

OPEN FIELD ENCLOSURE AND VILLAGE SHRINKAGE AT ASTON SANDFORD

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In the villages of Buckinghamshire, as elsewhere, the present layout of fields, roads, and inhabited areas is the product of many centuries of change. This article examines what happened at Aston Sandford, a small parish dominated by the open field system of agriculture which covered much of midland England in the Middle Ages. It considers developments in the village during the Middle Ages but concentrates on two great post-medieval changes – the enclosure of the open fields and the shrinkage of the village. The enclosure process was carried out informally and almost without record yet, in total, it produced the greatest change to the parish's landscape that has occurred over the past seven hundred years. This article shows that enclosure was carried out in three stages. The first, concerning only a small area, took place in the sixteenth century or earlier. The second, around 1621, affected about one-third of the parish. The third and final stage occurred between 1859 and 1878. The article also investigates the shrinkage of the village – which also passed largely unrecorded – and its relationship to the enclosure of the open fields. It suggests that, in the latter part of the seventeenth century, the population of Aston Sandford was reduced by more than a half.

INTRODUCTION

The tiny village of Aston Sandford, five miles southwest of the county town, is half-hidden by the imposing group of trees which mark its position in the slightly undulating Vale of Aylesbury landscape. Its single street heads first for Manor Farm and the church, then turns sharply to serve ten village houses before ending at a field gate. Beyond the gate, a public footpath continues the line of the road through a field which contains low, grassy earthworks indicating that buildings once stood to the east of the present village. Aerial photographs reveal more earthworks in fields to the east and south of that field and suggest that, in its heyday, the village was probably more than twice its present size.

Jefferys' map of Buckinghamshire¹, surveyed in the 1760s, reveals that, whereas the modern village street is closely flanked by garden walls and hedges, the scene then was much more open. The map shows a long, triangular village green flanked on both sides at its western end by a scatter of buildings. The green itself extended for over half a mile eastwards from the church and included within its bounds the group of earthworks which lie beyond the end of the present road. By the 1760s these were, presumably, already reduced to grassy

mounds because the map does not record any features on their site. Jefferys' map also shows that instead of ending, as it does now, at the field gate, the village street of his day forked just beyond the (future) site of the gate with its branches diverging across the green. The northern arm continued to Waldridge Manor, Owlswick and Meadle, while the southern one looped back to join the Haddenham – Longwick road. Today the western end of the green is incorporated in domestic gardens while the eastern end forms parts of four fields.

Clearly these changes are the result of an enclosure process carried out since Jefferys' map. But when were they made? Were all the fields of the parish enclosed at the same time? When did buildings stand on this green? Tate² does not include Aston Sandford in his list of parishes where the parliamentary enclosure process was used. Therefore, by implication, the enclosure of the parish's open fields was carried out by private agreement. Tate also implies that enclosure was completed in stages by quoting the 1794 Board of Agriculture report on Buckinghamshire³ to the effect that 400 out of the parish's 669 acres⁴ remained unenclosed at the end of the eighteenth century.

THE PARISH BEFORE ENCLOSURE

The open fields

Aerial photographs of the parish taken between 1946 and 1994 are held by the National Monuments Record at Swindon and the County Sites and Monuments Record in Aylesbury. The older ones show most of its surface corrugated by the fossilized patterns of hundreds of parallel arable strips, grouped into furlongs to form the pre-

enclosure field layout. Much of this is confirmed by the map attached to the Tithe Commutation Survey of 1838⁵. Nevertheless, the author had to supplement these sources in areas of uncertainty by field walking with the permission of Edwin Good of Manor Farm and Richard Belgrove of Pasture Farm, both of whom gave invaluable insights into some almost-lost elements of the parish's geography which still make themselves felt in modern soil conditions. Figure 1 shows that, with the

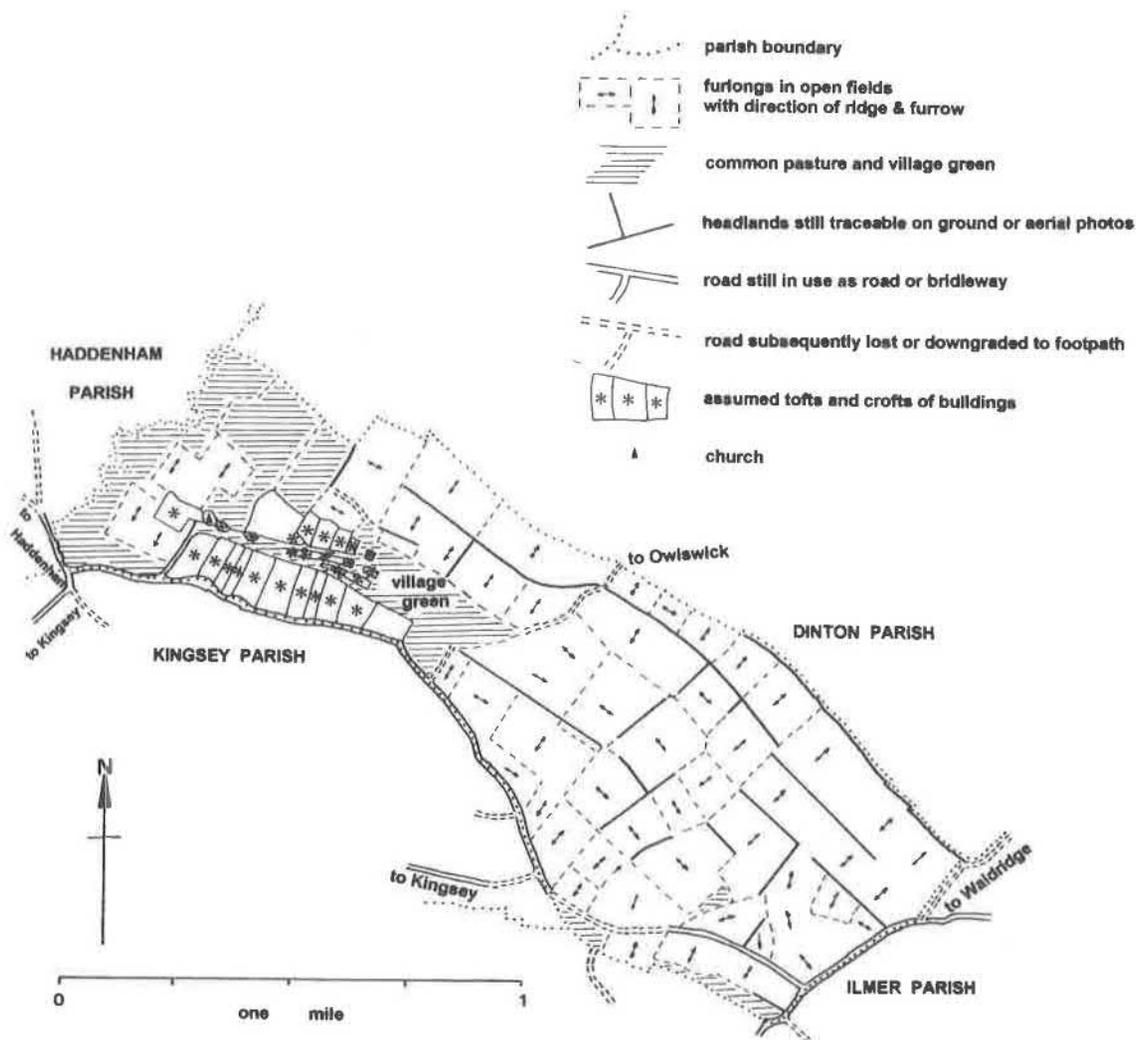


FIGURE 1 Aston Sandford parish in the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries.

exception of the village and its green and the permanent pastures beside the west end of the village, by the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries the parish was almost completely devoted to arable cultivation in open fields. Most of this former arable land survived as ridge and furrow earthworks in pasture fields until the latter part of the twentieth century and a good proportion remains the same today, particularly at the eastern end of the parish. Figure 1 also shows the network of headlands that marked the ends of furlongs and provided access routes from the village to every part of the parish; these are still visible in several places as low, linear mounds.

