

3 Smallholdings in the Agrarian Landscape

Compared with Kent, East Anglia and the Midlands, Surrey field-systems have received little attention. H L Gray's account, published in 1915, remains the most substantial: Baker & Butlin, who devote only ten pages to Surrey and Sussex, comment that 'a detailed and comprehensive analysis of the field systems of Surrey has not yet been attempted'.¹ A stimulating paper by Bailey & Galbraith² which appeared in 1973 outlines some of the important issues, but no later work has pursued them further.

This gap will not be filled here. Field-systems are best analysed retrospectively, and a full discussion would involve extensive work on late- and post-medieval sources. The theme here is essentially the development of peasant smallholdings, though since these are inseparable from their agrarian context we must begin with an outline survey of medieval farming practice.

Agriculture in medieval Surrey

Much of Surrey was not ideally suited to arable farming. Southwards lay the heavy clay of the Low Weald; northwards the almost equally uninviting London Clay and the infertile sands of the Windsor Forest area. The land between was more promising: the Greensands of the Vale of Holmesdale, and the varied, often relatively fertile beds on the slopes of the Downs.³ The major contrast in the organisation of farming was between Wealden and extra-Wealden Surrey, for only the latter provides evidence for common fields. The prevalence of pre-18th-century inclosure makes it much harder in Surrey than in the Midland counties to gain a clear picture of medieval open-field farming. The earliest evidence mainly takes the form of references in deeds and fines to land *in campo de X* or *in communi campo de X*, or merely to holdings dispersed in acre or half-acre strips. Fig 21 plots all available references to subdivided fields from these and later sources.⁴

The coverage is sufficiently thorough to show that subdivided fields occurred in some form in virtually every non-Wealden parish. In the Surrey Weald, as in Kent, agriculture never evolved beyond the stage of severalty farms and inclosures.⁵ Oxted, which contained Downland grazing in the north, inclosed demesne fields on the best land of the scarp slope, and a mixture of woodland, pasture and arable severalties occupying the southern two-thirds of the parish, typifies the farming landscape of Wealden Surrey.⁶ Even in non-Wealden Surrey common fields were small, often occupying less than half the total parish arable and set amid compact holdings. By the 13th century at least, most demesnes lay apart in blocks rather than intermixed with tenants' strips.⁷ Parishes north and south of the Downs display a recurring pattern in which the common subdivided field lay on the best ground (the Reading and Thanet beds in the former case and the Lower Greensand beds in the latter) between chalk downs with sheep-runs on one side and heavier inclosed arable on the other. Thus a continuous band of subdivided land followed the dip-slope through the central Surrey townships, stamping even such small sub-parochial units as Waddon in Croydon (fig 22) with the same topographical symmetry.⁸ It was common here for a nucleated settlement on the fertile strip to lie between a small North Field, in which subdivided furlongs and inclosures lay intermixed, and a much larger subdivided South Field. Thirteenth-century deeds for Bandon in Beddington mention a handful of plots, some open and some inclosed, in the 'north part' or 'north field' of the vill,⁹ and a far bigger number of strips in numerous named furlongs in the 'south field'.¹⁰ This was therefore a mere topographical distinction between land on the north side of the village and land on the south, not a division of

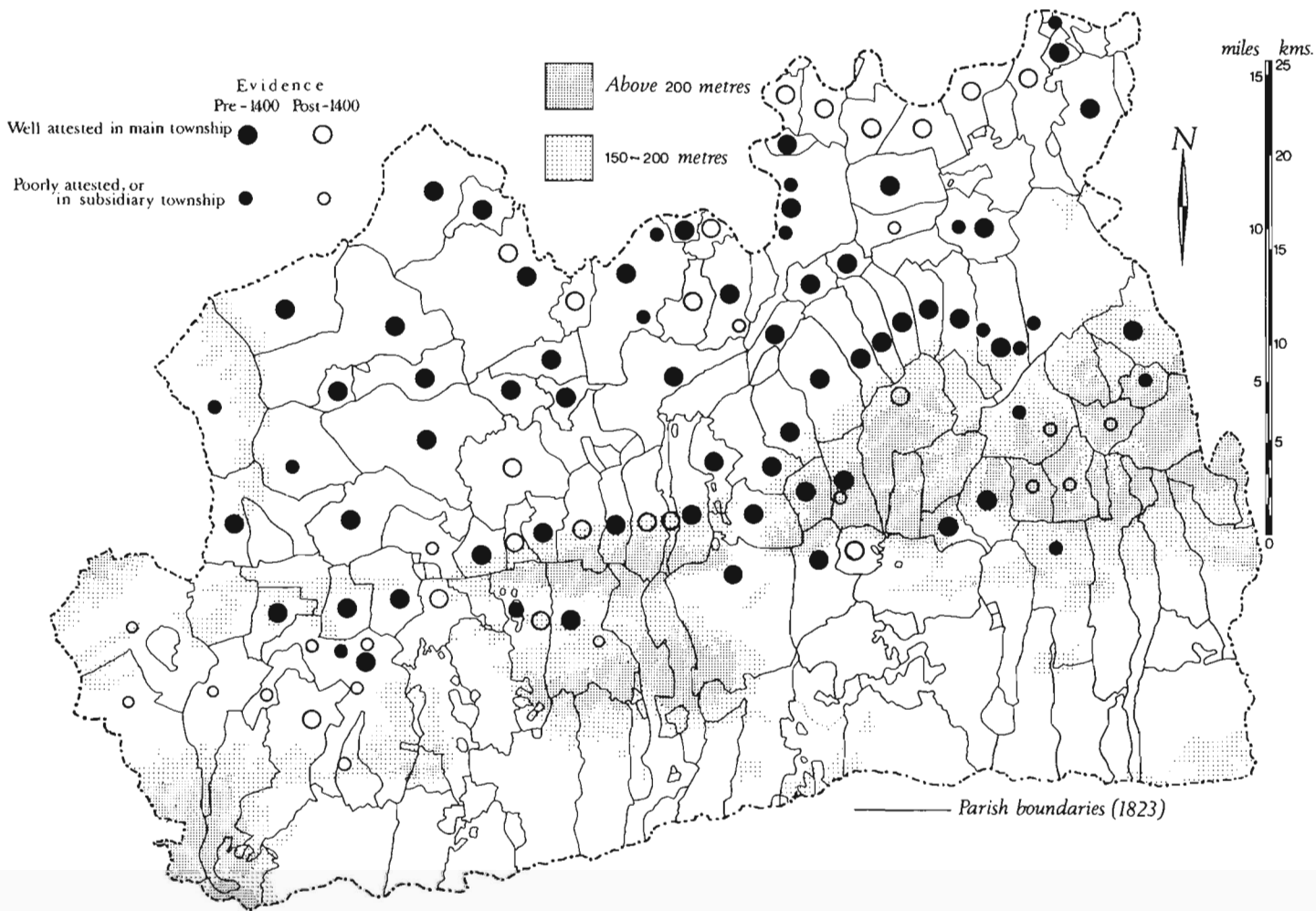


Fig 21 Evidence for subdivided fields in Surrey

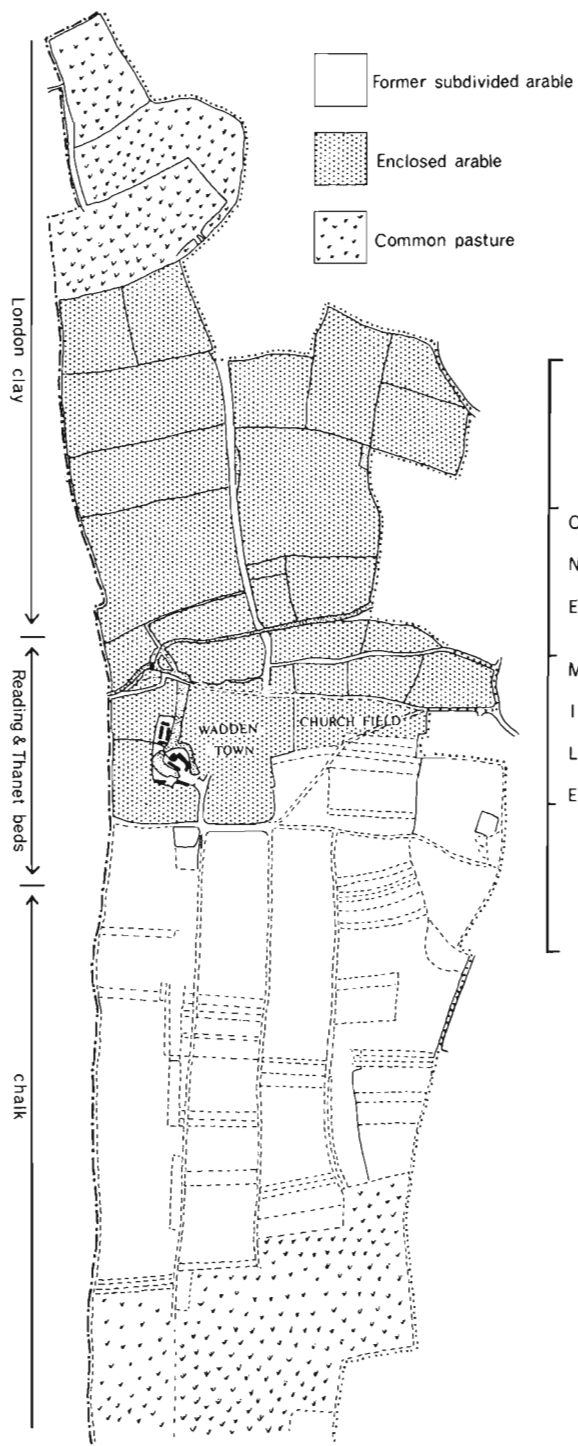


Fig 22 The township of Waddon, in Croydon parish. (Based on map of 1692 published to accompany L. Thornhill, *A Croydon backcloth: some little-known estate maps in Lambeth Palace Library.*)

the subdivided arable into equal halves. Sometimes, as at Leatherhead and Waddon (fig 22) the 'north part' contained no subdivided land, in which case strips in the main 'south field' were located by the simple designation *in communi campo*.¹¹

Elsewhere the pattern is more varied. In the early modern period Mickleham had subdivided land in East Field, West Field and Greenham Field, Wandsworth in Bridge Field, North Field and South Field, and Chobham in Burifield, Beanlonde, Gretestene and Lytilstene.¹² Subsidiary townships within a large parish sometimes had their own fields. Godalming contained the common fields of Godalming, Tuesley, Hurtmore, Farncombe and Shackleford;¹³ Kingston its own common arable¹⁴ together with the West Field of Surbiton¹⁵ and the North and East Fields of Norbiton.¹⁶ Numerous medieval deeds assign strips to named locations of uncertain status, and it is often hard to decide how many 'fields' a particular township contained.

