

THE CUSTOMARY LAND MARKET IN BEDFORDSHIRE  
IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

by

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ABSTRACT

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THE MARKET IN CUSTOMARY LAND IN BEDFORDSHIRE IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

by Andrew Christopher Jones

In Bedfordshire in the fifteenth century the market in customary (or copyhold) land ceased to be a purely peasant land market. As the security of tenure of this land grew, and as the stigma of customary tenure declined, men of a higher social status - gentry and merchants - began to buy up customary land, especially after about 1480. At the same time, prosperous peasants and other local farmers began to amass large holdings in and around their home village or town. The survival of several series of court rolls and of court registers enables us to reconstruct in detail the customary land market. In particular, it is possible to describe the activities of the more important landholders, their family background, and the development of their farms. In this connexion, special reference is made to the land market at Arlesey, a small village, and at Leighton Buzzard, a market town. An attempt is made to show not only how the land market affected the size of holdings, but also how it affected their distribution over the open fields and the structure of the fields themselves.

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Abbreviations (full titles are listed in the Bibliography)

Add.	Additional
<u>AgHR</u>	<u>Agricultural History Review</u>
<u>A.H.E.W.</u>	<u>Agrarian History of England and Wales</u>
<u>B.A.J.</u>	Bedfordshire Archaeological Journal
B.A.S.	Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society
B.H.R.S.	Bedfordshire Historical Records Society
B.M.	British Museum
B.R.S.	Buckinghamshire Record Society
BuRO	Buckinghamshire Record Office
<u>Calendar</u>	<u>Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem...Henry VII</u>
<u>Cal. Inq. Misc.</u>	<u>Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous</u>
<u>Cal. Papal Reg.</u>	<u>Calendar of Entries in the Papal Registers</u>
<u>C.C.R.</u>	<u>Calendar of Close Rolls</u>
<u>C.E.H.E.</u>	Cambridge Economic History of Europe, <u>The Agrarian Life of the Middle Ages</u> , ed. M. M. Postan (2nd. ed., 1966).
<u>C.F.R.</u>	<u>Calendar of Fine Rolls</u>
Ch.	Charter
<u>C.M.R.</u>	<u>Cartularium Monasterii de Rameseia</u>
<u>C.N.</u>	<u>Carte Nativorum</u>
<u>C.P.</u>	<u>Complete Peerage</u>
<u>C.P.M.R.</u>	<u>Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls</u>
<u>C.P.R.</u>	<u>Calendar of Patent Rolls</u>
C.R.O.	County Record Office, Bedford

Dalton	<u>The Manuscripts of St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle</u> , ed. J. N. Dalton (Windsor, 1957)
<u>D.N.B.</u>	<u>Dictionary of National Biography</u>
<u>ECHR</u>	<u>Economic History Review</u>
<u>E.H.R.</u>	<u>English Historical Review</u>
<u>English Wills</u>	<u>English Wills, 1498-1526</u> , ed. A. F. Cirket (B.H.R.S. xxxvii, 1957).
<u>Fasti</u>	<u>Fasti Wyndesorienses</u> , ed. S. L. Ollard (Windsor, 1950)
<u>Feudal Aids</u>	<u>Inquisitions...relating to Feudal Aids</u>
<u>G.J.</u>	<u>Geographical Journal</u>
Godber	J. Godber, <u>History of Bedfordshire</u> (Bedford, 1969).
Hervey	<u>Two Bedfordshire Subsidy Lists, 1309 and 1332</u> , ed. S. H. A. Hervey (Suffolk Green Books, xviii, 1925).
H.R.O.	Hertfordshire Record Office
<u>I.T.R.</u>	<u>Index to Testamentary Records...</u>
L.R.S.	Lincoln Record Society
<u>Luton Register</u>	<u>The Register of the Fraternity or Guild...of Luton...</u> , ed. H. Gough (1906).
<u>Musters</u>	<u>The Certificate of Musters for Buckinghamshire in 1522</u> , ed. A. C. Chibnall (B.R.S. xvii, 1973).
<u>N.P.P.</u>	<u>Northants. Past and Present</u>
<u>P.C.C.</u>	<u>Index of the Wills Proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury</u>
P.R.O.	Public Record Office
Rec. Comm.	Record Commission
<u>Rot. Parl.</u>	<u>Rotuli Parliamentorum</u>
<u>S.A.C.</u>	<u>Sussex Archaeological Collections</u>
S.B.T.	Shakespeare's Birthplace Trust, Stratford-upon-Avon

<u>T.B.A.S.</u>	<u>Transactions of the Birmingham Archaeological Society</u>
<u>T.L.A.H.S.</u>	<u>Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society</u>
<u>Trans. I.B.G.</u>	<u>Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers</u>
<u>T.R.H.S.</u>	<u>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</u>
<u>U.B.H.J.</u>	<u>University of Birmingham Historical Journal</u>
<u>Valor</u>	<u>The Grey of Ruthin Valor</u> , ed. R. I Jack (Sydney, 1965).
<u>V.C.H.</u>	<u>Victoria County History</u> (of Bedfordshire unless otherwise specified)
<u>W.A.M.</u>	<u>Westminster Abbey Muniments</u>

Note

All references beginning "XV" are to manuscripts at St George's Chapel, Windsor.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

In recent years the land market in England during the later Middle Ages has become a subject of major interest to historians. Research has concentrated upon two aspects: the village land market, and the land market among the gentry and nobility. Three things distinguished the former from the latter. The first and most obvious was the social, and often legal, status of the participants. The second was the smaller average size of individual transactions in the village land market, and the third was the restricted area in which this market operated, usually one village or a group of neighbouring villages. These have given the village land market a special character which historians have described as a "peasant" market.

While it has become accepted practice to write about "peasant" society, "peasant" itself was a word rarely used in England in the Middle Ages, and certainly not by those whom historians have called peasants. In the few sources where the word "peasant" occurs, it was usually synonymous with rusticus (a rural dweller),<sup>1</sup> or villanus (a villein).<sup>2</sup> By the thirteenth century, rusticus and villanus were terms of abuse used by the gentry and nobility to describe the lowest levels of rural society.<sup>3</sup> When English writers started to use "peasant" at all

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1. Historia et Cartularium Monasterii Sancti Petri Gloucestrie, ed. W. H. Hart (3 vols., Rolls Ser., 1863-7), i. 147 (I am grateful to Prof. R. H. Hilton for this reference). 2. Year Books of the Reign of King Edward the Third, Year XVI (first part), ed. L. O. Pike (Rolls Ser., 1896) pp. xxii, 65. 3. B. White, 'Poet and Peasant', The Reign of Richard II: essays in honour of May McKisack, ed. F. R. H. DuBoulay and C. M. Barron (1971), p. 73. They were terms of abuse at all levels of society: in the 1490s, Nicholas Barton of Brill (Bucks) was taken to court by Thomas Couley for slandering him as rusticum et servum, saying also, "Avaunte chorle and I wolde prove the a chorle of condicione" (BuRO D/A/V/1, old fo. 266). This case is noted by M. Bowker, 'The Commons' supplication against the Ordinaries in the light of some Archidiaconal Acta', T.R.H.S. 5th ser. xxi (1971), p. 65, and similar cases are discussed by S. F. C. Milsom, Historical Foundations of the Common Law (1969), p. 334.

consistently, in the sixteenth century, it was still in a derogatory sense, but directed not so much against villagers in England as against those in France. It was acknowledged, however, that husbandmen in England were vilified (unfairly) by their superiors as "villaines, pesauntes, or slaves".<sup>1</sup> For the most part, favourable comparisons were drawn between English villagers and their continental counterparts.<sup>2</sup> The meanings which now attach to the words "peasant" and "peasantry" are arbitrary, reflecting the economic and social activities of the majority of villagers. However, Dr Hyams has provided a definition of "peasant" which combines a contemporary awareness of the social hierarchy<sup>3</sup> with the historian's awareness that "peasant" society included many different sorts of men. His definition, used in this study, is as follows: "Basically, it ("peasant") should include primary cultivators holding land of which they may or may not have legal control. It ought also to take in other "countrymen" who share the way of life and values of the cultivators, hired labourers, craftsmen, and so on. Many of these will, after all, have some land too. Thus we might profitably consider as a peasant in medieval England anyone who:

- (a) lived outside the towns, and either
- (b) held no land at all, or  
held all his land by customary tenure or socage tenure or, if he held some land by knight service, had all his holdings in one manor or village, and
- (c) was not a noble, knight, burgess, monk or clerk (except parish priest)".<sup>4</sup>

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1. A Discourse of the Common Weal of this Realm of England, ed. E. Lamond (Camb., 1893; repr. 1954), pp. 94, 123. 2. Sir John Fortescue, The Governance of England, ed. C. Plummer (Oxford, 1885), pp. 113-4, 137-9, 197, 281-7. 3. S. L. Thrupp, The Merchant Class of Medieval London (Chicago, 1948), pp. 288-319, provides an introduction to ideas of the social hierarchy in the Middle Ages. 4. P. R. Hyams, 'The origins of a peasant land market in England', EcHR 2nd ser. xxiii, no. 1 (1970), p. 23.

Much of the early peasant land market was in free land, whether or not the participants were free men. Where village or peasant land was held in villeinage, it too changed hands, despite restrictions imposed by landlords upon its alienation. It is the size of the market between peasants, free and unfree, which has attracted attention. When the survival of sources first permits a detailed examination of the market in customary land, from about 1250, it appears to have been growing in scale. On the manors of the bishop of Ely, for example, transactions in customary land had become a flood by the reign of Edward II.<sup>1</sup> In East Anglia in general, the market was in full spate by the mid-fourteenth century,<sup>2</sup> a situation paralleled on the estates of St Albans Abbey.<sup>3</sup> On the estates of Titchfield Abbey, "the most striking feature... in the early fourteenth century was the...increasing volume of land transactions amongst peasants".<sup>4</sup> The growth in the peasant land market can also be traced in Wiltshire,<sup>5</sup> the West Midlands,<sup>6</sup> and the Chilterns.<sup>7</sup> Faced with so much activity, historians have been preoccupied with its origins, though their search has been hampered by a lack of early evidence. The suggestion has been made that the rise of the peasant land market was a thirteenth-century phenomenon,<sup>8</sup> the result of the rise

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1. E. Miller, The Abbey and Bishopric of Ely (Camb., 1951), p. 138.
  2. B. Dodwell, 'Holdings and inheritance in medieval East Anglia', EcHR 2nd ser. xx, no. 1 (1967), p. 63.
  3. A. E. Levett, Studies in Manorial History (Oxford, 1938), p. 187.
  4. D. C. Watts, 'A model for the early fourteenth century', EcHR 2nd ser. xx, no. 3 (1967), p. 543.
  5. V.C.H. Wilts. iv. 36.
  6. R. H. Hilton, A Medieval Society (1966), p. 161.
  7. D. Roden, 'Inheritance customs and succession to land in the Chiltern hills in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries', Jnl. of British Studies 7, no. 1 (1967), pp. 2-3.
  8. Hyams, 'The origins of a peasant land market...', pp. 18-31.

in population, mounting land-hunger, and the consequent demand for land. However, there is some evidence for peasant land transactions in East Anglia in the twelfth century,<sup>1</sup> and in the south of the country at the beginning of the thirteenth century.<sup>2</sup> The volume of transactions may not have constituted a market in the accepted sense,<sup>3</sup> but it shows that peasant land-dealing was not necessarily a new thing around the year 1200.

Professor Postan has suggested that the peasant land market owed its existence "more to certain abiding features of peasant life than to the higher land values of the thirteenth century and their attractions for speculators". One of the more important of the "abiding features" was the existence within the peasant community of "natural buyers and sellers". To a peasant, the ideal farm-size was one which was both large enough to feed his family and small enough to be worked by the labour available to him. As this ideal was rarely attainable, men found themselves with a farm too small to meet the family's needs, or a farm too large to be worked by the family's labour. These situations could be remedied by recourse to the labour market, to the land market, or to both.<sup>4</sup> A man could hire out his surplus labour, or buy or lease extra land, or he could hire extra labour, or dispose of some of his land. The logic behind Professor Postan's argument is that the peasant land market was as old as peasant society itself, for inequalities of family size and the consequent need for a means of land redistribution in the village were indigenous to that society. But this argument does

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1. Dodwell, 'Holdings and inheritance...', p. 63.  
xxxvii-xxxviii.  
xxxiv-xxxv.

3. Hyams, p. 19, n. 2.

2. C.N. pp.  
4. C.N. pp.

not deny that population growth in the thirteenth century would have increased the scale of the land market. Certainly, throughout all ranks of society in the Middle Ages the ownership of land conveyed status, and peasants appear to have sought land and enjoyed its benefits as avidly as their superiors. Work done by G. H. Tupling, and more recently by Dr King, suggests that considerations of family size as well as family fortune combined to produce a peasant land market, for peasants entered into land transactions both for the material prosperity they brought and to provide for their children.<sup>1</sup>

Whereas research has shown that there was an active peasant land market in many areas between 1200 and 1350, it reveals that the years between 1350 and 1500 were ones of a variety of local situations. On the manors of Ramsey Abbey, for example, the fifteenth century was a time of "failure in land demand", a period when peasants "refused land", a development which seemed of "revolutionary significance".<sup>2</sup> At Chippenham (Cambs), the land market stagnated throughout the fifteenth century,<sup>3</sup> and in the south-west, on the estates of the Duchy of Cornwall, the demand for land slackened off in the early decades of the century.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, an increase in land-dealing in the fifteenth century among the Leicestershire peasantry was "the probable precondition for the emergence of the wealthy peasant" in that county;<sup>5</sup> at Forncett

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1. G. H. Tupling, The Economic History of Rossendale (Manchester, 1927), p. 76; E. King, Peterborough Abbey, 1086-1310 (Camb., 1973), p. 124.
  2. J. A. Raftis, Tenure and Mobility (Toronto, 1964), pp. 190-8.
  3. M. Spufford, A Cambridgeshire Community (Leicester, 1965), pp. 34-5.
  4. J. Hatcher, Rural Economy and Society in the Duchy of Cornwall, 1300-1500 (Camb., 1970), p. 229.
  5. R. H. Hilton, The Economic Development of some Leicestershire Estates in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries (Oxford, 1947), p. 105.



(Norfolk), the beginning of the fifteenth century witnessed an upsurge in the land market;<sup>1</sup> and in Berkshire, the land market in the late Middle Ages was even more active than it had been elsewhere in the thirteenth century.<sup>2</sup> These different situations arose from a series of changes which affected English rural society in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Four developments stand out: population change, changes in estate administration, changes in land use, and changes in the status of customary tenants. Depending on the part of the country, land-dealing may have been affected by one or more of these changes, and in a number of ways.

The population of England, which may have reached a peak of some 4 or 5 millions at the end of the thirteenth century, probably declined by as much as 40-50 per cent between 1348 and 1430 as a result of a series of epidemics. It did not recover its pre-plague level until the late sixteenth century, the period of most rapid growth starting in the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century.<sup>3</sup> The massive drop in population after 1348 gave the surviving villagers opportunities to hold land for the first time or to increase the size of their farms. The land shortage was brought to an end. In many areas, including Bedfordshire, peasants were compelled (or an attempt was made to

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1. F. G. Davenport, The Economic Development of a Norfolk Manor, 1086-1565 (1906), p. 79, and Appendix xii. 2. R. J. Faith, The Peasant Land Market in Berkshire (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Univ. of Leicester, 1962), p. 73. 3. These sentences are based on J. D. Chambers, Population, Economy, and Society in Pre-Industrial England (Oxford, 1972), pp. 19-21, who takes into account Shrewsbury's reassessment of the impact of the Black Death (J. F. D. Shrewsbury, A History of the Bubonic Plague in the British Isles (Camb., 1971), esp. pp. 23-36). It has been suggested recently that sustained growth did not start until the 1520s, at the earliest (I. Blanchard, 'Population change, enclosure, and the early Tudor economy', ECHR 2nd ser. xxiii, no. 3 (1970), pp. 434-441).

compel them) by lords to take on extra holdings.<sup>1</sup> In the short term, as the redistribution of land was probably confined largely to the years of highest mortality, 1348-70,<sup>2</sup> the main effect of the decline on peasant society may have been to enrich one generation, thus preparing the way for individuals to prosper. In the long term, the decline may have ushered in an age in which the peasant land market was much smaller than that of the thirteenth century, for it removed the land hunger engendered by a large rural population.<sup>3</sup>

The impact of the Black Death, though more dramatic, was probably not so important an agency of change in the countryside as the reorganization of estate administration which began in the fourteenth century. Farming for the market gave way to a policy of leasing demesnes and living off rents. By 1400, many lay and church landlords had begun to let out a part of their lands or had abandoned the old system completely. The motives for the change were ones of profitability and practicability in an age of rising labour costs and stable grain prices.<sup>4</sup>

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1. T. W. Page, The End of Villainage in England (New York, 1900), p. 52, n. 1. 2. A. R. Bridbury has recently queried the severity of the effects of the Black Death in those years when it was believed to have had most effect ('The Black Death', EcHR 2nd ser. xxvi, no. 4 (1973), pp. 577-92). 3. The impact of the decline probably varied considerably across the country. It is a part of Shrewsbury's thesis that the greatest impact of the Black Death was felt only in East Anglia and the larger towns (History of Bubonic Plague, pp. 27-8, 36). 4. The two went hand-in-hand (E. M. Halcrow, 'The decline of demesne farming on the estates of Durham Cathedral Priory', EcHR 2nd ser. vii, no. 3 (1955), pp. 347-8; B. F. Harvey, 'The leasing of the abbot of Westminster's demesnes in the later Middle Ages', EcHR 2nd ser. xxii, no. 1 (1969), p. 24). The sort of profit which could accrue to the lord was substantial. At Otford (Kent), the archbishop of Canterbury's net income shot up from an average of £9 a year to one of £70 (F. R. H. DuBoulay, The Lordship of Canterbury (1966), p. 226). At Cuxham (Oxon), difficulties in finding a reeve probably prompted Merton College to farm out the manor (P. D. A. Harvey, A Medieval Oxfordshire Village (Oxford, 1965), p. 73).

At first, demesnes were often let out to the manorial tenants piecemeal, a few acres at a time for terms of a year or two. Thereafter, it became common for landlords to lease a demesne in its entirety to an individual firmarius or to partners.<sup>1</sup> To some extent the effect of these developments upon the peasantry are matters of conjecture. The sources are not very revealing and research has been directed generally towards problems of estate finance and organization. The release of small parcels of land onto the village land market may have temporarily reduced transactions in customary or free land between peasants. These parcels were probably attractive to the peasantry, especially where the demesne lay in compact blocks of arable or meadow, thus offering scope for farming activities outside the constraints of the communal husbandry. By contrast, the subsequent leasing of the demesne as one unit may have stimulated land-dealing where it removed demesne land from the grasp of the majority of the tenants, throwing them back on their own resources. Those few peasants wealthy or enterprising enough to lease a demesne from their lord had the chance of gaining wealth and power in the local community.<sup>2</sup>

As the form of estate organization changed, so did the character of farming itself, especially in the Midlands. An emphasis upon corn-growing gave way more to mixed farming in which sheep and cattle had an increasingly

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1. Halcrow, pp. 349-50; B. F. Harvey, p. 19. 2. B. F. Harvey, p. 24, suggests that firmarii established ascendancy in their villages because the lord relied heavily on them to carry on the local administration.

important role. Some landlords converted their arable to pasture, while others evicted their tenants and enclosed whole villages. The mark which large-scale changes made in the landscape and left in the written sources has tended to hide the contribution which the peasantry made to the growth of pastoral farming alongside corn production.<sup>1</sup> The fall in the acreage of arable in many villages following the Black Death brought a corresponding increase in the amount of pasture. Demesne-leasing was an additional source of land. It seems likely, however, that peasants usually supported their flocks and herds on their own customary holdings and the commons available to them. After 1350, a smaller village population would have benefited from a relative increase in the land at its disposal. The ownership of tenements enjoyed valuable grazing rights. As time passed, the land market provided a way in which people could increase their flocks without over-stepping the common stint.<sup>2</sup>

On some manors the hallmarks of villeinage lingered on into the sixteenth century,<sup>3</sup> but the end of demesne farming heralded the effective end of the institution. Between about 1370 and 1450, money rents replaced labour service and renders in kind,<sup>4</sup> and tenure by copy of court roll (copyhold) replaced the servile tenure from which it emerged. Although

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1. R. H. Tawney, The Agrarian Problem in the Sixteenth Century (1912), pp. 114-5; T. H. Lloyd, The Movement of Wool Prices in Medieval England (Camb., 1973), pp. 27-9. 2. A stint regulated the number of sheep or cattle which a tenant could graze on the commons and fallow, and was usually fixed at so many animals per acre held. Stints at Leighton Buzzard are discussed below, p. 136. 3. An inquisition into bondmen on the former Bedfordshire manors of the abbey of Ramsey was held at Cranfield in 1577 (S. Peyton, 'An Elizabethan inquisition concerning bondmen', B.H.R.S. ix (1925), pp. 61-74). 4. Page, The End of Villainage in England, pp. 76-82.

at law copyhold was no different from villeinage, and although the granting of a copy did not by itself imply any reduction in disabilities, it is symptomatic of other changes (principally the end of labour services) that by the beginning of the fifteenth century customary tenure was increasingly being described as tenure by copy.<sup>1</sup> In the course of the century, it came to be just one of a number of ways in which land could be held, without reference to the legal or social status of the tenant. Unlike free land, customary land was not freely alienable. Whereas free land could be acquired by charter without fear of interference from the lord of the manor,<sup>2</sup> the lord claimed the right to channel sales and leases of customary land through his court, to regulate them, and to profit from them. The interest of the lord was matched by that of the buyers and sellers, to whom the record of ownership provided by the court brought a security of tenure grounded in manorial custom, strengthened by the gradual disappearance of villeinage, and, in the later fifteenth century, protected by the royal courts. The judgments of Chief Justices Danby and Brian, in 1467 and 1481 respectively, brought copyholders within the compass of the common law courts for the first time. Danby ruled that a lord had no right to evict a copyholder who performed his services, while Brian ruled that a lord who did evict could be sued by

