.04.1381
	Unknown			Illegible
	01.06.1381	C		
	22.06.1381	C		Date illegible
X 351 A	13.07.1381	C	12	
	03.08.1381	C		
	24.08.1381			
X 351 B	21.09.1381	C	17	
	03.10.1381	V		
	12.10.1381	C		
	02.11.1381	C		
X 351 B	23.11.1381	C	16	
	14.12.1381	C		
	04.01.1382	C		
	25.01.1382	C		
	15.02.1382	C		
	08.03.1382	C		
	29.03.1382	C		Date uncertain
X 351 B	05.04.1382	C	14	

	05.04.1382	V		
	03.05.1382	C		
	31.05.1382	C		
	21.06.1382	C		
[X 351 B]	12.07.1382	C		Date uncertain
	02.08.1382	C		
	23.08.1382	C		
	13.09.1382	C		
X 351 B	01.10.1382	V	19	
	04.10.1382	C		
X 351 B	25.10.1382	C	18	
	15.11.1382	C		
	06.12.1382	C		
	27.12.1382	C		
X 351 B	17.01.1383	C	20	
	07.02.1383	C		
	28.02.1383	C		
	21.03.1383	C		
X 351 B	08.04.1383	V	23	
X 351 B	11.04.1383	C	22	
	02.05.1383	C		
	21.05.1383	C		Date illegible
	13.06.1383	C		
	04.07.1383	C		
X 351 A	15.08.1383	C	21	
	05.09.1383	C		
	26.09.1383	C		Date nearly illegible save ‘xxvi’
[X 351 A]	29.01.1384	C	7	
	18.02.1384	C		
X 351 A	14.03.1384	C	28	
	01.04.1384	C		
	22.04.1384	V		Mutilated
	13.05.1384	C		
	04.06.1384	C		
X 351 A	25.06.1384	C	27	Error in regnal year for first two curia
	13.07.1384	C		
	23.08.1384	C		
	18.09.1384	C		
X 351 A	06.10.1384	V	24	Heavily mutilated
	29.10.1384	C		Mutilated
	17.11.1384	C		Mutilated

X 351 A	11.12.1384	C	26	
	31.12.1384	C		
	11.02.1385	C		
	04.03.1385	C		
[X 351 A]	25.03.1385	C	6	
	15.04.1385	C		
	03.04.1385	V		
	06.05.1385	C		
X 351 A	27.05.1385	C	25	
	17.06.1385	C		Illegible
[X 351 B]	05.07.1385	C		
	29.07.1385	C		
X 351 B	21.08.1385	C	36	
	09.09.1385	C		
X 351 B	30.09.1385	C		
X 351 B	21.10.1385	C	35	
	22.10.1385	V		
[X 351 B]	10.11.1385	C	30	
X 351 B	02.12.1385	C	30	
	23.12.1385	C		
[X 351 B]	13.01.1386	C		
	03.02.1386	C		
	24.02.1386	C		
X 351 B	18.03.1386	C	32	
	06.04.1386	C		
	28.04.1386	C		
	14.05.1386	C		
X 351 B	14.05.1386	V	33	
	09.06.1386	C		
	30.06.1386	C		
X 351 A	16.07.1386	C	34	
	10.08.1386	C		
	01.09.1386	C		
	23.09.1386	C		
X 351 A	13.10.1386	V	42	
	03.11.1386	C		
	24.11.1386	C		
	15.12.1386	C		
	05.01.1387	C		
[X 351 A]	26.01.1387	C		Mutilated

	16.02.1387	C		
	09.03.1387	C		
	30.03.1387	C		
	20.04.1387	C		
X 351 A	20.04.1387	C	46	
X 351 A	11.05.1387	C	47	
	20.05.1387	C		
X 351 A	03.08.1387	C	48	
	20.08.1387	C		
	14.09.1387	C		
	31.08.1387	C	45	Date uncertain
X 351 A	04.10.1387	V	37	
	05.10.1387	C		
	26.10.1387	C		
	13.11.1387	C		
X 351 A	07.12.1387	C	38	
	28.12.1387	C		
	18.01.1388	C		
X 351 A	08.02.1388	C	39	
	28.02.1388	C		
	21.03.1388	C		
X 351 A	11.04.1388	V	40	
	02.05.1388	C		Date uncertain
	16.05.1388	C		
	04.07.1388	C		
X 351 A	26.07.1388	C	41	
	14.08.1388	C		
	24.09.1388	C		
	18.10.1388	C		
[X 351 A]	09.10.1389	C	50	
	29.10.1389	C		
	20.11.1389	C		
X 351 A	16.10.1389	V	49	
	11.12.1389	C		
	16.01.1390	C		
	12.02.1390	C		
X 351 A	05.03.1390	C	52	Mutilated and possibly missing two sessions
X 351 A	28.05.1390	C	53	
	21.06.1390	C		
	31.07.1390	C		

	18.08.1390	C		
X 351 A	08.09.1390	C	54	
X 351 A	01.10.1390	VC	55	
	23.10.1390	C		
X 351 A	16.11.1390	C	56	
	02.12.1390	C		
	13.12.1390	C		
	07.01.1391			
X 351 A	08.04.1391	V	57	
	30.04.1391	C		
	20.05.1391	C		
X 351 A	02.09.1391	C	58	
	29.09.1391	C		
X 351 A	30.10.1391	V	59	
X 351 A	29.11.1391	C	60	
	15.12.1391	C		
	28.01.1392	C		
	16.02.1392	C		
X 351 B	12.03.1392	C		
	30.03.1392	C		
	18.04.1392	C		
X 351 B	08.05.1392	VC	61	
	26.05.1392	C		
	03.08.1392	C		
X 351 B	04.10.1392	C	63	
	22.10.1392	C		
X 351 B	22.10.1392	VC	62	
	12.11.1392	C		
	08.12.1392	C		
	28.12.1392	C		
X 351 B	16.01.1393	C	64	
	10.02.1393	C		Date uncertain
[X 351 B]	01.03.1393	C		
X 351 B	14.03.1393	C	65	
	12.04.1393	C		Date uncertain
X 351 B	03.05.1393	VC	66	
	17.05.1393	C		
	31.08.1393	C		
	18.09.1393	C		

X 351 B	26.06.1393	C	67	Confusion over regnal year
	05.07.1393	C		
	26.07.1393	C		
X 351 A	02.10.1393	V	68	
	18.10.1393	C		
	09.11.1393	C		
X 351 A	29.11.1393	C	69	
	20.12.1393	C		
	09.01.1394	C		
X 351 A	31.01.1394	C	70	
	20.02.1394	C		
X 351 A	14.03.1394	C	71	
	06.04.1394	C		
	16.04.1394	C		
	08.05.1394	C		
X 351 B	08.05.1394	V	72	
	06.06.1394	C		
	12.07.1394	C		
	24.07.1394	C		
X 351 B	08.08.1394	C	73	
	30.08.1394	C		
	23.09.1394	C		
X 351 B	03.10.1395	VC	74	
X 351 B	26.10.1395	C	75	
	13.11.1395	C		
	28.11.1395	C		
X 351 B	15.01.1396	C	76	
	06.02.1396	C		
	26.02.1396	C		
X 351 A	10.04.1396	V	77	
	10.04.1396	C		
	29.04.1396	C		
	22.05.1396	C		
	10.06.1396	C		
X 351 B	02.07.1396	C	78	
	24.07.1396	C		
X 351 B	02.09.1396	C	79	With bedell's account
	26.09.1396	C		
[X 351 B]	14.10.1396	VC		Mutilated
	04.11.1396			

[X 351 B]	24.11.1396	C		Mutilated.
	23.12.1396	C		
	22.02.1397	C		
X 351 B	08.03.1397	C	83	Mutilated
	22.03.1397	C		
	01.04.1397	V		Date illegible
X 351 B	03.06.1397	C	84	Mutilated.
	25.06.1397	C		
	24.07.1397	C		
	04.08.1397	C		
X 351 B	25.08.1397	C	85	With account
X 351 B	01.10.1398	V	90	
	09.11.1398	C		
	28.11.1398	C		
	19.12.1398	C		
X 351 B	11.01.1399	C X 351B	91	
	31.01.1399	C		
	21.02.1399	C		
X 351 B	15.03.1399	C	92	
	06.06.1399	C		
	26.06.1399	C		
X 351 B	05.04.1399	V	93	This membrane contains curia within the dates of the preceding.
	26.04.1399	C		Date illegible; possibly 27.04.1399
	16.05.1399	C		
X 351 B	18.07.1399	C	94	
	10.08.1399	C		
	30.08.1399	C		
[X 351 B]	20.09.1399	C		
X 351 B	02.10.1400	VC	3	
	23.10.1400	C		
	14.11.1400	C		
X 351 B	04.12.1400	C	4	
	25.01.1401	C		
	24.02.1401	C		
	25.03.1401	C		
	08.04.1401	C		
X 351 B	08.04.1401	V	5	
	29.04.1401	C		
	20.05.1401	C		

