

FIELD SYSTEMS IN IBSTONE, A TOWNSHIP OF THE SOUTH-WEST CHILTERN, DURING THE LATER MIDDLE AGES¹

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H. L. GRAY, writing in 1915, could find no evidence of common arable cultivation on the dip-slope of the south-west Chilterns² which was, he concluded, a wooded area "without doubt directly enclosed from the forest".³ More recently M. W. Beresford has supported this conjecture⁴; but, as M. A. Havinden has shown, both were wrong: common fields, divided into strips and open to common grazing, although not extensive, did exist in this part of the Hills, and survived in some townships well into the nineteenth century.⁵ No detailed studies of medieval agriculture in the south-west Chilterns have been published, probably because of the paucity of documentary material. Gray's conclusions were largely surmise, lacking any factual basis, while Beresford's comments were founded on the evidence of glebe terriers for the seventeenth century and later. The present paper attempts to fill this gap by examining the landscape and economy, and especially the fields and their cultivation, in what was a typical township in the later Middle Ages.⁶

THE SETTING

The small parish of Ibstone spans a ridge on the Chiltern plateau near the Buckinghamshire border with Oxfordshire,⁷ the parish boundary running for the most part along the floors of the dry valleys on both sides of the ridge (Fig. 1). The area thus encompassed rises from less than 300 feet to more than 700 feet above sea level, and includes soils developed from a variety of formations—Valley Gravels on the valley bottoms, Middle and Upper Chalk exposed in the valley sides, and Pebble Gravels, sandy Reading Beds and Clay-with-flints capping the ridge itself.

In 1270 Walter de Merton granted the manor of Ibstone (co-extensive with the parish), along with other lands, to the college that he had founded in Oxford, and Merton College has retained possession of the manor ever since.⁸ Social organisation in the township about 1300 was characterised by considerable personal freedom. Free tenants outnumbered villeins and cottars (by twenty to six in 1284), and labour services were generally light and mainly seasonal. The only heavy demand on villeins was in autumn.⁹ Otherwise money rents were more important than works and became increasingly so. Most services had been commuted by the mid-fourteenth century, and as a

result the manorial demesne was worked largely by wage labour, both permanent and seasonal.¹⁰

The local economy was based almost entirely on agriculture, for, apart from the land, resources were limited. There was no market centre of craftsmen and small traders, and a tenant would find little to supplement his income other than seasonal employment on the demesne and in the woods. Smallholders were therefore relatively few—in 1284 half of the 26 tenants held ten acres or more¹¹—and many left the manor.¹² Growing stagnation in the later Middle Ages may, in fact, have affected this marginal township rather early. The peak of demesne farming was in the last decade of the thirteenth century and there is no evidence of the active peasant land market that existed in the north-east Chilterns about this time. Transactions in property were usually between lord and tenant, and usually involved complete holdings. Much of the manor was held on lease from the College, and many tenants had acquired a number of properties, a trend that was accentuated after the plague year of 1349, when more land became vacant and when demesne arable was being leased-out for grazing because farm labour was difficult to obtain.¹³

Inheritance in Ibstone was impartible. Customs based on primogeniture were followed but, as elsewhere in the Hills, there was considerable flexibility in actual succession to property because inheritance laws applied only in cases of intestacy.¹⁴ Children could enter family lands before the death of a parent, and joint holding had been adopted as a device that enabled the parent to arrange descent of his farm, sometimes years before he died. Parents could also provide sons or daughters with separate holdings whenever they wished,¹⁵ while a cottage might be built on the family farm for unmarried daughters.¹⁶ There is no evidence, however, that land was ever fragmented as a result of succession to it.

WOODLAND AND HEATH

Woodland was an important element both in the landscape of Ibstone and in the manorial economy. Assarting had ended by the early thirteenth century,¹⁷ leaving patches of enclosed timber throughout the township. Many woods were held by tenants¹⁸ but the largest ones were part of the demesne. Along the south-western side of the parish, the strip of woodland known as Turvilledene stretched down the bottom of the Turville valley, while a slightly smaller area of timber lay in the corresponding valley to the north-east.¹⁹ Woods of varying sizes were also scattered along the ridge itself,²⁰ and some, especially the smaller groves, lay within arable closes.²¹ The Park, near the manor farmstead, was an area of mixed wood and pasture,²² while the hedgerows that were a prominent feature of the township²³ were also valued as a source of firewood and other timber.²⁴ Oak, beech and ash were the main species, with beech probably less prominent and oak more important than today: four times as many oaks as beeches were blown down in Turvilledene during the high winds of 1363-4.²⁵ Ash was especially numerous in the Park.²⁶

Wood and woodland products occasionally accounted for a large proportion of the manorial revenue: in 1281-2, for example, more than one third of the total income came from this source.²⁷ But the manor was not a specialist

supplier of timber—grain sales were the main annual source of cash—and income from the woods, varying considerably from year to year, was sometimes non-existent. To suggest, as Beresford has done, that “villagers were able to maintain themselves . . . by exploiting the resources of a forest economy” and that consequently cultivation had only a secondary role,²⁸ is a considerable overstatement of the economic significance of woodland in this part of the Chilterns. Regular felling for sale was not a feature of demesne management. Rather the woods were treated as a reserve of capital to be exploited in an emergency, either when other income was exceptionally low or when expenditure was unusually heavy. Thus large amounts of timber were sold in many of the years when crop sales were very small,²⁹ while the expense of building the windmill, in 1293-4, was partly offset by sale of 400 trees from Westgrove—accounting for about one quarter of the total income in that year—and sales were again high in 1355-6 when a substantial sum was spent on repairing the mill.³⁰