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1. Page, pp. 83-90. The "pre-history" of the copy is considered by A. E. Levett, 'The courts and court rolls of St Albans Abbey', T.R.H.S. 4th ser. vii (1924), p. 72. The earliest surviving Bedfordshire copy known to Miss Godber was dated 1402 (Godber, p. 142), but there are several fourteenth-century ones for Leighton Buzzard at Windsor, dating back to the 1350s (XV.25.20, XV.25.26). 2. Landlords did control the acquisition of freehold land by customary tenants. A clash between Ramsey Abbey and some of its Bedfordshire tenants over this issue is discussed below, pp. 86-90.

the tenant in an action of trespass.<sup>1</sup> Prior to 1467, a copyholder threatened by his lord could only fall back on equitable jurisdiction. As early as 1438, we find customary tenants commencing chancery suits against their lord because the "suppliauntz be withoute remedie at the commone lawe".<sup>2</sup> It may have been the fear of losing business to Chancery which provoked the common law courts to action.<sup>3</sup> Certainly, in and after the reign of Henry VII there is clear evidence that copyhold cases became determinable at the common law,<sup>4</sup> whereas the judgments of 1467 and 1481 gave copyholders access to damages alone, not to the recovery of their lands. It was not until the late sixteenth century that the court of King's Bench decided to allow copyholders specific recovery of their lands in actions of trespass, and the court of Common Pleas followed this lead some years later.<sup>5</sup> Thus, well into the sixteenth century, the courts of equity remained a means by which copyholders sought justice in disputes with their lords.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the disadvantages at law which faced copyholders when compared with freeholders, the security of title which copyholders enjoyed was well founded by the end of the fifteenth century (and

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1. A. W. B. Simpson, An Introduction to the History of the Land Law (1960), p. 152. The whole question of the protection of copyholders' rights at law and their security of tenure is dealt with by E. Kerridge, Agrarian Problems in the Sixteenth Century and After (1969), pp. 65-93.  
2. A. Savine, 'Copyhold Cases in the Early Chancery Proceedings', E.H.R. xvii (1902), p. 299. 3. W. S. Holdsworth, A History of English Law (3rd edn., 1923), iii. 208. 4. Savine, p. 303; Kerridge, p. 69.  
5. Simpson, pp. 152-4; Kerridge, pp. 71-2, points out that specific recovery could be gained under the common law well before this date, but only under certain circumstances. 6. Savine, p. 303. This account of the development of security at law for copyholders, based on Kerridge and Leadham, has been questioned by C. M. Gray, Copyhold, Equity, and the Common Law (Camb., Mass., 1963), pp. 24-58. He would put the date of the first success under the common law in 1505-6 or later (p. 58).

probably long before).<sup>1</sup> As a register of title to copyholds, the court roll gave conclusive evidence of a tenant's rights.<sup>2</sup> In most disputes over security, the manor court roll, perhaps backed by a custumal and the relevant copies held by the tenants, would have been sufficient to settle disputes.<sup>3</sup> The changes in the status of customary tenants and customary tenure had important consequences for the local land market. People other than peasants began to purchase copyhold land. Transactions escaped the complications which could so easily bedevil the sale of free land,<sup>4</sup> and tenure was secured by manorial custom.

As villeinage gradually disappeared, rural society became increasingly mobile. A greater freedom of movement may have had an influence on the peasant land market. In some villages, holdings fell vacant never to be taken up again.<sup>5</sup> In others, mobility simply produced a reduction in the market.<sup>6</sup> But mobility also had the

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1. Kerridge, p. 74.      2. Simpson, p. 151.      3. In the sixteenth century, it became common for court rolls to be kept in the parish church under lock and key, with arrangements made for access by the tenants if a search was required (Kerridge, p. 79). As the court roll, rather than the tenant's copy, was the final authority, it was important that the rolls were kept safely. The dangers in lax custody of court rolls, with the scope this offered to dishonest men, are illustrated vividly in a letter from John Dodington to William Plumpton, c. 1540, about the care of the court rolls at Sacombe (Herts) (Plumpton Correspondence, ed. T. Stapleton (Camden Soc. iv, 1839), pp. 238-9).

4. Some of these are described by K. B. McFarlane, The Nobility of Later Medieval England (Oxford, 1973), pp. 61-82.      5. A case of piecemeal desertion is described by C. Dyer, 'Population and agriculture on a Warwickshire manor in the later Middle Ages', U.B.H.J. xi, no. 2 (1968), pp. 113-27.      6. On the manors of Ramsey Abbey, mobility and the decline in piecemeal local land-dealing went together (Raftis, Tenure and Mobility, pp. 153-82, 190-8).

opposite effect. At Castle Combe (Wilts), for example, the land market flourished in the fifteenth century as outsiders were attracted to the manor by the active trade in clothmaking.<sup>1</sup> Peasant mobility was associated with changes in inheritance customs. The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were a time when rural communities abandoned the idea that land "ought to descend in the blood of the men who had held it of old".<sup>2</sup> Primogeniture lost its former importance once the land shortage ended.

These developments in rural society between 1350 and 1500 changed its social structure and affected the size of holdings. A group of wealthy peasants emerged, farming holdings of 60, 80, even 100 acres or more. Although all the lower levels of rural society appear to have benefited from the fall in population and its consequences, a gap appears to have developed between the peasant "aristocracy" and other landholders.<sup>3</sup> The average size of peasant holding probably increased in the fifteenth century. It has been shown how, in south-west England, the slackening of the demand for land brought a progressive increase in the numbers of fairly substantial holdings. Indeed, by the 1460s, tenants with a single traditional holding were in a minority on some manors.<sup>4</sup>

The fifteenth century appears, then, to have been a period of contradictory and confusing developments in the market for customary

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1. E. M. Carus-Wilson, 'Evidences of industrial growth on some 15th-century manors', ECHR 2nd ser. xii, no. 2 (1959), pp. 190-205.  
2. R. J. Faith, 'Peasant families and inheritance customs in medieval England', AgHR xiv (1966), pp. 86-7. 3. S. Pollard and D. W. Crossley, The Wealth of Britain, 1085-1966 (1968), p. 69.  
4. Hatcher, Rural Economy and Society, p. 229.



land. The purpose of the present study is to elucidate the characteristics of the market during this century by examining a number of manors in Bedfordshire, a county in the south Midlands in which many individuals bought and sold copyhold land. These were not all descended from the customary tenants of an earlier age, nor were their activities always confined to one village or even to one county. For the most part, however, the customary land market was one in which small holdings changed hands between the labourers and farmers who constituted the bulk of the rural population. As conditions of tenure changed, some members of the professional classes and the gentry began to buy customary land. Their presence complicated the operation of what in earlier centuries had possibly been a purely local market. However, the "outsiders" shared one thing in common with the Bedfordshire villagers: their transactions were recorded as part of the business of the manorial court.

The survival of a variety of court records enables us to study the market in considerable detail. These records are described in chapter 2, together with the other sources drawn upon for this study. Differences in the size and quality of the source material, as well as in the character of the manors investigated, allows a basic distinction to be made between a group of rural manors (Blunham, Willington, Shillington, and Arlesey) and Leighton Buzzard, a large manor in the south-west of the county which contained a flourishing market town. Other variations in the source material mean that certain aspects of the market in customary land can be studied best only in one manor, though apparent in several. The possibility of studying recurrent transfers in detail at Arlesey is a case in point. Nevertheless, the manors upon which this study focuses have a common geographical and temporal setting - Bedfordshire in the

fifteenth century. Chapter 3 describes the county in the fifteenth century, and attempts to show how some of the developments discussed above affected its villages and their inhabitants, and the impact the changes may have had on the local land market. The fourth and fifth chapters are devoted to an examination of the land market on the rural manors and at Leighton Buzzard.

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Chapter 2: Sources for the history of the land market in the fifteenth century

In the late Middle Ages the manorial court assumed the function of a land registry.<sup>1</sup> The accession of business left its mark upon the court roll which increasingly became a record of customary tenure. Series of court rolls form the main source for a study of the market in customary land. On some estates registers of extracts from court rolls were kept. More easily handled than court rolls,<sup>2</sup> registers provided a ready means of reference to a limited range of evidence. They have survived in a variety of forms,<sup>3</sup> including registers of changes in tenancy. The court records which are most useful in a study of the land market are those which can be used together with other manorial records, those which have fewest gaps in their sequence, and those which are the most detailed. Although court rolls have survived from manors spread throughout Bedfordshire, the survival of estate archives has been very uneven. Few manors belonged to those great religious houses whose muniments have remained relatively intact. Few archives of any substance from lay estates have come down to us. Thus, few series of court rolls have survived with other manorial records.

While it could be an advantage to study a random sample of the

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1. In a sense it always had been a registry, for changes in tenure of customary land had been made in court from the time of the earliest surviving court rolls. In the fifteenth century, this aspect was more pronounced than it had been, if only because of the standard formulae adopted for entering transfers on the rolls. 2. A. E. Levett, 'The courts and court rolls of St Albans Abbey', T.R.H.S. 4th ser. vii (1924), pp. 55-6. 3. *ibid.* pp. 67-70; A. E. Levett, Studies in Manorial History (Oxford, 1938), pp. 79-96.

county's manors, or a group of adjoining manors, or manors in selected local environments, the uneven survival of sources has dictated those studied here. But, as we shall see, the manors in question had very varied histories in the fifteenth century, and their sites and setting differed too. Those manors which are represented by more substantial collections of sources include Leighton Buzzard, Blunham, Willington, Barton, Cranfield, Shillington, and Arlesey. Leighton Buzzard, a large manor in the south-west of the county, has a series of court rolls extant for the years 1393-98 and 1464-1508.<sup>1</sup> Account rolls also survive, mostly for the second half of the fifteenth century. In the later sixteenth century, a small register of court roll extracts was compiled for this manor, its examples drawn very largely from the first half of the fifteenth century. Blunham, a manor in central Bedfordshire, one part of a substantial estate which the Greys of Ruthin built up in the county, has a series of court rolls for the years 1413-57. After a gap of 56 years, the series resumes in 1513. The survival of rentals and accounts from 1457 has enabled a reasonably clear picture to emerge of the profits of the manor and the holdings of the tenants. Court rolls of the manor of Willington, another lay-owned manor in the centre of the county, have survived for the years 1394-1426 and 1451-81. In addition, there is a series of bailiffs' accounts for the 1380s and 1390s. The manors of the abbey of Ramsey - Barton, Cranfield, and Shillington - each have some court rolls and other sources for parts of the fifteenth century.<sup>2</sup> The latter include the abbey's Court Book, a register of the

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1. The rolls covering the years 1399-1420 (C.R.O. KK 620-1) have been badly affected by damp and are illegible. 2. Only Shillington has been selected for detailed study in chapter 4. The Court Book contains many more entries for Shillington than for Barton or Cranfield. In addition, the survival of the rental for 1437-8 gives us an extra source for the history of the manor.

descent of customary tenements in many of its manors. The manor of Waltham Abbey in Arlesey is represented by a few fifteenth-century court rolls, and by a fine court register.

Though hardly a sample of the total number of manors in the county in the fifteenth century, these seven manors do provide a variety, scattered over central and southern Bedfordshire. There is the distinction between the rural manors and Leighton Buzzard, where the manor included a market town. There is the distinction between the manors in ecclesiastical ownership and those in lay hands. There are the differences among manors in lay hands. Blunham was owned by a single family of capable administrators. Willington appears to have had a more chequered history in the fifteenth century. It formed a part of the dower of Katherine Nevill, Duchess of Norfolk, who survived a further three husbands following the death of John Mowbray, outlived all her Mowbray descendants, and retained Willington until her death late in 1483.<sup>1</sup>

### Court Rolls

Like all medieval records, court rolls have to be used with caution. While they are unrivalled in the range of information they yield on many aspects of rural life, they do not always lend themselves to systematic analysis. This is especially true of court rolls before about 1350.<sup>2</sup> Thereafter, court rolls often have a different character. Entries were

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1. Below, p. 71.  
1350 (1969), pp. 31-2.

2. J. Z. Titow, English Rural Society, 1200-

arranged to a pattern. In particular, changes in tenancy were dealt with together and were recorded in standard formulae.<sup>1</sup> Where full series of rolls have survived, elementary statistical analysis is possible. Records of changes in tenancy, whether sale, lease, or inheritance, commonly included details of the parties to the change, the land or property in question, often with a brief note of its location, the entry fine paid to the lord, and, less frequently, a note of the rent.<sup>2</sup> With these details to hand, the reconstruction of the turnover in customary land, trends in land-dealing, and movements in entry fines can all be attempted.

However detailed and complete a series of rolls may be, it is impossible to reconstruct a full picture of the local land market. Even the best series of Bedfordshire rolls have their gaps where records of some courts have disappeared.<sup>3</sup> In addition, we cannot be sure how comprehensive the surviving rolls were in their coverage of manorial business. On manors where courts were held only once or twice a year,<sup>4</sup> there is no way to judge the extent to which the one session reflected accurately a year's or a half-year's activity. On occasions, where the admission of tenants to holdings took place outside court proceedings,

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1. The Leighton Buzzard court rolls and their arrangement are discussed below. 2. It was not essential for the rent to be noted, as this would be on the rental. 3. For Leighton Buzzard, see below, Table 8. 4. At Blunham, Podington, and Arlesey the basic pattern was two courts a year. At Blunham there are some years when we have the record of just one court (1421, 1437, 1440, 1445), others when we have the records of four (1416), five (1435), and as many as ten (1432) (C.R.O. L26/51-4). At Shillington the practice of holding two courts a year lapsed in the fifteenth century: "de curia autumpni nichil quia nulla hoc anno tenta" (P.R.O. SC6/741/25-7).

we may not have the information recorded on a later court roll.<sup>1</sup> The extent of the evasion of regulations cannot be assessed properly either. For all the advantages which accrued to copyhold tenure during the fifteenth century, tenants still tried to evade the proper enrolment of land transfers, often to avoid the entry fine.<sup>2</sup> Where offenders were detected, the examples probably represent just those people unlucky enough to have been caught. Finally, the court roll as it has survived stands at the end of a process of editing in which material may have been discarded, deliberately or accidentally.<sup>3</sup>

There are two principal drawbacks to court rolls as a source for the local land market. One lies in their origins. They were manorial not village records. In Bedfordshire, a county in which many villages lay divided between two or more manors, court rolls rarely reveal more than a part of village life. This has a serious consequence for a study of the land market, for court rolls by themselves fail to provide a satisfactory base from which to work. Tenants of one manor may well have held land in another in the same village or elsewhere. The sales of a tenant in one manor may have been matched by purchases he made in another. The extra detail is often lacking.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Although transfers out of court were supposed to have required formal ratification at the next court, they may not always have been presented. When no courts were held at Cuxham (Oxon) between 1306-10, the Warden of Merton College conducted the admission of new tenants in person, and the bare detail was entered on the account roll (P. D. A. Harvey, A Medieval Oxfordshire Village (Oxford, 1965), p. 146).

2. This was the commonest reason at Leighton Buzzard (below p. 58, n. 5.).

3. E. Kerridge, Agrarian Problems of the Sixteenth Century and After (1969), pp. 24-5.

4. Court rolls for adjoining manors have rarely survived. The best we can hope for is usually the evidence of wills, deeds, and rentals.

This imposes limits on what court rolls can show. They do not necessarily reveal the sum of any one person's interest in land, and they do not necessarily show which tenants were resident in a particular manor. However, they can often reveal the ways in which people built up their holdings in one manor, only to disperse them with the approach of old age and death. The other drawback lies in the fact that court rolls usually dealt solely with the descent of customary land and with parcels of demesne let to the tenants. The sale of freehold land was not recorded on a court roll as it did not have to be presented in a manor court.<sup>1</sup> Thus, we know very little about the freehold land in the hands of customary tenants.

The changes in tenancy recorded on court rolls were primarily changes in land ownership: land occupation was a different matter. Short-term leases between tenants were often sanctioned as a matter of course and required no formal licence from the lord.<sup>2</sup> Subletting by tenants usually comes to light only when the lessee had fallen behind with his rent, or when an agreement contravened established procedure. Subletting may well have been as important as the land market as a means of increasing or decreasing the size of holdings. It had a distinct advantage, too, in being a temporary arrangement. Unfortunately, the full extent of subletting on customary holdings rarely comes to light. Where it does, it can overthrow completely the pattern of holdings suggested by a

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1. There are some court rolls, records of courts of survey, which recorded the admission of freeholders (or tenants taking up freeholds) when they came into court to perform fealty. The court rolls of Eggington manor, near Leighton Buzzard, are one example (C.R.O. X/510/1); those for Edlesborough, just to the south in Buckinghamshire, appear to be another (B.M. Add. Rolls 67906-68002). 2. Discussed below, p. 58.



rental.<sup>1</sup> The Bedfordshire court rolls provide detailed information only on the ownership of land. Any extra rearrangement remains largely an unknown quantity.

The great advantage of the court roll as a source for the land market lies in the other information it recorded. The court brought together free and customary tenants alike to subject them to the lord's authority in the matters of fealty and manorial monopolies (such as brewing and baking); to maintain law and order; and to regulate agricultural activities by establishing by-laws. A bare list of the regular business of the court can never do justice to the wealth of additional detail often recorded.<sup>2</sup> When the entries are indexed, they provide outline biographies of many tenants, and these form the essential background to a study of the local land market.<sup>3</sup>

The additional detail is not without its limitations. Two in particular hinder its interpretation. The first concerns the identification of individuals and their place within their own family. Some people used aliases. On occasions, these are obvious, but others are discovered only by accident when the activities of individuals are pieced together. Some people shared the same surname without obviously being members of the same family. An extreme example comes from Arlesey

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1. Kerridge, pp. 49-52; P. D. A. Harvey, p. 134, n. 7.

2. A convenient calendar of the sorts of entries on a fifteenth-century court roll is provided by A. F. C. Baber, The Court Rolls of the manor of Bromsgrove and King's Norton, 1494-1504 (Worcs. Hist. Soc., 1963).

3. Examples of the information which can be culled from court rolls are provided by E. B. DeWindt, Land and People in Holywell-cum-Needingworth (Toronto, 1972), pp. 3-4.

where, in the fifteenth century, the tenants included a John Knotte senior (sometimes called John Knotte de Caldewelle), a John Knotte Bocher, a John Knotte Deye, a John Knotte de Dounton, a John Knotte de Bloys, a John Knotte de Hichen, a John Knotte junior, and John Knotte who was bailiff and firmarius of the manor in the first half of the century. In many cases, the sources are easier to interpret. Where they are particularly full, family trees can be drawn up, some extending over six or seven generations.<sup>1</sup> A difficulty then arises over the age of an individual. Court rolls often provide the date when a son inherited land (on his father's death), and then the dates when he in turn died or passed on land to his children. They do not show us the age of a tenant when he or she first took on land.<sup>2</sup> Links between families can be equally elusive. It is not always possible to distinguish between branches of the one family. Relationships established by marriage are also hard to discover, save when a man married a widow. Customs surrounding tenure by widows remained strong throughout the later Middle Ages, although other inheritance customs weakened.<sup>3</sup> At all levels of society, women often proved tougher than men. Many outlived one husband, remarried, and so complicated the descent of holdings.<sup>4</sup>

The second drawback concerns the interpretation of certain entries, in particular recurrent entries about the same people or the same

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1. See below, Fig. 1.

2. Tithing lists only occur occasionally in fifteenth-century Bedfordshire court rolls.

3. R. J. Faith 'Peasant families and inheritance customs in medieval England', AgHR xiv, no. 2 (1966), p. 91.

4. K. B. McFarlane, The Nobility of Later Medieval England (Oxford, 1973), p. 153.

activities. It has been suggested that the numerous fines for trespass found in court rolls of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were little more than "disguised" pasture rents.<sup>1</sup> The habitual offenders against the assizes of bread and ale provide a similar case, as do those who were habitually amerced for failing to render suit of court. The fines paid by both classes of person were probably licences to brew and bake, or agreed payments for release from suit.<sup>2</sup> We might place a similar interpretation upon the many land pleas and pleas for debt entered on court rolls but rarely brought to any conclusion. It seems reasonable to suppose that these were really agreements to sublet land short-term, or to lend money. As these were informal arrangements, they may have been registered in court in the form of a plea. This gave some security to the lessor or the money lender; if problems arose, all that had to be done was for the plea to be prosecuted.<sup>3</sup>

### Court Registers

Court registers possess the disadvantages of court rolls, and lack, in themselves, most of the extra detail which sheds light on the tenants. In this study we shall use two registers.<sup>4</sup> The first is the Court Book of Ramsey Abbey, covering the first half of the fifteenth century. The second is the register of Waltham Abbey's manor in Arlesey which covers

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1. C.E.H.E. p. 554. 2. Baber, Court Rolls of the manor of Bromsgrove, p. 22; J. P. Dawson, A History of Lay Judges (Camb., Mass., 1960), pp. 215-6. 3. I am grateful to Mr C. J. Harrison for this suggestion. 4. Excluding the small Leighton Buzzard register (C.R.O. KK 725) which was compiled for a different purpose (for details, see bibliography).

the years 1376-1536. These two are primarily registers of the descent of customary tenements. The Ramsey Court Book is a folio volume of 256 pages containing extracts from court rolls of 29 of the abbey's manors.<sup>1</sup> These included the main Bedfordshire properties - Barton, Cranfield, and Shillington. Most entries dealt with "the movement of villein tenements through the manorial courts",<sup>2</sup> and with the parcels of demesne let to the tenants. They cover the years 1398-1456. Entries were listed under abbatial years, with those for each manor grouped together. The Court Book was compiled as a register of the entry fines (gersume) which were levied as tenements changed hands. It may have been one in a series; if so it is the sole survivor.<sup>3</sup> The Arlesey court register differs from the Court Book in geographical scope, in length, and in physical appearance.<sup>4</sup> Limited to one manor,<sup>5</sup> the extant portion of the register<sup>6</sup> covers a period of over 150 years and consists of five rolls, each of several membranes sown end to end in Chancery fashion. Entries were grouped in chronological sequence, a year's record running from Michaelmas to Michaelmas.<sup>7</sup> Like the Court Book, the register was primarily a register of entry fines levied on customary tenements.