X 351 B	10.06.1401	C		
	03.07.1401	C		
X 351 A	14.10.1402	VC	7	
	04.11.1402	C		
	25.11.1402	C		
X 351 A	16.12.1402	C	8	
X 351 A	27.01.1403	C		
X 351 A	22.02.1403	C		
	31.03.1403	C		
X 351 A	20.04.1403	V	9	
	16.05.1403	C		
X 351 A	06.06.1403	C	10	
	18.06.1403	C		
X 351 A	08.07.1403	C	11	
	06.08.1403	C		
	27.08.1403			
X 351 B	04.10.1404	C	16	
	25.10.1404	VC		
	18.11.1404	C		
	06.12.1404	C		
X 351 B	27.12.1404	C	17	
	17.01.1405	C		
	07.02.1405	C		
	28.02.1405	C		
X 351 B	21.03.1405	C	22	
	11.04.1405	C		
	02.05.1405	V		
	02.05.1405	C		
	23.05.1405	C		
	13.06.1405	C		
X 351 B	26.09.1405	C		
	17.10.1405	C		
	07.11.1405	VC		
X 351 B	28.11.1405	C	19	Date uncertain
	19.12.1405	C		
	09.01.1406	C		
X 351 B	30.01.1406	C	18	
	20.02.1406	C		
	13.03.1406	C		
	03.04.1406	C		

[X 351 B]	24.04.1406	VC	23	Date uncertain
	15.05.1406	C		
	12.06.1406	C		
	26.06.1406	C		
X 351 B	17.07.1406	C	24	
	07.08.1406	C		
	28.08.1406	C		
	11.09.1406	C		
	09.10.1406	C		
X 351 B	15.04.1407	VC	25	
	07.05.1407	C		
	28.05.1407	C		
	18.06.1407	C		
	09.07.1407	C		
	30.07.1407	C		
	20.08.1407	C		
	10.09.1407	C		
X 351 B	22.09.1407	C	26	
	06.10.1407	V		
	20.10.1407	C		
	12.11.1407	C		
	01.12.1407	C		
	24.12.1407	C		
	14.01.1408	C		
	04.02.1408	C		
	25.02.1408	C		
	17.03.1408	C		
	07.04.1408	C		
X 351 B	26.04.1408	V		
	19.05.1408	C		
	09.06.1408	C		
	30.06.1408	C		
	21.07.1408	C		
	11.08.1408	C		
	01.09.1408	C		
X 351 B	13.10.1408	C	31	
	18.10.1408	V		
	03.11.1408	C		
	24.11.1408	C		
	15.12.1408	C		
	05.01.1409	C		
	26.01.1409	C		
	16.02.1409	C		
	09.03.1409	C		
	30.03.1409	C		
	20.04.1409	VC		
	11.05.1409	C		
	01.06.1409	C		
	22.06.1409	C		

	13.07.1409	C		
	03.08.1409	C		
	24.08.1409	C		
	14.09.1409	C		
X 351 A	29.11.1410	C	34	
	20.12.1410	C		
	10.01.1411	C		
	01.10.1410	V		Date uncertain
X 351 A	18.04.1411	V	32	Date uncertain
	11.07.1411	C		Date uncertain
	08.08.1411	C		Date uncertain
X 351 B	10.10.1411	VC		
	10.10.1411	C		
	31.10.1411	C		
X 351 B	21.11.1411	C		Date uncertain
	12.12.1411	C		
	02.01.1412	C		
X 351 B	02.04.1412	C		Date uncertain
	23.01.1412	C	33	
	13.02.1412	C		
	05.03.1412	C		
	23.03.1412	C		
X 351 B	16.04.1412	VC		
	07.05.1412			
X 351 B	28.05.1412	C		
	18.06.1412	C		
	09.07.1412	C		
	30.07.1412	C		
X 351 B	13.08.1412	C		
	10.09.1412	C		
	15.10.1412	C		
X 351 B	22.10.1412	C		Date uncertain
	12.11.1412	V		
	23.09.1412	C		
[X 351 B]	24.12.1412	C		
	14.01.1413	C		
	04.02.1413	C		
X 351 B	25.02.1413	C	38	
	18.03.1413	C		
	08.04.1413	C		
	29.04.1413	VC		Date uncertain

X 351 B	20.05.1413	C		
	10.06.1413	C		
	01.07.1413	C		
	22.07.1413	C		
	12.08.1413	C		
	02.09.1413	C		
X 351 B	14.10.1413	VC		
	04.11.1413	C		
	25.11.1413	C		
	16.12.1413	C		
	06.01.1414	C		
	27.01.1414	C		
	17.02.1414	C		
	Unknown	C		
	01.04.1414	C		Date illegible
	12.05.1414	C		
	24.05.1414	V		
	09.06.1414	C		
X 350	23.04.1420	VC	12	
	04.06.1420	C		
	25.06.1420	C		
X 350	16.07.1420	C		Date uncertain
	06.08.1420	C		
	27.08.1420	C		
X 350	26.09.1420	VC	13	
	10.10.1420	C		
	05.11.1420	C		
X 350	07.01.1421	C	14	
	28.01.1421	C		
	18.02.1421	C		
	04.03.1421	C		
	01.04.1421	VC		
X 350	13.05.1421	C		
	03.06.1421	C		
	08.07.1421	C		
X 350	28.10.1421	C		
	18.11.1421	C		
	09.12.1421	C		
	30.12.1421	C		
X 350	10.02.1422	C	27	
	03.03.1422	C		
	24.03.1422	C		
	15.04.1422	VC		

X 350	05.05.1422	C		
	26.05.1422	C		
	23.06.1422	C		
X 350	07.07.1422	C	28	
	18.08.1422	C		
	08.09.1422	C		
	29.09.1422	VC		
X 350	20.10.1422	C	29	
	11.11.1422	C		Date uncertain
	03.12.1422	C		
	19.12.1422	C		
	12.01.1423			
X 350	06.04.1423	VC	30	
	18.05.1423	C		
X 350	08.06.1423	C		
	29.06.1423	C		
	10.08.1423	C		
X 350	11.01.1490	V		
X 350	04.11.1505	V		

Table 2 - Barkby manorial court rolls		
Date	MCR	
1278.??.??	6563	
1279.04.11	6563	
1279.06.18	6563	
1282.07.11	6563	
1282.10.1282	6563	
1285.10.24	6564	Date uncertain
1286.??.??	6564	
1289.04.02	6565	
1289.10.07	6566	Mostly Leicester
1289.06.24	6566	Mostly Leicester
1289.07.15	6566	Mostly Leicester
1289.07.15	6566	Mostly Leicester; draft?
1289.08.05	6566	Mostly Leicester
1289.07.12	6566	Draft of 11?; mostly Leicester
1289.06.24	6566	Draft of 10; mostly Leicester
1289.07.15	6566	Draft of 11; mostly Leicester
1289.08.05	6566	Draft of 13; mostly Leicester
1289.10.01	6566	Draft of 9? Mostly Leicester
1289.12.16	6566	

1290.04.08	6566	
1290.06.10	6566	
1294.08.05	6567	
1294.08.22	6567	
1294.12.21	6567	
1295.01.18	6567	
1295.02.14	6567	Some doubt about date but prob. correct
1295.02.29	6567	
1295.03.14	6567	
1295.04.06	6567	Date uncertain
1295.06.06	6567	
1295.08.04	6567	
1295.10.13	6567	
1296.03.12	6567	
1296.04.05	6567	Date uncertain
1296.05.04	6567	
1296.06.22	6567	
????.??.??	6570	
1341.05.11	6570	
1341.11.06	6570	
????.??.??	6570	
1342.07.02	6570	
????.??.??	6570	
1342.10.29	6570	
1342.11.15	6570	Date uncertain
1343.03.21	6570	
????.??.??	6570	Date uncertain; list of litigation
????.??.??	6570	Date uncertain
1346.02.13	6570	
1346.06.12	6570	
1346.05.22	6570	
????.??.??	6570	
1347.02.15	6570	
????.??.??	6570	
1347.04.24	6570	
1347.05.11	6570	
1347.??.??	6570	
1348.04.03	6571	
1348.07.29	6571	Date uncertain
1348.??.??	6571	
1348.??.??	6571	Poss. autumn 1348
1349.01.13	6571	Date uncertain
1349.04.09	6571	Date uncertain
1349.04.17	6571	Date uncertain
????.??.??	6571	
1349.10.18	6571	