The demesne woods were also used to supply the farm, the College in Oxford and its manors in the Vale (where there was very little timber of any kind) with a variety of materials including firewood and charcoal, cart wheels and spokes, plough frames, hurdles, and building supplies such as boards and beams, moss and wattles.³¹ But local wood was not suitable for all purposes, and special timbers had to be brought in from distant forests to meet particular requirements. Before the windmill could be erected a carpenter had to search for three days in the woods around Wokingham for a “standard”, while boards and other timber came from Surrey. Some local wood was used, but more was sold to help cover building costs.³²

During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, therefore, felling did not conform to any pattern: wood was cut whenever it was needed. This was in contrast with the north-east Chilterns, where woodland was less extensive and where, as a result, a kind of woodland farming, based on a systematic rotation of cutting, was followed.³³ By the sixteenth century, circumstances had changed and felling was being controlled in Ibstone to ensure a continuing supply of young growth. When standing timber in Turvilledene was sold in 1508, a condition of sale was that no beeches, oaks or ashes less than thirty inches in circumference were to be cut; and where the woodland was thin, trees larger than this were also to be left, the purchaser being recompensed with small timber from where growth was thicker.³⁴

All woodland in the township was enclosed and held in severalty. None was open to common usage. Only the rector could run pigs in the demesne woods as of right, a privilege that was held by ancient custom pertaining to the church.³⁵ Other tenants had to pay for access to this pannage, which they did occasionally and in varying numbers,³⁶ but in some years, perhaps even every year, swine from College manors down in the Vale were sent to pasture alongside those of the Ibstone demesne.³⁷ There is no evidence that the woods were ever grazed by other forms of livestock. They were too thick to offer suitable forage for anything but swine, and they were too valuable as a source of income to risk damaging in that way.

The only substantial common waste in the township was the Heath, on a

patch of Clay-with-flints in the northern tip of the parish, the College claiming, in a dispute with Lewknor in 1323, that the lord and tenants of Ibstone had rights to common grazing in "that pasture called Ibstonehathe" from time immemorial.³⁸ By the early sixteenth century a limit had been placed on the number of beasts allowed to pasture the Heath, and a little later extensive encroachments were being made.³⁹ A patch of rough pasture at the lower end of the ridge, on Copsdon, may also have been common land—in 1295 the reeve claimed right of common grazing there—and it was still unenclosed at the beginning of the nineteenth century.⁴⁰

THE FIELDS AND THEIR CULTIVATION

No fresh land was brought into cultivation in Ibstone between the time that assarting ended early in the thirteenth century and the sixteenth century enclosures from the Heath. By 1300 most of the cultivated land of the manor lay in hedged closes, but East field, which extended along the lower slope of the Turville valley immediately north of the village of Turville (Fig. 1), may once have been a common field. About 1280, the College had been granted "an acre of arable land in the east field of Ibstone on the north of the church of Turville", and sixty years later more than 70 acres of demesne arable lay in the field.⁴¹ It seems probable that almost all of this land had been consolidated and taken into the demesne by Ralph de Cheinduit, an earlier lord of the manor, before it passed to Merton College: the fact that the arable demesne at Cuxham lay as a few large blocks of consolidated strips in the three open fields of that township has been attributed to his work as an "active, improving landlord".⁴² Certainly the whole of East field was enclosed by 1391, for it was then leased-out in its entirety.⁴³

THE DEMESNE FIELDS

About half the cultivated land of Ibstone was in the ten fields of the manor farm. These, rather than lying together in one part of the township, were in three separate locations, the two larger areas being on the slopes and valley bottom below the farmstead and above Turville village, while a smaller group of closes was in the north-east corner of the manor on the other side of the ridge (Fig. 1). Four of the ten closes were large—two were more than 30 acres and two contained at least 70 acres⁴⁴—and all were in tillage. The Park offered the only permanent pasture.

Demesne farming was, then, based on arable husbandry in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In most years, grain sales far exceeded sales of livestock and livestock products in value,⁴⁵ and were so important that the effects of a poor harvest or low prices were felt throughout the manorial economy: the manor was rented-out three times after a succession of small grain sales. Wycombe and Henley appear to have been the main markets, although most produce was probably sent from them down the Thames to London.⁴⁶ Crop production dominated agriculture because physical conditions did not favour rearing and breeding. Within the parish there were neither marshy hollows nor permanent running water such as might encourage the growth of grasses suitable for mowing and, as a result, good pasturage was