The core village

The Domesday survey records two manors in Aston Sandford in 1086 but the location of their hamlets has not been established. Between the ninth and thirteenth centuries, many of the Saxon hamlets that dotted the parishes of midland England were abandoned and replaced by one nucleated village per parish to form the settlement pattern we know today. In this process one of the previous hamlets often became the core of the new nucleated village. While there is no firm evidence that this happened at Aston Sandford, there is a strong possibility that the area around the church, as outlined on figure 2, formed one of the hamlets in the parish which existed before the Norman conquest. In this core area the faint boundary ditches and low grassy platforms, shown on figure 3, form a layout that seems to have been largely ignored when the village of the late Middle Ages was laid out beside them. Only the boundaries of the church and Manor Farm sites suggest continuity (the Rectory site has probably also seen long occupation, but not within its present boundaries).

On the north side of the village, figure 3 shows ditches in this core area bounding what appear to be three crofts in the field behind the modern row of houses, west of (and overlapping) plot 17 (shown on figure 2). These no longer contain any visible house platforms and do not appear on a map of the village drawn about 1730⁶. Furthermore, two properties in use today ('Stone Lacey' and 'Sandford Cottage' – nos. 18 and 19 on figure 2) straddle the frontages to these plots awkwardly. This implies that, by the time these properties were created (the cores of the present houses date from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries respec-

tively) the three plots behind them had ceased to have individual existences and had become parts of Home Pasture and plot 17. These three crofts are almost joined to the Manor Farm site by two large rectangular raised platforms of uncertain function which lie on the north side of the church.

Along the south side of the village, plots 2 and 3 also lie partly within the core area, and display a different form of development to nos. 4 to 12. Both plots had buildings close to the green in 1730 but the suggestion of a house platform beneath the hedge that now divides them hints that the 1730 picture masks a higher density of development in earlier centuries. As shown on figure 3, a break in level runs in a straight line from south-east to north-west across both plots (in plot 3 (The Old Rectory) the line of the earthwork appears to have provided a later opportunity to construct a ha-ha). This change in level does not resemble or line up with any features on plots 4–12 and suggests that these two plots were once shorter than shown on figure 2 and have a different history to the other plots on this side of the village.

So, a small area at the west end of the village has traces of a layout which, except at Manor Farm and the church, had been abandoned by the eighteenth century, and probably much earlier. Further indirect evidence for an early settlement around the church comes from two nearby field names. By the time that early seventeenth century terriers⁷ began to record field names, Little Borough Field was the nearest common arable field to the village, and Old Berry (or Oldbury) Leys was a common pasture lying just to north of this suggested medieval village core (Old Berry Leys was later renamed Middle Butts as shown on figure 2). The name elements "borough" and "bury" usually refer to a protected place, and could thus refer to the boundary of the core hamlet, although they could simply refer to a fortified (i.e. moated) manor⁸. As noted below, Manor Farm may once have been surrounded by a moat.

First phase of village extension

The plan of the extension

In contrast to the irregular layout of what is suggested to be the core hamlet, much of the rest of the late medieval village had a more regular plan. In common with the plans of a group of nearby villages (Kingsey and Longwick in Bucking-

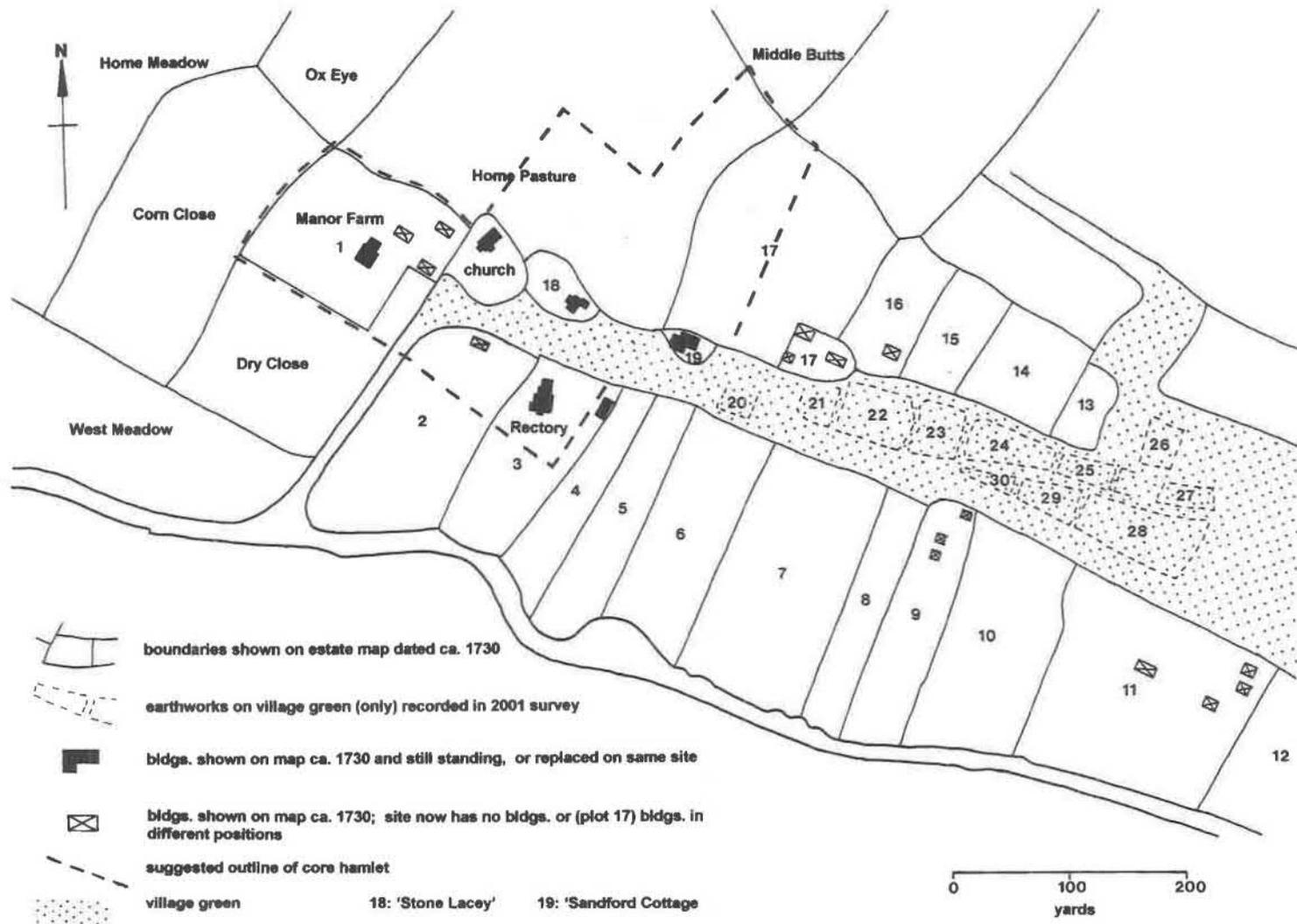


FIGURE 2 Plan of Aston Sandford village circa 1730
 (Plan based on map ref. D/PC/25/1 held by Bucks. Record Office).