1350.01.12	6571	Date uncertain
1351.05.13	6571	Date uncertain
1351.01.26	6571	
????.??.??	6571	
1351.07.25	6571	
1352.04.04	6571	
1352.07.18	6571	
1353.04.25	6571	
1354.01.08	6571	
1355.01.20	6573	
1355.??.??	6573	
1356.??.??	6574	
1357.02.11	6574	
1357.??.??	6605	
1358.05.22	6605	
1358.11.22	6605	
1359.12.17	6605	
1362.11.11	6575	
1363.04.07	6575	Date uncertain
1364.03.05	6575	
1365.11.10	6576	Date uncertain
1366.04.17	6576	Date uncertain
1367.02.03	6576	Date uncertain
1367.08.11	6577	
1369.01.30	6577	
1369.04.21	6577	
1369.06.20	6577	
1371.05.05	6577	
1372.05.24	6578	24.05 or 25.05
1372.11.02	6579	
1374.07.13	6580	
1375.05.25	6580	
????.??.??	6581	
1377.07.20	6581	
1378.07.07	6581	Date uncertain
1379.07.07	6581	
1380.07.20	6582	
1382.07.14	6582	
????.07.14	6582	
1385.07.25	6583	
1387.07.29	6583	Date uncertain
1387.07.25	6583	
1388.07.22	6583	Date uncertain
1389.12.14	6584	
1390.02.28	6584	
1392.05.06	6584	

1392.07.13	6585	
1394.01.16	6587	
1395.01.25	6587	
1396.05.22	6588	
1396.07.13	6588	Dorse is court of 10.11.1405
1397.03.02	6589	
1398.04.14	6589	
1399.01.17	6589	
1399.05.01	6589	
1405.11.10	6588	This is dorse of 116
1408.06.04	6591	
1413.06.20	6592	
1421.01.22	6593	
1421.07.25	6593	
????.11.23	6594	
????.05.??	6594	
1428.??.??	6595	Date unclear
????.??.??	6595	
1429.09.14	6596	
1429.12.07	6596	View of frankpledge
1430.11.15	6597	
1431.05.03	6598	
1432.12.12	6593	
1432.12.12	6599	Presumably draft of 134 or vice versa
1433.05.08	6599	
1433.10.27	6593	
1434.04.27	6593	
1434.04.27	6600	Presumably draft of 138 or vice versa
1434.08.30	6601	
1434.11.10	6601	
1434.11.10	6593	Presumably draft of 141 or vice versa
1435.06.20	6593	
1437.11.08	6602	
1440.12.16	6603	
1443.10.15	6605	
1444.01.10	6605	Date uncertain
1444.01.08	6604	Presumably draft of 147 or vice versa
1444.08.05	6604	
1445.05.04	6607	
1448.05.27	6610	NBB out of sequence
1445.11.30	6606	
1446.06.01	6606	
1447.05.19	6608	
1446.12.05	6608	NBB out of sequence
1447.??.??	6609	Date uncertain
1447.10.12	6605	

1447.12.01	6612	
1448.01.16	6605	
1448.01.17	6611	Draft of 159 or vice versa?
1448.05.27	6605	Presumably draft of 151 (which is out of order)
1449.05.12	6605	
1449.05.12	6612	Presumably draft of 162 or vice versa
1449.11.14	6605	
1450.04.27	6605	
1450.04.27	6613	Presumably draft of 165 or vice versa
1450.11.06	6613	
1456.10.18	6615	Slip/extract from 171
1456.05.01	6615	Slip/extract
1455.10.20	6615	
1456.10.18	6615	Date uncertain
1464.05.05	6616	
1472.10.01	6617	
1472.10.01	6618	Probably a draft of 173
1474.05.04	6618	
1474.10.06	6619	
1475.03.27	6619	
1475.10.05	6620	
1476.04.17	6620	
1476.10.25	6621	
1477.05.13	6621	
1477.09.30	6622	
1478.04.10	6622	
1478.10.08	6623	
1479.04.15	6623	
1487.05.07	6624	
1487.10.08	6624	
????.??.??	6625	
1542.10.06	6614	

Table 3 - Catesby manorial court rolls

Date	TNA ref.	Prioress (if named)	Comments
1313.01.30	SC 2/195/1 - 1		
1313.05.31	SC 2/195/1 - 1		
1313.10.18	SC 2/195/1 - 1		
1314.02.23	SC 2/195/1 - 1		
1314.05.03	SC 2/195/1 - 1		
1314.08.16	SC 2/195/1 - 1		
1314.10.18	SC 2/195/1 - 1		
1323.01.05	SC 2/195/1 - 2		
1323.05.06	SC 2/195/1 - 2		
1323.08.19	SC 2/195/1 - 2		

1323.10.28	SC 2/195/1 - 2		
1328.04.27	SC 2/195/2 - 1		Poss. 08.06.1328
1328.12.17	SC 2/195/2 - 2		
1328.06.02	SC 2/195/2 - 2		
1329.09.29	SC 2/195/2 - 2		
1330.04.21	SC 2/195/2 - 2		
1336.03.??	SC 2/195/2 - 3		Preceded by two illegible curia
1336.??.??	SC 2/195/2 - 3		
1336.12.19	SC 2/195/2 - 3		
1337.05.??	SC 2/195/2 - 3		Poss. June
1339.07.17	SC 2/195/2 - 4		
1339.10.14	SC 2/195/2 - 4		
1340.08.03	SC 2/195/2 - 4		
1342.06.01	SC 2/195/2 - 4		
1342.06.24	SC 2/195/2 - 4		
1340.11.02	SC 2/195/2 - 5		commences with termination of another curia
1341.01.05	SC 2/195/2 - 5		
1341.06.05	SC 2/195/2 - 5		
1343.02.14	SC 2/195/2 - 5		
1343.10.07	SC 2/195/2 - 5		
1341.08.07	SC 2/195/2 - 6		or poss. 1341.10.16
1342.01.07	SC 2/195/2 - 6		
1343.11.03	SC 2/195/2 - 6		
1344.08.02	SC 2/195/2 - 6		
????.??.??	SC 2/195/2 - 7		Poss. three courts…
1344.12.13	SC 2/195/2 - 8		
1345.03.11	SC 2/195/2 - 8		
1345.07.30	SC 2/195/2 - 8		
1345.10.25	SC 2/195/2 - 8		
1345.11.15	SC 2/195/2 - 8		
1346.03.07	SC 2/195/2 - 8		
1347.11.15	SC 2/195/2 - 8		Poss. 1347.11.16
1348.02.19	SC 2/195/2 - 8		
1348.04.27	SC 2/195/2 - 8		
1348.08.19	SC 2/195/2 - 8		
1346.05.19	SC 2/195/2 - 9		
1346.07.18	SC 2/195/2 - 9		
1346.08.08	SC 2/195/2 - 9		
1346.10.27	SC 2/195/2 - 9		
1348.02.25	SC 2/195/2 - 10		
1348.07.21	SC 2/195/2 - 10		
1348.11.03	SC 2/195/2 - 10		
1348.11.25	SC 2/195/2 - 10		
1348.11.03	SC 2/195/2 - 11		
1348.11.25	SC 2/195/2 - 11		