Did these 'fields', like their Midland counterparts, represent organised cropping units? Struck by their heterogeneity and the lack of evidence for any orderly system, Gray concluded that they did not: 'the fields were numerous, were curiously named, sometimes being called furlongs, and the distribution of the acres of a holding among them was irregular'. He proposed a flexible 'multi-field' cropping system, based essentially on the furlong, in which the larger 'fields' containing the furlongs were ill-defined and unimportant.¹⁷ This view was challenged in 1927 by H E Malden, who argued that inquisitions post mortem describing three-course rotations on demesnes at Paddington (Abinger) and Dorking in 1349/50, and the explicit statements of 18th-century agriculturalists, were conclusive evidence that the three-field system had once prevailed in Surrey.¹⁸ But the detailed work of Bailey & Galbraith on Epsom, Ewell, Ashted and Putney tends wholly to support Gray: cultivation was based on furlongs, among which holdings were distributed at random, and though township 'fields' existed 'the nomenclature appears vague, and descriptive rather than functional'.¹⁹

The weakness of Malden's case is his assumption, for a region where demesnes were generally compact, that their cropping patterns extended to whole townships. Numerous examples of regular demesne rotations could be given. The Christ Church demesnes of Cheam, Charlwood and Merstham had a two-course shift in 1211;²⁰ a century later the Bishop of Winchester practised a three-course rotation at Farnham on large inclosed fields called Westfield, Wynyerde and Langeham, and other Surrey landowners followed this pattern.²¹ Free from interdependence with tenant holdings, demesnes could be cultivated by whatever method their proprietors favoured or circumstances allowed. Inquisitions post mortem for the Dorking area show that the intensity of demesne cultivation varied with the quality of the soil from 20% to 40% under crop at any one time.²² The Southwark Priory demesne at Banstead is a clear case of an individually-created cropping system: by the 1280s ten blocks of land acquired from various grantors had been grouped as three 'seasons' of 58, 65 and 51 acres.²³ In a county of variable soils, lords selected rotations without reference to any wider scheme. There is certainly no hint in the deeds that tenants' strips were evenly divided between two or three fields: generally they were dispersed at random through a multiplicity of fields and furlongs. Most Surrey deeds locate open-field parcels by furlong names alone, and to the clerks who wrote them the furlong was clearly the dominant unit.

Absence of two or three distinct common fields is not, however, incompatible with two- or three-course rotations. H S A Fox has argued that it was not rotations but 'a desire to set aside each year a new compact half or third of the land for fallow grazing' which demanded a regular field layout. 'Many . . . examples could be cited . . . of three-course rotations which operated without the existence of three fields. . . Townships with systems of this kind had assigned each of their many fields and furlongs to a particular season in order to facilitate cropping, but had not experienced the need to introduce comprehensive fallowing arrangements'.²⁴ It can only be said that Surrey has hitherto produced no evidence for 'seasons' organised by township custom. This

is far from being proof that they never existed, but freedom of choice is suggested by private agreements which stipulate unconventional cropping patterns. Thus a Bandon deed of c1260 demises two acres, dispersed in three plots, which are to be sown yearly with 1 acre of barley, $\frac{1}{2}$ acre of wheat and $\frac{1}{2}$ acre of peas or vetch,²⁵ presumably a holding on which high fertility combined with intensive manuring had temporarily eliminated fallow. There are still no solid grounds for disputing that the cropping patterns of Surrey common fields were essentially flexible and free from customary control.

By contrast, there is good evidence for control of common fallow grazing. This was maintained and enforced into the post-medieval period even on manors, such as Ashtead,²⁶ which lacked all trace of common cropping. A Malden byelaw of 1281 declares 'quod campus A de Chelesham, sicut alie terre de villata, quolibet tertio anno debet jacere ad warectum et ad communam de antiquo consuetudine, nec debet herchiare in tertio anno nisi per licentiam domini'.²⁷ Since this rule applied to an individual tenant's field, it implies that compact as well as subdivided holdings were subject to triennial commoning; equally, there may be a suggestion here that A de Chelesham's *campus* had only recently been inclosed from the open fields. Nothing is said about predetermined cropping, which is positively unlikely on a compact holding, and it may be that the individual farmer was regulated in nothing more than the choice of his fallow year. On subdivided land such comprehensive pasture courses could be made compatible with flexible rotations by folding and tethering animals, as at Ashtead in 1575, 'in such sorte that they hurte not their neighbours corne'.²⁸ Nonetheless, the impression of controlled fallow without controlled cropping deserves further study.

Even if regulated fallow grazing on the lines of the Malden byelaw was common in medieval Surrey, it is doubtful if it often transcended estate boundaries. In some multi-manor townships, even at a much later date, such rights seem to have been apportioned at manor rather than at township level.²⁹ Even at Malden, grazing of the stubble did not extend to the whole township: in 1293 the lord of the main manor found it necessary to make a reciprocal agreement with a local freeholder, Adam le Cros, which gained for his customary tenants free common in Adam's field called Crosesdon in the open time after harvest.³⁰ Disputes between neighbours concerning pasture rights over arable³¹ show that in Surrey, as in Kent, the commoning of inclosed land was often a purely private matter to be negotiated between individuals.³²

The importance of fallow and stubble grazing was outweighed by that of the plentiful common wastes. There is little Surrey evidence for the intercommoning of large forest areas by the tenants of several manors, still widespread at this date in Kent and Sussex,³³ but this is a case where absence of evidence must be misleading. Although the fact could scarcely be deduced from medieval sources alone, the Weald certainly retained extensive tracts of waste:³⁴ where common grazing was so abundant, it was rarely contentious and so failed to enter the written record.

Outside the Weald, waste dwindled and boundaries and rights were defined with corresponding precision. Neighbouring lords quarrelled over interlying commons which their predecessors had shared in peace. For instance, the contiguous commons of Beddington and Mitcham were used by tenants of Beddington, Bandon, Wallington and Mitcham until Easter 1240, when armed men from the first three vills expelled the Mitcham men from Beddington common and impounded their beasts. The lords of Beddington defended their action by claiming that Mitcham could have no common there because it belonged to a different barony, the boundary being clearly marked by an ancient ditch.³⁵

But if wastes were defined more closely during the 13th century, it was in terms of lordship rather than of community. However economically unified a township might appear, each manor within it tended to have its distinct common. This was the case at Leatherhead, a parish which extends northwards onto clay and southwards onto chalk. A memorandum of c1610 defines these areas respectively as 'a lower common for greate cattell in which every lord's soyle is bounded

and knowen', and an 'upper common' for sheep called Leatherhead Downs where all the lords and their tenants could intercommon without stint.³⁶ The 'lower common' had been divided into blocks held by the lords of Thorncroft, Pachenesham Magna and Pachenesham Parva since at least the 14th century,³⁷ and if the Downs were free for all by c1610 they had not always been so; in c1300 the area called le Kingesdone was the exclusive right of three Leatherhead freeholders to whom their Mickleham neighbours paid a fine for its use.³⁸ Not far away, Fetcham Downs were divided up between the d'Abernon and their neighbours by a series of hedges and ditches.³⁹ These severally-owned commons emphasise the continued independence of small Surrey manors and the failure of township organisation to transcend it.

Rights in the manorial waste were often stinted, generally being apportioned by the virgate on a *pro rata* basis.⁴⁰ As early as c1140 a hide at Oxshott, a member of Stoke D'Abernon, carried with it the right to graze 120 sheep in the common forinsec pasture of Stoke, and a century later another Oxshott holding had grazing for six 'animals' and 60 sheep in the same pasture; possibly we see here a fixed allowance of one sheep per acre in the fiscal hide.⁴¹ In the 13th century the tenants of Oxenford farm in Witley manor, like the other men of Witley, were allowed as many animals in the common pasture of Witley during summer as they wintered on their own holding.⁴² Sometimes commoners' beasts were unstinted except for a prohibition of destructive breeds.⁴³ In a region where swine-rearing had been so important it is no surprise to find temporary restrictions during the pannage months; thus in the late 13th century the canons of Southwark had free common in the Earl of Warenne's wood at Reigate except in the swine-mast season, when they were allowed twelve pigs there free of pannage.⁴⁴ A final non-arable resource, meadow, often remained a tenemental appurtenance rather than property in its own right, being 'doled' out to virgated holdings by annual lot as late as the 13th and early 14th centuries.⁴⁵ Its character may, however, have been changing, for in other townships deeds of similar date grant individual pieces of meadow located by fixed boundary-points.⁴⁶

The agriculture of 13th-century Surrey was not without its orderly features, but it lacked the integrated regulation of cropping, fallow and grazing, organised at township level, which marks the fully-developed common field system. To explain its idiosyncratic development involves further study of its landholding basis. The rest of this chapter will consider the evolution of individual holdings, and the influence of this evolution on the agrarian landscape and its institutions.

The nature of the Surrey virgate

Smallholdings throughout Surrey were assessed by the virgate (*virgata*). One exception is a late 13th-century Ewell customal listing thirteen-acre *iugera*, a Kentish term which has caused speculation.⁴⁷ In fact these holdings resembled the dispersed virgates of surrounding manors rather than the compact yokes of Kent, and there is probably nothing more significant here than the vagary of an individual clerk. Otherwise the virgate was universal except on the handful of manors which contained distinct groups of smaller service holdings (below, p75).

Manorial clerks often assumed an acreage-equivalence for virgates within one township. In the Ewell customal which lists a long series of *iugera* but only gives the acreage of the first, it is implicit that all the others are identical. An inquisition of 1344 listing various Headley virgates states confidently that 'continet quelibet virgata 16 acras', while at Petersham in 1266 the annual maintenance of a chaplain was distributed among the tenants at a rate of one bushel of rye per ten-acre virgate.⁴⁸ Table 6 summarises virgate sizes on a sample of manors where the evidence points to this regular correspondence between virgates and acres.