hamshire, Henton and Towersey in Oxfordshire) it was arranged around a large central green which, at Aston Sandford, covered 33 acres in all. The estate map of about 1730 (the basis of figure 2) shows this green flanked to north and south by sixteen closes (nos. 2–17 on figure 2) with a seventeenth close, containing Manor Farm, at the west end of the green. This map shows farms or cottages in seven of these closes, four of them in places where no buildings stand now; the remaining closes were pastures in 1730 but, as suggested below, appear to be the tofts and crofts of former farms and cottages. The overall impression of the village in the early eighteenth century is of a large green surrounded by a scatter of farms and cottages separated by long, narrow, grassy closes. Looking in more detail at the village layout shown on the 1730 map, the regular shape of closes 4–17 suggests that they had been deliberately planned and laid out on the east side of the core hamlet. They were probably created in a fairly short period of time under firm manorial organisation, instead of growing piecemeal over the years as needs arose.

Nine closes (4–12 in figure 2) fronting the south side of the green at Aston Sandford had a family similarity. While not identical, they averaged some 190 yards in depth from the green to the Haddenham – Longwick road (which formed their rear boundary) and had roughly parallel sides; on average they covered a little over two acres each. Their variations in width could be the result of some having been subdivided and others having been merged to form double-width plots. Their shape and arrangement resembled that of arable strips in the open fields, and suggests that they could have been laid out on existing arable lands by taking a furlong out of cultivation and enclosing a certain number of strips to form each close. Today there is no sign of ridge and furrow within these plots but (figure 3) the remains of a broad, low ridge can just be detected as it parallels part of the southern edge of the green. This could represent the heavily-abraded remains of the northern headland of a furlong which ran between the site of the green and the Haddenham – Longwick road before the closes were laid out.

Today, only The Old Rectory and Old Rectory Cottage stand on the “building line” along the

south side of the green, but in 1760 Jeffery’s map of Buckinghamshire showed five other buildings along this frontage and the first draft of the Ordnance Survey map in 1813 shows three or possibly four. Indeed, one farm survived long enough on plot 9 to appear on a detailed estate sale plan in 1891⁹. Fieldwalking in 2000/01 identified five possible house platforms and, in ploughed areas, six concentrations of stone lying on the surface with small quantities of pottery dating back to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The platforms and spreads of stone rubble were in line with the Rectory along the south side of the green, and usually did not share sites with each other. Aerial photographs have not helped to confirm the sites of buildings but have been useful in highlighting the boundary ditches that mark the divisions between several of these closes.

On the north side of the green there is a row of four closes (plots 13–16 on figure 2) roughly opposite the middle of the southern row. They are not as large as their southern counterparts and these too vary in width, suggesting mergers in their history. Lying in a row, nos. 14–16 (at least) appear to have been planned and, unlike the plots south of the green, nos. 13–15 carry faint traces of ridge and furrow indicating that they had been laid out over former open fields. The tiny plot 13 (called Townsend Close in 1730) seems to protrude on to the village green, suggesting that it was a later encroachment rather than part of the original plan. Plot 17 is disproportionately large, and part of it carries traces of ridge and furrow. It seems to be the product of expansion from a plot which was once similar in size to plot 16; its two parts are specifically linked in one occupation by the schedule on the 1730 map, and, as suggested later, the smaller of these may represent another encroachment on to the green.

The only buildings that now almost perpetuate what could have been the former line of dwellings on the north side of the green are modern houses called ‘Field Cottage’ and ‘Sandford End’. These stand on the site of a farm (plot 17), shown on the 1730 estate map and still extant when the Ordnance Survey 25” scale map was surveyed in 1878. The 1730 map also showed a building next door on plot 16, but this had probably gone by the time of Jeffery’s map in 1760.

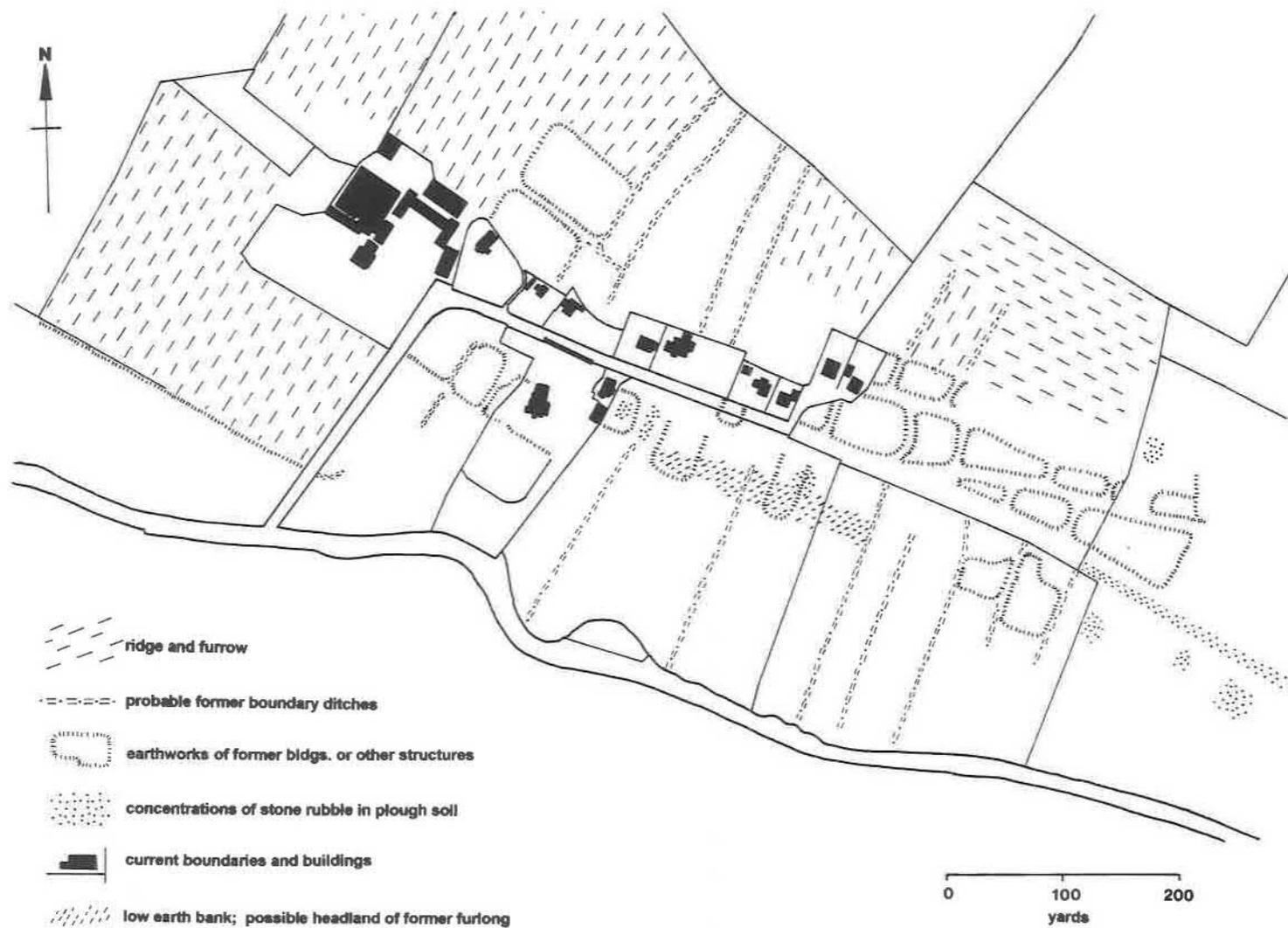


FIGURE 3 Sketch map of Aston Sandford village showing earthworks in relation to current property boundaries.