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1. B. M. Harley MS. 445. 2. J. A. Raftis, The Estates of Ramsey Abbey (Toronto, 1957), p. 321. 3. J. A. Raftis, Tenure and Mobility (Toronto, 1964), p. 90, assumes that other registers once existed for the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In Estates, p. 321, he suggested it was unique. 4. C.R.O. IN 58-62. 5. Similar registers appear to have been compiled for other manors on the estate (F. G. Emmison, Guide to the Essex Record Office (2nd edn., Chelmsford, 1969), pp. 112, 127, 144). Like the Essex manors in question, Arlesey was a manor assigned to the cellarer. 6. Internal evidence shows that an earlier portion of the register, for the reign of Edward III, once existed (C.R.O. IN 59, m. 5). 7. In the discussion in chapter 4, I have dated transfers falling in the year, say, 1376-77 as 1377.

Both the Ramsey Court Book and the Arlesey register have some gaps in their chronological sequence. These may have been due in part to oversight on the part of the compilers. In some years it is possible that no changes in ownership took place.<sup>1</sup> Also, we cannot be sure how selective the compilers were. The Arlesey register includes a full range of transfers of customary land, from the smallest portions to full tenements. On the other hand, it contains little reference to portions of the former demesne leased to the tenants. While the demesne may have been farmed to one man only, or divided between a few, leases of odd parcels may have fallen outside the scope of the register.<sup>2</sup> For the Bedfordshire property of Ramsey Abbey, the chief concern of the Court Book lay with the descent of standard tenements (semi-virgates and virgates) and portions of the former demesne. It is not clear how far transfers of small parcels of land attracted official attention.<sup>3</sup> Very few land transfers were entered on the Ramsey court rolls in the period covered by the Court Book. If we assume that they were omitted because the register was available, then we might assume too that the register was meant to be comprehensive.

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1. An entry "nothing was registered in this year" was noted at Arlesey in 1422-3, 1429-30 - 1431-2, 1436-7, 1437-8, 1480-1, 1481-2, 1485-6, 1490-1, 1491-2, and 1524-5 (C.R.O. IN 59, m. 5d; IN 60, mm. 4, 6; IN 61, m. 11d; IN 62, mm. 1, 2, 15). We do not know if this means that there was nothing to record or if an oversight resulted in a gap.

2. One or two leases of demesne parcels found their way onto the register, as in 1396 (IN 58, m. 2d). For further discussion, see below, p. 91.

3. Transfers of small parcels of land may have died out in the fifteenth century (Raftis, Tenure and Mobility, pp. 91-2), or they may have been recorded on other sources (DeWindt, p. 17).

The court rolls and registers of the abbeys of Ramsey and Waltham were all products of a process of editing. The entries in both registers were written in standard court roll formulae as though extracted from a draft version of the proceedings in the manor court. It appears that the draft records of the Ramsey Courts were written up and rearranged centrally. The final version of the court roll - the one surviving today - was an edition of the draft proceedings which omitted the detail transcribed on the registers. Save for one or two entries (mainly deaths of tenants), the court rolls of the Ramsey manors omit admissions and surrenders. The Arlesey register and rolls present more of a problem. There are two series of court rolls extant. One, in the Public Record Office,<sup>1</sup> forms a part of a broken series of rolls for a number of manors of Waltham Abbey. The Arlesey rolls survive for 1403, 1404, 1409, 1414, 1421, 1427, 1464, and 1468. On these rolls were entered the same admissions and surrenders as occur on the register. The second series, now in the County Record Office, Bedford,<sup>2</sup> consists of another broken sequence of rolls, for the years 1456-7, 1465, 1467, 1471-2, 1475-80, 1502, 1521, and 1522. None of these contains any of the transfers entered in the court register. The reason for what appears to have been a double series of rolls plus a register for one manor may have been as follows. The register was kept locally along with a version of the court roll which omitted the land transfers but retained the rest of the court

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1. P.R.O. SC2/173/32-8. In addition, the Arlesey court roll for 1539 has survived, though now rather badly damaged (P.R.O. SC2/153/4).

2. C.R.O. IN 102-5.

business. At the same time, the abbey kept a full version of the court roll at Waltham as its record of the local situation.<sup>1</sup> Both the Court Book and the Arlesey register contain a small number of entries which do not concern land transfers, but were included because they involved the payment of a fine. Thus, they recorded (but apparently not systematically) fines paid by customary tenants for the marriage of their daughters, for permission to move a tenement from one building to another, and for licence to live outside the manor.

The advantage of using similar sources, despite the variety of manors from which they derive, is that they enable us to adopt a common approach to the land market. This is facilitated by the legal restrictions which surrounded the transfer of customary land: these made it impossible for a tenant to transfer land other than through the lord of the manor. Thus, land transfers fell into one of three groups. Firstly, there was the surrender ad opus. This took the form of the surrender of land to the lord by a tenant with the express stipulation that it should be granted out to another, named person. The lord then granted the land to the new tenant. The surrender ad opus has long been interpreted as a sale of land,<sup>2</sup> though it could be used in a long-term lease.<sup>3</sup> It is impossible to be fully confident that every surrender ad opus was in

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1. Although this is hypothesis, it would help explain the survival of separate court records for the abbey's manors in local record offices (above, p. 25, n. 5). 2. C.N. p. xlvi. The surrender is discussed by Raftis, Tenure and Mobility, pp. 63-74. Contemporaries also talked of surrenders as sales: "a copie for on di acar...which was bought of (i.e. from) Toppinge" (endorsement to S.B.T. DR 18, Leighton Buzzard, unnumbered, 27 April, 1536). 3. R. J. Faith, The Peasant Land Market in Berkshire (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Univ. of Leicester, 1962), pp. 83-4.

fact a sale.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, there was the inheritance of land by the heir. When a father settled land on his son or sons during his own lifetime, the transfer was recorded as an ad opus surrender. Otherwise, the transfer recorded the death of the tenant and the admission of the heir, who took up the land from the lord's hands. Thirdly, there was the grant of land from the lord. This took two forms. On those manors where copyhold tenure was for a term of years or for life, changes in tenancy were often recorded in this way. A grant from the lord could well disguise an ad opus surrender from one tenant to another. Elsewhere, the form of a grant from the lord, in which the lord admitted a tenant to land lately held by another, carried the implication that the land had fallen vacant and so escheated to the lord of the manor. This could happen when a tenant died without heirs, or where the steward or bailiff had stepped in to seize land on some pretext.<sup>2</sup> In these cases, the lord acted as a redistributive agent, establishing new tenancies and returning land to customary tenure.

#### Other Sources

Apart from the principal sources - court rolls and registers - there are many others which have a bearing on the market in customary land. They fall into two categories. Firstly, there are the other

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1. In the following chapters, I have treated surrenders as sales unless there is clear evidence to the contrary; in this, I follow F. G. Davenport, The Economic Development of a Norfolk Manor, 1086-1565 (1906), p. 79.

2. Discussed below, p. 58.



manorial records: accounts, rentals, and customals. These are useful for the evidence they contain on such matters as the leasing of demesnes, the distribution of customary land among the tenants, the customs governing the conveyance of land, and rents and entry fines. Secondly, there is a group of miscellaneous sources: wills, private deeds, records of national taxation, administrative records. These show some of the tenants in a wider setting than the one manor. Their value lies in tracing the activities of individuals, more especially those people who were prominent locally and nationally. Secondary sources are discussed when their contents are considered.

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### Chapter 3: Bedfordshire in the Fifteenth Century

In the first chapter we discussed a number of the social and economic changes which affected the English countryside in the wake of the Black Death. Turning to Bedfordshire, it is important to gain some idea of the impact of these changes in the county, both to provide the necessary historical and geographical setting to the land market, and to suggest their possible repercussions on its operation in the manors under review. This chapter, then, describes some of the more important aspects of the county in the fifteenth century and their relevance to the market in customary land.

#### The Setting

The most striking feature of the landscape of Bedfordshire in the fifteenth century (as of the modern county) must have been the Chiltern hills which extend into the south of the county and reach a height of 800 feet near Dunstable. Elsewhere, the landscape is unremarkable - subdued and undulating, an area of shallow valleys, low ridges, and flat clay vales.<sup>1</sup> The scarp of the Chilterns faces north-west. Broken by the Hitchin gap, the chalk loses height and prominence towards the north-east. Northwards, a narrow belt of chalkland merges into a low-lying clay vale which is drained west by the river Ouzel and north by the river Ivel. To the north-west, in an area bounded roughly by Leighton Buzzard,

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1. Soils and geology are described by C. E. Fitchett, Bedfordshire (Land Utilisation Survey, 1943), pp. 104-113; and by D. W. King, Soils of the Luton and Bedford District (Harpenden, 1969), esp. pp. 1-3; Map 1.

Woburn, Ridgmont, and Toddington, the ground rises to between 400 and 500 feet, forming a much dissected plateau. Its northern limit is marked by a fairly well defined scarp capped by Lower Greensand. The scarp decreases in height eastwards, and is broken at Shefford by the valley of the Ivel. Central and eastern Bedfordshire is dominated by the vale of Bedford, a broad, low-lying clay plain drained by the rivers Ouse and Ivel and their tributaries. In the river valleys large expanses of river gravels cover the heavy Oxford Clay. To the north and west of Bedford the country is hillier, with average heights between 200 and 400 feet. Here, the limestone and ironstone hills slope southwards and eastwards to the Ouse.

Much of the county is overlain with drift deposits, a chalky boulder clay over much of the higher ground, and a great variety of glacial and riverine deposits in the lowland. The Chilterns themselves are capped with clay-with-flints and associated drifts. The chalk crops out only on the scarp face and in the sides of the larger valleys. The variety of drift deposits has resulted in a diversity of soils,<sup>1</sup> so much so that Thomas Batchelor, reporting on the agriculture of Bedfordshire in the early nineteenth century, could write: "Every soil, and every mixture of soil commonly seen on high land in the united kingdoms, may be found in the county, from the strongest clay to the lightest sand".<sup>2</sup> Inevitably, some soils have proved inherently more fertile than others. The valley gravels of the vale of Bedford yield a productive soil, such that Defoe

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1. Map 2. Part of the county's soils have been mapped (Soil Survey, OS 1: 63360, sheet 147). 2. T. Batchelor, General View of the Agriculture of Bedfordshire (1808), p. 4.

could exclaim: "The soil hereabouts is exceeding rich and fertile, and particularly produces great quantities of the best wheat in England".<sup>1</sup> On the Greensand plateau, where it is not covered by boulder clay, the soils are light and sandy. When Leland travelled from Willington to Ampthill in the sixteenth century, he went "almost al by chaumpayn ground, parte by corne, and parte by pasture, and sum baren hethy and sandy ground".<sup>2</sup> In fact, much of the Greensand remained woodland or heath into the twentieth century.<sup>3</sup> In the Nonarum Inquisitiones of 1341-2, complaints about the quality of the soil came mostly from villages on the Greensand - Flitwick, Maulden, Millbrook, and Ridgmont - where the inhabitants blamed the sandiness of the soil for their inability to cultivate it successfully. Elsewhere in the county, the excuses were usually less specific.<sup>4</sup> Further south and east, the heavy soil formed on the Oxford clay impressed Batchelor as "a dark, poor soil, coming too loose after frosts, infected by the worst of grasses, and of such general properties as to keep the cultivators poor".<sup>5</sup> Along the foot of the Chilterns the intermixture of chalk and clay has resulted in a good arable soil.

Locally, then, soils have had an important influence in determining the land-use and the character of an area. For a long time, the north-west of the county was a remote, backward area,<sup>6</sup> and its poverty was largely

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1. D. Defoe, A Tour Through England and Wales (Everyman edn., 1928), ii. 113. 2. The Itinerary of John Leland in or about the years 1535-43, ed. L. T. Smith (5 vols., 1907-10), i. 102. 3. Fitchett, p. 113. 4. Nonarum Inquisitiones in Curia Scaccarii, ed. G. Vanderzee (Record Commission, 1807), pp. 11-21. 5. Quoted in Fitchett, p. 112. 6. L. M. Marshall, The Rural Population of Bedfordshire, 1671 to 1921 (B.H.R.S. xvi, 1934), p. 23.

a result of the poor quality of the heavy clay soil.<sup>1</sup> None of the manors studied in chapters 4 and 5 lay in this part of the county.<sup>2</sup> Blunham and Willington lie in the vale of Bedford, just to the west of the confluence of the rivers Ouse and Ivel, on soils formed on river gravels and alluvium. In the south, Arlesey, Shillington, and Barton lie in the clay vale at the foot of the Chilterns, where the soils are largely a chalky boulder clay or a chalky marl. In the south-west, Leighton Buzzard has developed at one end of the Greensand plateau, where the land slopes westwards to the Ousel valley.<sup>3</sup> The clays which cover a large part of the county are heavy and damp because of their poor drainage rather than because of excessive rainfall, and they must have been difficult to work in past centuries. Actually, Bedfordshire is one of the driest counties in England. The average yearly rainfall over the county as a whole is 24 inches. There is a marked tendency to spring drought, with as much rain falling in summer as in winter. The relative dryness, together with a high annual range of mean monthly temperatures typical of the east Midlands, results in a "comparative continentality" of climate.<sup>4</sup>

#### Land-use

Arable land in the Chilterns had long lain in enclosures,<sup>5</sup> but elsewhere Bedfordshire was a county of late enclosure. In many parishes

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1. N. W. Alcock, 'Timber-framed buildings in north Bedfordshire', B.A.J. iv (1969), p. 57. 2. The settlements discussed below are located in Map 1. 3. The local topography of these manors is considered further in chapters 4 and 5. 4. King, p. 3; Fitchett, p. 118. 5. D. Roden, Studies in Chiltern Field Systems (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Univ. of London, 1965), p. 312.

open-field agriculture persisted into the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. When the commissioners of enclosure investigated the county in 1517, they discovered very few cases of arable which had been enclosed after 1485.<sup>1</sup> The little evidence we have suggests that, had they pursued their enquiries further into the past, they would not have stumbled on the sort of wholesale enclosure which other Midland counties underwent between about 1420 and 1480. The only example of a complete, deliberate depopulation and enclosure would appear to be Higham Gobion: while the manorial records of the mid-fifteenth century suggest a still-flourishing community,<sup>2</sup> by 1519 the parish lay enclosed and there was but one parishioner.<sup>3</sup> When Leland travelled through the county in the 1530s or 1540s, he noted some enclosure between Ampthill and Dunstable, but this was probably at the expense of the waste, save in the Chilterns.<sup>4</sup> Here and there, piecemeal enclosure may have been carried on, but the sources for the fifteenth century suggest that the sum total was negligible.<sup>5</sup> In the main, Bedfordshire was an open-field county. There were, however, various forms of open-field parish: orthodox two-field<sup>6</sup> and three-field arrangements, and more complex systems.<sup>7</sup> The local land market was carried on within the framework of the open-field system, and, as we shall see, it would be a mistake to imagine that peasants used the market to overthrow the communal agriculture by rearranging and enclosing their holdings.<sup>8</sup>

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1. The Domesday of Inclosures, 1517-18, ed. I. S. Leadam (2 vols., 1897), ii. 459-75. 2. Bodl. MSS. Beds. Rolls, 2-3. 3. Visitations in the Diocese of Lincoln, 1517-1531, ed. A. Hamilton Thompson (L.R.S. 33, 1940), i. 103; Godber, p. 139. The Lay Subsidy roll of 1524 recorded 2 men at Higham Gobion (P.R.O. E179/71/110, m. 4). 4. Marshall, pp. 25-6. 5. I have not come across an unambiguous reference to peasant enclosure in Bedfordshire court rolls of the fifteenth century. 6. E.g. Podington, in the north-west: the extent of 1324-5 stated that half the demesne was sown in any one year (P.R.O. E142/78(i), m. 11); and Arlesey (see below, p. 91, n. 5). 7. F. G. Emmison, Types of Open Field Parishes in the Midlands (1937). 8. Below, pp. 163-8.

In many Bedfordshire villages, as in other parts of the country,<sup>1</sup> there are signs that the fifteenth century saw a growth in pasture farming. The main support for this conclusion is the evidence of court rolls, for many contain references to the overstocking of common pastures, the fixing of stints, and the trespass of animals in arable land. Bedfordshire wills, which have survived in increasing numbers from about 1480, show that many individuals held large flocks of sheep at their death.<sup>2</sup> Flocks of between 40 and 60 sheep were, no doubt, more common than larger ones, but nonetheless represented a valuable asset.<sup>3</sup> Some men farmed sheep on a considerable scale. In 1519 John Crawley of Luton made bequests totalling 178 sheep.<sup>4</sup> In the same year Thomas Hobson of Sutton left a flock in excess of 250 sheep,<sup>5</sup> one equalled in size perhaps by that of John Heywood of Podington in 1516-17.<sup>6</sup> Some landlords had still larger flocks. In 1501 John Middleton sold his interest in Sharpenhoe, at the foot of the Chilterns, along with 600 ewes.<sup>7</sup> In 1513 John Sylam of Bramingham manor in Luton left bequests of 750 sheep.<sup>8</sup> Some 30 years later, when Sir John Gostwick of Willington

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1. R. H. Hilton, 'Rent and Capital Formation in Feudal Society', Second International Conference of Economic History, 1962 (Paris, 1965), ii. 58-9; F. G. Davenport, The Economic Development of a Norfolk Manor, 1086-1565 (1906), p. 81; R. K. Field, The Worcestershire Peasant in the Later Middle Ages (Unpublished M.A. thesis, Univ. of Birmingham, 1962), pp. 96-115.

2. In 1297, the usual size of stock-holding of a Bedfordshire villager was very small. Apart from sheep, few held more than one kind of animal (A. T. Gaydon, The Taxation of 1297 (B.H.R.S. xxxix, 1959), p. xxviii).

3. English Wills, pp. 46, 53, 75. Villagers also hired flocks from one another, as at Blunham, 1432, when Thomas Wryght prosecuted Stephen Wymond for 2s 11d owed him for the hire of 28 sheep (C.R.O. L26/53, m. 13).

4. English Wills, p. 46. 5. *ibid.* p. 77. 6. *ibid.* p. 80.

7. C.C.R. 1500-9, p. 13 (no. 36). 8. Godber, p. 160.

wrote instructions for his son, he assumed that the manor could support 300-400 ewes.<sup>1</sup> Recently, it has been suggested that sheep-farming was not the profitable activity it was once thought to have been in the fifteenth century.<sup>2</sup> It may be that ordinary villagers took advantage of the withdrawal of some landlords from the exploitation of demesne flocks to meet local demands themselves.<sup>3</sup> As has been noted already,<sup>4</sup> the copyhold land market provided one way in which individuals could obtain land on which to pasture flocks.

Any increase in pasture farming was probably at the expense of the amount of arable under cultivation.<sup>5</sup> The returns to the Nonarum Inquisitiones of 1341-2 suggest that many Bedfordshire villages underwent a contraction of their arable long before the fifteenth century. Of some 111 villages, 49 recorded some contraction of their arable as a reason for the low level of their taxation.<sup>6</sup> While the occasion of the tax no doubt produced exaggerated claims by the villagers, the testimony of the Inquisitiones is probably too widespread to be disregarded.<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately,

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1. A. G. Dickens, 'Estate and Household Management in Bedfordshire, c. 1540', B.H.R.S. xxxvi (1956), p. 43. 2. T. H. Lloyd, The Movement of Wool Prices in Medieval England (Camb., 1973), pp. 24-30. However, it has been suggested that a rise in wool prices between 1485 and 1520 may have encouraged sheep farming (The Duchy of Lancaster's Estates in Derbyshire, 1485-1540, ed. I. S. W. Blanchard (Derbys. Arch. Soc. Rec. Ser. 3, 1971), pp. 2-6). 3. Lloyd, pp. 27-8. 4. Above, p. 9. 5. H. Thorpe, 'The Lord and the Landscape', T.B.A.S. 80 (1965), p. 48; in Leicestershire, an increase in the amount of grazing was also achieved by laying down arable to pasture as leys in the open fields (W. G. Hoskins, Essays in Leicestershire History (Liverpool, 1950), pp. 140-3). 6. Nonarum Inquisitiones, pp. 11-21. 7. A. R. H. Baker, 'Evidence in the Nonarum Inquisitiones of contracting arable lands in England during the early fourteenth century', ECHR 2nd ser. xix, no. 3 (1966), pp. 518-32; 'Some evidence of a reduction in the acreage of cultivated lands in Sussex during the early fourteenth century', S.A.C. civ (1966), pp. 1-5; 'Contracting arable lands in 1341', B.H.R.S. xlix (1970), pp. 7-18.



the Inquisitiones provide the only detailed insight into the abandonment of land in the county.<sup>1</sup> After 1342, the process can be detected only in a minor way as tenements tumbled into ruin and as land reverted to the lords' hands through lack of tenants.<sup>2</sup>

As we have seen, open-field cultivation survived alongside pasture farming. To judge from the bequests in Bedfordshire wills, by the later fifteenth century barley was the principal grain crop grown in all parts of the county.<sup>3</sup> Wheat was another crop grown in most localities, and it was probably the main cash crop. Of the county's markets in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, those at Bedford, Biggleswade, Luton, and Shefford specialized in corn.<sup>4</sup> In Leland's opinion, Luton was "a very good market town for barley".<sup>5</sup>

#### Estate Administration

By the end of the fourteenth century, some landlords had begun to abandon demesne cultivation and to let out their lands and their farm buildings. At Shillington, in the south of the county, Ramsey Abbey continued to exploit a part of the demesne into the 1380s,<sup>6</sup> but by 1406 the entire demesne had been let to the tenants along with the stables, cowsheds and barns.<sup>7</sup> At Podington, in the north-west, the Greys of

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1. A search through the extents attached to the inquisitions post mortem might yield more evidence. At Riseley in 1351, 300 acres (the demesne) lay frisce, inculte, et pastura, but this was because there was no one to farm it, and it may have passed back into cultivation at a later date (P.R.O. C135/112/8). 2. C.E.H.E. p. 559. 3. Based on the evidence in English Wills. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Bedfordshire was a prime malting area, based on its barley (A. Everitt, 'The Marketing of Agricultural Produce', A.H.E.W. pp. 548-9).