An interesting fact here is that some acreages tend both to recur and to be exactly half the size

TABLE 6 Virgate sizes on manors with a regular acreage-equivalence for the subdivided virgate

<i>Manor</i>	<i>Virgate Size (acres)</i>	<i>Source</i>
Lambeth	<u>32?</u>	Cant Cath Lib, MS E24, ff147 ^v -8
Farleigh	<u>32</u>	See p80
Leatherhead (Thorncroft)	26	See pp73, 79-80
Cheam	21	Cant Cath Lib, MS E24, f155 ^v
Claygate	20	Harvey, <i>Westminster Abbey</i> , 206n
Morden	20	Harvey, <i>Westminster Abbey</i> , 208
Pyrford	20	Harvey, <i>Westminster Abbey</i> , 208
Headley	16	See p71
Malden	16	MM, 4782
Merrow	<u>16</u>	See p80
Battersea	15	Harvey, <i>Westminster Abbey</i> , 434
Wandsworth	15	Harvey, <i>Westminster Abbey</i> , 434
Cobham	15	Chertsey Abstract, No 121
Putney	15	Bailey & Galbraith, <i>Field systems</i> , 80
Ewell	13	See p71
Leatherhead (Pachenesham Parva)	13	See p73, 79-80
Petersham	10	See p71

- Notes: (a) Acreages underlined are deduced from sources which only describe virgates in fractions.
 (b) Except at Putney (late- and post-medieval court rolls), all the acreages derive from 13th- and 14th-century manorial records.

of other recurring acreages. Thus two manors had virgates of 32 acres and three of sixteen; one had virgates of 26 acres and two of thirteen; and three had virgates of twenty acres and one of ten. The appearance of the same acreage units within the same limited area presumably reflects patterns of seigneurial practice or local custom pertaining when the holdings were first apportioned. But why are there so many cases of virgates exactly half the size of those on other manors? That we are not contrasting different basic units, but merely comparing the half with the whole or the whole with the double, is confirmed by comparing the virgates on two Leatherhead manors, for here we know that Pachenesham Parva had been formed out of Thorncroft in c1170.⁴⁹ Thus the 26-acre virgates of Thorncroft and the thirteen-acre virgates of Pachenesham Parva recorded in c1300 had originally formed one series of tenements; subsequently the unit of assessment was either doubled on one manor or halved on the other. At Thorncroft, thirteen-acre half-virgates predominated heavily when the tenemental structure first appears, and we should not automatically assume that a large unit had been halved rather than vice versa. At Petersham, where tenants had been quite explicitly assessed in 1266 on ten-acre virgates (above, p71), a court roll of 1328 describes such a holding as a half-virgate.⁵⁰ Perhaps these instances simply show that we should not take terminology too seriously: whether the scribe on a particular manor described the predominant assessed holdings as virgates, half-virgates or *iugera* may simply reflect his own training or an *ad hoc* administrative decision. Whatever we call these units of assessment, the important fact is their persistent regularity.

But are we entitled to assume that this regularity is real, not a fiscal convention? It has recently been claimed that 'if there is any sign of uniform acreage between separate holdings, either singly or in simple combination, the acres are almost certainly fiscal ones, for no village community was so egalitarian as to give its members precisely the same number of arable strips or area of land'.⁵¹ For Surrey, this argument is effectively dismissed by the detailed descriptions of tenant holdings at Thorncroft and Pachenesham Parva. On these manors, every 'half-size' unit which can be itemised as common-field strips proves to have contained almost exactly 13 customary acres, and one 'full-size' holding proves to have contained 26 (table 7). The point can be sufficiently demonstrated by summarising three examples as recorded in c1300:

- (a) 5 acres on Stangrene, 1 acre at Stretende, 1 acre called Longeker, $\frac{1}{4}$ acre called Verthehalveker, 1 acre called la Putacre, 1 acre called le Stretaker, 2 acres at la Clayhelve, 1 acre at la Valtegh, 1 acre meadow in Southmed, a messuage at Cherlane between tenements of Gilbert le Glover and William Glover. [Total: messuage, $13\frac{1}{4}$ acres]⁵²
- (b) Capital messuage with curtilage and parcel of la Lynche, 1 acre at Longfforlonge, 2 acres at la Lymhost, 1 acre next land of Maud Gavelestre, 3 *particuli* at Jonescrouch, 1 acre at Lomlesheghe, 1 acre at Hardon, $\frac{1}{2}$ acre at Wellonde, 1 acre at Widegate next Brockhole, 1 acre at Tentés, $1\frac{1}{2}$ acres at Pinchunescrouch against Hardone, a meadow called Horsecroft, $\frac{1}{2}$ acre at Stoneshende. (Stated total: messuage, 13 acres, 1 rood.)⁵³
- (c) Messuage, 2 acres at Lyndene, 3 acres at la Wydegate, 1 acre at Someslane, $\frac{1}{2}$ acre abutting on le Kenchescrofte, $\frac{1}{2}$ acre on Lombesheghene, $\frac{1}{2}$ acre 1 rood on Hardone, 1 acre at Plumlye, 1 acre on la Falteghe, 1 acre in la Grenedene, 1 acre on la Falteghe next la Mulleweye, 1 acre next la Dondene. [Total: messuage, $12\frac{1}{2}$ acres, 1 rood.]⁵⁴

It is obvious that these were not formalised fiscal units, but bundles of actual strips which their tenants could add up to a total of c13 acres. Thorncroft and Pachenesham Parva are exceptional in the quality of available evidence, but the pattern thus revealed can scarcely have been peculiar to these manors. Whenever Surrey deeds describe open-field virgates acre-by-acre they appear, though less clearly, to reflect a structure of equal units.

Yet not all Surrey virgates were of this regular kind, and even the townships which contained them also had others of a very different character. In areas of extensive post-Conquest clearance the range of virgate sizes is much wider, extending in the Weald as high as 80 acres (below, p74). Even in some non-Wealden manors the virgates were uneven, or only partly standardised.⁵⁵ Thus a Banstead customal of 1325 lists virgates of almost every possible size between ten and 48 acres, though the largest single group (some 35% of holdings) are half-virgates which, from the absence of any stated acreages, are perhaps to be regarded as uniform.⁵⁶ This contrast, between a conspicuous standardisation and a conspicuous lack of it, can only mean that *virgata* is a single word describing different things.

For further light we may return to Thorncroft, where virgated holdings were to be found not only in the subdivided common field but also on the rising dip-slope of the Downs to the south-east. Four of these, all identifiable with virgates and half-virgates in a rental of c1275, can be traced continuously through the manorial records and are plotted in fig 16.⁵⁷ The acreages of these holdings were disparate and unrelated to the notional assessment in virgates. Richard de Hameldune's half-virgate was roughly equal in size to Nicholas Brun's virgate; both were smaller than the virgate held by Giles de la Boxe and more than three times larger than that held by William Herbert. Clearly a virgate on this manor could be either an equal share in the common field, or a compact farm of indeterminate size but within the same system of assessment. In less detailed records the distinction would not necessarily be apparent, and it is almost certainly in this sense that the Banstead customal should be read: the hard core of unspecified virgates

comprised common-field land, while those of variant acreages were unitary farms. In this very parish compact Downland virgates were still being formed in the late 12th century (below, p84).⁵⁸

The nature of the sources encourages a definition of virgates as 'typical peasant farms'. It is perhaps more helpful to think of them, as contemporaries assuredly did, primarily as units of obligation, overlying and moulded around customary tenemental divisions rather than identical with them. Some individual compact virgates may genuinely have been quarter-shares of primary assessed hides: hence, perhaps, the startling disparity in their sizes. But the virgatal systems of the manorial records were still fluid and evolving in 1200. They included all holdings, compact and discrete, old and relatively new; while their main purpose was for defining rents and services which only crystallised in the 12th century.⁵⁹ At some point the structure must have been imposed comprehensively, and thereafter extended to new holdings on an *ad hoc* basis. What mattered to the lord was not the topography of his tenants' holdings but the fact that they owed him defined obligations which might be exacted at a rate of so much per virgate.⁶⁰

Virgates in the Weald were compact or near-compact, often abnormally large, various in size and liable to fragment, as at Leigh and Charlwood in 1325 where customary holdings included 60-acre virgates and ferlings of twenty acres.⁶¹ We should not deduce that Wealden peasants were necessarily more prosperous, but rather that, in an under-developed terrain, units of obligation were generously defined at the outset. Battle Abbey pursued a similar policy on its developing Sussex estate by establishing fiscal hides of eight virgates each, later rearranged as conventional four-virgate hides as more land came under the plough.⁶² This explains the prevalence of ferlings in the 13th-century Surrey Weald: the larger and more primitive the original virgate, the greater the likelihood that a half or quarter fraction would quickly take its place as the normal assessed unit.

The assessment of new holdings eventually ceased. At the end of the 12th century in Surrey as a whole, and as late as c1220 in parts of the Surrey Weald, parcels of old and new land were still being grouped together as virgates and half-virgates (below, p84).⁶³ But the fossilization of the virgate, even in the Weald, soon becomes apparent in sources which contrast a core of assessed customary land with free assarts or purprestures. Thus an early 13th-century Alfold deed grants 'unam fernlingatam terre . . . quam Reginaldus Turtel aliquando tenuit in vilenagio exceptis purpresturis', while a Farnham man died in 1261 holding two virgates 'de antiqua tenura' for rents and services and 32 acres 'de nova terra' for rents only.⁶⁴ This echoes the type of firm chronological distinction between assessed and non-assessed land which seems to be a particular feature of Sussex Wealden manors.⁶⁵

This discussion has made it clear that Surrey virgates will not conform to any simple definition. A neat model, contrasting assessed land held and farmed in one way with non-assessed land held and farmed in another, is inappropriate here. The virgate was a unit not of topography but of seigneurial assessment, representing the size and form of one man's holding at the moment when the individual assessment was imposed. The virgatal structure preserved the memory of various tenemental types which had existed between the late Saxon and Angevin periods; the historian can use this structure to go behind it, tracing the original form and purpose of institutions which had often already become archaic when manorial clerks first described them.

The early development of subdivided holdings

We have already seen that the virgatal structure of many, perhaps most open-field parishes had a core of uniform subdivided holdings. Established within a narrow range of predetermined sizes,

they stand out as something separate and distinct from the irregular holdings, both virgated and non-virgated, which may often have outnumbered them. By c1300 they were no more than the vanishing relics of an older pattern; how are we to interpret these signs of an archaic order?

It has recently been argued that this kind of regularity is more to be associated with unfree communities than with free ones: bondsmen were more subject to seigneurial organisation and control, and the imposition of lordship created a greater need for tenants to act together as a common body.⁶⁶ This gives a new twist to the familiar contrast between unfree nucleated communities with their common fields, and free peasants farming their holdings in severalty from isolated farmsteads. In Surrey, where lordship was light and the pressures of an active land-market strong, such distinctions had often disappeared by the age of specific records. But on a few manors, notably components of large estates in stable ownership, change had been slower and explicit evidence has survived of a more orderly, hierarchical structure.