	SC 2/195/2 - 12		Poss. a continuation sheet
????.??.??	SC 2/195/2 - 13		
1349.11.23	SC 2/195/2 - 13		
1350.04.10	SC 2/195/2 - 13		
????.??.??	SC 2/195/2 - 14		
1350.08.07	SC 2/195/2 - 14		
1357.11.04	SC 2/195/3 - 1		
1358.02.24	SC 2/195/3 - 1		
1358.04.21	SC 2/195/3 - 1		
1358.05.05	SC 2/195/3 - 1		
1358.06.02	SC 2/195/3 - 1		
1358.07.21	SC 2/195/3 - 1		
1358.10.20	SC 2/195/3 - 1		
1358.11.23	SC 2/195/3 - 1		
1358.12.08	SC 2/195/3 - 1		
1360.05.30	SC 2/195/3 - 2		
1360.07.18	SC 2/195/3 - 2		
1360.09.26	SC 2/195/3 - 2		
1361.10.23	SC 2/195/3 - 3		
????.??.??	SC 2/195/3 - 4		
1361.??.??	SC 2/195/3 - 4		
1361.??.??	SC 2/195/3 - 4		
????.??.??	SC 2/195/3 - 5		
1371.12.13	SC 2/195/3 - 6		
1372.04.17	SC 2/195/3 - 6		
1372.08.16	SC 2/195/3 - 6		
1372.08.30	SC 2/195/3 - 6		
1372.10.30	SC 2/195/3 - 6		
1372.10.30	SC 2/195/3 - 6		
1372.12.13	SC 2/195/3 - 6		
1373.03.22	SC 2/195/3 - 6		
????.??.??	SC 2/195/3 - 7		
1378.10.19	SC 2/195/4 - 1		Poss. 1378.09.02
1379.08.01	SC 2/195/4 - 1		
????.??.??	SC 2/195/4 - 1		
1379.02.08	SC 2/195/4 - 1		
1379.03.21	SC 2/195/4 - 1		
1379.05.24	SC 2/195/4 - 2		
1379.11.10	SC 2/195/4 - 2		
1379.12.13	SC 2/195/4 - 2		
1380.03.09	SC 2/195/4 - 2		
1380.04.13	SC 2/195/4 - 2		
1380.07.03	SC 2/195/4 - 3		
1380.10.24	SC 2/195/4 - 3		
????.??.??	SC 2/195/4 - 3		
1382.02.05	SC 2/195/4 - 4		

1382.04.29	SC 2/195/4 - 4		
1382.07.22	SC 2/195/4 - 4		
1381.??.??	SC 2/195/4 - 5		
1381.11.05	SC 2/195/4 - 5		
1383.04.27	SC 2/195/4 - 6		
1382.12.08	SC 2/195/4 - 6		
1383.01.29	SC 2/195/4 - 6		
1383.03.19	SC 2/195/4 - 6		
1383.06.23	SC 2/195/4 - 6		
1383.08.01	SC 2/195/4 - 6		
	SC 2/195/4 - 7		Seems to be a continuation of ? prev. curia
1383.09.28	SC 2/195/4 - 8		
1383.11.17	SC 2/195/4 - 8		
1384.01.19	SC 2/195/4 - 8		
1384.04.29	SC 2/195/4 - 8		
1384.06.21	SC 2/195/4 - 9		
1384.08.01	SC 2/195/4 - 9		
1384.11.08	SC 2/195/4 - 9		
1385.05.07	SC 2/195/4 - 9		
1385.04.27	SC 2/195/4 - 9		
1384.08.01	SC 2/195/4 - 9		1385?
1384.10.27	SC 2/195/4 - 10		
????.??.??	SC 2/195/4 - 10		
1386.02.13	SC 2/195/4 - 10		
1386.06.05	SC 2/195/4 - 10		
1386.08.01	SC 2/195/4 - 10		
????.??.??	SC 2/195/4 - 11		
1387.04.23	SC 2/195/4 - 11		
1387.08.01	SC 2/195/4 - 11		
1387.11.25	SC 2/195/4 - 12		
1388.02.13	SC 2/195/4 - 12		
1388.04.14	SC 2/195/4 - 12		
1388.05.12	SC 2/195/4 - 12		
1388.07.08	SC 2/195/4 - 12		Or 1388.07.07
1388.09.23	SC 2/195/4 - 12		
1388.11.05	SC 2/195/4 - 12		
1389.05.26	SC 2/195/4 - 12		
1389.07.29	SC 2/195/4 - 12		
1389.10.27	SC 2/195/5 - 1		
1390.02.14	SC 2/195/5 - 1		
1390.03.28	SC 2/195/5 - 1		
1390.05.02	SC 2/195/5 - 2		
1390.10.27	SC 2/195/5 - 2		
1390.11.17	SC 2/195/5 - 2		
1391.04.13	SC 2/195/5 - 2		

1391.06.12	SC 2/195/5 - 2		
1391.08.05	SC 2/195/5 - 2		
1389.11.01	SC 2/195/5 - 3		
1391.12.09	SC 2/195/5 - 3		
1392.02.29	SC 2/195/5 - 3		
1392.03.21	SC 2/195/5 - 3		
1392.05.14	SC 2/195/5 - 3		
1392.07.09	SC 2/195/5 - 3		
1392.10.29	SC 2/195/5 - 4		
1393.02.11	SC 2/195/5 - 4		
1393.06.17	SC 2/195/5 - 5		
1393.07.29	SC 2/195/5 - 5		
1393.09.23	SC 2/195/5 - 5		
1394.01.13	SC 2/195/5 - 5		
1394.04.22	SC 2/195/5 - 5		
1394.08.01	SC 2/195/5 - 5		
1394.09.29	SC 2/195/5 - 5		
1394.01.27	SC 2/195/5 - 5		Possibly 1395.
1395.05.04	SC 2/195/5 - 6		
1395.07.12	SC 2/195/5 - 6		
1395.10.26	SC 2/195/5 - 6		
1396.02.08	SC 2/195/5 - 6		
1396.04.04	SC 2/195/5 - 6		
1396.09.30	SC 2/195/5 - 6		
1396.04.25	SC 2/195/5 - 7		
1397.07.24	SC 2/195/5 - 7		
1397.10.31	SC 2/195/5 - 8		
1397.11.20	SC 2/195/5 - 8		
1398.05.03	SC 2/195/5 - 8		
1398.??.??	SC 2/195/5 - 8		
1398.10.29	SC 2/195/5 - 8		
1399.09.24	SC 2/195/5 - 8		
1399.??.??	SC 2/195/5 - 8		
1399.10.28	SC 2/195/5 - 9		Or 1399.09.09
1400.02.25	SC 2/195/5 - 9		
1400.07.22	SC 2/195/6 - 1		
1400.10.12	SC 2/195/6 - 1		
1401.04.28	SC 2/195/6 - 1		
1401.08.16	SC 2/195/6 - 2		
1401.12.26	SC 2/195/6 - 2		
1402.04.13	SC 2/195/6 - 3		
1402.07.03	SC 2/195/6 - 3	Joanna Assheby	
1402.??.??	SC 2/195/6 - 3	Joanna Assheby	Poss. 1403.
????.??.??	SC 2/195/6 - 4		
1403.10.18	SC 2/195/6 - 4		
1404.01.15	SC 2/195/6 - 4	Joanna [Assheby]	

1404.08.04	SC 2/195/6 - 5	Joanna [Assheby]	
1404.10.14	SC 2/195/6 - 5		
1405.07.07	SC 2/195/6 - 6	Elizabeth Swynford	
1405.12.08	SC 2/195/6 - 6	Elizabeth Swynford	
1406.04.15	SC 2/195/6 - 7	Elizabeth Swynford	
1406.12.09	SC 2/195/6 - 7	Elizabeth Swynford	
1407.04.09	SC 2/195/6 - 7	Elizabeth Swynford	
1407.10.18	SC 2/195/6 - 7	Elizabeth Swynford	
1407.10.11	SC 2/195/6 - 8		
1408.04.10	SC 2/195/6 - 9		
1409.01.11	SC 2/195/6 - 9		
1409.09.21	SC 2/195/6 - 10	Elizabeth Swynford	
1410.04.02	SC 2/195/6 - 10	Elizabeth Swynford	
1410.06.27	SC 2/195/6 - 11		
1410.10.29	SC 2/195/6 - 11	Elizabeth Swynford	
1411.05.27	SC 2/195/6 - 11	Elizabeth Swynford	
1412.03.04	SC 2/195/6 - 12	Elizabeth Swynford	Custumal
1412.05.05	SC 2/195/6 - 12	Elizabeth Swynford	
1412.10.28	SC 2/195/6 - 13	Elizabeth Swynford	
1413.05.09	SC 2/195/6 - 13	Elizabeth Swynford	
1413.06.28	SC 2/195/6 - 13		
1413.12.14	SC 2/195/6 - 13		
1413.05.09	SC 2/195/6 - 14		Rental
1414.05.08	SC 2/195/7 - 1	Elizabeth Swynford	
1414.11.06	SC 2/195/7 - 1	Elizabeth Swynford	
1415.04.29	SC 2/195/7 - 1	Elizabeth Swynford	
1415.06.27	SC 2/195/7 - 1		
1415.11.29	SC 2/195/7 - 2	Elizabeth Swynford	
1416.05.11	SC 2/195/7 - 2		
1416.??.??	SC 2/195/7 - 2	Elizabeth Swynford	Possibly 1417.
1417.05.03	SC 2/195/7 - 2	Elizabeth Swynford	
1417.08.03	SC 2/195/7 - 2	Elizabeth Swynford	
1417.11.10	SC 2/195/7 - 3	Elizabeth Swynford	
1418.04.13	SC 2/195/7 - 3		
1418.06.29	SC 2/195/7 - 3	Elizabeth Swynford	
1418.05.02	SC 2/195/7 - 3	Elizabeth Swynford	
1419.05.02	SC 2/195/7 - 4	Elizabeth Swynford	
1419.05.29	SC 2/195/7 - 4	Elizabeth Swynford	or 1419.09.18
1419.10.16	SC 2/195/7 - 5	Elizabeth Swynford	
1420.04.17	SC 2/195/7 - 5	Elizabeth Swynford	
1420.10.28	SC 2/195/7 - 5	Elizabeth Swynford	
1422.02.19	SC 2/195/7 - 6	Elizabeth Swynford	
1422.07.21	SC 2/195/7 - 6	Elizabeth Swynford	
????.??.??	SC 2/195/7 - 7		
????.??.??	SC 2/195/7 - 8		
1423.03.16	SC 2/195/8 - 1	Elizabeth Swynford	