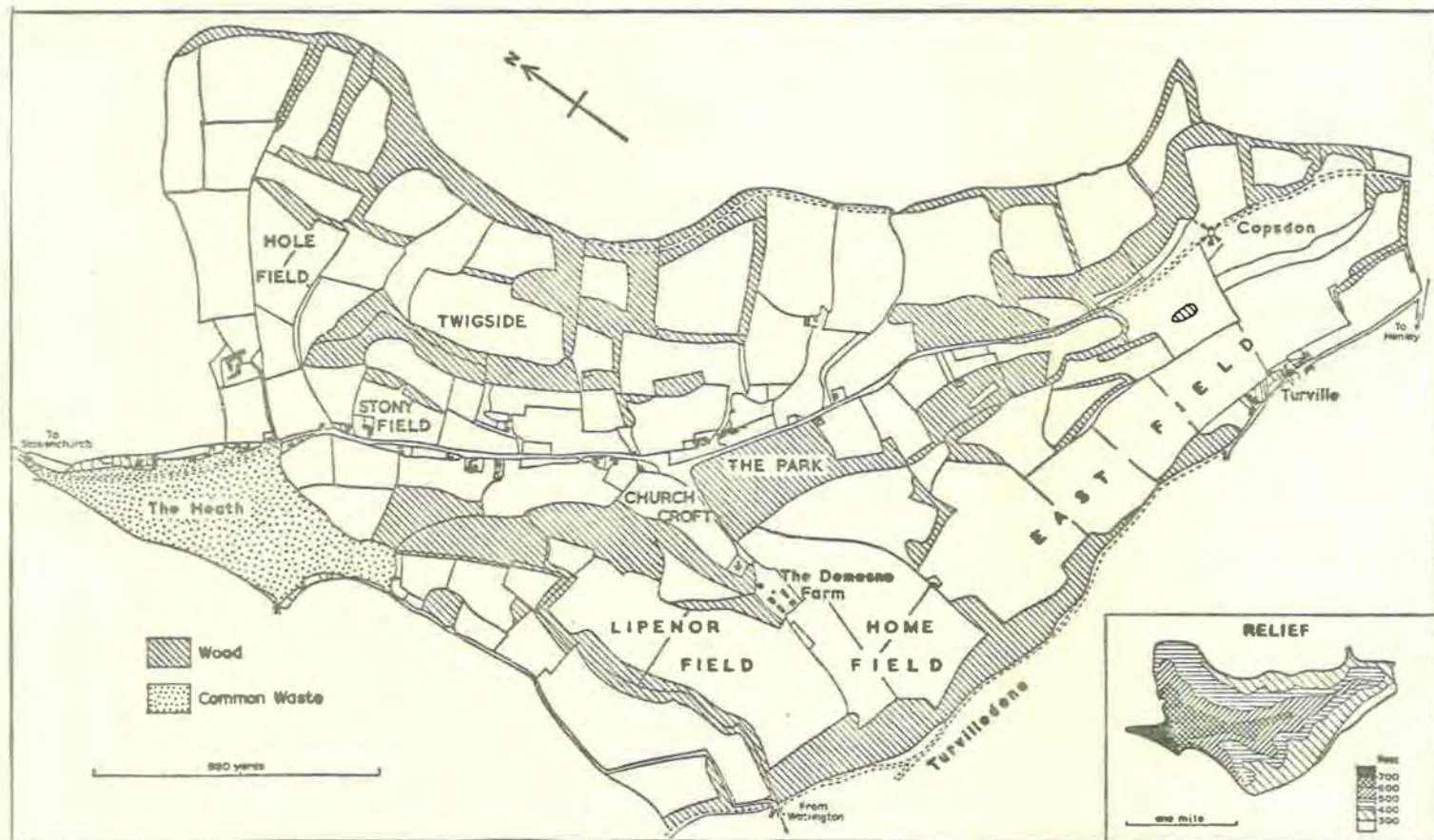


FIG. 1. The Parish of Ibstone.

scarce and winter feed was in especially short supply. Hay was often bought outside the manor,⁴⁷ while sheaves of oats were sometimes fed to ewes and lambs in early spring.⁴⁸ Winter feeding was a problem even after 1349, for little of the additional uncropped land then becoming available was suitable for hay.⁴⁹ Grazing was also limited prior to 1349⁵⁰: there was no permanent grassland on the demesne apart from the Park; the extensive woods were used only for swine pannage; and pasturage on the Heath was probably of a poor quality, especially as it may also have been open to the flocks and herds of Lewknor. Arable fallow and stubble was, in fact, the main source of grazing, supplemented in many years by a few acres of green crops.

Sheep were the most valuable item of demesne livestock. After 1293 the permanent flock was increased to more than 200 beasts and a large number was kept until the manor farm was leased-out for the last time in 1360. Lamb sales were very irregular—on average about half the annual crop was retained—and emphasis was on wool production.⁵¹ The flock was also important as a means of maintaining soil condition, and it is perhaps significant in this respect that yields of most grains increased after 1293 (Table 1). A permanent herd of a bull and eight to eleven cows was also kept,⁵² although numbers of other cattle fluctuated considerably from year to year. Apart from calves, most of which were sold within a few months of birth, cheeses and butter were the main cash products. The pig herd also varied widely in size—there were never more than 55 adult beasts—while horses, and not oxen, were used for ploughing as well as for harrowing and carting.⁵³

The sown acreage of the demesne was greatest before 1301 (Appendix). Its average annual extent at that time was 212 acres, although the actual yearly figure fluctuated by as much as 60 acres, from a maximum of 235½ acres in 1284-5 to a minimum of 171½ acres in 1300-1. After direct farming was resumed in 1337 the average area fell by about 40 acres during the years before 1348, presumably because of an increase in fallow⁵⁴; and then, in 1349, the cultivated land was reduced by nearly one half and a year later by a further 50%, reaching its lowest point in the following year when only 56 acres was sown. There was some recovery before the whole demesne was leased-out in 1360, and more than 100 acres was being ploughed each year.

Yields of all grains (Table 1), and especially wheat, were low compared with Cuxham in the Vale,⁵⁵ primarily because of the more rigorous environment facing cultivation at Ibstone up on the plateau: climate is harsher⁵⁶; soils are thinner, being derived mainly from chalk and from sands and gravels; slopes are steep and often exposed; and the spread of thorn bushes was a problem, even in fields in continuous cultivation.⁵⁷ Under these conditions the poorer mixed grains (mixed corn and dredge) were particularly prominent.⁵⁸ Wheat, however, was the principal grain export at the end of the thirteenth century (Table 2). Although occupying less than one half, and sometimes less than one quarter, of the total sown arable, it often accounted for more than half the crop sales in value, and in a few years it provided more than three-quarters of the income from this source.⁵⁹ Mixed corn, the only other winter crop,⁶⁰ always had a larger acreage but nearly all the harvest was used within the manor, mostly in part payment to farm servants. Oats was the

TABLE 1
CROP YIELDS ON THE IBSTONE DEMESNE, 1281-1358
(quarts for every quart sown)