In 1283–5 surveys were made of Cheam, Croydon and Wimbledon, ancient manors of the see of Canterbury, which divide the customary holdings into categories.⁶⁷ At Cheam fourteen cotmen held 35 acres comprising seven 5-acre cotlands; they lived in a separate hamlet and were responsible for heavier services than the other customary tenants, who had regular 21-acre holdings. At Wimbledon the tenants were divided into three groups: 60 customers holding 25 hides, twenty rodlanders with twelve and a quarter hides, and 24½ cotmen with two hides. Croydon had 38 ‘tenants’, thirteen rodlanders and three cotmen; the last, who held five-acre cotlands like their counterparts at Cheam, included among their services the exceptional duty of guarding criminals in gaol. Another case is Godalming, at the opposite end of the county. Here Domesday Book lists twelve cottars on the church glebe, and from a customal of the rectory manor in c1340 a series of twelve equal holdings, each comprising a messuage and twelve acres in the common fields, may be reconstructed.⁶⁸ On the main royal manor fourteen cotland tenements seem to have comprised similar subdivided twelve-acre holdings, and the house-plots of these lay together along one street identifiable in the modern town of Godalming.⁶⁹ In addition to more normal services, these tenants were responsible for hanging criminals. In the context of an ancient royal head manor this is just such an office as we might expect to find particularly associated with demesne servants, and it is interesting that on the Sussex ‘multiple estate’ of South Malling ten *bovarii*, six of whose tenements were ‘in the middle of the demesne’, owed a similar service.⁷⁰

These cases suggest a primary relationship between regular subdivided holdings, dwelling-sites in a nucleated settlement and specific seigneurial demands. The third factor only survived clearly where heavy or exceptional services had preserved to a special group of tenements their distinct identity, but there are hints here of a hierarchical structure in which all subdivided holdings of equal size had once carried equal obligations and status. Sometimes, as in the case of the Ewell *iugera*, the tenants of all standardised holdings remained unfree and shared a core of common services,⁷¹ while at Reigate reeve service was obligatory on tenants of virgates and half-virgates, and beadle service on tenants of farthinglands and cotlands, as late as the 16th century.⁷² The association of nucleated settlements with regular subdivided landholding survived more widely; whenever evidence is available, such tenants lived not in isolation but on village toft sites.⁷³ All open fields had their villages, and most villages, except the attenuated and late-formed Wealden hamlets, had their open fields.

A deliberate process of shareholding, by which each tenant was allotted an equal fraction of the resources of the township, has often been proposed as the basis of organised common fields in Britain.⁷⁴ In their earliest visible form, subdivided holdings in Surrey fit this model well: only the hypothesis that the strips had once been distributed among a group of tenants in predetermined shares can explain their regularity. It is also clear that each share had once been assigned a proportional interest in non-arable resources (above, p71). These Surrey holdings are dissimilar

both from the compact *ingum* of Kent⁷⁵ and from the classic Midland virgate with its symmetrically-disposed strips. The East Anglian *eriung* comes closer. Like its Surrey counterpart it frequently contained twelve or 24 acres; generally it lay in discrete though not widely scattered parcels,⁷⁶ and this lack of wide dispersion is also apparent in Surrey.⁷⁷ In their size, form and tendency to occur in whole- and half-size units, the Surrey virgate and the East Anglian *eriung* have much in common.

In his recent study of a Norfolk manor B M S Campbell concludes that 'the creation of these standardized holdings was almost certainly the work of the manorial authorities and was probably associated with the general downgrading in status of the manorial population which took place some time after 1086'.⁷⁸ Yet numerous East Anglian tenements and glebes listed by Little Domesday were of standard *eriung* size,⁷⁹ while the glebes of many Surrey churches founded by the early 12th century often seem to have conformed to the local patterns of standardised holdings (below, p140). Like the cotmen of Cheam and Croydon, a high proportion of Middlesex bordars and cottars in 1086 had five acres each.⁸⁰ In Surrey it is at present only at Godalming (above, p75) that a numerical correspondence between Domesday tenants and later holdings can be suggested, but relatively few manors preserved so static a tenemental structure. Some regular groups of subdivided holdings existed, then, at least by the early Norman period. The grand original sharing-out may often have been integral with the creation and planning of the village which housed the shareholders, part of the same protracted development spanning the 10th to 12th centuries. Further work may reveal equal size-units on manors of one landlord; it is interesting that out of five Westminster Abbey manors in Surrey, three had virgates of twenty acres and two of fifteen acres (table 6).

Significantly, signs of further order and symmetry in subdivided fields seem to be confined to the earlier sources. While there is never any suggestion of strips distributed equally between two or three common fields, 12th- and 13th-century references hint at a residual though once widespread pattern of subdivided holdings associated with compact land, often in roughly equal proportion. In c1300 William le Maleville held at Leatherhead two thirteen-acre virgates, one subdivided (above, p73, example (c)), the other compact and lying at Catebardene.⁸¹ A Malden tenement of 1212 comprised eight and a half acres in scattered plots and eleven and a half acres lying together in the North Field,⁸² while at Carshalton in c1250 nine acres of a holding were dispersed and the remaining thirteen and a half acres grouped together in Hugestescroft and Thurkillescroft.⁸³ These are unlikely to be coincidental, for occasionally we can perceive a definite concept of holdings split between two parts of a township. A mid-13th-century Hooley tenement comprised all the land held there by Reynold de la Putte 'in duabus partibus', while one early source, a Carshalton deed of c1150, grants 'totam terram quam Wluardus filius Brictrig tenuit in sud et in nort'.⁸⁴ The topography of this last case is interesting, for Carshalton was one of those strip parishes which contained a south common field and a smaller 'north part' made up of small inclosures (above, pp66-9); it may be inferred that Wulfward's holding had comprised subdivided land to the south of the village and compact land to the north.

There is a strong suggestion here that on some manors inclosed land had been apportioned among the regular subdivided holdings. The entitlement of such holdings to equal shares in pasture and meadow might extend to newly-cultivated arable on the less fertile soils, associating outfield with infield along familiar lines.⁸⁵ But the 'possessive' enclosure names in the examples just cited – Catebardene, Hugestescroft, Thurkillescroft – suggest a former proprietorship in their own right, while the rough acreage-equivalence of the two elements implies a single allocation rather than the piecemeal addition of new land. Perhaps the most likely hypothesis is a general rearrangement in which each subdivided holding was assigned a less fertile outfield, roughly equal in size; this might have been either old demesne, assart land, or the remains of a former compact farm. This interpretation, which sets subdivided holdings in a context of existing

severalty farms, is at least no less tenable than the conventional view of expansion outwards from a primary subdivided core.

We may also have here at least a partial explanation for the recurring pattern of 'half' and 'whole' units. Division between heirs does not explain this wholly convincingly, for a significant proportion of tenants must have had more than two sons. Furthermore, the evidence of glebes in Surrey, and of both Domesday Book and glebes in East Anglia, suggests that the pattern existed as early as c1100.⁸⁶ But to postulate small 'basic' units which might or might not be augmented in fixed proportion with land lying outside the subdivided system suits the evidence well. B Dodwell has shown for East Anglia how Norman rearrangements sometimes caused tenements to be enlarged or combined in fixed multiples; a mid 12th-century Brancaster holding comprised 24 acres which were half villein land and half old demesne.⁸⁷ Cases like this, and the 'big bovates' and 'little bovates' of some Lincolnshire townships,⁸⁸ suggest possible analogies for Surrey. At Leatherhead the 13-acre virgates would on this interpretation represent 'basic' units, sometimes doubled in size with compact land and sometimes (eg table 7) combined in pairs. The process need not have been universal, and in the 13th century the bonds linking the compact and subdivided halves usually succumbed to the solvent effects of the land-market. Yet despite the anarchism of agrarian arrangements in later medieval Surrey, there are suggestions here of an earlier and more orderly state.

It is hardly likely that common fields were themselves created at a stroke. Tenemental symmetry must result from the re-apportionment of holdings which were already subdivided, and the origins of which lie beyond the reach of records. Current work favours an evolutionary model: compact severalty holdings, or farms comprising 'a few large, wide, strip-shaped blocks stretching back from the habitation area of a hamlet', were progressively broken down by partible inheritance and added to by progressive clearance.⁸⁹ In Northamptonshire, the initial formation of open-field furlongs has been linked to settlement nucleation and placed in the 8th century (above, p65). This important problem can only be approached through topography and toponymy, and there would be scope for detailed studies of furlong layouts in Surrey. Certainly the field-names sometimes hint at a superseded structure of compact holdings. Thus Leatherhead common field was full of furlong and landmark names suggesting ancient proprietorship: Buntanlond,⁹⁰ Dondene,⁹¹ Edolvesdone,⁹² Godhivedene,⁹³ Katerbardene, Kenchescrofte, Lomleshegg', Lyndene,⁹⁴ Swyndolvestorne,⁹⁵ Tibeliesdene,⁹⁶ Tonnerscroft.⁹⁷ K Bailey's important recent study of Putney suggests a similar pattern, with the planned village succeeding scattered pre-Conquest farmsteads commemorated by names in the open fields.⁹⁸ Fragmentation of holdings and nucleation of settlement combined to produce the conditions for remodelling in the centuries on either side of the Conquest.

Holding sizes in the 13th century: the land-market and the dissolution of the virgate

By the late 13th century, when we have our first clear view of Surrey virgates, their breakup was already well advanced. No longer was the virgate or half-virgate the dominant unit of tenure: rentals and court rolls record a wide spectrum of smaller holdings, based on a formal structure which was becoming ever less real. A true picture of landholding in this period cannot be gained from these sources alone; the effects of the innumerable small transfers through the land-market are only made apparent by accumulations of private deeds. One man's transactions might cross many manorial boundaries and fail to appear completely in the records of any one manor.