1423.12.16	SC 2/195/8 - 1	Elizabeth Swynford	
1424.09.04	SC 2/195/8 - 2	Elizabeth Swynford	
1424.10.05	SC 2/195/8 - 2	Elizabeth Swynford	
1424.10.23	SC 2/195/8 - 2	Elizabeth Swynford	
1425.10.23	SC 2/195/8 - 3	Elizabeth Swynford	
1426.03.23	SC 2/195/8 - 3	Elizabeth Swynford	
1426.10.21	SC 2/195/8 - 3	Agnes Terry	
????.??.??	SC 2/195/8 - 4		List of presentations from 1426/7 (ARR HVI 6)
1427.12.30	SC 2/195/8 - 5	Agnes Terry	
1428.05.17	SC 2/195/8 - 5	Agnes Terry	
1428.??.??	SC 2/195/8 - 5		or possibly 1429.
1428.03.04	SC 2/195/8 - 6		
1428.06.22	SC 2/195/8 - 6		
1429.03.04	SC 2/195/8 - 7	Agnes Terry	
1429.06.21	SC 2/195/8 - 7	Agnes Terry	
1429.11.08	SC 2/195/8 - 7	Agnes Terry	
1430.05.10	SC 2/195/8 - 8	Agnes Terry	
1431.01.29	SC 2/195/8 -8	Agnes Terry	
1431.04.23	SC 2/195/8 - 8	Agnes Terry	
1431.11.05	SC 2/195/8 - 8		
1461.11.19	SC 2/195/8 - 9 & 10	Elizabeth [B itt]	
????.??.??	SC 2/195/9 - 1		Presumably 1461–8.
????.??.??	SC 2/195/9 - 1		
????.??.??	SC 2/195/9 - 2	Adelene Steynton	Presumably 1480/1.
????.??.??	SC 2/195/9 - 2	Adelene Steynton	Presumably 1480/1.
1482.03.11	SC 2/195/9 - 2	Adelene Steynton	Staverton
????.??.??	SC 2/195/9 - 2		
1482.10.04	SC 2/195/9 - 3	Adelene Steynton	Catesby
1482.10.05	SC 2/195/9 - 3	Adelene Steynton	Staverton
1483.06.06	SC 2/195/9 - 3	Adelene Steynton	Staverton
1484.03.30	SC 2/195/9 - 3	Adelene Steynton	Staverton
1483.10.04	SC 2/195/9 - 4	Adelene Steynton	
1485.04.12	SC 2/195/9 - 5	Adelene Steynton	Catesby
1485.04.13	SC 2/195/9 - 5	Adelene Steynton	Staverton
1487.05.21	SC 2/195/9 - 6	[Audelene Scheryngton]	
1487.??.??	SC 2/195/9 - 6	[Audelene Scheryngton]	
1489.??.??	SC 2/195/9 - 7	Joanna [ ]	
1490.04.07	SC 2/195/9 - 7		Catesby
1490.04.07	SC 2/195/9 - 7		Staverton
1493.04.29	SC 2/195/9 - 8		Catesby
1493.10.18	SC 2/195/9 - 9	[Humana Bukebye]	Catesby
1534.12.26	SC 2/195/10	Jocosa [ ]	

1534.12.31	SC 2/195/10	Jocosa [ ]	

Maps and notes

Map 1 **The three manors**

Map 2 **Geddington: 1886**

Map 3 **Detail from John Booth's 1717 map showing Geddington village centre**

The road from Northampton, the modern Queen Street, can be seen entering the village from the south west, crossing the River Ise by the bridge and then entering the market place (the location of the Eleanor Cross). The parish church stands on 'the Mount' to the north east; to its west is a group of houses and a side-street, Bakehouse Hill, possibly the location of a communal oven and possibly the location of the de Brechale family messuage and that of Henry Mulso. The square building shown in red to the south east of the market place is The Priory, possibly the location of John (i) Mulso's house tenement. The Castle Close is the site of the royal hunting lodge. The Wood Way can be seen leaving the village in the direction of Geddington Chase to the north west.

Map 4 **Geddington: 1717**

This shows the main details of John Booth's field map overlaid on the nineteenth century Ordnance Survey map. The main fields of the common field system are marked and closes, including the Breaches, shaded in green. The precise extent of the southern boundary of Tickley Field is not shown in Booth's map and its conjectural boundary is marked with a dashed line.

Map 5 **Barkby: 1884**

Map 6 **Barkby: 1635**

This shows the main details of Abraham Allen's 1635 map overlaid on the nineteenth century Ordnance Survey map. The three 'sesons' are shown: Spickacre (edged in yellow), Byagate (edged in dark red) and Church Hadland (edged in blue). Meadows and pasture are shown edged in green and the system of sikes on the north western boundary of the parish is shaded in light green. The precise location of the three outlying furlongs, Quinabarrow, Mote Bush and Trowell Sicke furlongs, is conjectural and shown with

dashed lines. Merton's closes and house tenements are shown edged in orange.

Map 7 **Detail from Abraham Allen's 1635 map showing the west end of Barkby village**

This extract shows the west end of the village with Merton's house tenements edged in orange. There is a freehold tenement belonging to Mr Johnson at the extreme west end of the village. The Merton tenements can be seen stretching northwards from the Barkby Brook, straddling the current Main Street and terminating at the road running parallel to Main Street and to its north (described on the map as the 'Woodgate Way' and no longer in existence). The park, described as 'Mr Putchens severall' may be the location of the de Ros park.

Map 8 **Detail from Abraham Allen's 1635 map showing the east end of Barkby village**

This shows the east end of the village and overlaps with map 4 (Mr Pochin's 'severall# can be seen to the west). It illustrates the change in village topography from the narrow tenements of the west end to the 'croft and toft' house tenements to the east. Those belonging to Merton are, again, edged in orange.

Map 9 **Barkby: middle ages**

This shows the extent of ridge and furrow visible in the 1940s aerial photographs overlaid on the nineteenth century Ordnance Survey maps. Areas where the ridge and furrow is fainter in the photographs are indicated by lighter grey shading. The ridge and furrow disappears to the west which may indicate that it was ploughed out earlier (before the 1940s) or that it was never ridged. Some of the unshaded fields in the midst of the ridge and furrow were probably ridged but the ridging is not visible in the aerial photographs. Part of the area forming Barkby Holt may have been ridged in the middle ages but was wooded in the 1940s so ridging there is not visible.

'Harbard's Closes' are shown – their location is taken from the 1781 enclosure award map.

Map 10 **Catesby: 1901**

Map 11 **Catesby: 1638**

This map shows the early modern enclosures from Richard Whiting's 1638 field map overlaid on the nineteenth century Ordnance Survey map. Those enclosures probably followed the boundaries of the medieval furlongs and some bear their medieval or similar names (e.g. 'long furlongs' and 'Rightons'). The cluster of closes around the abbey site, including the Lower Bigging were probably of medieval origin and for sheep and other stock.

Map 12 **Detail from Richard Whiting's 1638 field map showing Lower Catesby**

This extract from Richard Whiting's map shows the area around the Priory site in greater detail. The close rather faintly marked 'The Shopes' is shown to the east of the Priory site and presumably marks the site of the medieval village, or part of it.