Field name evidence for the extended village

The 1730 map gives the names of the closes to north and south of the green; all but three have personal surnames as identifiers (e.g. Adkins, Carters or Surrmans Closes). One of the three exceptions is the Rectory and another is Towns-end Close mentioned above. The third, Chilgrove, may never have had a farm or cottage on it – there is certainly no evidence on site or in aerial photographs. While in several cases the personal name of the close was that of the 1730 occupier, in others it was not, suggesting the memory of earlier tenants. In contrast, the very detailed glebe terrier of 1741 shows that almost all the common pastures and furlongs of the open fields had descriptive names (e.g. West Mead or Pasture Hedge Furlong) and not personal ones. The personal names of the closes around the green imply that they were regarded differently to land units in other parts of the parish. Taken together, the names of most of these closes, the 1730 map's evidence of buildings on some closes, and the field evidence (apparent house platforms, areas of stone rubble, and scatters of pottery) suggest that here was the late-medieval village. The Manor Farm would have faced along a village green, fronted by a row of some ten farms or cottages on the south side opposite four or five more on the north side.

Dating the first phase of extension to the village

Clues about when the planned extension to the core hamlet took place are found around the village. Some closes in the area of the extension whose sites are currently ploughed have yielded small amounts of pottery and this points to dwellings occupied by the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries; only one older sherd was found in what was admittedly unsystematic fieldwalking. At Manor Farm, whose earliest surviving parts date from the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries, the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments¹⁰ recorded the fragment of a homestead moat. Such moats usually date from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries, although they were often dug around existing manor houses. The statutory list of historic buildings¹¹ dates the earliest parts of the present St. Michael's church (the lower part of the chancel arch and a blocked window in the south-west wall) to the thirteenth century. Thus the domestic pottery, the moat and the church all point to activity on the village site in the twelfth to fourteenth centuries, but do not directly support anything earlier. It is

reasonable to envisage the building or rebuilding of the church and the digging of a moat around an existing manor house as accompaniments to the laying out of the enlarged village around a new green in one of those centuries. Nationally, population was growing strongly in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, after which climate change, soil exhaustion, and plague temporarily reversed the trend early in the fourteenth, so the planned expansion of Aston Sandford in the twelfth or thirteenth centuries would have made sense.

Second phase of village extension

If the closes on the north and south sides of the village green represent a phase of development *around* it, there is also evidence of a subsequent phase which encroached *on* the green. The 1730 map shows two cottages – the present 'Stone Lacey' and 'Sandford Cottage', whose earliest surviving parts date from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries respectively – standing on tiny plots (nos. 18 and 19 on figure 2) that projected on to the green as encroachments. Towns-end Close (plot 13 on figure 2 and mentioned above) was of a similar size and could also have been an encroachment but did not contain any buildings by the time of the 1730 map. Encroachments on to the green are likely to reflect a growing population in a village tightly surrounded by cultivated fields; loss of food producing land would have been unacceptable if there was a growing number of mouths to feed.

These three were probably the precursors of the wholesale takeover of another part of the green by eleven further plots (nos. 20–30 on figure 2), most of which are marked today by grassy house platforms in the pasture field at the end of the village street. Most are slightly larger than the plots of 'Stone Lacey' and 'Sandford Cottage', but substantially smaller than the rows of tofts and crofts that flanked the north and south sides of the green. They probably contained small cottages without crofts which were suitable for landless subsistence labourers. These plots were grouped around the fork in the road that formerly crossed this pasture field (then part of the green) and this explains why no two of these encroachments have the same shape.

Three problem sites are plots 17, 20 and 30.

Plot 17 is shown on the 1730 map to be in two parts. The smaller of these is now occupied by 'Field Cottage' and 'Sandford End', and previously supported a farm shown on the 1730 map, but it

appears to block a holloway running along the north side of the green and to overlap an apparent encroachment house platform (plot 21) on the green. The implication is that, in earlier years, plot 17's buildings may have stood on the north side of the holloway and thus, at the peak extent of the village, plots 17 and 21 were occupied simultaneously. Then, after the abandonment of plot 21, plot 17 was extended south-eastwards on to the green, with the extension indicated on the 1730 map by the small subdivision at the corner of the plot. Only archaeological excavation could reveal the sequence of events here. The tiny triangular platform on the green which forms site 30 was almost too small to hold a dwelling and may have supported some communal structure.

The final problem on the green is a small raised area that stands apart from other encroachments and resembles a house platform (no. 20 on figure 2); today it makes a slight hump in the village street and extends beneath the roadside hedge into the ploughed field to the south. The present road alignment probably only dates from enclosure in 1859-78, (a hollow way is partially visible paralleling it in the field on the south side of the hedge), and this structure possibly marks the site of another communal building on the green.

Dating the arrival of encroachments on the green
Plots 21-30 were grouped compactly on one part of the green, rather than scattered randomly around it, and were sited near the centre of the village at its fullest extent. This suggests the hand of authority in the laying out of these extra plots. A possible sequence of events is that the 'Stone Lacey', 'Sandford Cottage', and (possibly) Towns-end Close encroachments were accepted as a piecemeal response to the early signs of population pressure and that, when population continued to rise, the lord of the manor decided on a more comprehensive solution with a planned group of new plots on the green.

The shapes of these encroachments respect the boundaries of the green and the routes of the former roads which crossed it, implying that the green and roads existed before the encroachments appeared. It is probable that the designation of the green was an integral part of the laying out of the original village extension (plots 4-17). We can thus surmise that the cottages *on* the green were put there during the period of population growth

immediately after the laying out of the village extension in the twelfth or thirteenth centuries, but before the early fourteenth century when, nationally, the population growth of the two preceding centuries was reversed. It is, however, perfectly possible that they were not built until after the national growth of population had resumed in about 1450. Whichever building period is correct, they were still in place in the early seventeenth century in order to accommodate the population which the parish register shows to have been living in the village by that time.

EARLY PHASES OF ENCLOSURE IN THE OPEN FIELDS

We have no evidence for any changes to the open fields when the village was growing. Such changes, however, were not long in coming once village growth had ended. The first part of the parish to be withdrawn from the common open fields was a block of 43 acres lying beside the west end of the village, almost encircling Manor Farm. There is no written record of when this occurred, but by 1730 a detailed list of tenancies on the Aston Sandford estate¹² showed that this land was tenanted by the occupier of Manor Farm and comprised 13 acres of enclosed arable (in Dry Close, Corn Close, and Ox Eye) and 30 acres of enclosed pasture (in Home Pasture and Home Meadow). These closes are identified in figure 2. None of the five glebe terriers written between 1601 and 1730 claims any rights on this land, from which it is inferred that they had been taken out of the common fields in the sixteenth century or earlier. Much of Home Pasture is still faintly corrugated by ridge and furrow which, since there is no record of it having been ploughed subsequently, confirms that part of this field, at least, had once been part of the common open fields.