4. Everitt, p. 589. 5. The Itinerary of John Leland, v. 7. 6. P.R.O. SC6/741/23-4. 7. ibid. 741/25.

Ruthin had started to lease small parcels of the demesne to their tenants by 1384.<sup>1</sup> At Willington, in central Bedfordshire, the demesne was entirely at farm by 1383.<sup>2</sup> At Leighton Buzzard, in the south-west, the process appears to have been complete by 1407.<sup>3</sup> At Sutton, a Duchy of Lancaster manor in the east of the county, the demesne was at farm by 1394-5.<sup>4</sup> At all these manors, the demesne was let to the local tenants, either piecemeal or in portions of a standard size. No doubt this happened on many other manors too. On some, by the middle of the fifteenth century, the demesne was in the hands of a single firmarius.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the impact of leasing on the local land market must have varied from place to place, though where extra land was available, its presence on the market may have depressed the demand for customary holdings and helped to keep rents at a low level.<sup>6</sup> As the sources are so patchy, for many manors we can only guess that their lords followed the general trend towards leasing. For others, especially those in the hands of the local gentry, the exploitation of a part or the whole of the demesne may have continued well into the fifteenth century.<sup>7</sup> On manors where there were stands of timber, landlords usually retained the woodland in their own hands.<sup>8</sup> Wood was a valuable commodity, and cut timber and standing underwood were sold off at a profit.<sup>9</sup>

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1. C.R.O. OR 798, m. 1d.      2. C.R.O. R.213/12/120.      3. Below, pp. 72-3.      4. P.R.O. DL29/2/4.      5. As at Holme and Langford, a manor of Westminster Abbey (W.A.M. 7566-71). At Pegsdon, a Ramsey Abbey manor appurtenant to Shillington, the demesne appears to have been in the hands of a single firmarius from the end of the fourteenth century (P.R.O. SC6/741/22, m. 5).      6. As seems to have happened at Willington (below, pp. 73-4.).      7. At Baddesley Clinton (Warwicks), the landlord, John Brome, exploited his demesne as a cattle pasture between 1442-52 (C. Dyer, 'A small landowner in the fifteenth century', Midland History i, no. 3 (1972), pp. 4-5).      8. L. C. Latham, 'A Berkshire manor (Shaw) at the close of the Middle Ages', Trans. Newbury & District Field Club vi, no. 2 (1931), p. 75.      9. Sales of wood at Harrold in 1467-8 brought in £27 12s 4d (Valor, p. 82).

For the 300-400 manors in the county in the fifteenth century, there are now very few series of account rolls. Those sources which have survived only allow us to make some very general observations about manorial income. Some Bedfordshire manors do show signs of a falling income during the century. Some manors fared worse than others. At Willington, the income of the manor may have fallen by as much as one-quarter between the 1390s and 1458.<sup>1</sup> On the Westminster Abbey manor of Holme and Langford in the east of the county, the farm of the manor, which stood at £13 6s 8d in 1443-4, had declined to £12 in 1448-9, and £8 in 1473-4,<sup>2</sup> at which level it remained into the sixteenth century.<sup>3</sup> At Sutton, the fall in the income which the Duchy of Lancaster drew was a gradual one. The cash liberationes had totalled £64 in 1397, £55 in 1401, £53 in 1429, and £49 in 1430.<sup>4</sup> In the second half of the century, the income of Leighton Buzzard showed a similar, long-term decline, but it was slight, and the accounts leave the impression that successive lords of the manor were able to exploit the manor fairly effectively.<sup>5</sup> The Greys of Ruthin are prime examples of lords who were able to maintain and even increase their income by efficient estate management. The clear value of their Bedfordshire property increased from £339 in 1467-8 to nearly £362 in 1498.<sup>6</sup> One of the ways in which this increase was achieved appears to have been the control the Greys exercised over the customary land market on their manors.<sup>7</sup> While the income of individual properties

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1. Below, p. 72.

2. W.A.M. 7566-8.

3. W.A.M.

7569-71.

4. P.R.O. DL29/2/5-10.

5. Below, pp. 143-8.

6. Valor, pp. 26, 29-35.

7. Below, pp. 70-1.

may have declined, landlords were often able to maintain or increase their income by purchase or marriage.<sup>1</sup> In general, the fifteenth century probably saw both the smaller and the greater lay landlords increasing in wealth.<sup>2</sup> Despite declining profits, some Bedfordshire manors were clearly very valuable. Willington still brought in over £40 in 1458.<sup>3</sup> The net income from Leighton Buzzard in the second half of the century invariably exceeded £100.<sup>4</sup> The rents and farms which Reynold Bray drew from his manors of Eaton Bray and Houghton Regis at the end of the century amounted to between £128 and £134.<sup>5</sup> Landlords probably encouraged a market in customary holdings in order to boost their finances, or simply to maintain their rent rolls. Certainly, some gave active encouragement to new tenants by remitting a part of the entry fine or by granting timber for repairs to tenements.<sup>6</sup> The prosperity of the county as a whole is reflected in the Lay Subsidy returns of the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries. In 1334 Bedfordshire was one of the richest counties in England in terms of assessed lay wealth per thousand acres. By 1515 the lay wealth of the county had increased, but that of other counties had increased more for Bedfordshire was then no longer one of the richest.<sup>7</sup>

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1. It was a combination of marriage and the restoration of their estates which enabled the Percy family to compensate for the collapse of their agrarian income between 1416 and 1461 (J. M. W. Bean, The Estates of the Percy Family, 1416-1537 (Oxford, 1958), pp. 104-5).

2. S. Pollard and D. W. Crossley, The Wealth of Britain, 1085-1966 (1968), pp. 58-9.

3. B.M. Add. Roll 657. 4. Below, pp. 143-8.

5. W.A.M. 9219A-B. 6. Below, p. 46.

7. R. S. Schofield, 'The geographical distribution of wealth in England, 1334-1649', ECHR 2nd ser. xviii, no. 3 (1965), pp. 483-510.

### Villages and Villagers

The wealth of the county remained firmly anchored in the countryside. The principal towns - Bedford, Dunstable, Leighton Buzzard, Luton, and Biggleswade - were all small. Only Bedford was a self-governing borough.<sup>1</sup> The lives of most of their inhabitants were intimately bound up with the agriculture of the surrounding area. The villages and hamlets in which the greater part of the population lived were scattered more or less evenly over the county.<sup>2</sup> Unlike other Midland counties, Bedfordshire suffered little desertion of settlements in the later Middle Ages, though a number of sites appear to have undergone a contraction in their size after 1300. As deserted and shrunken villages are not a prominent feature in the present-day landscape, little research has been directed at the history of the county's rural settlement. It is clear, however, that practically all the villages which have disappeared or shrunk were poorer and smaller in the fourteenth century than the average village in the county.<sup>3</sup> The evidence of the Nonarum Inquisitiones suggests that the process of contraction was well under way by 1342.<sup>4</sup> Apart from Higham Gobion,<sup>5</sup> depopulation was probably the result of a combination of factors

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1. Godber, pp. 155-63.      2. In Bedfordshire, settlements, arable, and meadow were all distributed far more evenly over the county than in neighbouring Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire. This even distribution appears to reflect the absence of sharp divisions which surface geology, drainage, and relief can produce (The Domesday Geography of South-East England, ed. H. C. Darby and E. M. J. Campbell (Camb., 1962), pp. 1-96, 138-85).      3. M. W. Beresford in Deserted Medieval Villages, ed. M. W. Beresford and J. G. Hurst (1971), pp. 21, 23.      4. Above, p. 37.      5. Above, p. 35.

at work over a considerable period of time. The distribution of depopulated and deserted sites shows a marked concentration on the heavy clays of south-central Bedfordshire.<sup>1</sup> Once the pressure of population on the land had eased, small settlements farming damp, heavy soils were the scene of the greatest shrinkage in population. Deteriorating weather conditions in the fifteenth century may have tipped the balance against the viability of a settlement.<sup>2</sup> The recovery in the population level in the wake of the Black Death was slow. Over England as a whole, the level of population in the 1520s may perhaps have been about the same as it had been in 1377.<sup>3</sup> In Bedfordshire, it appears that recovery lagged behind other areas, for as late as 1563 the population of the county may not have exceeded that in 1377.<sup>4</sup> One result of the fall in population and of its slow recovery was a growth in peasant mobility. On some manors in the county, rent rolls continued to decline in the fifteenth century as villagers sought better opportunities elsewhere.<sup>5</sup> Rural mobility probably had a threefold effect on the land market. In terms of the number of transactions presented in the courts, the market on the rural manors slackened, though the average size of land-transfer increased as many more full tenements came onto the market. For those who remained in their villages, there were considerable opportunities to increase the size of their own holdings. Finally,

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1. Map 3. 2. Thorpe, 'The lord and the landscape', p. 50; H. Lamb, 'Britain's changing climate', G.J. 133, pt. 4 (1967), p. 459; P. F. Brandon, 'Late medieval weather in Sussex and its agricultural significance', Trans. I.B.G. 54 (1971), pp. 11-14. 3. J. Cornwall, 'English population in the early sixteenth century', EcHR 2nd ser. xxiii, no. 1 (1970), p. 44. 4. J. Cornwall, 'An Elizabethan census', Records of Bucks. xvi, no. 4 (1959), p. 264. 5. The best evidence for mobility comes from the manors of Ramsey Abbey (T. W. Page, The End of Villainage in England (New York, 1900), pp. 76-7; J. A. Raftis, Tenure and Mobility (Toronto, 1964), pp. 153-82).

the greater mobility may have increased the population of country towns, such as Leighton Buzzard, and have added to the demand for land in their immediate vicinity.<sup>1</sup>

We have little evidence of the size and character of the villages themselves in the late Middle Ages. In plan many may have resembled villages found all over the Midland plain.<sup>2</sup> But the houses of the villagers no doubt varied from place to place in their construction. Probably only the larger houses of the more prosperous resembled types common in the southern half of the country in general.<sup>3</sup> In the north of the county, surviving post-medieval houses resemble houses in some of the more backward areas of northern England, rather than those in the south. They are simple in style, and meanly built, probably deriving from a single storey house with an open hearth.<sup>4</sup> It seems reasonable to assume that the houses of the villagers in the fifteenth century were equally simple in construction. In this area "stone cottages sufficiently substantial to survive to the present day were rarely erected before the eighteenth century".<sup>5</sup> Further south, on more productive soils, houses may have been larger. However, the typical peasant house of the fifteenth century does not appear to have been particularly strong or large. It was a relatively simple matter to move lock, stock, and barrel.<sup>6</sup> Some of the changes in

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1. These ideas are discussed in more detail in chapters 4 and 5.  
2. Bedfordshire falls within an area of strong village settlement (H. Thorpe, 'Rural settlement', The British Isles: a systematic geography, ed. J. W. Watson and J. B. Sissons (1964), p. 369).  
3. Alcock, 'Timber-framed buildings...', pp. 43-6.  
4. *ibid.* pp. 57-9.  
5. J. A. Shepherd, 'Vernacular buildings in England and Wales', Trans. I.B.G. 40 (1966), pp. 22-3.  
6. At Barton and Shillington, manors of Ramsey Abbey, the lord granted permission for tenants to move buildings from one tenement to another (B. M. Harley MS. 445, fos. 184r, 193r, 201v, 206r: 1441-5).

house-styles found in different parts of the Midlands did percolate into Bedfordshire too. At Barton in 1464 Thomas Gregory was fined 2d for failing to repair his insethous which needed attention to the straw, the foundations, and the mud walls.<sup>1</sup> At Podington in 1476 two tenants were fined for not repairing the stonewerk of their houses.<sup>2</sup> The foundations and the stonewerk in these cases were probably the stone plinth on which walls of daub and wattle or of cob were erected.<sup>3</sup>

In the fifteenth century Bedfordshire court rolls contain many references to the dilapidation of messuages. Tenants were frequently ordered to repair their buildings, were fined for not doing so, or they agreed to build new ones (or repair old ones) when a tenement changed hands. In some cases, no doubt, tenements fell into disrepair because individual tenants were too poor to maintain them.<sup>4</sup> On the whole, the shrinkage in village populations would seem to be a more plausible explanation for most of the dilapidation rather than continuing rural impoverishment. Some tenants with houses in need of repair held two or more tenements, and probably had little incentive to maintain all their property in good condition. John Warde, tenant at Shillington, fined in 1428 for neglecting his property, was the most active land-dealer of his generation in the manor.<sup>5</sup> For their part, landlords anxious to maintain

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1. "Thomas Gregory non reperavit le Insethous ut in stramine, grousellyng', et in cleye" (P.R.O. SC2/179/70, m. 2). An insethous may have been a building erected on a site which already contained a building of some sort (R. K. Field, 'Worcestershire peasant buildings, household goods, and farming equipment in the later Middle Ages', Medieval Archaeology ix (1965), p. 113, n. 55). 2. C.R.O. OR 802, m. 1-1d.

3. J. G. Hurst in Deserted Medieval Villages, pp. 93-5. In Northamptonshire, cob-walling was founded on a stone plinth (M. V. J. Seaborne, 'Cob cottages of Northamptonshire', N.P.P. iii, no. 5 (1964), p. 217).

4. Field, Worcestershire Peasant, pp. 195-6, has suggested that the non-repair of tenements was a sign of continuing peasant impoverishment.

5. P.R.O. SC2/179/59, m. 4; and below, p. 83.



their rent rolls were prepared to encourage tenants to take on holdings by grants of timber or cash towards the upkeep of the property. At Podington, tenants sometimes received timber or underwood with which to repair their houses.<sup>1</sup> In 1413 Richard Tommes received 26s 8d towards the cost of repairs, in addition to an allocation of wood.<sup>2</sup> And in 1457 Richard Addereston<sup>3</sup> was excused the entry fine on a tenement he had acquired because it was ruinous; he too received timber.<sup>3</sup> Similar grants were made on the manors of Ramsey Abbey.<sup>4</sup>

For the well-to-do, wills provide some insight into the sorts of possessions found in their homes at the end of the fifteenth century.<sup>5</sup> For the farmers and peasants who formed the greater part of the rural population, there is less detail. The Subsidy rolls of 1523-5 suggest that in some parts as much as one half of the rural population were labourers, assessed on wages of £1 a year.<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, the Subsidies, like the Survey of 1522 which preceded them (and which does not survive for Bedfordshire), took no account of customary holdings. Thus, an assessment of property or wages does not necessarily do full justice to individual circumstances.<sup>7</sup> The middling peasants, those assessed on goods worth £5, were probably mostly tenant farmers,<sup>8</sup> though we usually have little or no idea of the size of their customary holdings. In

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1. C.R.O. OR 798, mm. 10, 12; OR 799, m. 1.      2. OR 799, m. 8.  
3. OR 800, m. 16.      4. E.g. Shillington, 1409 (P.R.O. SC2/179/52, m. 3).      5. The information is summarized in Godber, pp. 165-7.  
6. *ibid.* p. 214; P.R.O. E179/71/110 (Flitt Hundred).      7. J. Cornwall, 'The people of Rutland in 1522', *T.L.A.H.S.* xxxvii (1961-2), pp. 8-11.  
8. *ibid.* p. 16.

Buckinghamshire, particularly in the north of the county, a relatively large amount of land was held freely in 1522, and much of this was held in quite small parcels by local yeomen and husbandmen.<sup>1</sup> In 1279, in the two northern hundreds of Bedfordshire, as much as 46 per cent of the land was held freely,<sup>2</sup> and it seems likely that landholding in this part in 1522 was similar to that in neighbouring Buckinghamshire. In the later thirteenth century the north of Bedfordshire was not fully manorialized.<sup>3</sup> In other parts of the county there may not have been so large a proportion of free land. However, rentals and court rolls of individual manors in the centre and south of the county suggest that in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries freeholds could be as numerous as copyholds.<sup>4</sup> Many freeholds were very small, but one man often held several scattered over neighbouring villages. Many tenants held both free and customary land. In Buckinghamshire in 1523 the gentry and the peers owned between them about 61 per cent of lay-owned land,<sup>5</sup> with the rest in the hands of lesser landowners. There was probably a roughly similar division in Bedfordshire.

### Landlords

Few villages in Bedfordshire can have had a resident squire at the end of the fifteenth century.<sup>6</sup> Most lords held more than one manor, and

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1. Musters, p. 24.      2. E. A. Kosminsky, Studies in the Agrarian History of England in the Thirteenth Century (Oxford, 1956), p. 90.  
3. ibid. p. 125.      4. E.g. Blunham (C.R.O. L26/154, L26/212); Eggington (C.R.O. X/310/1, m. 11); Stotfold (Newnham) (C.R.O. HA 510); Tilsworth (C.R.O. CH 4, m. 9).      5. J. Cornwall, 'The early Tudor gentry', ECHR 2nd ser. xvii, no. 3 (1965), p. 461.      6. In the reign of Henry VII most villages did not have a resident squire. In Rutland and Suffolk, this was true of four places out of five (ibid. p. 459).

the greater the size of a man's estate the greater was the likelihood that he held land in other counties. By 1500, there were between 300 and 400 manors in the county, but only about 125 parishes.<sup>1</sup> Thus there were on average three manors to a parish, and those with a single manor were rare. As the median size of rural parish was about 2250 acres,<sup>2</sup> many manors were very small.<sup>3</sup> In the fifteenth century, 70 per cent of the manors in the county were owned by lay men. In 1412 an income tax was levied on owners of lands and rents worth £20 or more a year at the rate of 6s 8d for every £20, and the surviving returns provide a fairly comprehensive guide to the more prominent lay landlords at that date.<sup>4</sup> The returns show that incomes from land were under-assessed,<sup>5</sup> and, as they were concerned with estates of a certain value, they excluded many of the parish gentry whose estates were worth less than £20 a year.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, they do give some indication of the relative wealth and importance of Bedfordshire landowners.

In 1412, the largest lay estate in Bedfordshire was held by Reynold Grey, Lord of Ruthin. In addition to his land in the Palatinate of Chester and the marcher lordship of Ruthin, he held manors scattered over seven other counties in the Midlands and East Anglia.<sup>7</sup> By the 1460s, with the

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1. Calculated from V.C.H.ii-iii, excluding Bedford. 2. The range was from less than 1000 acres to over 15000 in the case of Luton, but here there were at least 27 manors. 3. Fifteenth-century inquisitions and feet-of-fines are unreliable sources for the size of manors, but suggest that manors with 600 acres or more of arable demesne were few. 4. Feudal Aids, vi. 391-8. Additional sources for the more prominent landowners include the Commission of Peace, 1434 (C.P.R. 1429-36, pp. 373-5) and M. Bassett, Knights of the shire for Bedfordshire during the Middle Ages (B.H.R.S. xxix, 1949). 5. E.g. Joan Cobham's manors in Arlesey and Potton were assessed at £11 (Feudal Aids, vi. 395), whereas her net income from Arlesey alone in 1402-3 had been over £13 (B. M. Harley Roll A.37). 6. The returns included many estates in the county valued at less than £20, but these were probably included in case the man in question held lands elsewhere. 7. Valor, pp. 6, 22.

acquisition of Ampthill, Bedfordshire had become not only the administrative base of the Midland estates, but also the county in which lay the Greys' favourite country residence.<sup>1</sup> Not every landlord established the same close connections with Bedfordshire as the Greys. In fact, the returns of 1412 show that, of the landlords with which they dealt, three-fifths had interests outside the county which must have equalled or exceeded their interests in it in terms of income and lordship. They show, too, that the larger estates in the county were held in the main by men with lands elsewhere. Many local men held only one or two manors. Of the total landed wealth encompassed by the tax, 60-65 per cent was in the hands of gentry, knights, and nobility who were not first and foremost Bedfordshire men.