Map 13 **Catesby: middle ages**

This map shows the ridge and furrow visible in the 1940s aerial photographs overlaid on the nineteenth century Ordnance Survey maps. Areas where the ridge and furrow is fainter in the photographs are indicated by lighter grey shading. As at Barkby, some of the unshaded areas in the midst of the ridging may have been ridged in the middle ages but are not visible in the aerial photographs. They may be areas where material was dumped from the excavation of Catesby tunnel for the Great Central Railway in the 1890s. The areas of lighter shading may represent areas turned over to pasture and *frisca* in the later middle ages.

Map 1 The three manors



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Scale 1:800000

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100 km

Projection: British National Grid
15 April 2026 13:07

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Map 2 Geddington: 1886



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Scale 1:20000

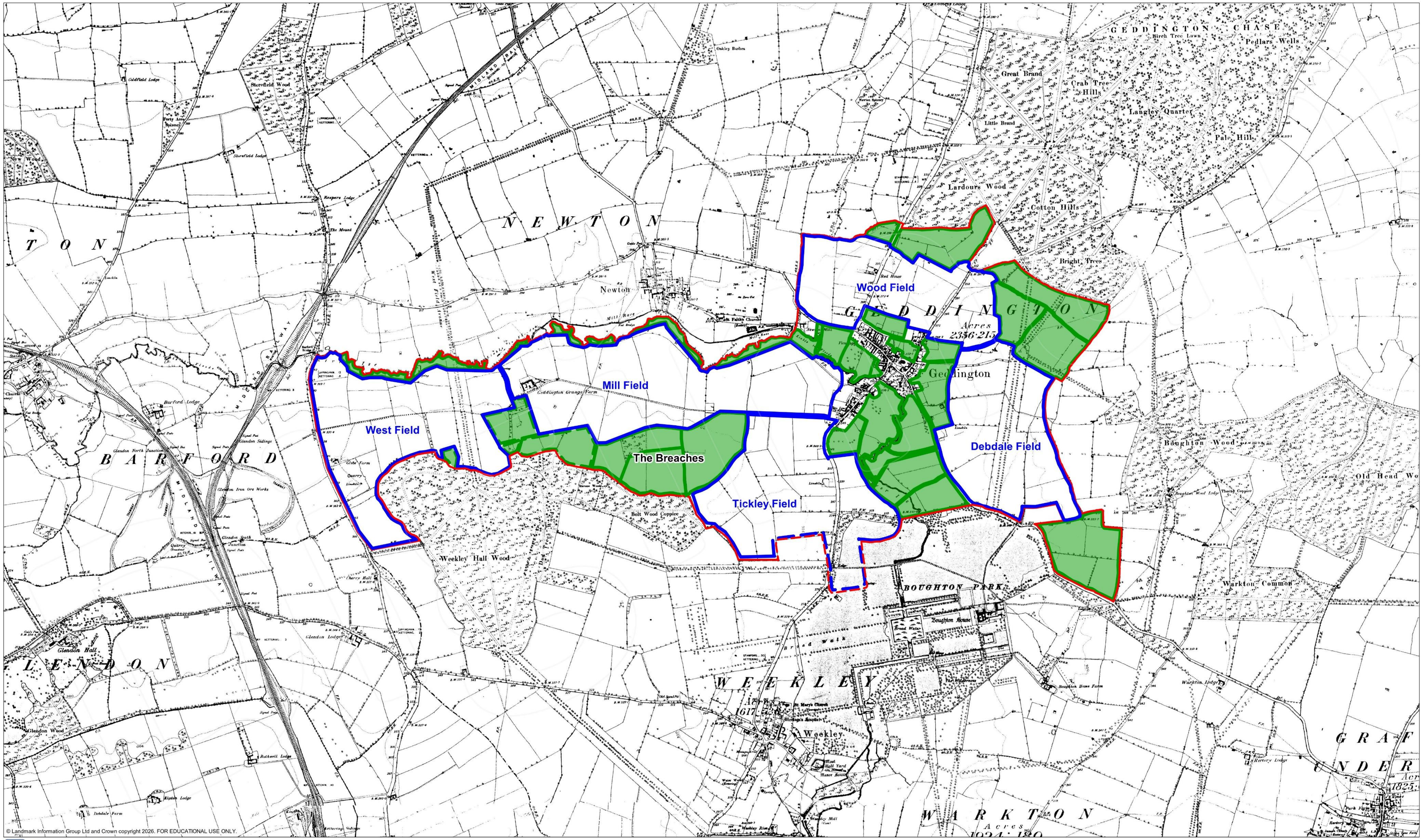
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Projection: British National Grid
15 April 2026 13:12

Map 3 Detail from John Booth's 1717 map showing Geddington village centre



Map 4 Geddington: 1717



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Scale 1:15000

0 0.2 0.4 0.6 0.8 1 1.2 1.4 1.6 1.8 2 km

Projection: British National Grid
15 April 2026 13:17

Map 5 Barkby: 1884



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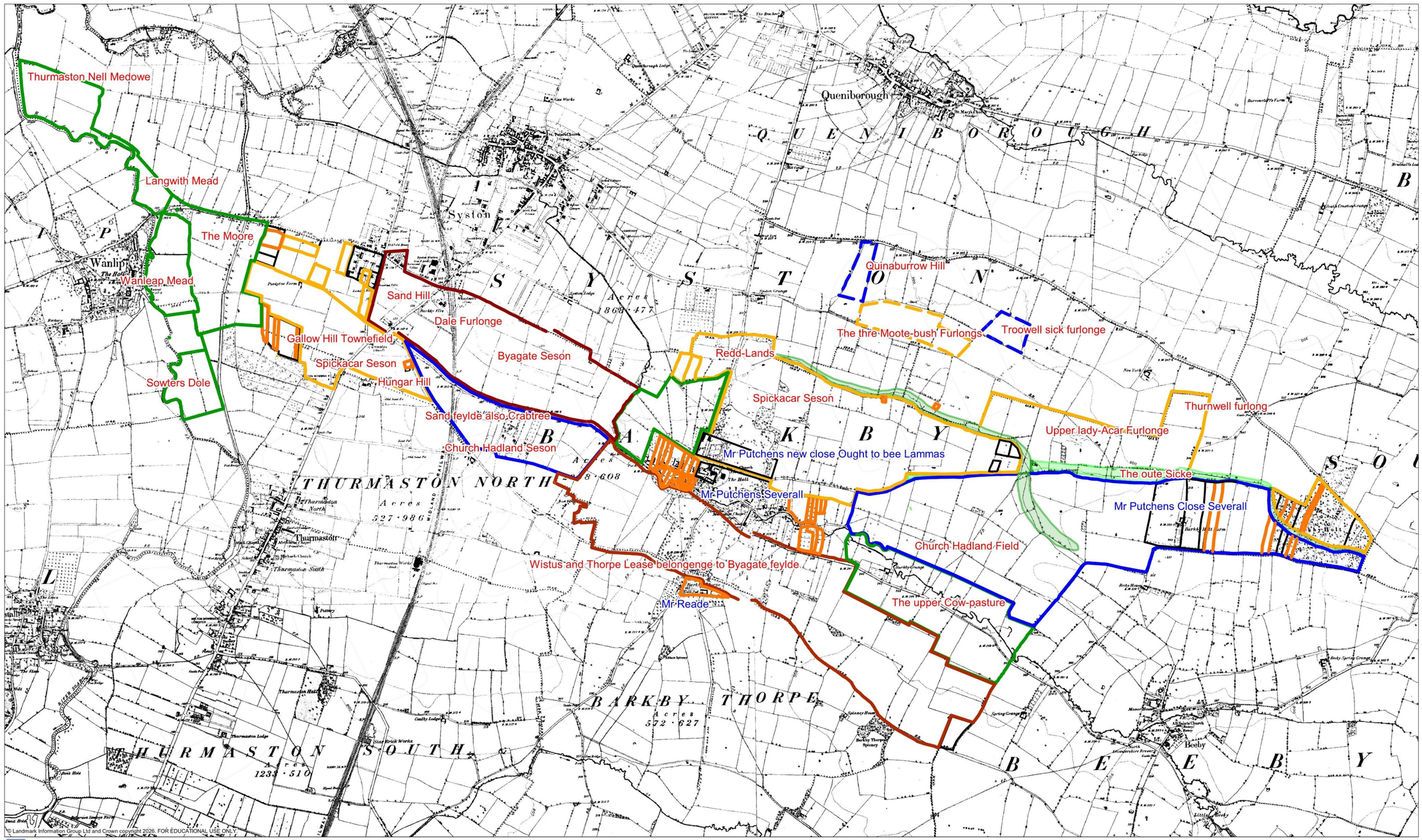
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Scale 1:20000