The earliest written record of the next phase of enclosure in the parish was in 1639 when Rev. Robert Lenthall, Rector of Aston Sandford, compiled a terrier¹³ of the glebe lands in the parish. This showed him holding 37 "lands", or strips, distributed across four open arable fields (Dead Hill, Middle, Long Ridge, and Little Borough Fields) and 4½ acres of grass in three common pastures (West Mead, Town Mead, and Old Berry (or Oldbury) Leys). Figure 4 shows the location of the fields referred to. Comparison with subsequent, more detailed, terriers and with the tithe map enables the

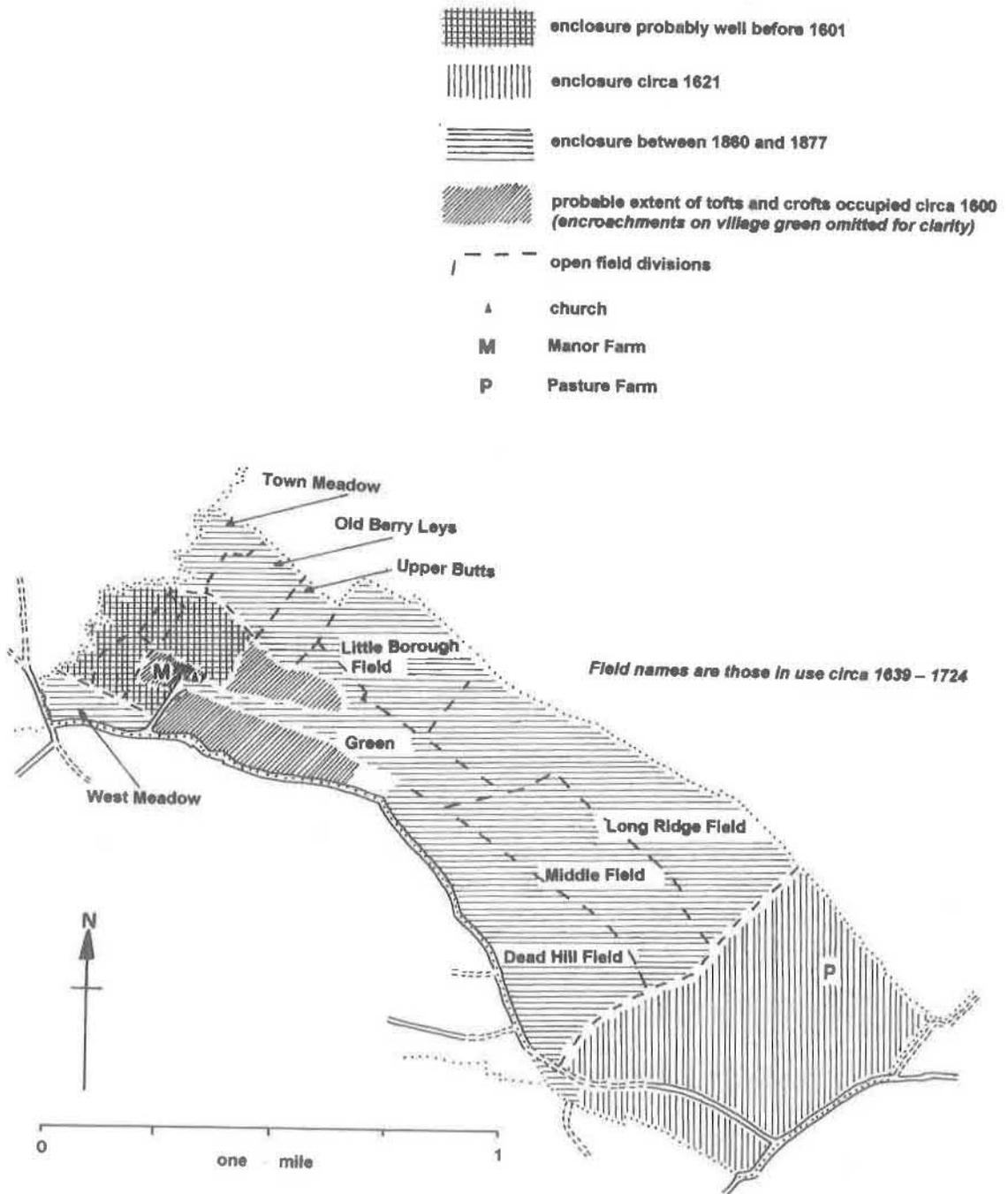


FIGURE 4 Stages in the enclosure of Aston Sandford parish.

extent and layout of these fields to be ascertained; this confirms that, in 1639, the open field system still covered well over half of the parish. As to the remainder, two brief entries in the 1639 terrier indicate that there was now some enclosed land at the eastern end of the parish. First we are told that:

In the arable closes of William Welled lying at the end of Long Ridge Field are seven lands of the glebe.....every of them lying between some lands of the said William Welled.

Secondly:

.....at the end of the Middle Fieldbetween it and the parish (*sic*) of Owlswick a close containing.....eight acres of land belonging to the said Parsonage.....which lies between the land of William Welled on both sides.

This gives no indication of how much land Mr. Welled (or Welhead) had enclosed, nor of when enclosure had taken place, but here is an unambiguous statement that by 1639 land to the east of Long Ridge and Middle Fields was no longer part of the open fields and now lay in hedged closes.

Information on the *extent and location* of these enclosures came in the 1720's when John Fleetwood of Great Missenden was lord of the manor and owner of the Aston Sandford Estate. (His estate covered the same area as the parish except for a long-established 47 acre projection into Dinton parish and a 4 acre "island" at Kingsey Mill, neither of which are discussed here). Late in 1727 Fleetwood wrote to the Bishop of Lincoln¹⁴ explaining his wish to enclose what, misleadingly, sounds like the whole parish and seeking the Bishop's approval to the terms for the resultant commutation of tithes. (His plans were probably prompted by the parish's population having been more than halved during the preceding eighty years – see below). The Bishop's reply does not appear to have survived, but Fleetwood seems to have pressed ahead with preparations to enclose. In about 1730, he compiled a detailed list of his tenants' holdings¹⁵ and probably accompanied this with a map of them (the likely existence of such a map is discussed in note 6). His plans for enclosure progressed no further but the surviving documents from his survey show that, contrary to the impression given by the 1727 letter, his estate already contained a substantial block of enclosed land consisting of the 185

acres at the eastern end of the parish which later became known as Pasture Farm; here were the closes mentioned in the 1639 glebe terrier.

Evidence for *when* the 185 acre Pasture Farm was enclosed is found in the terrier of Aston Sandford's glebe lands taken by the Rev. Thomas Penn in 1741. In this he stated, with some chagrin, that:

No lands in the parish are exempt from tithe except the lands of a farm in the remotest part of the parish south east inclosed about one hundred and twenty years ago only with the consent of the then Incumbent in lieu of the tithes whereof he and his successors have had an addition of glebe lands which exchange is much to the prejudice of the living.