Date	Wheat	Mixed corn	Oats	Barley	Dredge	Pease
1281	3.2	2.5	2.1	1.5	2.2	1.4
1285-86	4.3	2.4	2.2	?	2.4	?
1294-1300	3.2	2.6	2.5	3.2	2.7	3.8
1338-44	3.4	3.4	3.4	4.2	3.4	3.2
1346-58	2.5	3.0	2.9	2.7	2.9	2.8
Sources: 5056-7, 5059-64, 5066-8, 5070, 5072, 5078-80, 5082-3, 5084, 5086-8, 5091-104						

most important of the spring crops, both in area sown and yield produced. Until 1287 it accounted for more than 85% of the total acreage of this course each year, and, although subsequently less important, it always remained the most widely grown spring grain. The bulk of the yield was used within the manor as horse feed, but a steady export developed in the 1340s with oats being sent to the College or to one of the many royal households around the Chilterns. Barley and dredge, however, were the main spring cash crops. Nearly all the harvest, apart from seed, left the demesne, and income from their sale and from malt made from them was exceeding wheat sales in value before the end of the thirteenth century. The proportion of land devoted to barley and dredge was later increased, until their combined acreage surpassed that of oats. The area under pease and vetch was also expanded, pease sales in particular becoming an important annual item after 1337. These had formerly been primarily forage crops.⁶¹

Acreages of all grains varied considerably from year to year, no doubt in response to fluctuating demands and weather conditions. The overall trend between 1280 and 1360 was towards a greater diversity of crops, especially in the spring course.⁶² Oats became less prominent, while barley, dredge, pease and vetch all became relatively more important in terms of area sown. At the same time, there was a move away from the dominance of wheat sales and towards a greater export of the spring grains, at first of barley and dredge, and later of oats and pease. Changes such as these were facilitated by the flexible cropping system practised on the manor farm.

A three-course rotation was probably being followed before the end of the thirteenth century.⁶³ In most years the sown land was divided more or less equally between winter and spring courses, with minor variations probably representing favourable or unfavourable weather during the autumn and spring ploughing and sowing. Occasional large differences were always offset by a trend in the opposite direction in the succeeding year.⁶⁴ There is no indication of the proportion of land left fallow at any one time, but it is clear from wide annual fluctuations in the sown area that this must have altered markedly from year to year.

TABLE 2
GRAIN EXPORTS AND IMPORTS ON THE IBSTONE DEMESNE, 1280-1360
(in quarts)

Date	Wheat			Mixed corn			Oats			Barley			Dredge			Pease		
	a	b	c	a	b	c	a	b	c	a	b	c	a	b	c	a	b	c
1280-82	41	21	—	62	—	1	133	2	—	2	—	—	9	5	—	1	—	—
1284-87	40	23	5	70	5	5	122	21	—	3	—	$\frac{1}{2}$	14	9	—	$\frac{2}{3}$	—	$\frac{1}{2}$
1293-1301	40	17	2	77	9	6	81	2	15	24	16	—	19	13	—	4	2	$\frac{1}{2}$
1337-49	28	13	2	55	$\frac{1}{4}$	5	48	14	5	26	17	$\frac{1}{2}$	27	10	—	9	3	—
1349-60	12	3	4	28	1	4	27	12	1	4	2	$\frac{1}{4}$	13	6	—	2	$\frac{1}{2}$	—
a = average annual issue b = average annual export c = average annual import Totals are to the nearest quart																		
Sources: As in Table 1																		

The earlier account rolls only give acreages under the different crops and not their locations. Later, however, field names were often recorded, and on this basis it is possible to reconstruct the system of demesne cultivation in more detail. Before 1349 the fields were divided into three groups between which crops were regularly rotated,⁶⁵ but with the large-scale disruption that subsequently occurred this arrangement was abandoned. Cropping within the fields—as distinct from amongst them—was often complex, again especially after 1349. The larger fields were subdivided into a number of open units, each sown with a different grain and sometimes even in different courses of the farm rotation. In 1348-9, for example, East field included the winter-sown wheat and mixed corn as well as barley sown in spring, while in the following year Lipenor field was under these three crops.⁶⁶ Each individual subdivision seems to have been subject to a rotation of its own that was followed independently of the rest of the field. Twenty-two acres of Home field was sown with wheat in 1349-50, almost the same area as that under oats, barley, pease and vetch in the next year, when wheat was again sown.⁶⁷ One result was that a single crop, or crops of the same course, could follow each other in one field for a number of consecutive years, presumably on different plots of land: for each of the three years 1354-7 Lipenor field contained a spring grain, and for two of these years mixed corn was also grown.⁶⁸ In other words, a demesne enclosure might include all three types of arable in any one year; in another field only two courses may have been represented; while a third field might remain undivided.

Sheep were folded on the arable. Many accounts record the expense of making hurdles, while one of the services attached to cottar land was to "carry five sheep hurdles when they are taken from one field to another".⁶⁹ Where a field was divided into plots under different crops or in more than one course, hurdles were essential to prevent damage to growing grain when fallow, stubble or green crops were being pastured. At the same time, folding con-

centrated manure from the flock on one part of the close. Tenant swine were also occasionally allowed, on payment of dues, to forage over uncropped demesne arable.⁷⁰ Dung from grazing stock was supplemented by litter from stables, cowsheds and lambing pens.⁷¹

The overall result of this system of cropping was to allow considerable flexibility in the annual routine of cultivation. Acreages under particular crops could easily be changed from year to year, and substantial variations in the proportion of land devoted to winter and spring grains in any one season could be adjusted within the farm rotation. Wider changes in production over a long period—the diversification of the spring course was an example—were accommodated within the general framework. But the best proof of this adaptability was the relative ease with which cropping was modified to meet the new conditions arising after 1349. Reduction of the sown demesne to one-third of its former average was accomplished through extension of the fallow area, rather than by allowing land to go out of arable cultivation completely. One field (Twigsid) was turned over to pasture for two years, and whereas previously only some of the land in the other large enclosures had lain fallow at any one time, now entire fields were being left to grazing for a year or six months.⁷² For the rest of the time, plots of land were still being cultivated within these, although the pieces were smaller and more numerous than before, while the surrounding areas of fallow were large. Individual units were probably ploughed for one or two seasons and then returned to fallow for a number of years. All this is reminiscent of the convertible husbandry described by T. A. M. Bishop for Westerham in Kent “under which a relatively small, fluctuating, and on the whole declining area of cultivation shifted within the limits of a relatively large . . . cleared area”.⁷³ The distinctive feature of the Ibstone system was that the ploughed area often shifted within a single field rather than between fields.