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Projection: British National Grid
15 April 2026 13:20

Map 6 Barkby: 1635



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Scale 1:15000

0 0.2 0.4 0.6 0.8 1 1.2 1.4 1.6 1.8 2 km

Projection: British National Grid
15 April 2026 13:35

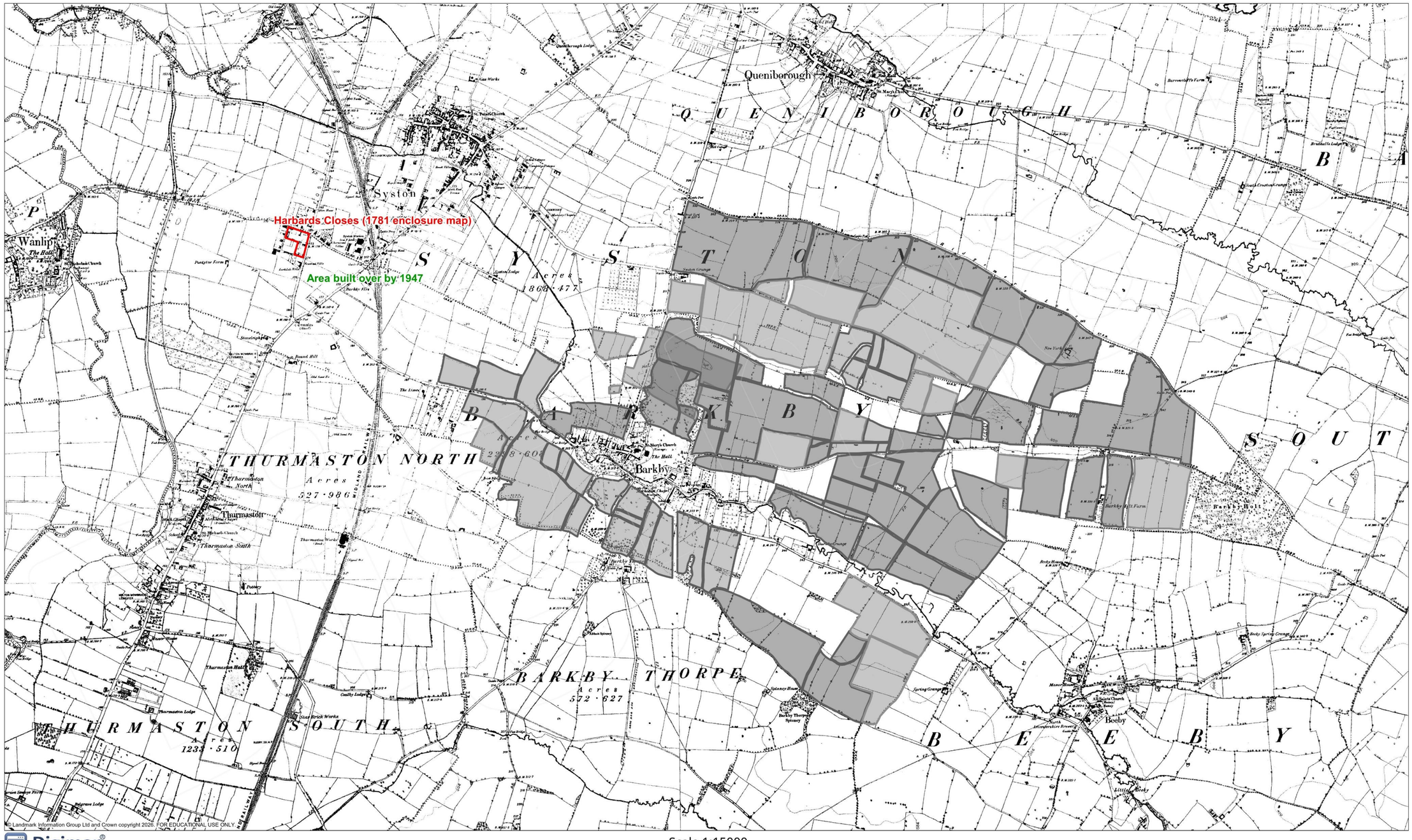
Map 7 Detail from Abraham Allen's 1635 map showing the west end of Barkby village



Map 8 Detail from Abraham Allen's 1635 map showing the east end of Barkby village



Map 9 Barkby: middle ages



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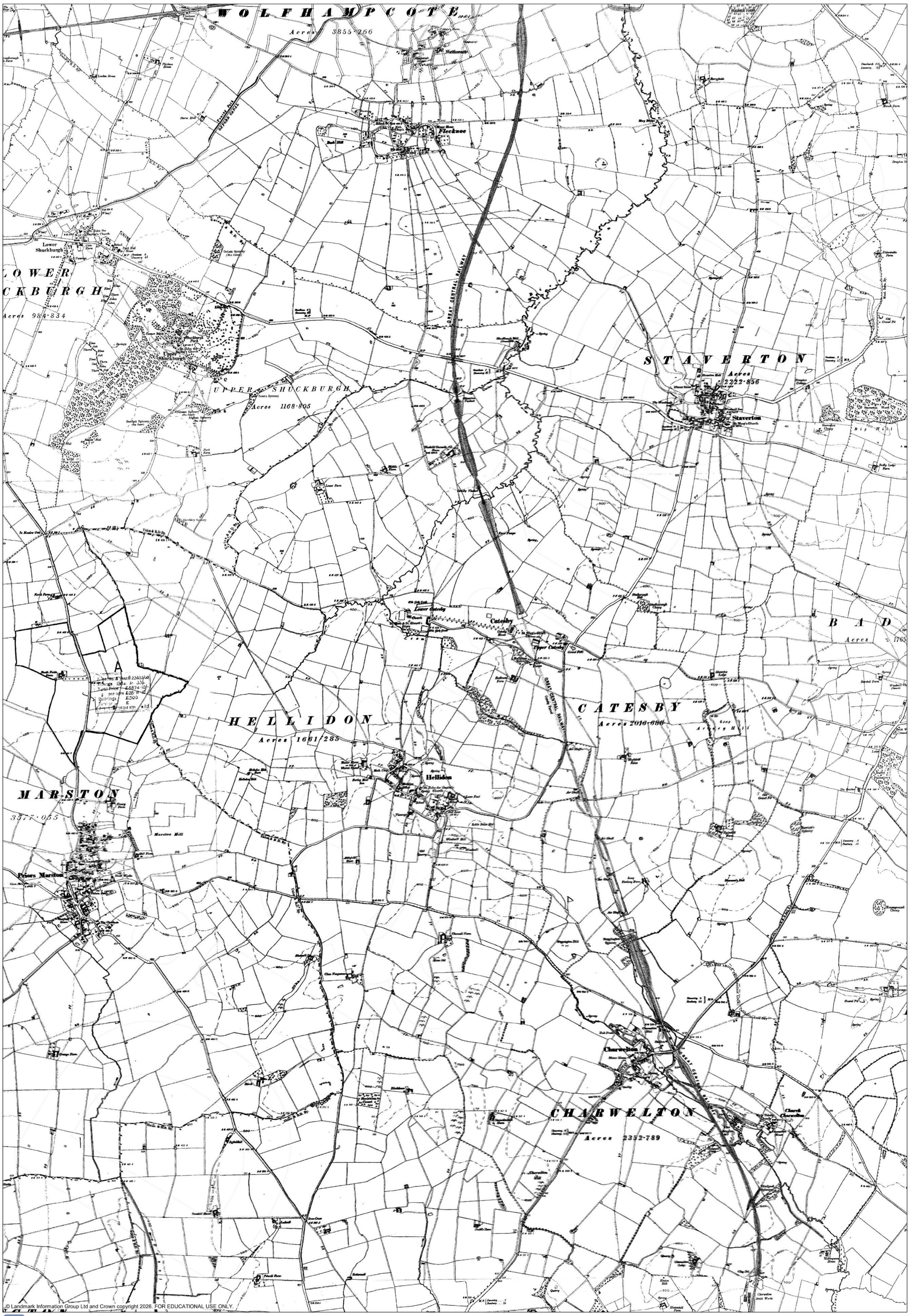
Edward Coulson
University of Oxford