We can thus date this enclosure by William Welhead at around 1621.

Thus by the time that the first map of the Aston Sandford estate was drawn about 1730 the land which would become known as Pasture Farm had been enclosed for over 100 years in five fields which, although all but one have since been subdivided, are still recognisable today. Not long after 1621 the present farmhouse and one of its barns would have been erected on part of a former furlong within these fields near the northern boundary of the parish; they are dated to the seventeenth century by architectural evidence.¹⁶

The 1639 glebe terrier's reference to the rector holding seven lands scattered "in the arable closes of William Welled lying at the end of Long Ridge Field" shows that Mr. Welhead initially continued to cultivate his newly enclosed fields in the traditional strips. This inconvenience of not converting immediately to more profitable pasture was possibly forced on him because there were no spare strips in the surviving open fields which were available to be allocated to the glebe in place of those which Welhead wanted the rector to abandon at Pasture Farm. The 1646 glebe terrier contains remarks suggesting that agreement had still not been reached, but the number of glebe lands in the open fields nearly doubled between the 1646 and 1674 terriers (bringing them back to slightly more than had been recorded in the 1601 terrier), showing that the rector had abandoned his holdings at Pasture Farm by 1674. As will be shown below, the second half of the seventeenth century saw the parish's population fall by over a half and it was

presumably for this reason that more strips in the open fields were available to be added to the glebe.

THE VILLAGE SHRINKS

The old families move out

The author has analysed the parish register¹⁷ from when it started a coherent sequence of entries in 1615 down to 1811 (the latter year chosen to obtain calibration from an overlap with the start of the national census) to determine how many families in the parish needed a roof over their heads in any one year. This study showed that up to three generations of a family appeared to share one roof in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and, using this basis, gave an indication of how many households lived in the village in each year. Exceptions to the "one house per extended family" rule were made for the large Lambert and Williams families, shown by the 1730 map to be occupying two houses each, and for two branches of the Chapman family which

did not, on paper, show any interconnection.

The parish register suggests that, in 1635, there were some 23 families living in the village, in addition to the Welheads who had moved out to build their new farmstead at what is now Pasture Farm. While figure 2 shows a possible maximum of 30 dwelling plots on and around the green, it has been suggested above that plots 12, 20 and 30 did not carry a farm or cottage and thus that the greatest number of dwellings in the village was probably 27. The 23 families resident in the village in 1635 must have been occupying at least some of the encroachments on the green since there were only 17 plots around it. That they did not need all available plots suggests that the village was already past its peak size by that time. It is possible that at least one of the vacant plots had been left by the Welheads when they moved to Pasture Farm in the 1620's.

As shown in figure 5 the number of families in the village rose to 25 by 1645 but then fell almost continuously to bottom out at ten between 1710

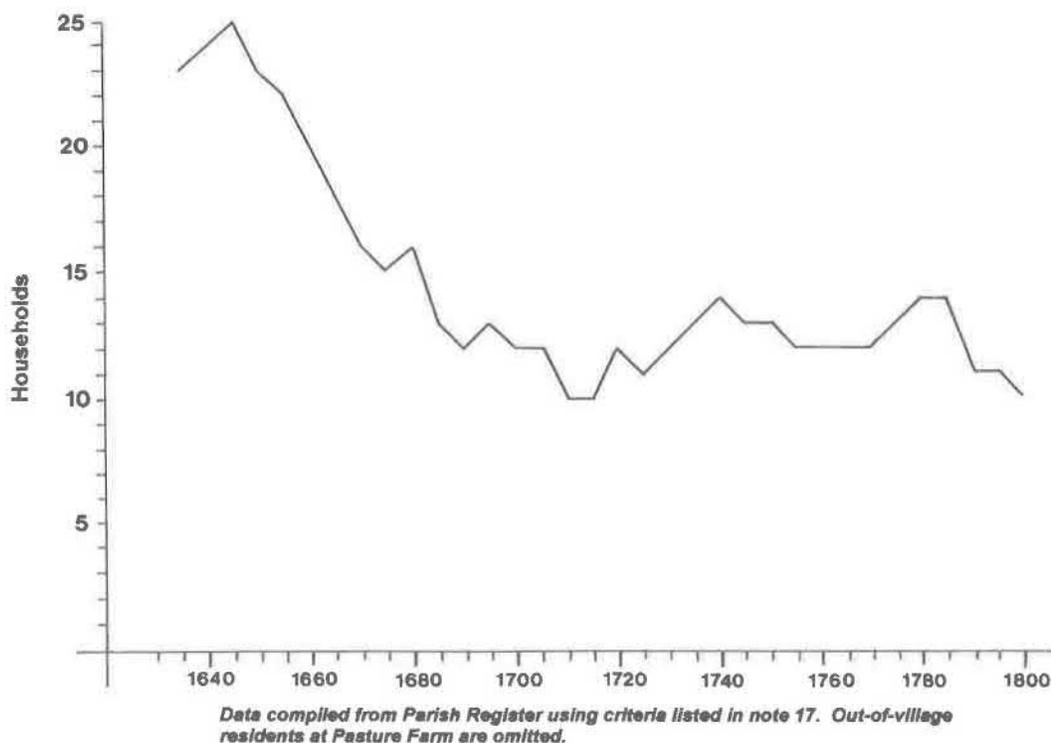


FIGURE 5 Number of households present in Aston Sandford village at 5-yearly intervals between 1635 and 1800.

and 1715, shortly before Fleetwood's abortive proposal in 1727 to complete the enclosure of the parish's open fields. The second half of the seventeenth century must have seen a depressing spread of empty and decaying farms and cottages standing around and on the green as villagers departed and the number of resident families more than halved. The fact that emigration from the village was spread over sixty years precludes eviction as the reason for the families' departure and the absence of a sudden cluster of deaths makes an epidemic unlikely. More probably the enclosure of Pasture Farm in about 1621, and the resultant loss of nearly one-third of the common grazing on fallow arable lands, made it difficult for the cottagers to feed enough of the livestock on which they depended. Initially they appear to have tried to adapt to their reduced circumstances by altering the operating arrangements in the remaining open fields. In the 1601 glebe terrier the rector had recorded "...thirtie acres of gleeb Land lying in the three common fields of Aston Samford here and there dispersed among the lands of the inhabitants". By the time of the 1639 terrier, however, the glebe lands were scattered through *four* named common fields. This implies a wholesale reallocation of furlongs to new, smaller common fields in an attempt to minimise the impact of the loss of fallow land grazing area. Presumably only when it became clear that reorganisation had not worked did the families begin to realise that they had to leave, which they did from 1650 onwards.

The reduction of common grazing land caused by the enclosure of Pasture Farm would have had the greatest effect on the poorest subsistence farmers who held few or no strips in the open fields; these were most likely to occupy the plots on the green which were the smallest in the village. It is thus to be expected that these encroachment plots would have been abandoned earlier than the larger plots around the green. By the time of Fleetwood's 1730 map all the encroachments had gone except for Stone Lacey, Sandford Cottage and Towns-end Close, while gaps had begun to appear between the buildings surrounding the green.