THE TENANT CLOSES

Although much smaller than some of the demesne fields, peasant closes in the township were on average larger than those in the north-east Chilterns. Some complete customary tenures comprised a single enclosed field—a close called Coppusdonfeld was a quarter virgate, as too was the ten-acre Thurnechune⁷⁴—and other holdings lay in only a few closes. Three crofts next to each other formed Bakers, a quarter virgate, while half-virgate Whytefeld Scelyacre was two fields with these names, together probably totalling about 25 acres.⁷⁵

There is little evidence of the nature of peasant farming at this time. The one tenant inventory that has survived suggests a form of mixed husbandry similar to that practised by the College,⁷⁶ while cases of trespass brought before the manorial court show that there was a large peasant flock by the mid-fourteenth century, no doubt supported to some extent by the greater area of pasture then available.⁷⁷ A three-course rotation was followed and the manor even appears to have enforced a triennial fallow on land held from it.⁷⁸ Larger peasant closes were probably divided up in the same way as demesne fields for cropping, particularly as some complete holdings were single fields and others contained no more than two or three closes.

SETTLEMENT

By the thirteenth century, settlement in this part of the Chilterns was in villages and hamlets down in the valley bottoms,⁷⁹ in isolated farmsteads or small hamlets on the slopes,⁸⁰ and in loose conglomerations either strung along the ridge-tops or around patches of common waste.⁸¹ All five facets were represented within the manor of Ibstone.

In so far as there was a village or hamlet called Ibstone, it comprised a line of farmsteads and cottages straggling along the crest of the hill from the Heath in the north to the demesne farmstead on a spur extending south from the main ridge. There was also a number of dispersed dwellings in the township,⁸² while the manor included (as the present parish does) a large part of Turville village, the remainder being in the parish of that name.⁸³ Turville was not the only nucleation in the area to be so divided: Fingest, nearby, was split between the parishes of Fingest and Hambleden. Possibly the first permanent settlement in this part of the Hills had been in small agglomerations on the floors of the larger valleys, where water supply, obtained from wells,⁸⁴ was less of a problem than up on the plateau, where the better agricultural land is located, and where fields and settlements are less exposed. With subsequent clearing and colonisation of the surrounding ridges and upland surfaces, a pattern of isolated farmsteads, hamlets and small villages was established, many of them around the extensive wastes left there. But as the later parish boundaries tended to follow valley floors, the original nucleations became divided between two parishes.

The settlement pattern in Ibstone was not static. Although there was some rebuilding in the first half of the fourteenth century,⁸⁵ the overall trend was towards a reduction of settlement. As early as 1295 a tenement was lying in ruins,⁸⁶ and frequently, in subsequent years, men entering holdings were ordered to repair the house or cottage, or to erect a new dwelling on the plot where a house had once stood.⁸⁷ The manor found it more and more difficult to obtain tenants for vacant property,⁸⁸ while some individuals who had acquired the lands and buildings of a number of complete holdings left the dwellings empty, eventually to tumble down, if subtenants were not available. Thus the cottage formerly occupied by John Couper had disappeared a few years after his land was obtained by the parson.⁸⁹

The history of the windmill reflects these changing conditions. It was built, at considerable expense, in 1293-4. Timber and craftsmen were brought from Surrey and Berkshire, while mill stones were imported from Europe through London.⁹⁰ Within thirty years the building was derelict: planks and boards had been stolen and it was described as being in an extremely bad state "through lack of a roof and several defects".⁹¹ Extensive repairs were undertaken in 1339-40, but six years later a tenant could not be found for the full year.⁹² The mill continued to grind, on and off, worked sometimes by the manor and sometimes by a lessee, until 1349, when issue was said to be small "because of the death of men".⁹³ During the following years the building was often vacant and was eventually burnt down in 1370-1.⁹⁴ A few bits of machinery were salvaged from the ruins and by 1400 it had been rebuilt.⁹⁵

The existing trend towards a reduction of settlement was accentuated by the large number of deaths in 1349. Exhortations to mend ruined cottages and to rebuild on unoccupied plots became more numerous, while tenants were ordered, on pain of forfeiture, to live in dwellings they had acquired.⁹⁶ Such injunctions were ignored, and although buildings were occasionally repaired,⁹⁷ decay continued throughout the fifteenth century.⁹⁸ In spite of these and subsequent changes, however, the settlement mosaic remained basically unaltered. At least one isolated farmstead (Gravesend) had vanished by the nineteenth century, while there had been a greater concentration of cottages along the edge of the Heath in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Otherwise the present pattern in Ibstone is, in all essentials, the same as that of about 1300.

CONCLUSIONS

The limited evidence that is available for other parts of the south-west Chilterns suggests that medieval field systems in Ibstone were fairly typical of the whole Chalk dip-slope west of the Wye. At Ibstone, extensive private woodland was not a source of regular income and was always ancillary to agriculture, the basis of the local economy. Farming was orientated towards arable husbandry, largely because of a lack of good grassland, and the field pattern was dominated by enclosed fields scattered amongst the woods. Most cultivated land had probably been taken into severalty directly from the waste, as Gray suggested, although at least one common field may have been enclosed during the thirteenth century. Closes were of two types, with big demesne fields perhaps designed to facilitate large-scale crop production, and smaller tenant closes. Demesne cropping was elaborate, and became more so in the fourteenth century, especially after 1349. The practical application of rotations could be just as complex in an enclosed Chiltern township as in the open field manors of the Vale. The settlement pattern of the township combined elements of both dispersal and nucleation, and, in spite of some modification in detail, has remained fundamentally unchanged ever since. In fact, the general appearance of the medieval landscape as a whole was probably broadly similar to that of the parish today.⁹⁹