To understand how tenure was evolving we need to use both kinds of evidence: rentals and court rolls, in which the breakup of assessed holdings is seen through the eyes of established landlords, and deeds, which show the recombination of the resultant fragments in the hands of

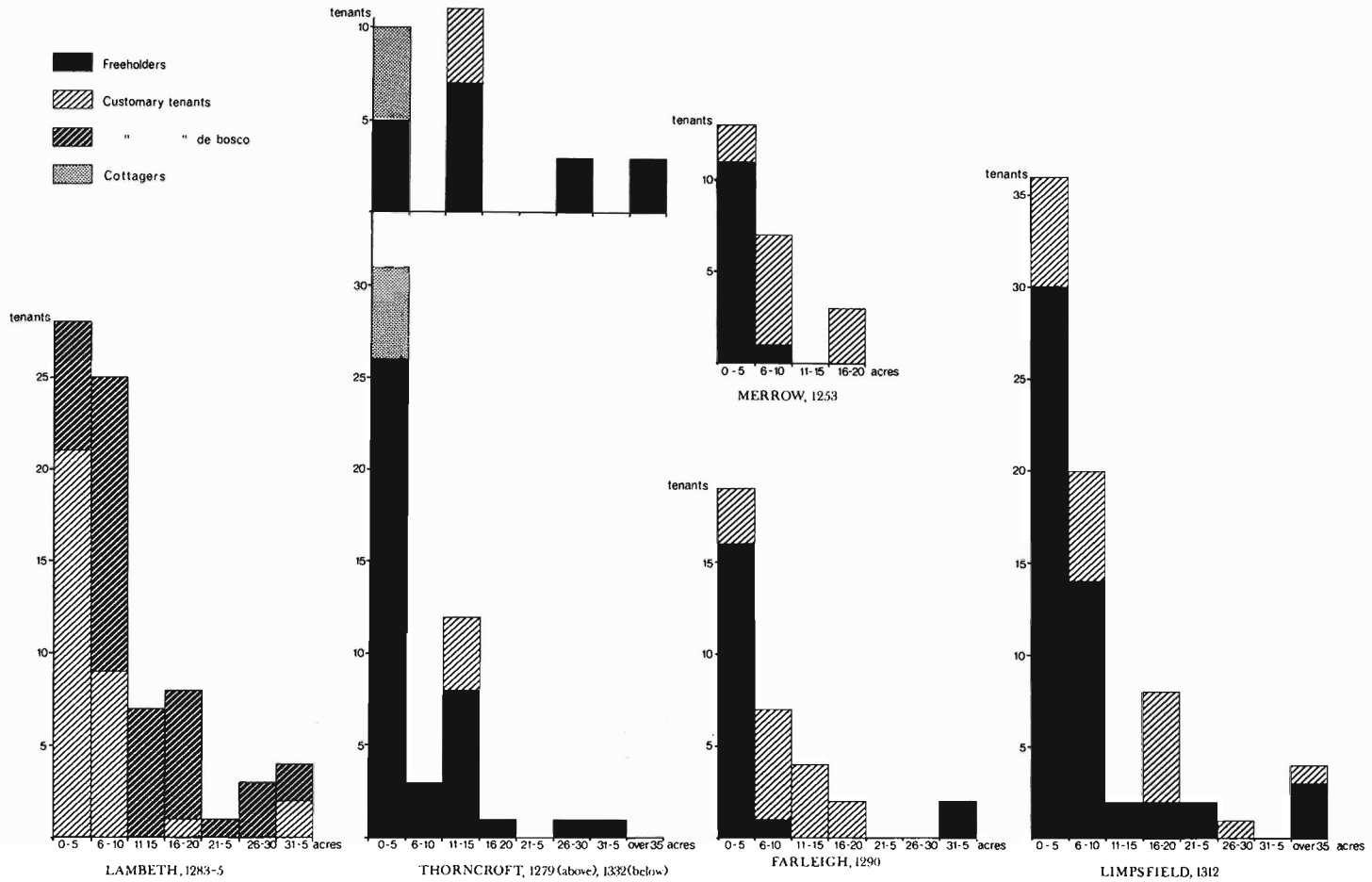


Fig 23 Sizes of smallholdings on five manors. (At Thorncroft, Merrow and Farleigh virgated holdings of otherwise unknown size have been translated into the acre-equivalents recorded for these manors, despite the fact that some compact virgates failed to conform to standard measure.)

TABLE 7 The tenure in 1332 of Henry the Shepherd's former virgate held of Thorncroft manor

<i>Tenant</i>	<i> Holding</i>	<i>Rent</i>
Mabel atte Slovene	Capital messuage, 4 acres	8½d
John and Nicholas de Leddrede	3½ acres	8d
The king	3 acres	6d
William le Tannere	2½ acres	10d
Nicholas le Tannere	2 acres	8d
John Scot	1½ acres	4d
Maud Gavelestre	1½ acres	3d
William Ewelle	1½ acres	3d
John de Bradmere	1 acre	4d
Christine de Chinthurst	1 acre	4d
William atte Burgh	1 acre	2d
Thomas Jelyng	1 acre	2d
John Scot	1 acre	3d
William le Tannere	1 acre	1d
	Capital messuage, 25½ acres	5s 6½d

Source: MM, 5779d

rising freeholders. To illustrate the spectrum of landholding on individual manors, five geographically different examples have been chosen: Lambeth, in the London Basin; Thorncroft and Merrow, crossing the dip-slope of the Downs; Farleigh on the Downland; and Limpsfield in the Weald. Fig 23 shows in graph form the patterns of holdings recorded in customals of these manors.

All the archiepiscopal manors in Surrey had an abnormally low proportion of freeholders, and at Lambeth in 1283–5 there were none at all (fig 23A). The customal of that year⁹⁹ preserves only the faintest suggestion of a 32-acre virgatal structure, though most of the smaller tenants owed services identical with those of the two intact virgates. An interesting feature is that whereas most customary tenements on the main manor were extremely small (only about a third contained more than five acres), the range of the group headed 'tenentes de bosco' was decidedly bigger. On this manor in a populous and advanced region subdivision had occurred early – probably before the final systematisation of services and the tightening of restraints on partitioning customary land; nonetheless, the larger and less broken-up holdings produced by woodland assarting still retained a distinct character at the end of the 13th century.

Thorncroft in Leatherhead illustrates with unusual clarity the dissolution of free virgates (fig 23B). A tenant list compiled for a scutage assessment of 1279 portrays a near-intact virgatal structure: of eighteen free tenants, thirteen hold whole, half or double virgates, in addition to which there were four villein half-virgates and five cottage holdings with one acre each.¹⁰⁰ Dramatically different was the position recorded in a rental of 1332.¹⁰¹ The villein and cottage holdings were unchanged, but of the free virgates and half-virgates only those in compact blocks were still tenurial realities. The regular thirteen-acre and 26-acre freeholds in the common field were now redistributed between numerous tenants in tiny fractions (eg the example in table 7); more than half the freeholders held five acres or less, and the only large freeholds were a small

group of old-established compact farms. Several new holdings amalgamated fragments of old ones: Gilbert le Glovere had supplemented his compact half-virgate with parcels from the former virgates of Chereburgh, Dru and Boxe, not to mention a messuage and one and a half acres held of another old virgate on the neighbouring manor of Pachenesham Parva.¹⁰²

We should not attribute all this subdivision to the previous half-century; the symmetry of the 1279 list is an illusion, produced by an administrative policy which ignored sub-tenancies in exacting obligations.¹⁰³ A release of a Thorncroft half-virgate in c1250–60 shows that five sub-tenants were holding of it,¹⁰⁴ and late 13th-century court rolls note the sale or farming of individual components from virgated holdings.¹⁰⁵ Fragmentation of free virgates was well under way by c1300 and complete by 1332, at which date, by contrast, the four villein half-virgates in the common field remained intact.

At Merrow, where the virgate contained sixteen acres, the main source is a rental of 1253 (fig 23C).¹⁰⁶ Of the twelve freeholds all but one (a half-virgate) were very small and expressed in acres; the eleven customary holdings, which despite their disparity in size owed identical services, comprised three virgates, five half-virgates and three smaller unvirgated units. This pattern corroborates the evidence of earlier deeds that Merrow freeholds were already fragmenting during the first half of the century.¹⁰⁷

At Farleigh, a small Downland manor, subdivision may have occurred rather later than in the more fertile dip-slope townships. Holdings were assessed on a 32-acre virgate;¹⁰⁸ in 1290¹⁰⁹ (fig 23D) there were two free virgates and seventeen very small freeholds, probably fragments of a third. About half of the fifteen villein tenements are described in terms of ferlings (quarter-virgates) and the rest in acres; six holdings can be reassembled as two-and-a-half former virgates (table 8) while the remaining nine total c48 acres, presumably representing another one-and-a-half virgates. As table 8 shows, rents and services had been imposed on the larger units and divided with them. In one case a one-and-a-half virgate tenement which owed services, 4s rent and an exceptional hospitality payment called 'guestingsilver' had first been divided into two uneven parts between which these obligations were split equally; the larger portion was then halved, and its half-share in the original payments and duties was divided accordingly. By the time these services were defined in detail the virgatal structure had already lost some of its symmetry; but the process of subdivision which made the ferling the dominant customary unit must have been later still, carefully controlled to safeguard obligations.

TABLE 8 Six Farleigh villein tenements in 1290

<i>Tenant</i>	<i> Holding</i>	<i>Rent</i>	<i> Guesting-silver</i>		<i>Services</i>
Crispin atte Hage	messuage, 1 ferling	1s	–	<i>Specified in detail</i>	} Total 1 virgate (ie 32 acres) owing 4s rent and services
Richard le Wyte	messuage, 1½ ferlings	2s	–	As C atte H	
Gregory de Farle	messuage, 1½ ferlings	1s	–	As C atte H	
Walter atte Hage	messuage, 1½ ferlings	2s	1s 6d	<i>Specified in detail</i>	} Total 1½ virgates (ie 48 acres) owing 4s rent, 3s guestingsilver and services
John atte Hage	messuage, 15 acres land, 3 acres wood	1s	9d	Half W atte H	
Richard le Yungge	messuage, 15 acres land, 3 acres wood	1s	9d	Half W atte H	

Source: MM, 4890; the payments totalling 3s are defined as guestingsilver in a rental of 1333 (MM, 4894)

Limpsfield, in the Weald, had no trace of a virgatal structure in 1312 (fig 23E).¹¹⁰ Even on this heavy soil, and in the complete absence of subdivided fields, fragmentation had proceeded apace, with well over half the free tenants holding five acres or less. Once again, a markedly higher proportion of the customary than of the free holdings were in the range of c15–30 acres and may thus have represented intact virgates and half-virgates.

Conspicuous in all these cases is the advanced fragmentation of the free virgate. Like the contemporary Kentish *iugum*, it had lost most of its tenurial and topographical significance and was now largely a fiscal unit, fragments of which might be combined with other land to form new *tenementa*.¹¹¹ Notwithstanding such occasional amalgamation, the holdings of free tenants within individual manors were overwhelmingly very small. Over the five manors considered here an average of 75% of freeholders had less than six acres, and a further 12% had between six and twelve acres. A small minority of freeholds in the range of c25–40 acres were mainly compact farms still in the hands of old-established families. Excepting these hardy survivors, the landholding basis of the free farming community in early medieval Surrey had largely been destroyed by 1300.