The fall in the size of the population inevitably affected the rector's finances. When the village was at its maximum extent, baptisms, weddings, and funerals provided him with a thin but steady additional income. In the first half of the seventeenth century entries for such services in the parish

register refer almost entirely to residents of the parish; entries for people from outside had been once-in-a-decade events. Thomas Lillingstone, rector from 1643 to 1676, seems to have borne the most acute phase of the population decline, and thus a reduction of special services, without seeking to make up for his loss of income. In contrast his successor, John Porter, (who took over when emigration was slowing), seems to have reacted to the loss of parishioners by widening his "catchment area". Between 1677 and 1692 one baptism, seven weddings and three funerals were conducted at Aston Sandford for people who, on paper, had no connection with the parish. Then, after a lull of two years, one baptism, 31 weddings and three funerals of outsiders were conducted between 1695 and 1706. Porter's retirement in 1708 brought an abrupt end to a practice which had brought people to his church from miles around and which may have created hostility from incumbents of surrounding parishes. This may explain why his replacement, Rev. Thomas Penn, started his ministry (at the time when Aston Sandford's population was at its lowest) by discontinuing his predecessor's practice. However he, too, must have found a need to increase his fees and, between 1716 and 1724, fifteen couples from outside the village were married at Aston Sandford, followed by a long lull and then seven more in 1739-1743 just before Penn retired.

Incoming residents reduce the number of tenant farmers

The parish register shows that the initial outflow of families in the seventeenth century was partly offset by a small counter flow with the Tylors and Wheelers moving into the village during the 1640's, but both families moved out in the 1670's. The Tee family came in the 1670's, but left within fifteen years.

Although the village would never return to its former size, it was not long before the parish register recorded the arrival of the first of the new wave of people who would occupy the village through the eighteenth century. The Mableys came in the 1690s, followed by the Williams (at Manor Farm) in the 1700s, the Watts in the 1710s, and the Hutchins in the 1720s. While new blood kept the parish going, there was an almost-complete change of residents. Most families which had been living in the village in the 1620's and 1630's had gone by

1690, and most of the much smaller number present in 1800 had arrived since 1720. Only the Hance and Stevens families appear to have been resident throughout the study period (both had gone by the time of the 1841 census). This turnover in the village population would have caused a lack of continuity in the community in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. As an example, the 1724 glebe terrier showed that, since the terrier taken in 1700, two of the open arable fields (Dead Hill Field and Long Ridge Field) had been renamed Upper Field and Red Land Field respectively. Their boundaries had not changed so there seems little point in this unless a preponderance of new people in the village had no feeling for local history and traditions.

The glebe terrier of 1639 showed that the common fields of the parish were then held by eleven tenant farmers plus the rector and the absentee lord of the manor (one of the Fleetwood family of Great Missenden). Between them they farmed 292 acres of arable strips in four open fields and grazed 50 acres of common pasture¹⁸. Nearly a century later John Fleetwood's detailed record of the holdings of his tenants (made in about 1730) showed that the extent of enclosed arable and common pasture in the parish had not changed significantly since 1639 but was now occupied by just four tenants plus the rector, indicating a big drop in the number of tenancies since 1639.

While the fall in the number of tenant farmers in the open fields was partly the result of a declining population, it was also the product of growing market forces in agriculture prompting newcomers to lease larger land holdings than the subsistence farmers whom they replaced. It is striking that, whereas the number of agricultural labourers recorded in the parish register was negligible in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries (3 were recorded in 1638-42 and 3 in 1681-1702 but no others), they became a significant feature of the entries after 1747.

ENCLOSURE IS COMPLETED

So far we have seen the substantial seventeenth-century reduction in the population and number of dwellings in Aston Sandford as the slightly delayed result of the enclosure of Pasture Farm by the Welhead family in about 1621. Although its effects on the village were dramatic, the Welheads' encl-

sure, together with the earlier very small one beside Manor Farm, left nearly two-thirds of the parish unchanged as open fields. Since a low hill hides Pasture Farm from the village, the landscape seen from the settlement after 1621 must have seemed oddly unchanged as the village decayed.

The family which was finally to enclose the remaining open fields came to Aston Sandford late in the eighteenth century. In 1764 the Dover family first appears in the parish register, two years after the marriage of John Dover and Elizabeth Tyler and their move from nearby Haddenham to Manor Farm at Aston Sandford. In 1783 John Dover renewed his lease for 21 years¹⁹ from absentee landlord Henry Hurt of Spitalfields, London; the lease was of two farms which by then accounted for three-quarters of all the unenclosed arable land and most of the common pasture in the parish. By 1786 Henry Hurt was dead and his executors granted a lease²⁰ of the 185 acre Pasture Farm jointly to John Dover's brother James and to James Matthews, both of Aston Sandford. In the following years branches of the Dover and Matthews families occupied most of the parish, with Sarah Kingham the only other occupier of the open fields recorded by the 1788 glebe terrier. John Dover died in 1791 but his widow, Elizabeth, continued to farm the open fields from Manor Farm with the help of two of her sons until about 1820 (the year of Elizabeth's death). After this the enterprise was taken over by her youngest son, James, until his death in 1856.²¹

For the last half of the eighteenth century the parish register shows the village population to have hovered between eleven and fourteen families (in addition to two families out at Pasture Farm) before falling back to ten in 1801. In 1801 the first national census enumerated 31 males and 40 females in the parish, giving an average of just under 6 persons per household which, since it includes unrelated labourers and servants living as part of the households at Manor and Pasture Farms and servants living in the Rectory, shows a reasonable match between the register and census.

By the time of the Tithe Commutation Agreement of 1842 the fields which, since about 1724, had been called Upper, Middle and Red Land Fields (246 acres) were still being worked as unenclosed arable but now as one field (called The Great Field). Little Borough Field (46 acres) was now pasture but still laid out in unenclosed strips (the agreement refers to its various "lands"). The

schedule attached to the tithe agreement shows that, after excluding glebe lands, the entire farmed area of the parish was now in only two units, with Messrs. Stopps and Williat (or Willott) occupying the enclosed fields of Pasture Farm (probably as sub-tenants) and James Dover on all the rest.

The continued survival of The Great Field and Little Borough Field as open fields through the mid-nineteenth century may be indicative of inertia. As the sole tenant James Dover could dictate precisely which crops would be sown and harvested where and when; indeed by 1842 he had ended arable farming in the whole of Little Borough Field. Furthermore the Tithe Commutation map appears to show an isolated barn, later to be known as Black Barn, under construction on Long Oatland Furlong beside the crossing of two headlands near the centre of The Great Field. In the past the construction of a substantial building on part of the open fields would have been highly controversial; that there appears to have been no controversy in 1842 shows the completeness of Dover's control. In the light of this the cost of hedging and ditching to divide up land which was all under his tenancy may have seemed an unnecessary luxury. It is perhaps more difficult to understand why he did not enclose the 33 acre village green, but it was still in existence in 1851 when the national census recorded the addresses of ten out of the twelve houses in the village simply as "Aston Green".

The situation changed with the death of James Dover in 1856 and his replacement at Manor Farm by the energetic John Dover (a grandson of the first Dover to come to Aston Sandford) who had been farming Bridgefoot Farm nearby at Ford. In 1859, possibly after an approach by Dover, Rev. John Hurt Barber, the absentee owner of the Aston Sandford estate, sold the estate's freehold to him and his brother William Dover of Dinton²². After centuries of absentee landlords, Aston Sandford suddenly had owners who were local men and this seems to have been the catalyst for action. John Dover set about refurbishing and extending Manor farmhouse and redeveloping its farmyard with a fine range of brick-built buildings which still stand today. He must then have started to break up the wide expanse of the open fields and village green with new hedges and ditches; by the time that the first edition of the Ordnance Survey's 25" scale map was surveyed in 1878, the whole parish had

become enclosed, making it one of the last in Buckinghamshire to be thus transformed.