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APPENDIX
CROPS ON THE IBSTONE DEMESNE
(in acres)

Year	Wheat	Mixed corn	Oats	Barley	Dredge	Pease	Vetch	Total
1280-1	39	61	99½	3	7½	1½	¾	211½
1281-2	41	71½	93½	3	5½	1½	¾	215½
1284-5	41½	75	109½	1½	9	1½	—	235½
1285-6	39	66	114½	2½	7	1½	¾	230½
1286-7	37	72½	91	11½	¾	1	—	213¾
1293-4	28¾	96¾	59	17	9	4½	2¾	217½
1294-5	40	43	92	21½	11½	3½	3	214½
1295-6	41	61	69½	24	10	3½	3½	212½
1296-7	44½	71½	79	20	2	3	2½	222
1297-8	28	83	60½	12	10	2½	2½	198
1298-9	27½	78	62	1	26	2½	2½	199½
1299-1300	21	102	60	6	21¾	4	3½	218½
1300-1	27	67	63	6½	—	—	8	171½
1337-8	28	37	55	10	15	—	1	146
1338-9	36	55	52	11	14	—	1	169
1339-40	30	51	45	4	16	—	2	148
1341-2	14	59	53	7	6	7	3½	149½
1342-3	47	67	51½	7	17	—	3	192½
1343-4	25	57	38	11½	21	5	7½	165
1344-5	?	59	39	18½	18	8	5	?
1345-6	36	59	26½	24	18	8	7½	179¾
1346-7	26	47	20	21½	27	15	1½	158
1347-8	30	38	30½	26	23½	16	2½	166½
1348-9	27	40	23	18½	20	14	3½	146
1349-50	22	28	13	17	10	—	2	92
1350-1	18	28	9½	7½	—	6	1	70
1351-2	9	27	20	—	—	—	—	56
1352-3	?	12	19	—	—	1	2½	66½
1353-4	9	28	21	3	7	3	—	71
1354-5	—	26	26½	—	12½	—	1½	66
1355-6	7	28	22½	3	17	—	1½	79
1356-7	15	14	13	4	5½	—	—	51½
1358-9	16	23	27	—	15½	1	6	91½
1359-60	7	36	28	—	42	—	—	113

Sources: 5056-7, 5059-64, 5066-8, 5070, 5072, 5078-80, 5082-4, 5086-9, 5091-105.

¹ A more detailed account is available in my unpublished doctoral thesis, "Studies in Chiltern field systems", University of London (1965), 236-70 and 424-43.

² "South-west Chilterns" is used here to describe the area west of the Wye valley.

³ H. L. Gray, *English Field Systems* (1915), 119-20.

⁴ M. W. Beresford, "Glebe terriers and open-field Buckinghamshire", *Records of Buckinghamshire*, 16 (1953-4), 6.

⁵ M. A. Havinden, "The rural economy of Oxfordshire, 1580-1730", unpublished B.Litt. thesis, University of Oxford (1961), 248. For a more complete appraisal of the extent and nature of the common fields, see D. Roden, *op. cit.*, 19-87.

⁶ Account rolls, court rolls, rentals and charters preserved at Merton College are the main primary sources. The series of court rolls is incomplete, but provides a fairly full sequence from the end of the thirteenth century until the beginning of the sixteenth. Accounts survive from 1280 for most years until the end of the sixteenth century, but because direct farming by the College was practised only for three short spells during this period, detailed manorial accounts are few: they are available for 1280-2, 1284-7, 1293-1301 and 1337-60.

⁷ The parish was divided between both counties until the adjustment of county boundaries towards the end of the nineteenth century.

⁸ Merton College Mss. 2426 (all subsequent references are to documents in the possession of Merton College unless otherwise stated).

⁹ 5202. Light labour services were attached to some free land.

¹⁰ This is clear both from the ending of customary plough works in 1337 (5078) and increased autumn expenses after 1344 (5089).

¹¹ 5202.

¹² Seven villeins were living outside the manor at the end of the thirteenth century, only two with manorial approval: 5210-11.

¹³ In 1349, when five vacant holdings were leased-out for grazing, allowance for decline in rents was for eight properties, while in 1350-1 and later ploughmen for the demesne had to be brought from other College manors: 5095, 5097, 5099. By 1451 land in the manor was held by only twelve tenants compared with 25 in 1332: 5205, 5203.

¹⁴ Partible inheritance did arise in Ibstone under one set of circumstances. This was when a free tenant was survived only by daughters, who then became co-heirs to the property. Thus the two daughters of Simon Drew claimed his freehold messuage and virgate when he died in 1349, and both were described as his heirs: 5223. For an account of Chiltern custom at this time, see D. Roden, "Inheritance customs and succession to land in the Chiltern Hills in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries", *Journal of British Studies* (in press).

¹⁵ John Coleman, for example, acquired an extensive holding during his lifetime, decided on the disposal of this property before he died, and ensured that all three of his children were provided with land, two by direct grant and the other through a joint holding with his father: 5065, 5202, 5210-11, 5216-17.

¹⁶ Amicia Oxlade built two cottages on her tenement for two daughters: 5221.

¹⁷ There are no references to assart land in either account rolls or court rolls. The only description of recently cleared land was an exchange by Robert Thuig, c. 1240, of rent for an assart lying before his gate—probably in the north of the parish in the area later known as Twigside (2446)—although at least two crofts (Saarte and Inning) had names suggestive of woodland clearing towards the end of the thirteenth century (2430, 2432, 5202).

¹⁸ Presentments for unlicensed felling suggest that there was sometimes substantial woodland on tenant holdings: in 1346 Richard Oxlade had cut down eighty trees on his land, and in 1403 another farmer had removed fifty trees without permission (5221, 5226).