In the fifteenth century, religious houses owned some 30 per cent of the manors in the county. Of this proportion, perhaps 110 manors in all, Bedfordshire houses held half. The rest were shared between 20 other foundations, no one of them, with the exception of the Knights Hospitallers, holding more than four manors.<sup>2</sup> The eleven principal foundations within the county were mostly small in terms of their personnel and modest in terms of their endowment.<sup>3</sup> Apart from cartularies, they have left behind them little in the way of records. In the fifteenth century, in common with lay lords, the religious houses probably let out most of their demesnes, perhaps retaining some land in hand in the

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1. Valor, p. 46.      2. Based on V.C.H. ii-iii.      3. Godber, p. 108. The eleven were Bushmead, Caldwell, Chicksands, Dunstable, Harrold, Markyate, & Newnham Priors; Elstow, Warden, and Woburn Abbies; and Northill College.

immediate neighbourhood of the foundation.<sup>1</sup> Although several of the Bedfordshire houses held land in other counties, they usually held the core of their lands around their site. Thus, Woburn Abbey held a block of land in the west of the county, Bushmead Priory held several manors in and around Eaton Socon in the north-east, and Dunstable Priory held land in the south-west. The estates of the gentry, on the other hand, tended to be scattered more widely throughout the county.<sup>2</sup>

The fifteenth century was a period of flux in the descent of lay estates in Bedfordshire. We can trace the descent of some 67 (out of 78) of the estates which were listed in the returns of 1412. Of these, 40 per cent (27) remained in the one family throughout the century, 27 per cent (18) passed from one family to another by marriage, 27 per cent (18) passed from one family to another by purchase or some other means, and the remaining 6 per cent (4) had a more chequered descent, passing from one family to another by marriage and then to another family by purchase. When we examine the descent of as many lay estates as possible (199 out of about 240 manors), we find that 38 per cent (76 manors) descended in the male line of the one family, 24 per cent (48 manors) passed out of one family by marriage, while 38 per cent (75 manors) eventually passed from one family to another, unrelated family.<sup>3</sup> As families died out in the male line or died out completely, so newcomers took their place or established families stepped in to enlarge their estates. When John, Lord Wenlock, died in 1471, his

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1. Valor Ecclesiasticus, ed. J. Caley and J. Hunter (6 vols., Record Commission, 1810-34), iv. 206, 209.      2. As was the case in Buckinghamshire (Musters, p. 25).      3. Based on V.C.H. ii-iii.

estate in and around Luton was granted to Thomas Rotherham, then bishop of Lincoln. At the end of the century, the Rotherhams had amassed a large estate in the south of the county.<sup>1</sup> Another man who built up a sizeable estate in Bedfordshire at the end of the century was Sir Reynold Bray who was granted a part of the lands of the Zouches of Harringworth when they were forfeited in 1485.<sup>2</sup> After the death of Sir John Cornwall, Lord Fanhope, in 1443, Lord Edmund Grey was eventually able to step in and purchase all Cornwall's land in Bedfordshire, including the fine castle at Ampthill.<sup>3</sup>

### Londoners

Among the men who bought up land and property in the county in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries there were several London merchants who sought an investment for their profits from trade. The only London merchant listed as a tax payer in Bedfordshire in 1412 was Stephen Spelman who held a manor in Maulden.<sup>4</sup> However, Sir Adam Francis, who held Eyworth, was the son of a London mercer,<sup>5</sup> and Sir Henry Brounflete (later Lord Vescy), who succeeded to the Bedfordshire lands of his father, Sir Thomas,<sup>6</sup> owned merchant ships and at one time sought membership in the grocers' company in London.<sup>7</sup> During the century, London merchants began to buy land, particularly in the south of the county, well within reach of the

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1. Godber, p. 159; Calendar, ii. 493-4. 2. C.P. xii, pt. 2, pp. 945-7. Zouche was restored in part to his lands; in 1495, Sir John sold to Bray the manors of Eaton, Houghton Regis, and Totternhoe (C.C.R. 1485-1500, p. 270). 3. Valor, pp. 34-5. 4. Feudal Aids, vi. 397; S. L. Thrupp, The Merchant Class of Medieval London (Chicago, 1948), p. 367. 5. Feudal Aids, vi. 395; Thrupp, pp. 284, 341-2. 6. Feudal Aids, vi. 393. 7. Thrupp, p. 243.

capital.<sup>1</sup> Alexander Heued (or Hened), citizen and wax-chandler of London, bought land in Luton in the early years of the century.<sup>2</sup> Richard Sutton, draper, held land at Stopsley in Luton when he died in 1430.<sup>3</sup> Richard Drake, merchant of the staple, sold his estate in Shillington in 1502.<sup>4</sup> Richard Fermour, gentleman and grocer, built up an estate in and around Luton in the 1520s.<sup>5</sup> John Morecote, gentleman, bought freeholds in a number of parishes in the 1490s, as well as 58 acres of copyhold land in Sundon and Luton.<sup>6</sup> George Monoux, master of the drapers' company, and Lord Mayor of London in 1514, was another Londoner who bought both freeholds and copyholds in the county.<sup>7</sup> He was just one of a number of Londoners who invested in copyholds at Leighton Buzzard.<sup>8</sup> The willingness of merchants and gentlemen to hold land in customary tenure is a sure sign of the security of title which accrued to copyhold,<sup>9</sup> and their involvement in the market is one of its more fascinating aspects.

The proximity of London also attracted Bedfordshire men to the capital. Thomas Northfeld of Eaton Socon apprenticed his son Walter to Stephen Sampton, bowyer, in 1442.<sup>10</sup> Thomas Chamber, grocer of London, who died in or around 1488, had been born in Blunham.<sup>11</sup> Other men made more of a mark. Thomas Chalton, son of Thomas Chalton of Dunstable, was a member of the mercers' company, and Lord Mayor of London in 1449.<sup>12</sup> In fact,

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1. The favourite counties for London merchants were those closest to the capital (ibid. p. 284). 2. P.R.O. CP25(i)/6/73, fo. 18; 6/74, fo. 23.  
3. I.T.R. i. 178. 4. C.C.R. 1500-9, p. 259. 5. B. M. Egerton MS. 1938, fos. 42r-52v. 6. P.R.O. CP25(i)/6/83, fo. 24; C.C.R. 1485-1500, pp. 321, 368. 7. Godber, p. 140. 8. Below, pp. 154-5. 9. E. Kerridge, *Agrarian Problems in the Sixteenth Century and After* (1969), p. 76. 10. C.P.M.R., 1437-57, p. 46.  
11. I.T.R. i. 41. 12. Godber, p. 158; Thrupp, p. 330.

there were several links between merchants at Dunstable and at London: the Fayreys held land in both towns,<sup>1</sup> and the family of William Cantelowe, mercer of London, was related to the Dunstable family of Pycot in the second half of the fifteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Other members of Bedfordshire families who became Lord Mayors of London included William Stocker of Eaton Socon (1484) and William Boteler of Biddenham (1515-16).<sup>3</sup>

### Local men

Land, of course, was a "safe" investment, and an additional attraction lay in the effective lordship over men which it bestowed.<sup>4</sup> The Bedfordshire landlords and the London merchants who bought up land in the county probably paid about 20 years' purchase, that is 20 times the annual value of a rent-charge.<sup>5</sup> This was the usual price for land in the fifteenth century (and on into the eighteenth century),<sup>6</sup> though we have little evidence of prices actually paid in Bedfordshire.<sup>7</sup> The significant relationships which the ownership of a manor brought to a landlord lay not so much with poor peasants as with the well-to-do villagers who farmed the demesnes, the parish "gentry" who acted as bailiffs, stewards, and receivers. In turn, it was these men who had the contact with the peasantry. Sir John

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1. Godber, p. 158; P.C.C. i. 197. 2. F. A. Page-Turner, 'The Bedfordshire wills and administrations proved at Lambeth Palace and in the Archdeaconry of Huntingdon', B.H.R.S. ii (1914), pp. 47-8; C.C.R. 1485-1500, p. 176; Thrupp, p. 328. 3. Godber, p. 140.  
4. K. B. McFarlane, 'The investment of Sir John Fastolf's profits of war', T.R.H.S. 5th ser. vii (1957), pp. 109-110. 5. McFarlane, 'The investment of...Fastolf's profits of war', p. 110. 6. H. J. Habakkuk, 'The long-term rate of interest and the price of land in the seventeenth century', ECHR 2nd ser. v, no. 1 (1952), p. 44; C. Clay, 'The price of freehold land in the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries', ECHR 2nd ser. xxvii, no. 2 (1974), pp. 173-4. 7. Sir Reynold Bray paid 19 years' purchase for lands in Northamptonshire and Bedfordshire in 1498 (C.C.R. 1485-1500, p. 327). John Morell claimed to have paid Thomas Reynes 24 years' purchase for land in and around Leighton Buzzard in the 1470s (P.R.O. C1/65/61-3). Unfortunately, the price paid for copyhold land escapes us for it was not engrossed on the court roll, and probably never came to the notice of the court unless in dispute.



Gostwick was voicing the opinion of every lord when he wrote to his son in the sixteenth century: "Ye must have some honest man to have the charge of your husbandry...This man if he be an honest man shalbe the key of your husbandry and shall bring you and your wife much quietnes... in anie wise, take good hede to whome and how ye lett your fermes".<sup>1</sup> It was not easy to unearth honest and effective estate officials,<sup>2</sup> but, at the local level, it was these men who provided the link between lord and tenant in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, especially where many manors lacked a resident lord. The bailiffs, rent-collectors, and firmarii became increasingly important and influential within their communities.<sup>3</sup> As representatives of the lord constantly at hand, they fulfilled a vital role in the workings of the local land market, for it was through these men that many transfers of customary land took place out of court. Their presence contributed to the flexibility of copyhold tenure, for holdings could be taken up at any time as long as formal registration was made at the next court. These men were also in a position to benefit greatly from the land market, and, as we shall see, several built up large holdings of customary land in various Bedfordshire manors. Higher in the social and administrative scale, there were men like Richard Carlile, receiver in Bedfordshire to the Greys in 1467-8, who bought a manor in Roxton in 1472,<sup>4</sup> and Christopher Wase, receiver to Alice Chaucer at Leighton Buzzard in the 1460s and 1470s. Mayor of High Wycombe in 1480, at his death Wase left freehold property in that town, as well as copyhold lands elsewhere in the county.<sup>5</sup> It was the local

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1. Dickens, 'Estate and household management', pp. 38-44. 2. McFarlane, 'The investment of...Fastolf's profits of war', pp. 110-111. 3. On some manors one man effectively combined all three positions; this was so at Leighton Buzzard (below, p. 139). 4. Valor, pp. 46-7; V.C.H. iii. 321; P.R.O. CP25(i)/6/82, fo. 16. 5. F. W. Ragg, 'Fragment of a folio MS. of archdeaconry courts of Buckinghamshire, pt. iv', Records of Bucks. xi, no. 4 (1922), p. 201; and see below, pp. 139-40.

officials and their overseers who were responsible, directly or indirectly, for the compilation and care of the records which show us the functioning of the market in customary land. It is to these that we shall now turn in order to examine the land market on a number of rural manors in Bedfordshire.

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#### Chapter 4: The customary land market on the rural manors

The market in customary land was regulated by the customs which surrounded copyhold tenure. In Bedfordshire in the fifteenth century, these resembled those in many different parts of the country. The two principal forms of copyhold - for a term of years or for life on the one hand, and in perpetuity by inheritance on the other - existed side by side on different manors.<sup>1</sup> The first major signs of the disappearance of villein disabilities, particularly labour services, are found in the 1370s and 1380s. On some manors, tenants already held their land per rotulum curie, a development probably associated with the commutation of services into cash rents.<sup>2</sup> On the manors of the abbey of Ramsey, copyholds for terms of years began to replace the traditional servile tenures in the 1370s. Thereafter, this tenure was gradually converted to copyhold of inheritance.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the Cranfield custumal of 1484 stated that the customary tenants held to them, their heirs, and assigns, whereas most entries in the Court Book were copyholds for years or for life.<sup>4</sup> At Willington, by 1383, the former tenants in bondagio held their land by life-leases or for terms of years.<sup>5</sup> By the beginning of the fifteenth century, customary tenures at Blunham and Podington, manors of the Greys of Ruthin, were copyholds for terms of years or for life.<sup>6</sup> Elsewhere, copyholds of inheritance replaced servile tenure: this was so at Arlesey

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1. E. Kerridge, Agrarian Problems in the Sixteenth Century and After (1969), pp. 36-41. 2. E.g. Chalgrave, rental 1376 (C.R.O. MC 13); Etonbury in Arlesey, court roll 1386 (B. M. Harley Roll A.4).  
3. J. A. Raftis, Tenure and Mobility (Toronto, 1964), pp. 65-6, 259-60.  
4. *ibid.* p. 202, n. 86; C.R.O. AD 341 (transcribed in Appendix 3).  
5. *Below*, p. 72. 6. C.R.O. L26/51; C.R.O. OR 798, m. 3.

and at Leighton Buzzard.<sup>1</sup> Giving a tenant a "copy" did not remove legal disabilities, for at law copyhold was no different from villeinage. The customs which grew up around copyhold both expressed the security of a tenant's title and enshrined the disabilities which continued to attach to customary tenure.

Bedfordshire court rolls and custumals show that customary tenants enjoyed freedom of alienation provided their transfers were presented in the manor court. At Cranfield, the tenant had the right to alienate either in court, or at any other time into the hands of the steward, bailiff, or headborrow (chief pledge), provided the alienation was then registered formally at the next court.<sup>2</sup> The right to alienate outside the court, followed by formal presentation, was important, especially on manors where courts were held only once or twice a year. Where this was so, the tenant made his alienation into the hands of one of the manorial officials, or in front of witnesses.<sup>3</sup> The importance of their testimony in court at the next session can be judged from an entry in the Ramsey Court Book in 1419-20. Adam Yonge sought entry to a semi-virgate in Shillington which he claimed Richard Grene had surrendered to him out of court. However, Adam was unable to produce witnesses to the alleged transfer, and the land passed to Richard Grene's son.<sup>4</sup> Customary tenants

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1. Below, pp. 92, 153. 2. C.R.O. AD 341. I have discovered only one written record of an informal surrender: in 1663, Thomas Burges surrendered 3 butts in Long Crendon (Bucks) to his son. The deed recording this was signed (very shakily) "T.B.", witnessed, sealed, and endorsed later that it had been delivered in court (XV.15.104). 3. At Shillington in 1473, the court roll recorded a transfer made by Margaret Toprest out of court "coram Mattheo Chawmbre ballivo et omnibus parochianis in ecclesia de Shitlyngton" (B.M. Add. Roll 39656; Raftis, p. 201, n. 85). 4. "Idem Adam non potest invenire testes in curia de sursu reddicione" (B. M. Harley MS. 445, fo. 106r).

also had the right to sublet a part of their tenements or to lease them outright. On the manors of Ramsey Abbey, a tenant could sublet his land for up to 3 years without formal licence. For longer periods, he required a licence for which he paid a fine.<sup>1</sup> On other manors, the period in which informal subletting was allowed may have been less - two years,<sup>2</sup> or a year and a day.<sup>3</sup>

When tenants attempted to evade the regulations governing the transfer of land, the steward of the manor court stepped in to seize the land into the lord's hands. A common pretext for the steward's intervention was the attempt to escape the entry fine.<sup>4</sup> Another was the attempt to convey customary land by charter, as if it were free land.<sup>5</sup> The steward also retained land when no heir was forthcoming. A proclamation was made in court for an heir, but if no one established a claim, the steward could grant the tenancy to anyone willing to take it on.<sup>6</sup>

On the Bedfordshire manors with which we shall deal, inheritance was nominally primogeniture. In practice, a father could divide his land

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1. C.R.O. AD 341; B.M. Add. Rolls 39774, 34322; B. M. Harley MS. 445. fos. 7r, 149v. 2. I have been unable to discover the length of time allowed at either Arlesey or Leighton Buzzard. It was for two years on the estates of St Albans Abbey (A. E. Levett, Studies in Manorial History (Oxford, 1938), p. 188) and on a number of Warwickshire manors in the sixteenth century (S.B.T. DR98/1857). 3. As at Long Crendon (Bucks) and elsewhere (XV.15.104; Kerridge, p. 50). 4. E.g. at Leighton Buzzard (C.R.O. KK 725, fo. 2v; KK 622, mm. 1d, 5-5d, 7, 9, 10, and many more). 5. C.R.O. KK 619, mm. 20, 23d; KK 725, fos. 12v, 13v. These cases may have stemmed from Leighton Buzzard's status as an ancient demesne manor. This is discussed below, pp. 153-4. 6. E.g. at Arlesey (C.R.O. IN 58, mm. 4, 5); and at Leighton Buzzard (C.R.O. KK 725, fo. 7v).

between any or all of his children.<sup>1</sup> In the fifteenth century, it was usual for husband and wife to hold their land jointly. A widow enjoyed a life estate in her husband's land.<sup>2</sup> The widow's right to freebench was an attraction to those seeking land, a wife, or both. More than once, the Ramsey Court Book recorded the remarriage of a widow in the guise of a man entering her land.<sup>3</sup> When a husband proposed surrendering land which his wife held as a former widow, the steward would examine the woman secretly in court to ensure that she agreed to the transfer.<sup>4</sup> On other occasions, widows and elderly folk made maintenance arrangements a condition of a transfer of their land to someone younger.<sup>5</sup> At the other end of the age-range, a minor was sometimes placed, along with his tenement, in wardship,<sup>6</sup> or pledges found for the payment of the rent if the minor was admitted to his land.<sup>7</sup>

It is because these customs and constraints were enforced and obeyed that we have so much detail in court rolls about the land market. The application of the body of custom enables us to distinguish between inheritance arrangements and sales, to trace fluctuations in the levels of rents and entry fines, and aids us in outlining the careers of individuals. This chapter discusses the land market on four rural manors in Bedfordshire: Blunham, Willington, Shillington, and Arlesey.

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1. Below, p. 119. "A small sample of early Tudor wills from Bedfordshire shows how often men still shared all or some of their land among their sons" (J. Thirsk, 'Industries in the countryside', Essays in the Economic and Social History of Tudor and Stuart England, ed. F. J. Fisher (Camb., 1961), p. 78). 2. At Arlesey in 1391 a widow forfeited her freebench when she remarried (C.R.O. IN 58, m. 7), but perhaps she was not a joint tenant with her husband. There are instances where widows retained their life-estate when they remarried (e.g. IN 60, m. 7). 3. B. M. Harley MS. 445, fo. 130v (two entries); Raftis, pp. 40, 219-20, provides further examples from court rolls. 4. E.g. at Arlesey (C.R.O. IN 60, m. 7); at Leighton Buzzard (C.R.O. KK 622, m. 1d). 5. B. M. Harley MS. 445, fos. 138v, 183v, 202v; C.R.O. KK 623, m. 47. 6. B. M. Harley MS. 445, fo. 240v. 7. *ibid.* fo. 202r.

Blunham

The parish of Blunham lies in the angle formed by the confluence of the rivers Ouse and Ivel. The village itself lies on the west bank of the Ivel, some 7 miles east of Bedford. The land in the parish, which amounted to some 3000 acres,<sup>1</sup> is low-lying, mostly below 100 feet. The soils consist of alluvium, river gravels, and a loamy boulder clay, and are more fertile and more easily worked than the heavier clays in parishes further south.<sup>2</sup>

In the fifteenth century there were three manors in the ancient parish. One lay to the south, centred on Moggerhanger.<sup>3</sup> In mid-century, the ownership of this manor passed from the Trumpington family to the Enderbys.<sup>4</sup> A second manor had passed in 1422 to Elizabeth Braybroke, Baroness St Amand. She outlived her husband, William Beauchamp, by some 34 years and died in 1491 when her son, Richard Beauchamp, inherited.<sup>5</sup> The third manor had passed from the Hastings to the Greys of Ruthin at the end of the fourteenth century.<sup>6</sup> Blunham was only a part of a considerable estate which the Greys built up by inheritance and purchase in Bedfordshire.<sup>7</sup> The Hastings' inheritance greatly advanced the Greys' prosperity. It raised them from the lesser baronage to the ranks of the

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1. V.C.H. iii. 228.      2. C. E. Fitchett, Bedfordshire (Land Utilisation Survey, 1943), p. 106; Soil Survey, OS 1: 63360, sheet 147.  
3. Map 4. The old parish included Moggerhanger and Chalton. This southern part is now a separate civil parish.      4. A marriage was arranged between Eleanor Trumpington and Richard Enderby (V.C.H. iii. 230; B.M. Add. Ch. 35246, covenant between Sir Walter Trumpington and John Enderby on the marriage of Richard and Eleanor, 13 March 1453).  
5. C.P. xi. 301-3; Richard Beauchamp's will is printed in C.C.R. 1500-9, pp. 346-8.      6. Valor, pp. 4-6.      7. *ibid.* pp. 6, 59.

wealthier nobility, although the family had to wait until 1465 for the earldom of Kent.<sup>1</sup> By 1467-8, Earl Edmund's net income was well over £1100. To this total the Bedfordshire manors contributed £339, of which Blunham accounted for nearly £37.<sup>2</sup> The story of the Greys in the later Middle Ages was one of remarkable success. The heads of the family combined political and financial acumen with simple good fortune: "...all the normal hazards to baronial fortunes were avoided. Between 1325 and 1490... there were only four heads of the house, yet there was not a single minority".<sup>3</sup> The fortunes of the family were reversed in the 1520s when Earl Richard dissipated much of its wealth.<sup>4</sup>

A mid-sixteenth century terrier of the Greys' manor in Blunham shows that it included between a third and two-fifths of the land in the parish. The terrier listed about 680 acres of arable land held by the tenants, 225 acres of demesne arable, and 66 acres of glebe.<sup>5</sup> To this we should add perhaps 100-150 acres of meadow and pasture, both tenant and demesne.<sup>6</sup> Thus, the size of the manor probably exceeded 1100 acres. The arable lay divided between three open fields<sup>7</sup> - South, Middle, North - and the tenements were scattered in strips over 54 furlongs.<sup>8</sup> Some demesne arable lay in compact parcels within individual furlongs, some lay in strips.<sup>9</sup> Various freeholds were held of the manor in Blunham and in the surrounding villages: Willington, Girtford, Sandy, Tempsford, and

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1. Valor, pp. 3-4; The Marcher Lordships of South Wales, 1415-1536: Select Documents, ed. T. B. Pugh (Cardiff, 1963), p. 145, n. 5.

2. Valor, pp. 22-7, 30. 3. ibid. p. 3. 4. ibid. p. 35, n. 96. 5. C.R.O. L26/214. 6. Calculated from the extent of 1392 (P.R.O. DL43/14/3, fos. 64v-65r), and the rentals of 1457 and 1498 (C.R.O. L26/154, L26/212). 7. Moggerhanger appears to have had its own field system, but the Greys' manor may well have shared a field system with the St Amand manor (L26/154, L26/212). 8. P.R.O. DL43/14/3, fo. 64v. Middle Field is not mentioned by name in the sixteenth-century terrier (L26/214), but this was presumably a scribal omission.