Two changes recorded in the national census point towards the enclosure having taken place between the dates of the 1871 census and the 1878 visit by the Ordnance Survey. Firstly in 1861 and 1871 the census had recorded Manor Farm's workforce as consisting of fourteen or fifteen men and boys but in 1881 their number had suddenly more than doubled, suggesting a drastically different agricultural operation on the farm following enclosure. Secondly whereas the fifteen or sixteen farm workers recorded by the census as living in the village in 1851 and 1861 could have supplied all of Manor Farm's labour needs in those years, by 1881 only 8 village residents were farm workers, implying that most of John Dover's workforce were, by then, walking to work from surrounding villages. This fall in the number of resident farm workers came when, after decades of stability, nearly half of the households living there moved out and were replaced between 1871 and 1881 with a suddenness which again suggests that the village had just undergone another great upheaval.

The enclosures carried out by Mr. Welhead in the 1620s and John Dover in the 1870s had similar results in that they completely changed the appearance of their respective parts of the parish's fields from hedgeless prairies to the hedged fields which we see today. But they had quite different effects on the size and appearance of the village. In the seventeenth century the village shrank drastically, but its overall layout remained the same. In the nineteenth century there was no further shrinkage, but the appearance of the village changed completely as its street was straightened and as house gardens and fields were extended across the former green to face each other in parallel lines of walls and hedges flanking the highway.

REFERENCES

(B.R.O. Buckinghamshire Record Office)

1. *Buckinghamshire in the 1760s and 1820s: the county maps of Jefferys and Bryant*. Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society, 2000.
2. *A Handlist of Buckinghamshire Enclosure Acts and Awards by W.E. Tate*. Buckinghamshire County Council, 1946

3. *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Buckingham, with observations on the means of its improvement*, by W., J., & J., Malcolm, 1794.
4. Aston Sandford parish was recorded as covering 669 acres in the 1841 and 1871 censuses and in the 1842 Tithe Commutation Agreement. It had grown to 679 acres in the 1891 census and to 680 acres in the 1971 census; this increase is assumed by the writer to derive from the adjustment of the western parish boundary when the stream which separates this parish from Haddenham was substantially straightened.
5. The Tithe Commutation Survey and Agreement are held in the Public Record Office (refs. IR.30/3/5 (map of 1838) and IR.29/3/5 (agreement of 1842)).
6. This map, entitled 'A survey of Aston Sandford in the County of Bucks.', is in B.R.O. (ref. D/PC/25/4). It is undated, and is internally self-contradictory. It claims to show the estate of John Barber, (who held the Aston Sandford estate from 1789 to 1809), and it shows the common fields after they had been reduced from four to two, which took place after the glebe terrier dated 1788. However, of the six tenants listed in its schedule, five are shown by the parish register to have died between 1732 and 1766 while the sixth does not appear in the register unless the map has given him the wrong initial, in which case he died in 1749. On the other hand the Dover family made its first appearance in the parish register in 1764 and, by 1786, occupied 472½ out of 669 acres in the parish; nevertheless they are not mentioned on the "Barber" map. The author interprets this to indicate that the map in the B.R.O. was drawn for John Barber to show the layout of his estate by copying one drawn for John Fleetwood (who held the estate from 1711 to about 1737) and, for some reason unknown, identifying individual properties with the names of the long-dead Fleetwood tenants who had once occupied them. The writer therefore assumes that this is a copy (with some updating amendments, particularly in the common fields) of a lost map which had been attached to John Fleetwood's survey of 1730 (see item (12) below) in preparation for an enclosure which did not take place, and that it shows the layout of the village (but not the open fields) as at 1730.
7. Glebe terriers of Aston Sandford dated 1601, 1639, 1674, 1700, 1724, 1760, 1763, 1766, 1780, 1788, and 1822 are held in Lincolnshire Archives (ref. Bundle of terriers: Aston Sandford, Bucks.). The terrier dated 1741 is held by B.R.O. (ref. BAS.ST.118) and a damaged draft of the 1646 terrier is in the parish register held by B.R.O.(ref. PR/9/1/1) . In addition the 1639 terrier is published on pages 19-21 in *Buckinghamshire Glebe Terriers 1578-1640*, ed. Michael Reed, Buckinghamshire Record Society, 1997. Glebe terriers, which usually list the location of the glebe lands scattered through the open fields, are an invaluable window through which to observe the layout of a field system long gone and, by comparing successive terriers, to observe changes in that field system and its occupiers as the years passed. Although written to a nominally standard format, they contain occasional nuggets of information when individual rectors departed from convention to explain something which was worrying them.
8. *Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place Names* by Eilert Ekwall, page 75. Clarendon Press, Oxford (4th ed. 1991).
9. Auction particulars of freehold estate in Aston Sandford, 1891. B.R.O. (ref: BAS/280/41).
10. *Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England): an inventory of the historical monuments in Buckinghamshire*, Vol. 1, p. 22. H.M.S.O. 1913.
11. *Ninety-ninth List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest compiled under section 54 of The Town & Country Planning Act, 1971*.
12. *Particulars of John Fleetwood's estate at Aston Sandford* is held by B.R.O. (ref. D/MH28/22). This document (probably a draft) is undated but Fleetwood held the estate from 1711 to about 1737 and the five tenants named in it (four in the open fields and one at Pasture Farm) narrow the date down to 1720-1732 with 1730-1732 being the most likely. On the other hand Fleetwood had proposed the enclosure of the open fields in 1727 and that would have been a possible year for the survey. The writer has taken 1730 as the most likely date

and refers to this throughout the article.

13. See ref. 7.
14. Letter dated 6 September 1727 from John Fleetwood to Bishop of Lincoln is held by Lincolnshire Archives (ref. BEN/2/31)
15. See ref. 12.
16. See ref. 11.
17. Analysis of Aston Sandford Parish Register. (B.R.O. ref. PR/9/1/1). In this analysis families were normally considered to be resident in Aston Sandford if they were the subject of four or more entries in the register (the average for resident families was 11.5 entries). Nine families with less than four entries were included because their individual circumstances suggested compellingly that they were village residents; these included being described in the register as "of Aston Sandford" or as being a churchwarden, or being listed in a glebe terrier as an occupier of lands in the open fields. From 1615 to 1635 the number of families recorded in the register rose steeply as they made their first appearances in it; this, however, is due to the newness of the register rather than to the inward migration of families. For this reason no "safe" totals of families can be made before 1635.
18. It is necessary to read the glebe terriers of 1639 and 1700 together to understand the actual extent of common pasture at this time, all of it by now close to the village at the west end of the parish.
19. Renewal of lease of land at Aston Sandford in 1783. B.R.O. (ref: D/PC/25/1).
20. Grant of lease of Pasture Farm, Aston Sandford in 1786. B.R.O. (ref.: D/PC /25/2).
21. Mrs. Ruth Brown, of West Ashling, Chichester. Pers. comm. 24/8/2001.
22. Sale of freehold of Aston Sandford Estate, 1859. B.R.O. (ref.: BAS/289/41).