This was the culmination of a process which spanned the 13th century, and indeed had begun before the virgatal structure finally crystallised. As early as the 1180s and 1190s, occasional grants itemising heterogeneous collections of open-field strips must have cut across any established tenemental structure,¹¹² while at Thorncroft and Merrow sub-tenancies were evidently well-established on the free land by c1250. The rapidly growing rate of small transactions is evident from Surrey feet of fines, in which the proportion concerned with individual strips or plots rather than hides or virgates rises steadily between 1195 and 1250.¹¹³

Predictably, customary holdings had fragmented less and preserved more of the old assessed structure. On the five manors studied the size-range was spread more evenly: 32% of holdings below six acres, 31% between six and ten acres and 32% between eleven and twenty acres. Cottage tenements of one acre are distinguished at Thorncroft and probably form a distinct element in the undifferentiated customary holdings elsewhere. Contrasts between manors reflect variations both in economic development and in administrative control. Just as the readiness or otherwise of individual landlords to capitalise by enfranchising small tenancies had determined the proportion between free and customary land,¹¹⁴ so seigneurial policy affected the later development of unfree holdings. A structure of villein virgates survived almost intact on the Westminster manors of Battersea and Wandsworth,¹¹⁵ but had disappeared by 1283/5 at nearby Lambeth. In the former cases the monks actively preserved 'the units of landholding that were the livelihood of their dependent villein families';¹¹⁶ in the latter the archbishops seem to have permitted unchecked division, exacting nonetheless a full quota of services from each resulting fragment. At Farleigh, some distance from London and probably less susceptible to demographic pressure, we find a regular, controlled partition of rents and services, probably a more recent process and very different from piecemeal fragmentation. Generally speaking, those manors which retained an intact structure of customary virgates until c1250 retained it for at least a further century; obligations were the *raison d'être* of the virgate, and the more precisely its services were defined the harder it was likely to prove.

The prevalence of sub-tenancies and temporary demises make it impossible to say how closely the evidence discussed above reflects the actual pattern of occupation.¹¹⁷ At the level of formal tenure, however, it is temptingly easy to picture a society in which most customary holdings were reasonably adequate and most freeholds were minute. The fallacy of this view is made clear by examining, through the evidence of their own deeds, the kinds of people named in rentals as the tenants of such exiguous freeholds. Far from living on the verge of poverty, they were often substantial men whose prosperity is concealed by the very variety of their resources.

There was a thriving land-market in 13th-century Surrey for two main reasons: closeness to

TABLE 9 The early development of the Fitznells estate: acquisitions by Robert de Cuddington (1–5) and Gilbert de Ewell (6–14)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Parish</i>	<i>Land acquired</i>	<i>Cartulary No.</i>
1 1218/19	Cuddington	2½ acres in 3 furlongs	107,47
2 1220 × 30	Ewell	10 acres in 6 furlongs	57,47
3 1220 × 30	Cuddington	8 acres 1 rood in 9 furlongs	34,47
4 1220 × 30	Cuddington	4 acres in 4 furlongs	45,47
5 1220 × 30	Cuddington	2 acres in 6 selions	110,47
6 c1230	Cuddington	2 acres in 2 furlongs	38
7 c1230	Ewell	1 acre in 2 furlongs	37
8 c1230	Ewell	curtilage, 1 acre headland	86
9 1230 × 8	Cuddington	10 acres in 4 furlongs	5
10 1230 × 8	Cuddington	6 acres in 7 furlongs	75
11 1230 × 8	Cuddington	6½ acres lying together	12
12 1230 × 8	Ewell	4½ acres in 3 furlongs	7
13 1230 × 8	Ewell	2 acres in 3 furlongs	109
14 1231 × 8	Ewell	messuage with buildings	74

Source: *Fitznells Cartulary*.

London, and the high proportion of free land. London provided an exceptional market for surpluses, the proceeds from which could be used to enlarge the producers' holdings; it also contained numerous merchants and craftsmen anxious to invest their own capital in the surrounding rural areas.¹¹⁸ By c1300 the free land, especially in north-east Surrey, was held by a mixture of local men from both old and parvenu families, yeoman farmers from nearby villages, and Londoners. For example, the 13th-century deeds for Beddington, Bandon and Wallington record long series of small purchases by Robert Payn of Bandon,¹¹⁹ John Mauncel of Croydon,¹²⁰ and Walter Rokesle, citizen of London.¹²¹

While the individual acquisitions were usually trivial, their sum total could be impressive. The Fitznells estate at Ewell originated in a long series of small purchases from c1220 onwards by Robert rector of Cuddington, his nephew Gilbert de Ewell, and Gilbert's son William.¹²² Table 9, which summarises their earlier acquisitions, shows that some 60 acres in the open fields of Ewell and Cuddington were amassed during the first twenty years. A later but equally striking instance, showing a consistent policy of acquisition, is provided by the early 14th-century Headley freeholder Richard atte Leghe.¹²³ Starting with a small estate which his father John had built up in Headley, Walton-on-the-Hill and Epsom, Richard accumulated a long series of small acquisitions in the contiguous areas of Leatherhead, Ashted and Headley parishes over some forty years from the early 1290s. In Leatherhead he concentrated his efforts on the inclosed land east of the common field, where the fields, mostly identifiable, called Sepehale, Little Colecrofte, Pinchonesfelde, Pinchonesgrove, Hameldonesfeld, Ponshurstefeld and part of Joyesfeld passed successively into his hands. In 1317 he began acquiring individual acres and half-acres in Ashted south common field, and throughout his active life he was slowly building up strips and parcels in his native township of Headley. By 1335 he had amassed an estate of at least some 70 arable acres, not counting his father's holdings and perhaps acquisitions elsewhere which the extant deeds fail to record.¹²⁴ The impression is of a fair-sized Downland farm, much of it compact and the rest lying within a mile's radius, which could also have supported a sheep-flock on the fallow

and the abundant common pasture of the surrounding chalk.¹²⁵ This estate had a clear economic logic which owed nothing to traditional agrarian arrangements.

By c1300 there were many freeholders of this substantial kind. Several names in the 1332 Thorncroft rental (as in table 7) recur in contexts suggesting a certain prosperity, sometimes as parties to other transactions in or near Leatherhead. Although freehold estates had been building up through the 13th century, it is the fifty years or so from c1280 which provide the most impressive examples and the greatest volume of deeds. These Surrey 'kulaks' remind us of John atte Grene in early 14th-century Cuxham, or the Peterborough tenants who were engrossing large amounts of free land during the same period.¹²⁶ Such figures seem most conspicuous during the half-century before the Black Death, though in Surrey, and probably wherever free tenure predominated, their presence can be traced some generations earlier.¹²⁷

New families rose at the expense of old ones: many ancient Surrey names disappear between 1280 and 1350. Thus several of Richard atte Leghe's Leatherhead properties were acquired from the de Puneshers, established in the parish from at least the 1170s (above, p46), who vanish from local sources thereafter. Landholding was now dominated by new men on newly-assembled farms, which cut across not merely the old virgated holdings but also the very manors to which the virgates were attached. Rentals and surveys of the reigns of the three Edwards are more relevant to a superseded tenurial system than to that prevailing when they were actually compiled.

The development of compact holdings

It has already been suggested that compact farms were ubiquitous in Anglo-Saxon Surrey. When sources become numerous it is predictably in the Weald that such holdings remain most prominent, and retain most clearly the character of primary tracts. But in all areas where it survived, this simple pattern can be seen diversifying from the late 12th century onwards in response to population growth and massive subdivision. In the Weald at least, the boundaries as first laid out certainly encompassed a high proportion of under-exploited land. Twelfth-century deeds rarely describe such holdings more precisely than as *terra de X*, *terra que vocatur X*, or *terra quam Y tenuit*, the first two of these sometimes making clear, by reference to some topographical feature, that the land was compact.¹²⁸

Such family farm units acquired a certain stable identity, the memory of which often lasted for many generations. A fair number may have remained tenurially intact, though it is hard to distinguish such early survivals from the results of post-plague engrossment in those Wealden parishes which were later dominated by large unitary holdings.¹²⁹ Church glebes, inherently the most stable kind of smallholdings, often best illustrate this once-dominant type (see ch 6). On the Downland small but evidently long-established farms survived into the 13th and 14th centuries (above, pp45–9).

This continuity was exceptional: in general early farms were subdivided or (less frequently) amalgamated, though the resultant new holdings were often described in terms of the primary units. A chronological summary of tenemental descriptions from one Wealden parish (table 10) illustrates this diversifying pattern. Sometimes a simple division into fractions necessitated new hedges and ditches; an early 13th-century holding near Abinger is described as 'tantum terre quantum tenui de terra Wlgari de Montibus sicut modo fossata est', and in 1219 a half-hide in Chipstead was divided in two along a new north-south boundary running through a marlpit in 'la middelfeld'.¹³⁰ Large farms of a hide or more might break down into component virgates, as at Newdigate in 1229 when John de Hale alienated two virgates of his holding but retained a third contiguous virgate.¹³¹ The 13th century also saw much subdivision on a smaller scale: the

TABLE 10 Charter descriptions of smallholdings in Tandridge

<i>Date</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Source</i>
1121 × 45	Land of Felbridge	Blair, Surrey endowments of Lewes Priory, 103
c1130 × 50	Land of Nortun	Minet Library, Deed 3605
c1200 × 20	My land of Fosseslawe	Minet Library, Deed 3610
c1200 × 20	All land which Blakeman held and all land which Hodgar held in my vill of Tandridge	SRO, 60/11/1
c1270 × 90	All that land which I have in Tandridge of that land called Goldyvelond	Minet Library, Deed 3608

increasingly frequent formula *X acre in campo qui dicitur Y*,¹³² implying fragmentation of an existing named field, proves that in some areas the average plot-size was getting steadily less.

This happened wherever large assart farms remained from an earlier phase of colonisation. In the Woodcote area of the Downs (cf above, p49) the disintegration of such holdings can be traced in detail. The core of William Baudri's land, a block of fields here including two of nine acres each and one of 30 acres, was dismembered piecemeal during the mid to late 13th century.¹³³ Other deeds, which state the precise dimensions of plots, record the partial breakup over the same period of Geoffrey de la Woodcote's assart tract, transforming it into a group of separately-owned closes (fig 24). In a third instance, members of the Colswein family progressively alienated parcels in and around a former unitary field called Colswayenesfeld.¹³⁴

In addition to fragmentation of existing arable, a steady trickle of clearances contributed to the evolution of the inclosed landscape. Both on the chalk and in the Weald, assarting seems to have diminished in scale by the later 12th century, a matter now of filling-in waste areas between established fields. Thus a deed of c1180 for the Wealden parish of Horne¹³⁵ grants to Walter de Marini

totum campum quem Rogerus de Frith tenuit inter terram Ricardi filii Ade et terram ipsius Rogeri Birstowe iuxta Alfadescroft; et omnia nova essarta que sunt inter essartum Ricardi filii Ade et terram Rogeri de Frith; et preter hos quoddam incrementum terre inter defensum meum et essartum quod idem Walterus tenuit de patre meo, ita ut fossum eius sit inter defensum meum et rotundam garam, et longitudo incrementi sit a bosco Sancti Pauli quantum terra eiusdem Walteri durat quam de patre meo tenuit.