Scale 1:15000

0 0.2 0.4 0.6 0.8 1 1.2 1.4 1.6 1.8 2 km

Projection: British National Grid
15 April 2026 13:47

Map 10 Catesby: 1901



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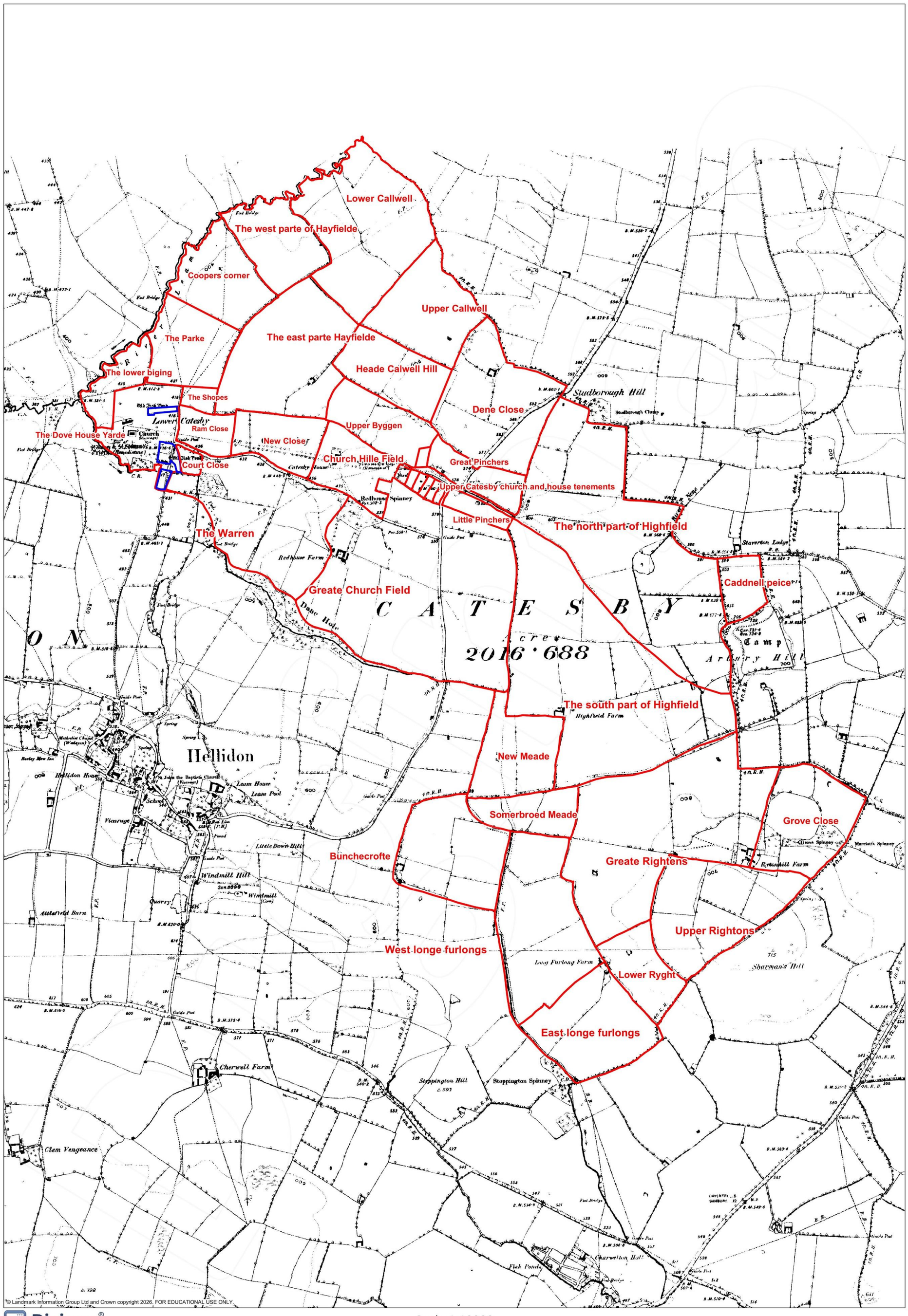
Edward Coulson
University of Oxford

Scale 1:20000

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Projection: British National Grid
15 April 2026 13:52

Map 11 Catesby: 1638



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Scale 1:10000

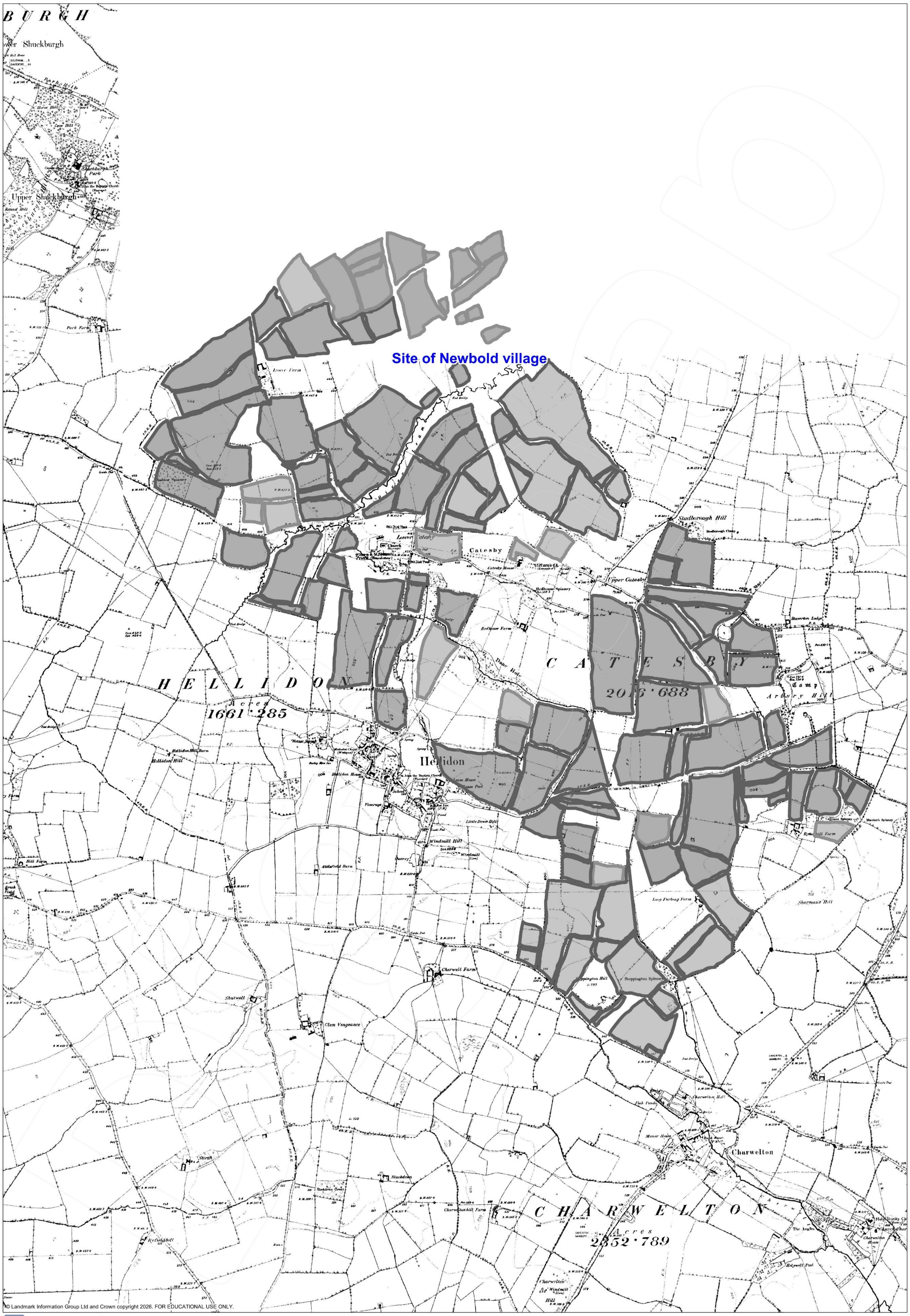
0 100 200 300 400 500 600 700 800 900 1000 m

Projection: British National Grid
15 April 2026 14:04

Map 12 Detail of Richard Whiting's 1638 field map showing Lower Catesby



Map 13 Catesby: middle Ages



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Scale 1:15000
0 0.2 0.4 0.6 0.8 1 1.2 1.4 1.6 1.8 2 km
Projection: British National Grid
15 April 2026 14:19