9. The size of demesne parcels in the terrier ranged from 1 rood to 30 acres.



Everton.<sup>1</sup> Many of these were very small: in 1457, eleven people held less than 5 acres each. Some were larger. For example, Sir Walter Trumpington, lord of Moggerhanger, held a semi-virgate, and John Broughton held a hide and a water-mill. These two men, and other freeholders, held land and interests elsewhere - John Gostwick, bailiff of nearby Willington, held a freehold of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  roods in his native village.<sup>2</sup>

The Greys' manor has left us sources for a study of landholding at Blunham that are fuller than those for most Bedfordshire manors. There are court rolls for the years 1413-51 and 1455-7, and the series resumes again in 1513. There are rentals for 1457 and 1498, and several for the sixteenth century. There is the "charter" of 1471. The great valor of the Greys' lands for 1467-8 includes Blunham,<sup>3</sup> and there are accounts for 1468-9, 1497-8, and 1502-3.<sup>4</sup> These sources reveal the interest which the Greys took in the management of their estates, but, as they all derive from the one manor, they do not show the situation in the village as a whole. Nor are they full enough to show a complete picture of the one manor. It is particularly unfortunate that the court rolls break off just as the series of rentals starts. Although we can compare the land market between 1413 and 1457 with that in the sixteenth century, the redistribution of land which took place between 1457 and 1498 cannot be traced in detail. However, some of its results can be seen in the rental of 1498.

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1. Map 4; L26/154, L26/212.

2. L26/154. John Gostwick was bailiff of Willington in 1457-8 (B.M. Add Roll 657). The family had yet to rise to more than local prominence (below, p. 71).

3. Valor, pp. 90-1.

4. ibid. p. 30. Other references are given in the bibliography.

The rental of 1457 listed 65 tenants on the manor of Edmund Grey.<sup>1</sup> The demesne arable, though still identified as such, was entirely let at farm. There were 41 tenants of customary land, 20 tenants who held only freeholds, and a further four men who farmed parcels of the demesne but held no other land in the manor. Several of the customary tenants also held parcels of freehold land and portions of the demesne. In terms of rent, the distinction between free and customary tenure was important, for the freeholds were held for very small sums of money.<sup>2</sup> But in terms of status, the type of tenure mattered little.<sup>3</sup> Although the rental, in common with many documents in the Greys' archive, appears to have been a "realistic" one,<sup>4</sup> it did not include every tenant.<sup>5</sup> We do not know the number and extent of the omissions, but they were probably very few.<sup>6</sup> As it stands, the rental of 1457 shows that 30 tenants held the greater part of the customary land at that date. This consisted of 32 holdings: 23 semi-virgates, 6 quarterlands, and 3 cotlands.<sup>7</sup> Farm-sizes varied more than this regular distribution suggests, for several people held portions of the demesne or freeholds. The table given below lists all the customary tenants of the manor (except for the four mentioned in the discussion), and all the lands they held in the manor, including demesne and freeholds. The range of farm-sizes in 1457 was as follows:

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1. C.R.O. L26/154.
  2. E.g. Edmund Boteler held 27 acres of arable and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  acres of meadow in Blunham, Sandy, and Tempsford for 8s 6d a year. The rent of Robert Riend's virgate was only 4s.
  3. The "charter" included a list of the customary tenants who witnessed it (C.R.O. L26/229). The first name was Thomas Malyns'. In 1481, he was described as a "gentleman" (C.P.R. 1476-85, p. 267). He held a freehold estate in Blunham and Moggerhanger (P.R.O. CP25(i)/6/83, fo. 21).
  4. Valor, p. 29.
  5. E.g. the rental did not list any member of the Samwell family. In 1451 Thomas Samwell entered lands in the manor. A member of the family witnessed the "charter" of 1471, and the family occurs in the rental of 1498 (C.R.O. L26/54, m. 12; L26/229; L26/212.)
  6. This has to be a guess based on the evidence of the later rentals.
  7. A cotland appears to have been about the same size as a quarterland, about 7 acres.

Smallholders	16
10-19 acres	12
20-29 acres	4
30-39 acres	2
40-49 acres	3
	<u>37 (+ 4 = 41)</u>

This distribution excludes freeholders who did not hold customary land, and it also excludes the holdings of John Wymond senior and junior, and John Yereld senior and junior. The rental failed to distinguish consistently between father and son. Between them, the Wymonds held 40-50 acres of customary land and demesne, the Yerelds over 60 acres. Some, perhaps many, of the customary tenants must have held land in other manors within the parish, or in other villages. However, the rental may well reflect the situation in the village as a whole. The two main groups of customary tenants were the smallholders and those with a middle-sized holding. A smaller number of men had taken advantage of the abandonment of demesne cultivation to build up larger tenements.<sup>1</sup>

In 1471, Earl Edmund "strongly reaffirmed his seignorial rights over the tenants of Blunham".<sup>2</sup> The result of this reaffirmation was the "charter", written "at the especiall labour, instaunce, and request of our Tenauntes".<sup>3</sup> The "charter" was an attempt to codify the procedures for the alienation of customary land, and is, in fact, the earliest

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1. We have no way of knowing the extent to which subtenancing on the customary holding affected the distribution of land farmed.

2. Valor, p. 29. 3. C.R.O. L26/229.

Bedfordshire custumal of its kind.<sup>1</sup> The tenants were given complete freedom of alienation provided they observed certain conditions. Tenements could be sold or let whole, but when a person wished to alienate a part of his holding, it was established that a semi-virgate (14 acres) was to lose no more than 8 acres, and that a quarterland (7 acres) was to lose no more than 4 acres. The entry fine paid by the incoming tenant was fixed at 6d an acre, and 20d for each acre of meadow.<sup>2</sup> A fine was levied on the tenant who sold a house: "as ofte as any tenaunte alieneth or chaungeth any Mess' or Cotage, he shall paye to us the duple of his rente that is leyde and asigned unto the same Mese or Cottage for the fyne of the same".<sup>3</sup> The "charter" recognized the free market which had developed amongst the tenants, and may well have given it a new impetus. At the same time, it attempted to control the excessive fragmentation of holdings. The rental of 1498 provides an opportunity to assess the changes of the second half of the fifteenth century in the light of the earlier rental and of the "charter". It listed 72 tenants: 39 customary tenants, 24 who held freeholds, and nine men who only held portions of the demesne at farm.<sup>4</sup> Although the number of tenants had risen only slightly between 1457 and 1498, there had been a rapid turnover in their ranks. Both rentals contained about 50 different family names, but only 19 were common to both. The greatest change had taken place amongst the customary tenants: only six of the families holding standard tenements in 1457 still held similar holdings in 1498. However, family stability was probably greater than this figure suggests. Inheritance by daughters and widows would have carried land,

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1. Transcribed in Appendix 2. 2. Not 6d on a tenement as stated in Valor, p. 29, n. 76. 3. This was a fine paid by the seller, not the entry fine as stated in Valor, p. 29, n. 76. 4. C.R.O. L26/212.

on marriage or remarriage to different families.

Family changes were associated with a demand for land which had led to the disintegration of holdings. From the rental of 1498 we can piece together the constituent parts of 8 former semi-virgates. Although each had been held by one tenant, the 8 were now divided into 44 parcels shared amongst 21 tenants. The "charter" of 1471 had not been without effect, for in every case a messuage and a residue of 6 acres were retained in the hands of one of the tenants. However, fragmentation had brought about some changes in the size and structure of holdings. Between 1457 and 1498 there had been a slight increase in the number of smallholders (20, as opposed to 16 in 1457).<sup>1</sup> In part, this was the result of the break-up of the semi-virgates; in part, it was the result of the reorganization of the demesne leases. In 1457, the parcels of the demesne let at farm measured 10 acres 1 rood (8 parcels);  $20\frac{1}{2}$  acres (3 parcels); and 41 acres (1 parcel). In addition, there were three small parcels: 1 acre,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  acres, and  $7\frac{1}{2}$  acres. In 1498, there were two main divisions: 12 acres (8 parcels) and 24 acres (5 parcels). There were two small portions: 1 acre and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  acres.<sup>2</sup> Although the proportion of the demesne arable in the hands of the customary tenants increased between 1457 and 1498 from 58 per cent (114 acres) to 66 per cent (144 acres), the number of customary tenants who shared this land fell by one, from ten to nine.

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1. Those with less than 10 acres of customary land. 2. In 1457, the total acreage of the demesne arable at farm was about 198 acres; in 1498 it amounted to some 218 acres. While we might account for the difference in the difficulties of measuring land and assessing the size of strips in the open fields, it is possible that some pasture or meadow had been put under the plough.

The reorganization of the farms, and the change-over in the lessees brought about a greater concentration of land in the hands of a smaller number of the tenants, and probably lent some force to the market in customary holdings. In 1498, the greater part of the customary land was held by about the same number of tenants as in 1457 (29 as against 30). Portions of the demesne still accounted for a substantial part of some of the larger holdings. Some tenants had amalgamated holdings, while others had added small parcels of arable to their holdings as and when they could.<sup>1</sup>

During the sixteenth century, land-holding underwent further changes. The number of tenants fell;<sup>2</sup> individuals amassed larger holdings, probably driving some of the smallholders off the land and into the ranks of the landless labourers. By 1559, seven customary tenants (out of a total of 27) held farms in excess of 40 acres. Most of these consisted of customary land and portions of the demesne. Robert Osburne's holding consisted of 2 semi-virgates, 1 quarterland, a cotland, 29 acres in small parcels, 9 acres of meadow, and a portion of demesne (25 acres of arable, 2 acres of meadow). In all, his arable holding did not fall far short of 100 acres.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Table 1.      2. The mid-century terrier listed 50, excluding the glebe and the lands of the old Fraternity of Blunham (C.R.O. L26/214).  
3. C.R.O. L26/156.

The land market

The process of accumulation can be followed in the court rolls of the manor. Between 1413 and 1457, the rolls recorded some 115 changes in tenancy. Of these, 25 were transfers of ownership within the family, and 85 were transfers of ownership outside the family, either by sale or by action of the lord's steward.<sup>1</sup> The analysis of the land market (the 85) shows that four-fifths of the transfers involved parcels of land (as set out below), while one-fifth involved just messuages or cottages, perhaps with a croft or garden.

0 - 4 acres	23
Quarterlands	12
Semi-virgates	25

It seems clear that up to 1457 the land market was running at a low level. When land changed hands, it was either in the form of a standard holding, or a small piece of land.

The "charter" and the rentals of 1457 and 1498 suggest a growth in land-dealing in the second half of the fifteenth century. This suggestion is borne out by the sixteenth-century court rolls. Between 1513 and 1573, some 260 tenancy-changes were recorded on the rolls,<sup>2</sup> of which about 190

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1. The remaining five were transfers outside the family on death.  
2. I have used some estreat rolls to supplement the court rolls. These recorded only the bare details of an entry to land, and it is not always clear how many entries were sales or inheritance arrangements (C.R.O. L26/144, L26/146-151).

were transfers outside the family. Three-quarters of these involved arable, but only just over one-quarter involved land alone. The greater part consisted of arable plus a messuage or cottage, or some other piece of property. The majority of land transfers, whether with or without other property, were small in size, usually less than 5 acres.<sup>1</sup>

A comparison of the land market in the first half of the fifteenth century with the market in the sixteenth century shows that several changes took place between 1413 and 1573. Transfers of standard holdings declined in number considerably, from three-fifths of recorded transfers between 1413 and 1457, to just over one-fifth of the total between 1513 and 1573. There was a corresponding increase in the number of transfers of small parcels of land. The land market at Blunham in the sixteenth century included more small parcels of land, and it appears to have been twice the size of the market a hundred years previously. The tailing-off of transfers of larger land units, and the growth in the number of small transfers were probably the result of an increased demand for land. It is tempting to see this, in turn, as the result of an increasing village population.<sup>2</sup>

#### Rents and entry fines

As we have seen, the "charter" of 1471 laid down standard rates for entry fines. Before the middle of the century, rents and entry fines charged on the alienations of semi-virgates and quarterlands

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1. Table 2.      2. Population trends in general are discussed above, pp. 6, 43.



varied markedly. In so far as there was any norm in the first half of the century, the most frequent rent for a semi-virgate was 2s, with an entry fine of 20s.<sup>1</sup> There was no set pattern to the rents and fines charged on quarterlands, though the fines on alienation or succession were frequently lower, sometimes as little as 6d or 7½d.<sup>2</sup> The rental of 1457 may have resulted from an attempt to regularize rents, for it listed the rents of the semi-virgate and quarterland as 8s 4d and 4s 2d respectively.<sup>3</sup> These figures remained unaltered in 1498, and appear to have continued throughout the first 70 years of the sixteenth century. By 1498, individual portions of customary arable land were rented from the lord at 4d an acre.<sup>4</sup> The different levels of rent charged on different semi-virgates and quarterlands after 1513 reflect variations in the size of the tenements - an effect of the "charter" of 1471 and its concern to maintain the integrity of the tenement. It is clear from the court rolls of the sixteenth century that the entry fine paid by the incoming tenant was one year's rent on a standard tenement,<sup>5</sup> and, for individual acres of land and meadow, 6d and 20d, the amounts laid down in the "charter".<sup>6</sup> Thus, in or about 1457, there was a significant increase in the cash rents of semi-virgates and quarterlands, and an equally significant decrease in the level of their entry fines. In the second half

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1. The cash rent was probably this low while labour services were still demanded. We have no clear idea of when these were commuted. In 1417, various tenants were presented at the autumn court for withholding harvest boon-works (C.R.O. L26/51, m. 10). 2. L26/51, m. 2 (1414: 7½d); in 1433 a widow was charged 6d on entry to her former husband's land (L26/53, m. 14). 3. L26/154. 4. L26/212. 5. Not two years' rent as stated in Valor, p. 29, n. 76. 6. L26/56, m. 7; L26/57, m. 4; L26/229.

of the fifteenth century, the rents and fines were brought under review and standardized. No doubt Earl Edmund wished to regularize his income.

### Willington

Willington, just to the west of Blunham in the valley of the Ouse,<sup>1</sup> was one of the few single-manor parishes in the county. The manor was larger than the Greys' in Blunham, perhaps some 1600 acres in all. It descended in the Mowbray family. When John Mowbray, second restored duke of Norfolk, died in 1432, the greater part of the Mowbray estates was held in dower by his widow, Katherine Nevill.<sup>2</sup> The next two dukes of Norfolk would have been among the richest of English magnates had not Katherine retained her lands until her death in 1483.<sup>3</sup> In the 50 years after the death of her first husband, Katherine survived a further three. When she died, she had outlived all her Mowbray descendants.<sup>4</sup> The dukedom passed to John Howard, and with it went Willington, only to be sold to Sir John Gostwick in 1529.<sup>5</sup> Sir John was one in a long line of Gostwicks who had lived in Willington for many years. The family provides a good example of self-made men prospering in their native village, and, finally, emerging into the gentry in the sixteenth century.<sup>6</sup>

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1. Map 4. 2. C.P. ix. 606; C.C.R. 1429-35, pp. 204-5, 208-14.

3. T. B. Pugh, 'The magnates, knights and gentry', Fifteenth Century England, 1399-1509: Studies in Politics and Society, ed. S. B. Chrimes, C. D. Ross, and R. A. Griffiths (Manchester, 1972), p. 124, n. 102.

4. The story of the Mowbrays is told by K. B. McFarlane, The Nobility of Later Medieval England (Oxford, 1973), pp. 154-5; C.P. ix. 606-7.

5. Margaret, sister of John Mowbray (d. 1432), married Sir William Howard (McFarlane, pp. 154-5); V.C.H. iii. 263. 6. H. P. R. Finberg, The Gostwicks of Willington (B.H.R.S. xxxvi, 1956), pp. 57-75.

The bailiffs' accounts of the later fourteenth century show that Willington was a valuable property. The net income enjoyed by Thomas Mowbray was frequently over £50 a year.<sup>1</sup> The greater part consisted of £22 13s 4d from 34 semi-virgates (at 13s 4d each), £25 6s 8d from the farm of the demesne to the local tenants, and £5 6s 8d from the farm of the water-mill.<sup>2</sup> By 1457-8, there are signs that the manorial income had contracted, perhaps by as much as one-quarter. In that year, the income from the farm of the demesne was £18, from the mill, £3 13s 4d, while the decay of rent on the customary holdings amounted to £5 18s 7d.<sup>3</sup> Manorial administration was not necessarily more inefficient under Katherine Nevill and her husbands than under the dukes of Norfolk, for a declining income was by no means peculiar to Willington.<sup>4</sup> In 1458, the manor was still a desirable possession. In that year, Katherine and her third husband, John Beaumont, received a net income from Willington of £40 15s 6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>d.

By 1383, changes had occurred among the customary tenants of the manor. Where they had formerly held their land in villeinage (nuper tenentes in bondagio), the semi-virgaters now held their land by copyhold for a term of years or for life.<sup>5</sup> The change in tenure may well have been

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1. C.R.O. R.213/12/120-130.

2. C.R.O. R.213/12/120.

3. B.M. Add. Roll 657.

4. A. J. Pollard, 'Estate management in the later Middle Ages: the Talbots and Whitchurch, 1383-1525', ECHR 2nd ser. xxv, no. 4 (1972), pp. 555-9; at Leighton Buzzard, the income from the farm of the demesne mills declined from £10 13s 4d in 1439-40 to £6 13s 4d in 1468 (XV.61.35-42). At Willington, the little evidence there is suggests that casual revenues were exploited as fully as possible. In 1464, 12 acres 15 perches of underwood were sold at 8s an acre, bringing in £4 16s 9d (B.M. Add. Roll 26813, m. 2).

5. The account roll describes the tenants as now holding freely (libere), but this cannot have been meant as a legal term, but rather as one bringing out the contrast with the former conditions of tenure (R.213/12/120).

associated with the leasing of the demesne, which would necessarily have led to the commutation of the labour services previously imposed.

The court rolls of the fifteenth century show that the only consistent traffic in land was that in standard holdings - the quarterland, and, more especially, the semi-virgate, which consisted of about 10 acres of arable. Between 1394 and 1426, some 62 changes in tenancy were recorded on the rolls. Between 1451 and 1481, the number recorded was 50. Over four-fifths of all these involved a standard tenement. Before 1426, the transfer of ownership outside the family accounted for about 70 per cent of all transfers. By the second half of the fifteenth century, nearly 90 per cent of the transfers involved a break in family descent.<sup>1</sup>

Between 1408 and 1423, at least 18 tenements, mostly semi-virgates and quarterlands, passed into the lord's hands.<sup>2</sup> It is possible that these years witnessed a decline in manorial population. Certainly land on which family inheritance had ceased accumulated in the lord's hands. The gap in the court rolls between 1426 and 1451 has removed any chance of tracing the succession to land, but there are one or two indications of the sort of process at work. In 1411, Felicia Prentys entered into full possession of a messuage and a semi-virgate on the death of her husband.<sup>3</sup> Five years later, she was forced to relinquish her holding "quia impotens est ad tenendum et sustinendum dictum tenementum".<sup>4</sup>

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1. Most copyhold tenures appear to have been for life, though there are examples of leases for 20 years and 60 years (C.R.O. R.212/12/41X, 53A, 53: 1452, 1466, 1467). 2. Table 3. 3. R.212/12/13.  
4. *ibid.* 12/20.

In 1417, the lord was able to find a tenant, but, by the autumn, the tenement had reverted once more to his keeping.<sup>1</sup> It remained in his hands until at least 1423.<sup>2</sup> By 1478, Felicia was still remembered in Willington, but only in the name of her former land (mesuagium vocatum Felicia Prentyse).<sup>3</sup> The tenement had passed back into the hands of the tenants; perhaps the messuage had become separated from the land.<sup>4</sup>

Changes in the manor in the early fifteenth century had an effect on customary rents. In 1382-3, the rent of a semi-virgate was 13s 4d.<sup>5</sup> It remained at this level until 1426. Between 1451 and 1481, the average rent for a semi-virgate was 10s 6d, a significant decline, especially in the light of the level of entry fines.<sup>6</sup> Between 1394 and 1426, the highest entry fine levied on the semi-virgate was only 1s 4d,<sup>7</sup> and the usual fine was 8d or 1s. As far as we can tell, these low rates continued throughout the period 1451-81.<sup>8</sup> Not only did rents fall in the fifteenth century, but also no attempt was made to recoup the loss of income by demanding higher entry fines. It seems clear that a declining manorial population forced rents down to a realistic level. The same thing happened on the demesne. To maintain an income from this source, Katherine Nevill was forced to make fresh bargains at a reduced rent.<sup>9</sup> In these circumstances, it is not surprising that there was little or no demand for a market in odd parcels of land.<sup>10</sup>

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1. R.212/12/22-3. 2. *ibid.* 12/33. 3. *ibid.* 12/59.  
4. The semi-virgate was not mentioned in the court roll entry of 1478, but this is not conclusive evidence that the two had been separated.  
5. C.R.O. R.213/12/120. 6. Based on the following data: 10 semi-virgates, 1394-1426; 15 semi-virgates, 1451-81. Tested by "students-t" test (S. Gregory, Statistical Methods and the Geographer (2nd edn., 1968), p. 137). 7. R.212/12/3, in 1395. 8. We have only three entry fines recorded. 9. In 1449, new demesne leases were negotiated. The rents totalled £18, the total in 1457-8 (R.212/12/37; B.M. Add. Roll 657). 10. A factor contributing to the turn-over in standard holdings may have been the reluctance of the landlord to countenance the break-up of holdings, but there is no firm evidence to back this idea.