In north-west Surrey compact holdings were acquiring 'increments' of new land in predetermined shares. In 1191–8 Newark Priory was given half a hide together with a little croft and 'ad incrementum, tantum terre ab austro collateraliter adiacentis quantum sufficit ad unam carucatum terre'.¹³⁶ Elsewhere heterogeneous collections of assarts and existing arable closes were still being grouped within the virgatal structure. A Sanderstead quarter-virgate of 1199 comprised 'unum campum terre iacentem ut novam terram et quinque acras in Hadfeld quas Ricardus filius Sueini' assartavit', while a Banstead deed of c1180 grants 'totam terram quam Hugo clericus aliquando de me tenuit et 20 acras de essarto et 10 acras de bosco, scilicet unam bonam carucatum terre'.¹³⁷ Of two half-virgates in early 13th-century Hambledon, one is described as 'totam terram quam Sald de Prato de me tenuit, et totum assartum quod Galfridus de Bosco de me tenuit, et totum assartum quod Johannes le Clop tenuit, et totam terram in

Lafirþingland quod Reginaldus Nort' tenuit'; the other comprised a croft and messuage, fifteen acres of inclosed land in a wood next an assart, and six acres of inclosed land in the same wood.¹³⁸

Thirteenth-century holdings on the Weald clay and Greensand could be extremely complex, sometimes running to a dozen contiguous or near-contiguous plots of land, meadow and wood.¹³⁹ But here again, this complexity was not confined to the Weald. Gray noted the 'curious and varied descriptions of the parcels of a virgate' which occur so often in northern Surrey; cases like the Wandsworth holding of 1247 which comprised nine acres in Nortfeld, ten and a half acres in Suetingedich, 21½ acres in Suthfeld and three acres in Leye imply a mixed tenurial pattern hardly less remote from primary compact farm units than from the pristine regularity of subdivided shares.¹⁴⁰

The inclosed landscape had thus tended towards a greater heterogeneity. Holdings had fragmented, and the process had left its mark in the proliferation of little irregular closes within the sweeping assart boundaries. Yet the basic nature of farming outside the common closes had probably changed much less. If many holdings were not strictly compact their components lay within close range, and farmers, especially in the Weald, still preferred to live on isolated homesteads amidst their land.¹⁴¹ Agriculture never reached the intensity of even the simpler kinds of open-field system: as J L M Gulley has pointed out, the geographical shortcomings of the Weald hampered further progress. Soil was variable within small areas and rarely very good, transport was hard in winter along muddy clay roads, and a farmer needed to be near his fields to use them to best advantage when they were neither cracked nor boggy; 'these difficulties were allied with deficiencies in the soil . . . and their combined restrictions rarely allowed food production sufficient or sufficiently regular to support the greater populations of nucleated settlements'.¹⁴²

In Surrey the same kind of compact farms, diversifying and fragmenting to the same limited extent, were to be found everywhere outside the immediate purlieu of nucleated settlements. Nowhere did common agriculture ever gain total supremacy; the older pattern, preserved by geographical constraints, continued to develop along its own separate course.

Fragmentation and assarting: the expansion of subdivided fields?

Even as late as the 13th century, the end-products of clearance and subdivision might potentially be absorbed into common fields in the strict sense. T A M Bishop's classic demonstration shows some Yorkshire assarts divided among groups of cultivators and integrated into existing common fields, while others of unitary origin had met the same fate within a few generations.¹⁴³ Recently, B M S Campbell has shown how 13th-century population growth and the demands of an active land-market were met on one Norfolk manor by subdivision of plots, greatly increasing the number of common-field parcels and breaking up existing inclosures.¹⁴⁴

Can such expansion of the subdivided arable be found in the south-east? In Kent, gavelkind descent certainly led to the fragmentation and intermixture of compact holdings.¹⁴⁵ In Surrey the impartible inheritance custom of Borough English was evidently normal by the 13th century, as indeed it remained for long afterwards.¹⁴⁶ Nonetheless, descent to heiresses and transactions *inter vivos* might give rise to the regular parcellation (as distinct from haphazard fragmentation) of holdings. Discrete strips or closes sometimes underwent a systematic parcel-by-parcel division, so enduring was the ancient concept of aliquot shares.¹⁴⁷ Whether this was effected by sun-division (as with the half-share of a Mitcham holding in 1235 'que ubique iacet in campis de Inlond, Bery, Battesworth, Burforlang, Spirihey, Westebroc versus umbram'),¹⁴⁸ or expressed in terms of compass-points,¹⁴⁹ each topographical unit was physically split in two. This process must have tended both to reduce the size of inclosures and to divide open-field strips along the furrows between their component selions – surely the best explanation for those common and

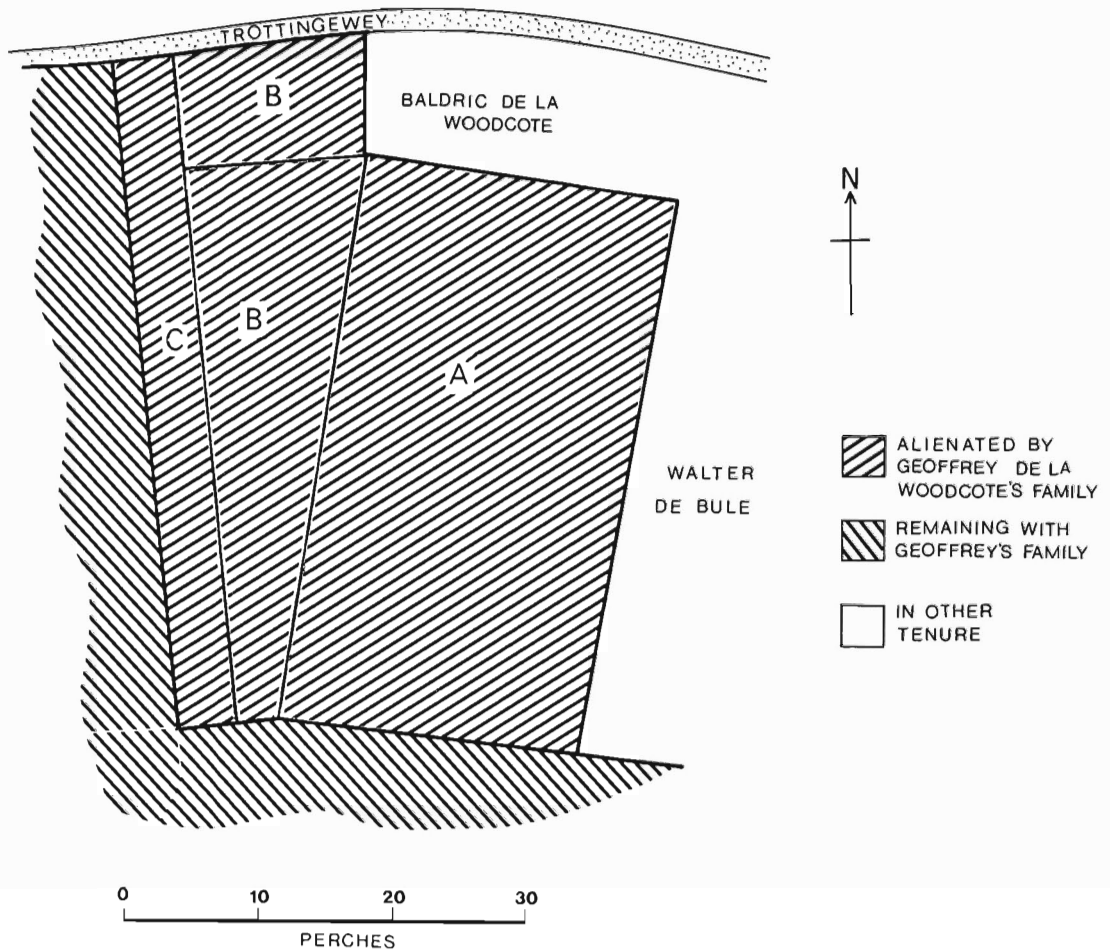


Fig 24 The dismemberment of Geoffrey de la Woodcote's compact holding, c.1260–80: a schematic reconstruction. A: Granted by Geoffrey's widow to Ralph and Levinia de Dorset (Add Chs 22923, 22937). B–B: Granted by same to same (Add Chs 22938, 22998). C: Granted by Geoffrey's son to Simon de Epsile (Add Ch 22954). The rest of the land shown hatched represents the known residue of Geoffrey's holding. The land was at East Woodcote in the field called Heye

much-discussed cases of subdivided holdings where each plot adjoins the same neighbour's land.¹⁵⁰

We have seen how unitary blocks might fragment into groups of separately-owned closes. Even in the 13th century this process could produce narrow, elongated plots resembling elements of a common-field system: one component of a Woodcote holding (fig 24, plot C) took the form of an 'acre' 50 by 4 perches, analogous in size and shape to an open strip and doubtless similarly reflecting the ploughman's needs. It is much less clear that the process resulted either in new common fields or in the enlargement of old ones. Small though the new plots were, deeds show that they generally lay in a miscellaneous patchwork lacking any regular alignment of strips or furlongs. More significant, it is clear that most were permanent inclosures, hedged or ditched: variants of the standard formula *sicut sepibus et fossatis undique includitur* are widely used in 13th-

and 14th-century Surrey deeds for plots of no more than one or two acres. A late 13th-century Hambledon grant by William de Anekecneppe of an acre in his croft called Eldeleme, conceding to the grantee 'quod possit dictam acram sibi includere fossato et haya prout melius voluerit', illustrates piecemeal fragmentation followed immediately by inclosure of the individual fragments.¹⁵¹

The effects of clearance were sometimes similar. Even in the Weald, the practice of sharing out co-operative assarts in small parcels survived into the 13th century, suggested for instance in a Horne deed of c1220 granting 'una acra terre cum gardino que est in novo assarto de la Byse'.¹⁵² But as a region of dynamic colonisation, the Weald was now being outstripped by the Bagshot sands of north-west Surrey, and here we have apparent evidence, at first sight both extensive and impressive, for a new landscape of subdivided fields. As shown above (p42), deeds and eyre rolls list numerous tiny assarts and purprestures colonised by individual smallholders; it would be easy to infer that large-scale co-operative efforts were extending the common fields of Chertsey and its neighbouring townships. But the nature of these encroachments needs closer examination.