¹⁹ First references to these woods were in 1281-2 and 1324 respectively: 5057, 5216.

²⁰ For example, Westgrove and Eastgrove, which belonged to the College and which seem to have been two of the larger. In 1293-4, 400 trees were sold from Westgrove: 5062. Eastgrove is first referred to in the same year: 5211.

²¹ Lucas croft, for example, contained eight acres of arable and one acre of wood: 5219.

²² The earliest reference to wood in the Park was in 1281-2: 5057.

²³ As manorial expenses for maintaining hedges show: 5062-4, 5066, 5078, 5122.

²⁴ As sales of hedge loppings and ditch timber show: 5079, 5102. A tenant was presented at the manorial court, in 1390, for cutting down a hedge and burning it for charcoal: 5226.

²⁵ More than 100 beeches and 400 oaks were blown down there: 5109.

²⁶ 5095, 5102.

²⁷ Sales included 301 *quartrons* of wood, 130 trees in Turvilledene, 1,100 faggots cut in the Park, 100 spokes for cart wheels and 28½ qts. of charcoal from the Park: 5057.

²⁸ M. W. Beresford, *op. cit.*, 6.

²⁹ As in 1286-7, 1337-9 and 1349-50: 5061, 5078-80, 5082, 5095.

³⁰ 5102. Sales were also high after the exceptional storms of 1361-2, when many trees were blown down. This wood, wheels made from it and more than forty cartloads of charcoal provided a steady income for the following nine years: 5109-17.

³¹ If these products were not available on the demesne they were bought in the locality, as in 1341-2 when wattles and charcoal acquired in this way were sent to Cuxham and Oxford: 5086.

³² 5062

- ³³ D. Roden, *loc. cit.*, (1965), 356-7.
- ³⁴ 2750.
- ³⁵ 5216.
- ³⁶ As in 1286-7, 1296-7 and 1298-9: 5061, 5064, 5067.
- ³⁷ P. D. A. Harvey, *A Medieval Oxfordshire Village: Cuxham, 1240 to 1400* (1965), 97; and 5066.
- ³⁸ 5216. Lewknor claimed to share these rights.
- ³⁹ In 1510 two tenants were presented for overstocking the common, while there were later pre-
sentments for ploughing-up and enclosing pieces from the waste, and for erecting buildings on the
common: 5240-1, 5243-6, 5348.
- ⁴⁰ 5211 and the Tithe Map. According to sixteenth-century evidence, the lord and tenants of
Ibstone also had grazing rights in an area of wood and heath in Aston Rowant and Stokenchurch
parishes: 2631.
- ⁴¹ 2433, 5086.
- ⁴² P. D. A. Harvey, *op. cit.*, 21.
- ⁴³ 5226.
- ⁴⁴ These were Home field, Twigsid, East field and Lipenor field.
- ⁴⁵ For a tabulated summary of manorial income during the periods of direct demesne farming
by the College, see D. Roden, *loc. cit.* (1965), 430-8.
- ⁴⁶ In 1294 each carrying service was to take $\frac{1}{2}$ qt. of wheat or other grain, or 6 bu. of oats to Henley
or Wycombe (5210), and for a number of years the manor paid to store grain in a warehouse in
Henley (5062). During the thirteenth century, products from the manor of West Wycombe were
regularly sent down the Thames from Marlow to Southwark (as in 1208: Hampshire Record Office,
Eccl. 2/159270), while by the fourteenth century the corn merchants of High Wycombe and Great
Marlow were supplying London with grain bought in local markets (N. S. B. Gras, *The Evolution
of the English Corn Market from the Twelfth to the Eighteenth Century* (1915), 165).
- ⁴⁷ As in 1280-2 and 1299-1300: 5056-7, 5068. After 1337 carts taking firewood or moss to Oxford
or Cuxham usually returned with a load of hay: e.g. 5087, 5089.
- ⁴⁸ As in 1346-7, when ninety sheaves were used: 5092.
- ⁴⁹ Only the grass of a vacant tenement was mown (5095) and fodder still had to be bought (5103).
- ⁵⁰ Pasture outside the manor was sometimes rented for demesne stock: 5067, 5092-3.
- ⁵¹ The flock was largest in 1344, when it numbered more than 280 beasts (5088). The only break
was in 1353, when all the sheep were sent down to Cuxham (5099), but a fresh flock was built up
within two years. During the earlier periods of direct farming by the College, wool was usually sold
from the manor each year. After 1337, it was customary to store the fleece for several years before
selling through the College (as in 1346-7: 5092)—the value of wool sales was not then recorded in the
manorial accounts.
- ⁵² The herd was farmed-out in 1351-2: 5098.
- ⁵³ Two plough teams, each normally consisting of six geldings, were maintained.
- ⁵⁴ There is no evidence that any demesne arable was leased-out at that time.
- ⁵⁵ P. D. A. Harvey, *op. cit.*, 58.
- ⁵⁶ J. T. Coppock, "The agricultural geography of the Chilterns, 1870-1951", unpublished Ph.D.
thesis, University of London (1960), 151-2.
- ⁵⁷ Thorn bushes had to be removed from the arable fields from time to time: 5059, 5063, 5087,
5092-3.
- ⁵⁸ Mixed corn included wheat and rye (5063, 5105) and dredge was a barley based mixture (5062,
5072).
- ⁵⁹ As in the two years 1280-2: 5056-7.
- ⁶⁰ The respective winter and spring-sown crops in Ibstone are indicated by an account compiled
in February 1339, when only wheat and mixed corn had been sown: 5082.
- ⁶¹ In some years, especially before 1301, only enough grain for the following year's seed was har-
vested: e.g. 5059-60.
- ⁶² Similar trends have been noted in Leicestershire and Kent in the fourteenth century: R. H.
Hilton in W. G. Hoskins (ed.), *A History of Leicestershire*, 2 (1954), 160-1; and T. A. M. Bishop,
"The rotation of crops at Westerham", *Economic History Review*, 9 (1938), 42-3. They were also
occurring in other parts of the Chilterns: D. Roden, *loc. cit.* (1965), 280.
- ⁶³ Each villein half virgater owed ploughing and harrowing on half an acre at each of three courses,
winter, spring and fallow: 5102.
- ⁶⁴ For example, in 1293-4 the area of spring crops was 34 acres larger than those sown in autumn,
a difference that was more than balanced in the next year, when winter crops exceeded spring crops
by 49 acres: 5062-3. The total discrepancy between the two sown courses, during the 21 years after
1280, was no more than 36 acres; and although there were large fluctuations after 1337, the sown
land was evenly divided between the two cropping seasons over a 23-year period, with an average
of 61 acres each.