Shillington

The abbey of Ramsey held four main manors in Bedfordshire: Cranfield in the west; and Barton, Pegsdon, and Shillington in the south.<sup>1</sup> Barton, a single-manor parish, lies at the foot of the Chiltern escarpment, the village lands extending southwards into the hills. Shillington and Pegsdon lie to the east of Barton, further north, in the lowlying claylands. Pegsdon was one of a number of hamlets within the large parish of Shillington. It was exploited separately in the early fourteenth century as a corn-growing manor.<sup>2</sup> In the fifteenth century, the greater part of the abbey's demesne at Pegsdon was farmed by a lessee, again separately from the parent manor.<sup>3</sup> The Bedfordshire manors of the abbey were among its richest. Until the 1370s, when the abbey began to lease its demesnes, they were exploited directly.<sup>4</sup> Then, the manors were granted to the cellarer, rendering cash quotas: £48 from Barton, £60 from Cranfield, £80 from Shillington and Pegsdon.<sup>5</sup>

The tenurial history of Shillington in the later Middle Ages is a complex one. The abbey's manor included the village itself, and the surrounding hamlets of Hanscombe End, Upton End, and Woodmer End.<sup>6</sup> It also included land in Holwell, Stondon, and Apsley End.<sup>7</sup> Pegsdon, as a distinct manor, had its own fields, as did Hanscombe.<sup>8</sup> But we do not

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1. Ramsey Abbey also held lands in Gravenhurst, and a court was held there for at least a part of the fifteenth century (C.M.R. ii. 246-51; P.R.O. SC2/135/27). Cranfield included land in North Crawley, over the border in Buckinghamshire (C.M.R. ii. 3-22.) 2. P.R.O. SC6/741/19, m. 5 (1313-14); SC6/741/11-13 (1311-12, 1324-5, 1347-8 or 1353-4). 3. The lessee paid over his farm to the bailiff of Shillington (SC6/741/22, m. 5; SC6/741/26-7). 4. J. A. Raftis, The Estates of Ramsey Abbey (Toronto, 1957), p. 240. The move to lease the manors in 1330 was only a temporary expedient, and may never have taken place. 5. *ibid.* p. 259. 6. Map 5. These are all names which occur frequently in the Court Book, the court rolls, and the Cartulary (C.M.R. i. 460-6). 7. *ibid.* i. 458-9. In 1437-8, John, later Lord Wenlock was farmer of a part of the demesne at Apsley End (P.R.O. SC11/43). 8. B. M. Harley MS. 445, fo. 16r; P.R.O. SC2/179/69, m. 1 (1461, John Wyldefowle and William Aylmer elected "custodes camporum pro Hanscombe").

know if the other nearby hamlets had their own systems. It is clear from the Court Book that the customary land in Pegsdon, Stondon, and the other places was considered appurtenant to the main manor.<sup>1</sup> As far as we can tell, the manor court at Shillington served the abbey's tenants in all the surrounding settlements. Alongside the abbey's manor there developed other manors in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, centred on Apsley End and Holwell.<sup>2</sup> In addition, Richard Brygg (or del Brugge), Lancaster king-of-arms, held lands in Pegsdon worth £5 a year in 1412.<sup>3</sup> Nothing more is known of this land after Richard's death, c. 1419,<sup>4</sup> but presumably it passed to his son William Bruges, created Garter king-of-arms in 1417.<sup>5</sup>

#### The demesne

Shillington and Pegsdon continued to be an important source of income to Ramsey Abbey during the fifteenth century, long after the first steps had been taken to abandon demesne cultivation.<sup>6</sup> The survival of a few manorial accounts for the later fourteenth century enables us to reconstruct the way in which the demesne at Shillington was leased. The account roll for 1368-9 recorded 14 parcels of demesne arable and pasture leased to various tenants of the manor. The arable totalled 66 acres.<sup>7</sup> Between 1368-9 and 1380-1, the amount of arable at farm increased by just 1 acre.<sup>8</sup> A year later, in 1381-2, the acreage at farm had nearly quadrupled to about 218 acres (in 46 parcels).<sup>9</sup> Most of these parcels (86 per cent) were

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1. B. M. Harley MS. 445, fos. 16r (Pegsdon, Stondon), 106r (Stondon).

2. V.C.H. ii. 295-6; Cal. Inq. Misc. iv, 1377-88, pp. 220-1.

3. Feudal Aids, vi. 396.

4. I.T.R. i. 28.

5. C.P. xi,

Appendix 1, p. 74, note.

6. In 1451, the income the abbey derived from both was still £80 (P.R.O. SC6/741/26).

7. SC6/741/21.

8. SC6/741/22-3.

9. SC6/741/24.

smaller than  $7\frac{1}{2}$  acres in size. By 1405-6, a second policy of demesne-leasing had taken effect. In the account roll for that year,<sup>1</sup> the 218 acres were described as demesne leased de antiquo. Another entry recorded the lease of a further 240 acres of demesne arable de novo to various tenants. The rent for the "new" farms was 6d a acre, whereas, under the old system, rents had varied from 4d to 1s an acre. Thus, by 1405-6, a distinction had been made between a casual policy which had developed over some 30 or 40 years, and the conscious decision to let out most of the remaining demesne. The distinction becomes clear when the descent of parcels of demesne is traced in the Court Book and in the rental of 1437-8.

The Court Book shows that the ownership of the parcels of demesne quickly assumed the characteristics of customary tenure. The abbey let out demesne parcels at will, for a term of years, or for life. The tenants could surrender them to one another in the same way that copyholds were transferred.<sup>2</sup> The demesne was described in the Court Book in two ways. Firstly, there were the parcels de antiquo, described in acres. Secondly, there were the parcels de novo, described as portions (sortes) or shares (loti).<sup>3</sup> In the rental of 1437-8, the "old" demesne can be identified either from its description, or from its former tenants, whose names it listed. Most of the men and women who had formerly held the

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1. SC6/741/25. 2. Demesne leases were not held by copyhold tenure, for they were held purely at the will of the lord, and not according to the custom of the manor (Kerridge, pp. 86-7). 3. B. M. Harley MS. 445, fo. 100r-v.



parcels can be identified in the account rolls of the later fourteenth century. The only information in the rental about the "new" demesne concerns two sortes terre dominicalis, two sortes in manerio, and three other parcels. Of these seven holdings, all but two were held together with one portion of Burylond and 1 acre of Newmanlond. In addition, other tenants, who did not hold portions of demesne, held Burylond and Newmanlond. The regularity of the entries on the rental describing the tenancies of Burylond and Newmanlond suggests that they were the "new" demesne.<sup>1</sup>

In 1437-8, 13 tenants rented 14 portions of Burylond. Two held, in addition,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  virgates of customary land, five held virgates, and two held semi-virgates. One tenant held 18 acres, another 8 acres, a third held 1 acre. At Shillington, as at Blunham,<sup>2</sup> several tenants were able to take advantage of the leasing of the demesne to add considerably to their holdings. The land let out before 1382 gave the tenants the chance to add to their holdings in a piecemeal way. By 1406, the final abandonment of demesne cultivation had been achieved by dividing the remaining land into standard portions.

#### The land market

If the account rolls show how the tenants of the manor were able to benefit from the leasing of the demesne, the Court Book, supplemented by the court rolls and the rental of 1437-8, shows how tenants built up their

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1. P.R.O. SC11/43. Names such as burylond and newmanlond were commonly given to demesne at farm (Kerridge, p. 87).

2. Above, pp. 64-7.

holdings and disposed of their land. Between 1398 and 1458, the Court Book recorded some 244 transfers of land at Shillington. Of these, 56 arose from family inheritance, and the remainder resulted from the traffic in land and redistribution by the lord. Three-quarters of the latter (146 out of 188) involved arable; the distribution of parcels by size was as follows:

<u>Acreage</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
0-4	27	18
5-9	12	8
10-14	5	3
15-19	3	2
20+	1	-
semi-virgate	29	20
semi-virgate/virgate	3	2
virgate	44	30
virgate/ $1\frac{1}{2}$ virgates	1	-
$1\frac{1}{2}$ virgates	4	3
$1\frac{1}{2}/2$ virgates	3	2
2 virgates	6	4
more than 2 virgates	8	6
	<hr/> 146	<hr/> (100)

These figures may be compared with those for traffic in land at Barton and Cranfield. At Barton, there were 141 transfers between 1397 and 1457. Of these, 40 represented some form of inheritance arrangement. Most of the others involved some land. At Cranfield, the total number of transfers was 178. Of these, 127 resulted from traffic in land or the intervention of the lord.

Barton (these figures exclude the transfer of tofts and crofts described below, pp. 81-2).

<u>Acreage</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
0-4	6	7
5-9	1	1
10-14	2	2
semi-virgate	19	21
virgate	58	64
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ virgates	4	4
2 virgates	1	1
	<hr/> 91	<hr/> 100

Cranfield

<u>Acreage</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
0-4	26	24
5-9	5	5
10-14	7	7
15-19	-	-
20+	2	2
quarterland	7	7
quarterland/semi-virgate	1	-
semi-virgate	39	37
semi-virgate/virgate	14	13
virgate	3	3
more than one virgate	2	2
	<hr/> 106	<hr/> 100

On these three manors, the virgate and semi-virgate remained the basis of landholding, and they formed the greater part of the tenements to change hands. The transfer of a standard holding was usually associated with the transfer of a messuage, a croft, the odd plot of land (placea), and meadow. In the Ramsey Cartulary the size of the virgate at Shillington was said to have been 12 acres; at Barton 24 acres; and at Cranfield 48 acres.<sup>1</sup> These acres were almost certainly fiscal acres, and did not necessarily bear a relation to a measured or a customary acre on the ground. Nonetheless, a variation in the size of the virgate is reflected in the transfers in the Court Book. At Shillington, the virgate was the commonest unit of tenure and the commonest tenement to change hands. At Cranfield, it was the semi-virgate, and at Barton, the virgate.<sup>2</sup> A situation may be imagined in which the tenants at Shillington could transfer most effectively a "small" virgate. At Barton, a "middle-sized" virgate marked the effective upper limit to most transfers, while at Cranfield, a "large" virgate encouraged traffic in the semi-virgate. It is probably significant that it was only at Cranfield, where there was a "large" virgate, that there were also quarterlands. Here, a quarterland was a holding of viable size.

The apparently small number of land transfers of a few acres at Barton was the result of a peculiarity in the division of land in that manor. There were there a large number of crofts and closes which were mostly very small.<sup>3</sup> These were transferred from one tenant to another

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1. C.M.R. iii. 211-13.  
3-22; P.R.O. SC11/42-3.

2. ibid. i. 438-41, 460-6, 477-86; ii.  
3. C.M.R. i. 477-86.

in the same way as the standard holdings. In the Court Book, the acreage of the crofts and closes was rarely given and they have not been included in the table above, but it seems probable that the turnover in these supplemented the turnover in small parcels of land in the open fields. On all three manors, the traffic in land included demesne as well as customary land. As the former accounted for many of the transfers of small parcels of land, the importance of the standard tenements in the turnover of customary land was even greater than the figures set out above suggest.

#### The tenants at Shillington

The survival of both Court Book and rental for Shillington suggests, at first sight, that we can obtain a fairly full insight into the distribution of land amongst the manorial tenants between 1400 and 1460. The rental of 1437-8 "freezes" at one point in time the activity recorded in the register. A comparison of the two sources shows that neither is comprehensive. The rental recorded 52 family names (70 tenants in all). An index of families and individuals for the fifteenth century shows that there were many people who featured in the court records, but whose names did not appear in the rental. This is not surprising, for not all inhabitants of the manor would have held land, and not every person mentioned in the court rolls was necessarily an inhabitant. However, there were at least 19 families which we might expect to find among the tenants in 1437-8, but which were not in fact recorded on the rental.

Several of these had been resident in the manor for many generations. At least 13 families had members who are known, from the Court Book, to have held land in or around 1437. It appears that the rental was not a comprehensive list: several names were overlooked, names often long-established in the manor.

The Court Book may have been a more or less full record of land transfers. All but five of the 52 family-names in the rental occur in the Court Book. Of these five, three are known from the rental alone.<sup>1</sup> Thus, for most tenants recorded in 1437-8, there are entries in the Court Book, and, as has been shown, the Book recorded several tenants who held land but who were not included in the rental. While we may approach the Court Book with some confidence, the amount of information on any one tenant is limited. The survival of the court rolls has been too sporadic to provide much additional detail. We cannot usually be sure of the date of a person's first entry to land, and the date of a person's death often has to be inferred from incidental detail in the Court Book.

From the biographies of tenants built up from the sources, we can see that few individuals participated in more than three or four transactions. John Ward was the most active land-dealer of his day. Between 1406 and 1450, he was involved in 13 transfers, taking on land and shedding it. At its largest, in 1426, his holding included 4

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1. The other two were the rector and John Wenlock, later Lord Wenlock.

virgates and 12 acres accumulated in odd parcels. In amassing his land he paid over £5 in entry fines.<sup>1</sup> He does not seem to have been averse to a bargain: in 1409, 1413, and 1426, we see him surrendering tenements only to take on others.

If John Ward stands out from his fellow tenants by reason of the occasions when he used the land market, he was by no means the only tenant to hold land for 40 years or more. Thomas Bradefan held his land from 1398 (or earlier) until his death in 1438-9.<sup>2</sup> Philip Multon's tenancy lasted at least 44 years, between 1414 and 1458.<sup>3</sup> John atte Brook held land in Shillington for half a century.<sup>4</sup> In fact, the main impression left by the Court Book is one of stability. Before 1460, the land market ran at a low level. The absence of any great demand for land, especially small parcels, suggests that there was little competition for land. The speculation in land which occurred at Arlesey and at Leighton Buzzard at the end of the century was not a feature of the market in southern Bedfordshire before about 1450.<sup>5</sup> During the fifteenth century, a number of tenants left the manor. Their tenements fell vacant and passed to those who stayed on or to newcomers.<sup>6</sup> Some tenants took advantage of this movement, and the availability of the former demesne, to amass holdings in excess of 50 acres.<sup>7</sup> The majority

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1. Table 4.                      2. B. M. Harley MS. 445, fos. 3r, 178r.                      3. *ibid.*  
fos. 92r, 256v.                      4. *ibid.* fos. 16r, 229v (1400-50).                      5. Below,  
pp. 109-10, 182-3.                      6. There are numerous chevage entries on the  
court rolls. Mobility on the Ramsey manors is discussed by Raftis, Tenure and Mobility, pp. 153-82.                      7. Although we cannot rely on the rental of  
1437-8, the impression it leaves may not be entirely misleading. However,  
this statement about size of holding applies only to holdings in Shillington.  
Several men must have held land elsewhere. Walter Swyft, who entered a  
customary tenement in Shillington in 1454, held land in Brill and Oakley in  
Buckinghamshire (B. M. Harley MS. 445, fo. 249v; Bodl. MS. DD. Barrett A. 2,  
Brill and Oakley, no. 12).

of Shillington tenants in the first half of the century appear to have remained "middling" men, holding a virgate, and perhaps an extra semi-virgate or virgate, and some demesne.

#### Rents and entry fines

The Court Book was essentially a record of the entry fines (gersume) paid to the abbey when a tenement changed hands. Rents were not of immediate interest to its compilers and were not often recorded. The result is that we have quite a lot of information about entry fines, particularly for semi-virgates and virgates, at Barton, Cranfield, and Shillington, but little for rents, save for the information in the rentals of Cranfield and Shillington.<sup>1</sup> On all three manors, the entry fines for standard tenements varied considerably and at random throughout the first half of the fifteenth century. At Cranfield, the average fine on a semi-virgate was 4s 8d, and it was about the same at Barton. At both Barton and Shillington, the average fine on a virgate was about 9s. In each case, the standard deviation from the mean was so great as to give it little usefulness other than as a measure by which to judge the occasional large fine.<sup>2</sup> "Standard" fines of 3s 4d, 6s 8d, or 13s 4d were often levied on tenements in all three manors.<sup>3</sup> Where we have details of rent, it is clear that there was no correlation between rent and entry

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1. P.R.O. SC11/42-3. 2. The largest recorded was 40s on a messuage and semi-virgate at Barton in 1445, but 33s 4d was excused for repairs which the tenant agreed to carry out (B. M. Harley MS. 445, fo. 206v). 3. A common feature on other estates and at other periods (I. Kershaw, Bolton Priory: the Economy of a Northern Monastery (Oxford, 1973), p. 28).



fine.<sup>1</sup> The fine was considerably less than a year's rent, though it showed no fixed relation to it. Like fines, rents varied a great deal for standard tenements in the one manor, although the rent on any one holding remained stable throughout the first half of the fifteenth century. Entry fines for one holding sometimes changed. At Shillington and Barton, where it is possible to trace the fortunes of rents and fines on a number of tenements, it seems that there was no general movement in the level of entry fines: some rose, some fell, some remained stable. On occasions, the abbey excused a part or the whole of a fine.<sup>2</sup> Between 1400 and 1460, the demand for land (or lack of it) was such that the abbey was unable to use the entry fine as a convenient method of extracting income from its Bedfordshire manors. Like rents, the entry fines charged on the transfer of holdings appear to have been fixed by considerations of past custom and the state of the tenement.

A dispute between the abbey and its tenants over land

The men and women who appear in the Court Book were either the descendants of the abbey's tenants in villeinage or those who, in the fifteenth century, took up tenancies on customary land. Amongst the former, the disabilities of bondage all but disappeared in the fifteenth

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1. The Cranfield custumal of 1484 makes no mention of the rate at which the entry fine was levied (C.R.O. AD 341). As copyhold tenure before this date had been for years or for life, the entry fine may well have still been "uncertain" (Kerridge, p. 37). 2. An entry fine on a croftland at Barton was wholly excused in 1442, though the reason for this was not given (B. M. Harley MS. 445, fo. 192v).

century.<sup>1</sup> However, down to about the year 1400, the abbey continued to extract from its customary tenants payments and services which bore the hallmark of servility. The court rolls of Barton and Shillington contain numerous references to labour services withheld or poorly performed and to payments such as leyrwite.<sup>2</sup> One particular way in which the abbey asserted its rights over its customary tenants (and, of course, continued to) was in the regulation of the transfer of land. Transfers of customary land had to be registered in the manor court.<sup>3</sup> It appears that customary tenants could lease land to one another on a short-term basis without the lord's formal licence.<sup>4</sup> However, leases by customary tenants to freemen appear to have required this.<sup>5</sup> And, of course, a customary tenant was not supposed to acquire land by charter without his lord's licence, or any land outside his lord's domain.<sup>6</sup> Between about 1360 and 1407, the abbey of Ramsey and some of its customary tenants in Shillington and Barton were involved in a dispute over the rights of the latter to purchase land outside the abbey's manor.

Sometime between 1358 and 1366, William de Otteford, then the king's escheator in Bedfordshire, seized lands in Shillington totalling 40 acres. The pretext for the seizure was that the abbot of Ramsey had appropriated land which various bond tenants had held. The appropriation was without royal licence and thus contravened the Statute of Mortmain. The land in question consisted of 15 acres described as acquired from John Whitefelawe

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1. R. H. Hilton, The Decline of Serfdom in Medieval England (1969), p. 47.  
2. P.R.O. SC2/179/34, m. 2d (1350, Shillington); SC2/179/36, m. 11 (1358-9, Shillington); SC2/179/36, m. 12d (1358-9, Barton); and many others.  
3. Raftis, Tenure and Mobility, pp. 65-74. 4. Above, p. 58.  
5. Instances of tenants amerced for unlicensed leasing occur at Barton in 1369 (B.M. Add. Roll 39473), at Shillington in 1358-9 (SC2/179/36, m. 12), and at Cranfield in 1359 (SC2/179/36, m. 12). 6. E. King, Peterborough Abbey 1086-1310 (Camb., 1973), p. 100.

through the abbot's bondmen, Thomas atte Welle and Robert Whildfole, and 12 parcels amounting to 25 acres acquired through 12 different bond tenants.<sup>1</sup> In 1367, custody of the 15 acres was granted to Matthew de Assheton, parson of Shillington.<sup>2</sup> The other 25 acres appear to have remained in the hands of the escheator until 1373 when Thomas Fauconer was granted the keepership of all 40 acres.<sup>3</sup> This grant threatened the position of Assheton, but the situation was resolved in 1380 when it was agreed that Fauconer should retain the farm of the 15 acres (7s 6d) during his life, while Assheton remained the keeper.<sup>4</sup> Further orders for the custody of the 40 acres were taken in 1407,<sup>5</sup> 1408, 1444, 1448, 1464, and 1475.<sup>6</sup>

In either 1402 or 1403, the escheator was involved in a similar situation. This time, William Bosoun seized two parcels of land in Silsoe which the abbot of Ramsey had acquired without the king's licence through two of his bondmen, Robert and William atte Fenne. This land consisted of a messuage and 6 acres, and a further acre.<sup>7</sup> Silsoe is a village 3 miles north of Barton, where the atte Fennes were the abbey's tenants.<sup>8</sup> In 1406, the keepership of this land was committed to William Sare of Barton.<sup>9</sup> Further orders for its custody followed in 1418 (to Simon Sare),<sup>10</sup> 1423,<sup>11</sup> and 1444.<sup>12</sup>

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1. C.F.R. 1356-68, p. 354; C.P.R. 1370-4, pp. 374, 386. Otteford appears to have been escheator between about 1358 and 1366 (Cal. Inq. Misc. iii, 1348-77, pp. 98, 177; C.C.R. 1364-8, p. 261). 2. C.F.R. 1356-68, p. 354; Cal. Papal Reg., Petitions i, 1342-1419, p. 186. 3. C.P.R. 1370-4, pp. 374, 386. 4. C.C.R. 1377-81, p. 412. 5. C.F.R. 1405-13, p. 68. 6. C.P.R. 1408-13, p. 42; 1441-6, p. 319; C.F.R. 1445-52, pp. 109-110; C.P.R. 1461-7, p. 331; 1467-76, p. 507. I assume that these references did in fact refer to this land. 7. C.F.R. 1405-13, p. 27. Bosoun was escheator in 1402-3 (C.C.R. 1402-5, pp. 29, 109; C.F.R. 1399-1405, p. 185). 8. P.R.O. SC2/179/36, m. 8d; SC2/179/43, m. 1; SC2/179/56, m. 4-4d; SC2/179/57, m. 2. 9. C.F.R. 1405-13, p. 27. 10. C.F.R. 1413-22, p. 231. 11. C.F.R. 1422-30, p. 46. 12. C.F.R. 1437-45, p. 297.