In deeds the words *assartum* and *purprestura* seem virtually interchangeable, but the forest eyres make a general distinction, not always consistently observed, on the basis of size and use. Purprestures were on average much smaller: the total acreage of assarts recorded in the eyres is over half that of the purprestures (251 acres as against 476), but the proportion of individual plots is enormously less (98 assarts as against 589 purprestures). This reflects the large number of minute purpresture plots containing only one or two perches each, scarcely viable as individual ploughing units. Indeed, it is clear that these were generally non-arable; thus in the 1269 roll it is only assarts which are described as 'in bladata', while several small purprestures had houses built on them. More often these were probably no more than patches of waste inclosed for rough grazing or for cropping the timber and underwood: Chertsey Abbey deeds often refer to 'purprestures of moorland', sometimes apparently used as alder coppice.¹⁵³

The assarts listed by the forest justices, with an average plot size of 2.6 acres and a median of 1.5 acres, were generally under cultivation, while other sources for the forest area provide abundant evidence of small, newly-won arable plots. But clearance in small units does not necessarily produce open fields. A large proportion of both assarts and purprestures, especially those of very small size, were probably encroachments on the margins of existing unitary holdings. Thus in 1272 Chertsey Abbey inclosed a parcel of common adjoining land of Gilbert de la Felde for the enlargement of Gilbert's tenement, while in 1341 a Westminster Abbey tenant at Pyrford received licence 'elargare . . . tenementum suum versus communiam etc. de vasto domini de una roda terre'.¹⁵⁴ Even when 13th-century assarts lay intermixed, it was normal both to inclose them with permanent boundaries and to regard them thereafter as something distinct from open-field land. A group of Chertsey deeds records the recent and current inclosure of moorland in parcels of between one and three acres, divided up by newly-established hedges and ditches.¹⁵⁵ Other Chertsey Abbey documents make a clear distinction between open land in cultures and furlongs on the one hand and series of small closes on the other.¹⁵⁶

It is surely an essential characteristic of a common field that cropping and grazing are organised at least within individual furlongs, if not within larger units; and of an open field that permanent physical obstacles to these activities are absent. The products of fragmentation and assarting in 13th-century Surrey failed to meet either requirement: they lay apart, each parcel securely hedged or ditched against wandering animals, distinct from earlier open land if often lying near it. Arguments *ex silentio* are dangerous, but the absence of any explicit reference in innumerable deeds and estate records suggests very strongly that the formation of new open fields in Surrey was already rare, if not unknown, when our sources first mention such matters.

The consolidation of subdivided land

The 13th-century market for free land was bound to have topographical as well as tenurial consequences. Fragmentation and intermixture were not the only possible result: on the contrary, some buyers made distinct efforts to concentrate acquisitions within a small area, efforts which may have resulted both in new agrarian arrangements and in the inclosure of open-field land.

Surrey was a region of ancient inclosed demesnes, and in the 13th century some landowners were busily gathering piecemeal acquisitions into compact blocks where crop-rotations could be imposed at will (above, p69).¹⁵⁷ Such activity was not long confined to big estates: the amalgamation of existing inclosures was becoming increasingly common (above, p82). It seems a fair conclusion that as the land-market expanded, and as new families rose from the mass of the peasantry to re-fashion the fragments of earlier holdings, improvements which big landowners had been effecting since c1200 were now attempted more widely. It is less certain how often this led to the consolidation of open-field land: in the case of Fitznells at Ewell, for instance, scarcely any of the strips acquired can have been contiguous (above, table 9). It is obvious from the widespread survival of Surrey common fields beyond the Middle Ages that the process was never very comprehensive, and Brandon's recent study goes no further than to suggest that 'enclosure into small hedged fields had begun by the early 15th century'.¹⁵⁸ Yet its beginnings, if piecemeal in character and trivial in scale, were nearly two centuries earlier.

Grants of open-field strips adjoining land already in the hands of the grantee are very common among 13th- and 14th-century Surrey deeds. In a few collections, such as the early 13th-century Newington charters of Christ Church Canterbury,¹⁵⁹ this feature occurs with a frequency suggesting that groups of two, three or four contiguous acres, either within one furlong or in adjoining furlongs, must have been coming into single ownership. Sometimes this limited consolidation can be demonstrated (table 11), though no 13th-century case has been found which extends to the components of an entire furlong. Exchanges between tenants enabling each to hold adjacent plots become common in the early 14th-century court rolls of Chertsey Abbey manors,¹⁶⁰ and must reflect a growing feeling that land was more conveniently farmed in larger units.

Such groups did not always re-fragment with the next generation. There are occasional hints, increasingly common from the early 14th century onwards, of hedges and ditches around what had once been open land. A piece of land 'cum sepibus, fossis et fossatis' in Beddington south common field in 1336 is perhaps such a case; an earlier and more telling one, which plainly suggests recent inclosure, is a reference of 1274 to two acres in Bandon 'que fuerunt Radulfi le Serder' et nunc includuntur sepibus'.¹⁶¹ The results of this process are still apparent on 17th-century estate maps, which often show odd patches of hedged and ditched common-field land beside the more extensive inclosures of later centuries. Lack of common control left much wider scope for the impact of private initiative on the farming landscape, with results that can be seen in, for example, the contrast between early inclosure in the 'wood-pasture' areas of Devon and much later inclosure in the 'champion' regions.¹⁶² In 13th- and early 14th-century Surrey we have traced two near-contemporary but contrasting trends: the division and intermixture of plots on the one hand, and their consolidation and inclosure on the other. But the contrast is not a total one, for both developments tended to produce a landscape of small closes. The one type of land-unit which was indubitably proliferating throughout Surrey was the small field of some two to six acres enclosed by hedges and ditches. This development was only partial, and the distinctive contrasts of the Surrey landscape well survived the period considered here. Yet on the one hand inclosed holdings were losing their primitive unitary character, and on the other the area of subdivided arable under even a limited agrarian control was very gradually shrinking. In

TABLE 11 Eudes le Jop's acquisitions of contiguous plots in Bandon

<i>Date</i>	<i>Grantor</i>	<i>Property</i>	<i>Bounds</i>	<i>BL Add Cb</i>
1271	Sibil Maubon	1 acre in Bandon field in Buttininge	Between Thomas de Bandon S and Thomas Trigold N, abutting Schortefurlang W and Waddoningemarke E	22818
c1260 × 80	Thomas Trigold	1 acre in Bandon S field at Butininge	Between said Eudes Jop and the parson, abutting Wadduninge marke E and Sortefurlange W	22767
c1260 × 80	William le Duc	½ acre in Bandon field in Sortefurlang	Between William son of the parson and Thomas Trigold, abutting John Rubius W and formerly Eudes Moryn E	22996
c1260 × 80	Thomas Soaper	1 acre in Bandon S field at Sortefurlange	Between Sir Thomas Huscarle N and Walter de Rokesle S	22722
c1260 × 80	William Baudry	2 curtilages in Bandon	Between water called Nortbroc N, Peter Soaper S, Thomas Lemmer E and highway W	22713
1277	Thomas son of Peter le Soaper	messuage in Bandon	Between said Eudes Jop N and said Thomas Soaper S, abutting formerly Thomas Lemmer E and highway W	22720

so far as any general trend is visible, it was towards a patchwork of fragmented severalties, in which farmers could benefit both from the variety of soil-types offered by a dispersed holding, and from the freedom of choice offered by a compact one.

Conclusion

Later medieval Surrey shared with Kent, and still more closely with East Anglia, agrarian institutions very different from those of the Midlands. Yet where origins are concerned we may accept R A Dodgshon's recent conclusion that 'there was but one type of British field system, articulated into different regional variants, rather than different regional types'.¹⁶³ The further back we look, the easier it becomes to view Surrey common-field holdings in the main national stream of development. The basic ingredients are there: regular tenemental shares in the subdivided arable, tenurially-apportioned rights over waste and meadow. What the non-Midland systems lack is additional features: comprehensive rotations, symmetrical distribution of holdings between two or three open fields, the yearly allocation of one fallow field. In other words, it seems likely that subdivided fields which lack regular rotations and symmetrical dispersion, but where land is held in equal shares, merely display absence of the 'second-stage' remodelling. Thus field-systems in Surrey and East Anglia were not fundamentally different from those of the Midlands, but simply preserved a more primitive, once general, type at a stage of arrested development.

Two kinds of factor can be used to explain this: the strength of lordship and the balance of pastoral resources. For B M S Campbell, the individualistic and unsystematic agriculture of Norfolk resulted from light lordship. Free tenure predominated, and lords were unable to introduce the comprehensive systems imposed on peasants elsewhere; thus common fields 'seem to have manifested greatest regularity of layout and management in precisely those areas where manor and vill were most often coincident'.¹⁶⁴ This interpretation seems equally applicable to Surrey, where early signs of agrarian order and control were confined to specific groups of tenants and failed to transcend estate boundaries. Surrey townships never, like their classic Midland counterparts, developed comprehensively into open-field farming communities, but merely came to *contain* such communities. By the 12th or 13th century, no lord here would have found it easy to impose radical rearrangements on the heterogeneous groups of smallholders dominated by freemen.

Recent work tends to place the full development of Midland systems in the 12th and 13th centuries. Fox, however, has argued persuasively that their essential distinctness was already apparent by the Conquest.¹⁶⁵ The central factor in this interpretation is the necessity for fallow grazing: the Midlands were characterised, even in the 10th century, by an exceptional dearth of common waste which led to a close regulation of fallowing superfluous in the 'wood-pasture' regions. Surrey is consistent with this to the extent that wide individual freedom of cropping is accompanied by plentiful rough grazing, though the explicit evidence for communal fallowing is hard to reconcile with Fox's model.

These two factors are not incompatible: the link between free tenure and abundant waste lies at the heart of the basic contrast between 'champion' and 'non-champion' England. Whatever the precise date at which the two types of region diverged on their separate agrarian paths, the Surrey evidence suggests that the contrasts became ever sharper with time. In the Midlands common regulation grew and expanded; in Surrey and East Anglia it atrophied and decayed. We have noted hints that Surrey common fields were more organised in the earlier than in the later Middle Ages; possibly some townships once observed fuller cropping patterns in which only the fallow courses survived late enough to be recorded.

Tightly organised field-systems were not necessarily an unmixed blessing for peasant cultivators. Sometimes they may have become a hindrance, which tenants would gladly have forgone if the constraints of lordship had so allowed.¹⁶⁶ Where soils were so varied, free tenure so dominant and the land-market so active, it is not so surprising that primitive rotations dissolved into heterogeneity rather than evolving into fully-fledged systems on the Midland pattern. Kentish Holmesdale saw a similar development towards a flexible 'multifield' system during the 13th and 14th centuries.¹⁶⁷ In the south-east, smallholders were sufficiently free from corporate and seigneurial controls to progress during the 13th and 14th centuries towards a still wider freedom.