⁶⁵ Wheat, for example, followed the triennial sequence of East field, Lipenor field and other *culturae*, and Home field even though its area varied from 14 acres in 1341-2 to 47 acres the year after. Mixed corn may also have kept to this pattern but the evidence is less specific. Of the spring crops, barley was sown in East field at least once every three years, in the season after wheat and mixed corn.

⁶⁶ 5094-5.

⁶⁸ 5101-3.

⁶⁷ 5095-7.

⁶⁹ 5065, 5202.

⁷⁰ In 1345-6, for example: 5091.

⁷¹ As in 1297-8 and 1344-5: 5066, 5089. In one year 66 cartloads of dung were bought: 5066.

⁷² In both 1352-3 and 1353-4 all of Lipenor field was fallow during the winter half of the year, while the whole of East field lay uncropped throughout 1352-3 and again during the winter of 1354-5: 5099-101.

⁷³ T. A. M. Bishop, *op. cit.*, 40.

⁷⁴ 5228, 5205.

⁷⁵ For Bakers, compare references in 1298 and 1332 (5065, 5203); and for Whytefeld Scelyacre, compare references to land held by Henry Peris in 1298 and 1329 (5065, 5217). In Ibstone the half virgate was about 25 acres—this was the size of half virgate Sonnings (c.f. 5203 and 5217). The meaning of these terms was becoming confused by the fifteenth century, for in 1453 two half virgates were said to contain 12 acres each (5235).

⁷⁶ 5248b.

⁷⁷ Presentments for trespass included the forty sheep of John Batte in 1341, the forty sheep of Richard atte Nokslade and the thirty sheep of Simon Dolesden in 1355, and the sixty sheep of Robert le Clerk in 1356: 5219, 5224.

⁷⁸ At the September court of 1336 it was claimed that the executor of the dead parson had "not fallowed that land which ought to have been fallow in the summer". In all, 14 acres were affected, nine of which were part of the holding called Bussards. Other evidence shows Bussards to have contained 34 acres, and so slightly less than one third should have lain fallow. 5219.

⁷⁹ Such as Turville (2443), Fingest (2453) and Skirmett (W. Page (ed.), *The Victoria History of the County of Buckingham*, 3 (1925), 51).

⁸⁰ Such as Harecramp (2454) and Chequers Manor in the township of Abbfield east of Ibstone (M. D. Lobel (ed.), *A History of the County of Oxford*, 8 (1964), 105), and Studridge in Stokenchurch to the north (H. E. Salter (ed.), *The Feet of Fines for Oxfordshire, 1195-1291*, Oxfordshire Record Series, 12 (1930), 240).

⁸¹ Such as Cadmore Heath: 5106.

⁸² They included the isolated farm or small hamlet called Lipenor—members of the "de Lipenor" family appear frequently in the documents; the dwelling at Twigsid—probably the house held by Robert Thuig c. 1240 (2446); and the farm at Gravesend—Stephen de Gravesend held a croft in Ibstone in 1329 (5218).

⁸³ About 1240, all the land between Copsdon and the church of Turville was granted to the lord of the manor of Ibstone (2441). A messuage held by Merton College in 1286 was described as being in Ibstone near the church of Turville (2434), and there are a number of subsequent references in the Ibstone court rolls to dwellings in the village (5216, 5218, 5226). A seventeenth-century list of twenty freeholders in the manor includes seven cottages and tenements in Turville village (5243).

⁸⁴ There are frequent references to wells in court rolls and charters: 2438, 5211, 5216.

⁸⁵ On the demesne, new sheds were built from time to time, and old buildings were pulled down and replaced: 5063-4, 5078, 5082-3. Tenants sometimes built cottages for their children: 5211, 5216, 5221.

⁸⁶ 5211.

⁸⁷ For example, in 1315, 1329 and 1333: 5216-18.

⁸⁸ For example, the cottage called Bishops remained empty for four years after it became vacant in 1332: 5218-19.

⁸⁹ The cottage was sold in 1313 and by 1335 there was only a vacant croft, on which another tenant was ordered to build: 5216, 5218.

⁹⁰ 5062.

⁹² 5083, 5091.

⁹¹ 5216.

⁹³ 5094.

⁹⁴ 5116. It was empty between 1349 and 1356 (5094-102). Very extensive repairs were undertaken in 1355-6 (5102) and in the following year it was farmed-out (5103).

⁹⁵ It was leased-out for twenty years then: 1531. There is still a windmill on the hill.

⁹⁶ 5225-6. At least three empty cottages were seized by the manor in 1379-80, and five ruined tenements, two without roofs, were presented at the manorial court of 1398: 5226.

⁹⁷ William Nemour was given permission to build a cottage on a vacant plot in 1388: 5226.

⁹⁸ 5228-31, 5234-5, 5237. As late as 1507 a cottage was partly ruined—the walls were still standing but the roof, windows and doors had all disappeared: 5240.

⁹⁹ Architectural styles apart, the most striking differences between the medieval and modern landscapes are a greater equality in field size today—field boundaries have been altered particularly during the last hundred years—and a much greater emphasis on grassland farming.