From the bare details of the two seizures we can attempt to piece together the circumstances which led up to them. The abbot of Ramsey took into his hands certain parcels of land from his bond tenants on the grounds that they, being villeins, had acquired them outside the abbey's fee without licence.<sup>1</sup> By some means, possibly the tenants', the confiscation came to the notice of the king's escheator who seized the land, claiming that the action of the abbot broke the Statute of Mortmain. From the second incident it appears that there was collaboration between the tenants and the Crown. The William Sare to whom the custody of the land in Silsoe was granted was, in fact, a bond tenant of the abbot.<sup>2</sup> One of Sare's sureties was a certain John atte Fenne of London.<sup>3</sup> This man may have been related to the atte Fennes of Barton from whom the abbot confiscated the land in the first place. Thus, when the abbot stepped in, the atte Fennes (who would have known of the events at Shillington in the previous half-century) took advantage of their connections to deprive the abbot of the land. Custody was granted to a local man, and so they may well have regained their tenure under William Sare. Whatever the outcome for the atte Fennes and the tenants of Shillington, the events which led to the escheator's intervention appear to represent a local struggle between the abbot and his unfree tenants. The abbot wished to preserve his seignorial privileges while the tenants were seeking opportunities to enlarge their holdings free

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1. Obviously they lay outside his fee or else there would have been no quarrel with the seizure. It is unlikely that the tenants were acting as agents of the abbot in an effort to evade the Statute of Mortmain. On occasions, individuals did act in such a capacity, but not for such small properties (S. Raban, 'Mortmain in medieval England', Past and Present, 62 (1974), pp. 10-11). 2. He was described as nativus in the 1405 court roll when he paid a fine of 6d to send his son Simon to school (P.R.O. SC2/179/50, m. 4d). This Simon was the man given custody of the land in 1418 (above, p. 88, n. 10); Simon Sare figured in several grants of land and property at Dunstable in the 1420s and 1430s (C.A.D. i. 401, 436, 449, 537). 3. Above, p. 88, n. 5.

from this control. Their reaction was an ingenious attempt to undermine the abbey's rights, and one in which they appear to have achieved the tacit support of the Crown. The struggle provides a vivid illustration of the decay of villein disabilities and the growing power of customary tenants to protect their own interests. The mobility of rural society in the later fourteenth century brought to the peasantry connections and influence in places which had been denied to their ancestors.

### Arlesey

The village of Arlesey lies in the south-east corner of Bedfordshire, five miles east of Shillington, and in the same belt of country. The land in the parish is level and low-lying, below 200 feet; the soil, a heavy chalky clay.<sup>1</sup> The village has grown along the street, and at present it straggles north-south for over a mile.<sup>2</sup> There were three manors within the parish. One had been a part of the original endowment of Waltham Abbey. After the Conquest, the foundation was temporarily shorn of much of its lands,<sup>3</sup> but regained them, and the Arlesey Bury manor remained in its hands until the Dissolution.<sup>4</sup> In the fourteenth century, the second manor passed to the de la Pole family. William de la Pole's son, John, married Joan Cobham in 1362. Their daughter, another Joan, baroness Cobham, held the manor of Etonbury until her death in 1434.<sup>5</sup> Her daughter by her second marriage,<sup>6</sup> a third Joan, married Sir Thomas

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1. Map 5. The chalk cannot have lain far below the surface. In 1566, the lord of the Etonbury manor had "a goodly myne of Lymestone within the said manor" (C.R.O. IN 174, fo. 19r). 2. The earliest surviving map, drawn just after enclosure in 1808, depicts the village drawn out north-south, with the tofts running back at right-angles to the street in typical medieval fashion (C.R.O. MA 34). 3. The pre-Conquest foundation at Waltham was not an abbey but a college of secular canons. It was refounded as an abbey of regular Augustinian canons by Henry II in 1177 (D. Knowles and R. N. Hadcock, Medieval Religious Houses: England and Wales (1971), p. 178). 4. V.C.H. ii. 262. 5. ibid. pp. 261-2; C.P. iii. 345. 6. To Sir Reynold Braybroke; Joan was married five times (C.P. iii. 346).

Brooke. Their grand-daughter, Elizabeth, married Robert Tanfield, and these two were in possession of the manor in 1480.<sup>1</sup> The rental of William Tanfield, armiger, drawn up in 1519, shows that his income from rents in Etonbury was about £12 15s a year.<sup>2</sup> A third, small manor belonged to Llanthony Priory.<sup>3</sup>

The surviving records of both main manors are largely court records. Most of those for the Etonbury manor date from the sixteenth century, and our knowledge of the two manors in the fifteenth century is limited, for we know very little of the income which the lords of the manors received,<sup>4</sup> or of the agricultural organization of the village.<sup>5</sup> On the Arlesey Bury manor most of the demesne appears to have been let to a single firmarius from the beginning of the fifteenth century. Now and again, the abbot let odd parcels to other tenants.<sup>6</sup> The fine court register of the abbey's manor

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1. C.R.O. AD 337.      2. C.R.O. IN 167.      3. This was Llanthony secunda, near Gloucester, another house of Augustinian canons (V.C.H. ii. 263; Knowles and Hadcock, pp. 164-5). We know very little of this manor until the sixteenth century. It appears to have been little more than an income from rents: in 1535-6, the redditus assise, the only income, amounted to £1 18s 0<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>d. The priory held a much larger and more valuable property in nearby Henlow. In 1535-6, the total value of this was £40 4s 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>d (Sir William Dugdale, Monasticon Anglicanum, vi. 140). At the end of the fifteenth century, Elizabeth St Amand also held lands in Arlesey (Calendar, i. 305, no. 730).      4. In 1402, Joan Cobham and Reynold Braybroke received £15 5s 4d gross (£13 9s 8d net) from their manor (B. M. Harley Roll A. 37). At the Dissolution, the rents of the abbey's manor came to £35 6s 8d, plus the income of the courts estimated at £3 13s (V.C.H. ii. 262).      5. The village arable appears to have been divided into two fields. The only field names which occur in sources of the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries are North Field and South Field. (B.M. Add Chs. 67061-3; C.R.O. IN 59, mm. 2d, 3; IN 62, mm. 7-8). A simple, two-field division would suit the topography of the parish - a long, narrow area, stretching north - south. The custumal of the Etonbury manor (1566) stated that the whole parish intercommoned and that the pasture stint was usually 3 sheep an acre (C.R.O. IN 174, fo. 19r).      6. In 1426, the abbot let 10 acres to John Lely for 9 years "ex assensu Johannis Knotte firmarii domini" (C.R.O. IN 59, m. 6d).

partly compensates for the lack of either rentals or a custumal, and it enables us to reconstruct the descent of many customary tenements. From it there emerges a reasonably clear picture of the way in which a few families began to amass copyholds during the fifteenth century. One of them, the Hemmings, eventually ended as owners of the manor. They provide a good example of a local family emerging from obscurity into the ranks of the gentry in the reign of Henry VIII.<sup>1</sup>

The land market on the abbey's manor

Between 1377 and 1536, some 747 transfers of land and property were recorded in the court register of the Arlesey Bury manor. The range of entries suggests that the register was intended to be a comprehensive account of the copyhold tenures, which were tenures of inheritance, by the rod (per virgam), with entry fines apparently fixed at the will of the lord.<sup>2</sup> Omissions may have resulted from oversight or laxity on the part of the compilers, and, of course, from any successful evasion of the manorial regulations governing the transfer of customary land. However, it appears that the abbey retained a close interest in the traffic in land and the descent of tenements.<sup>3</sup> For various reasons, the steward of the manor court or his deputy sometimes intervened to seize land.<sup>4</sup> In so doing, he acted as a redistributive agent in much the same way as the

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1. Below, pp. 104-5.

2. As they were on the Etonbury manor (C.R.O. IN 174, fo. 19v) and at Leighton Buzzard (below, p. 153). Tenure per virgam is discussed by Kerridge, p. 41.

3. When the manor was leased in 1514, the abbot retained the courts in his own hands (H.R.O. AR 492, no. 79917).

4. Mainly lack of heirs, evasion of entry fine, committing waste. These are discussed generally above, p. 58.

straightforward surrender between tenants. In studying the land market, it is convenient to group together these two ways in which land changed hands. This gives a distribution of types of transfer as follows:

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Inter-family during lifetime	71	10
Inter-family on death	161	21
Extra-family (sales, leases)	481	64
Extra-family on death	<u>34</u>	<u>5</u>
Total	747	100

The land market proper accounted for just under two-thirds of the total number of transfers. Of this proportion, two-thirds (328 out of 481) included arable land, and two-fifths consisted of arable only. Thus, the majority of sales included other parcels of land and property: meadow, crofts, messuages, cottages, gardens.

The market in arable land was mostly small-scale. About three-quarters of the total number of parcels transferred were smaller than 10 acres, and half were smaller than  $2\frac{1}{2}$  acres. While these small parcels predominated, the semi-virgate and the virgate continued to be recognizable units of tenure throughout the fifteenth century. Where land was transferred together with a messuage or cottage, there was a greater likelihood of the parcel of land being larger.<sup>1</sup>

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1. 35 per cent of transfers involving a messuage or cottage and land were 10 acres or more, mostly in the range 11-15 acres. The semi-virgate contained about 14 acres of arable.



### Recurrent transfers

An outstanding feature of the land market at Arlesey was the extent to which certain tenements and parcels of land changed hands without becoming a permanent part of any one person's holding. In the manor, there was a distinct "pool" of land and property which habitually reappeared on the land market. This was land on which family inheritance had disappeared as families died out or moved away, and it stands in contrast to the holdings which continued to descend from father to son among the established families. An example will show the sort of thing that happened. In 1401, the abbot granted out a vacant holding to Richard Deye; 46 years later, in 1447, Richard surrendered this to John Deye. John had died by 1457, in which year his widow was granted tenure of the holding until their son came of age. By 1472, the tenement had fallen vacant again and was granted to John Smith. In the following year, he forfeited the land for withholding his rent. The tenement was then granted to Thomas Hammond. William Hammond, Thomas's son, succeeded to his father's land in 1500. After William's death in or before 1511, his widow surrendered the holding to John Hemming. Ten years later, in 1521, John transferred it to Richard Page.<sup>1</sup> When the land finally passes from view, it had passed from family to family without ever having been incorporated fully into a family holding. Throughout its wanderings, it kept its separate identity.

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1. Appendix 4, no. 19. C.R.O. IN 59, m. 3; IN 60, m. 8d; IN 60, m. 3d; IN 61, m. 9; IN 61, m. 9; IN 62, mm. 3-4; IN 62, m. 10; IN 62, m. 13.

This example, together with many others at Arlesey, can be studied particularly clearly because the tenement in question had a distinctive name. At each change in ownership, the name of the tenement was recorded in the register.<sup>1</sup> Many tenements were named after families or individuals who had been associated with them at some time. Most of these can be traced in the court register or in the fourteenth-century Lay Subsidy rolls.<sup>2</sup> Sometimes the process can be studied as it happened. For example, one semi-virgate came to be known as "Warens" or "Mekys". In 1444, it had passed out of the family of Thomas Waryn.<sup>3</sup> Between 1460 and 1500, it descended in the Mekys family.<sup>4</sup> Between 1500 and 1518, the holding passed through a further three families yet it retained by its names its associations with the former tenants.<sup>5</sup> It is clear from the register that the tenement-names referred to those holdings and parcels of land on which family succession had, for some reason, broken down. It was this land which formed a large part of the customary land market in the fifteenth century.

From the court register, we can trace for varying lengths of time the changing ownership of 79 named tenements (under 47 tenement-names) and 17 unnamed tenements. They were of all sizes, from a single rood to a full virgate. Some were parts of holdings which had split in two or

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1. It is a straightforward step from this point to compile an index and to construct the descent of holdings. An example of the procedure is given by J. Z. Titow, English Rural Society 1200-1350 (1969), pp. 186-8. The naming of tenements was a common feature of rural life (P. D. A. Harvey, A Medieval Oxfordshire Village (Oxford, 1965), pp. 27-8, 160-3).

2. Those for 1309 and 1332 are printed in Hervey, pp. 5-6, 154-5.

3. C.R.O. IN 60, m. 9. 4. IN 60, m. 2d; IN 62, m. 1; IN 62, m. 4.

5. Appendix 4, no. 45. IN 62, mm. 6, 10, 12.

three. The details are set out in Appendix 4. A cursory examination of this is sufficient to show the extent to which the recurrent transfer of land and property dominated the changing ownership of land. At least 70 per cent of all transfers in the register, whether inter-family or extra-family, consisted of a part or the whole of one of the 96 holdings. The land which the tenants continued to hold as a part of their inheritance played a minor role in supplying the land market.

It was unusual for a tenement to descend in one family once it had come onto the land market. When family ownership disappeared, the idea of inheritance faded too.<sup>1</sup> A man might have held a tenement for 30 or 40 years, but he rarely passed it on to his heirs. Some tenements passed through as many as eight or nine families in the course of a hundred years. There was no discernible rhythm to the intervals at which land was transferred. Periods of 30 years or more in the hands of one tenant were followed by a rapid succession of changes. Most holdings changed hands at least once every 20 years; half changed hands twice as often. As there was little demand for land in the fifteenth century,<sup>2</sup> the supply of land to the market was self-perpetuating while the manorial population did not grow.<sup>3</sup> The same tenements reappeared on the land market at intervals.

The availability of land on which family inheritance had ceased had important consequences for the tenants of the Arlesey Bury manor. It

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1. R. J. Faith, 'Peasant families and inheritance customs in medieval England', AgHR xiv, no. 2 (1966), pp. 86-90. 2. Discussed below, pp. 97-8.

3. We cannot document the population history of Arlesey in the fifteenth century, but the court register displays many of the symptoms of a static or declining population (E. B. Dewindt, Land and People at Holywell-cum-Needingworth (Toronto, 1972), pp. 166-205).

was an influence on the growth of farm-sizes in the fifteenth century. Prosperous tenants could take advantage of the availability of land to increase the scale of their activities. The absence of any specific family ties and claims to the land was one of the attractions of copyhold as a form of tenure. The situation at Arlesey was by no means unique. The recurrent transfer of land can be traced on the Bedfordshire manors of Ramsey Abbey<sup>1</sup> and at Leighton Buzzard.<sup>2</sup> Its symptoms are to be seen in many other places in the growth of farms, and in the seemingly haphazard way in which family farms fluctuated in size throughout the fifteenth century. Not all the land held by one person now passed to his heir.<sup>3</sup>

#### Trends in the land market

Between 1377 and about the year 1480 (after which date the paucity of detail in the court register precludes an attempt at trend-analysis), the land market at Arlesey was remarkable for its stability and the low level of its activity. Averaged out over a hundred years, there were three or four transfers a year. The trend-line in land-dealing shows no dramatic growth or decline. After 1480, the trend-line cannot be followed accurately, but it appears that there was no substantial departure from the level prior to that date.

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1. The Court Book does not supply enough detail over a sufficiently long period to study the phenomenon in detail. 2. Below, pp. 161-2.  
3. DeWindt, pp. 112-161.

Turning to the structure of the market, the years 1377-1400 were marked by a growth in land-dealing in small parcels (of less than 5 acres), from 60 per cent of the market to between 75-80 per cent. Thereafter, a gradual decline set in. Between 1420 and 1460, there was a period of stability in which the proportion of transactions in small parcels fluctuated between about 50 and 60 per cent. The traffic in small parcels then grew in importance between about 1470 and 1490, but afterwards appears to have stabilized again, at around 60 per cent of the market. From these minor fluctuations, we can see that the scale of the market as a whole was probably linked to the scale of the market in small parcels. The level of overall activity tended to follow long-term fluctuations in the latter.

#### Rents and entry fines

Like the Ramsey Court Book, the Arlesey register was primarily a record of the entry fines levied on customary tenements. Rents lay outside the register's scope and were recorded infrequently. The limited information is enough to establish that there was no fixed ratio between the entry fine and the annual rent. Neither was there a ratio between the size of fine and the size of the tenement. In this respect, the position at Arlesey was similar to that on the manors of Ramsey Abbey.<sup>1</sup> Fines levied on parcels as small as an acre and as large as a semi-virgate varied considerably and apparently at random. However, the fifteenth century was

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1. Above, pp. 85-6.

marked by a rise in the general level of entry fines. This can be seen in Appendix 4 which tabulates the entry fines levied on holdings when they changed hands. For the 53 tenements for which we have a succession of entries, there was a definite increase in the level of fine on 37 (70 per cent). On seven, the level of fine remained stable, while on nine the entry fines fluctuated. The increase in entry fines is particularly noticeable from about 1470. Before 1470, where we have details of both rents and fines, the rent was usually greater than the fine. After 1470, the entry fine almost invariably exceeded the rent. As far as we can tell, rents remained stable throughout the fifteenth century, so the rise in the level of entry fines was real and not relative. Between 1400 and 1530, the average entry fine on a semi-virgate trebled, from 6s 8d to 20s, with the significant increase occurring in the later fifteenth century. Presumably, the increase in fines came at the instigation of the abbey's officials. With rents stable and protected by custom, the manipulation of the entry fine was the only way in which manorial income could conveniently be maintained or increased. The heightened awareness of the value of the entry fine in this period is found on other estates.<sup>1</sup>

#### The tenants and the land market

On the Arlesey Bury manor, the fifteenth century was a period of flux among the tenants. Families died out or moved away. New ones took their place.<sup>2</sup> Few families which lived in the manor in or before 1400

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1. J. M. W. Bean, The Estates of the Percy Family, 1416-1537 (Oxford, 1958), pp. 60, 64. 2. From the register we can trace some 22 families which disappeared during the fifteenth century, and some 11 new ones.

still lived there in the early sixteenth century. Among those which survived the century were ones which prospered and built up sizeable holdings. Together with a few newcomers, they came to dominate the tenure of copyholds. In all these respects, Arlesey resembled many other Midland manors.<sup>1</sup>

It would be wrong to exaggerate the extent of the mobility which developed. Very few of the newcomers to the manor, whether they settled there or simply invested in land, came from places further away than five or six miles. Stotfold, Henlow, Hitchin, Meppershall, Shillington, and Cadwell, the places of origin of most of the immigrants, were all close by.<sup>2</sup> The inter-marriage of tenants helped to bind the community together where mobility threatened to undermine it. The links between families which marriage produced were many and complex.<sup>3</sup> Despite the number of recurrent transfers which took place, marriage and inheritance remained of some importance in the redistribution of land at Arlesey. Between 1377 and 1536, 30 per cent of the transfers in the register represented inter-family arrangements. In examining the involvement of individuals in the land market, inter-family transfers, particularly inheritance, were often as important as transfers on the open market, in their effect on farm-size. It was the inherited holding which provided many with the basis for the development of their farms.

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1. W. G. Hoskins, Essays in Leicestershire History (Liverpool, 1950), pp. 127-8; R. H. Hilton, The Economic Development of Some Leicestershire Estates in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries (Oxford, 1947), pp. 94-105; J. A. Raftis, 'Changes in an English village after the Black Death', Medieval Studies, xxix (1967), pp. 158-77. 2. In 7 out of 16 cases, people came from Stotfold, Henlow, or Hitchin.  
3. Figure 1.

The court register contains information about several hundred people. For many of them there is just one entry, but for the main group of families resident in the manor we have a fair amount of detail, enough to distinguish successive generations and to provide skeleton biographies of their more important members. The long time-span of the register allows us to study many of these from their first appearance to their death. As the register is a manorial and not a village document, it does not necessarily provide a full picture of a person's activities in Arlesey. We are at the disadvantage of never knowing when it does deal with the whole of one person's interests. Despite these drawbacks, the register probably provides a representative sample of men's involvement in the land market. We can study this in some detail by examining selected families and by recourse to a sample of the main body of tenants. These can be recognized by the number of times they bought and sold land, and by the size of the tenements they held. Between 1377 and 1536, there were 65 tenants who dealt in land on five occasions or more, though only 13 were involved in 10 transfers or more. Most of the 65 fell into two general categories: 24 (38 per cent) were "enterers", that is they took on land; and 36 (55 per cent) were "enterers and surrenderers", that is they both took on land and shed it. The preponderance of the latter to some extent reflects the length and scope of the register: here may be seen the rise and decline of farm-size with the advancing age of the tenant. However, it is interesting to note that we know the dates of death of 18 out of the 24 "enterers". As the average time between the first and last transfer of these 18 was 31 years, it would be wrong to imagine that death interrupted the cycle of farm growth and decline. For some who were active in the land market, farm-size grew and then declined. For others, it reached a peak at or just before death.



We shall consider below the characteristics of the market based on case studies chosen from the 65. However, it is impossible to be completely objective in our approach to the problem of sampling. Among the 65 were individuals and families which demand separate investigation. These were the families which amassed large holdings and the men who climbed into the ranks of the minor gentry. Before turning to a more general survey, we shall examine six families or individuals in more detail.

### The Baldok family<sup>1</sup>

The pedigree of the Baldok family is particularly clear. The family first appears in Arlesey at the end of the fourteenth century, and they were still in the village six generations later, in the 1520s and 1530s. The first John Baldok built up a modest holding in the Arlesey Bury manor.<sup>2</sup> That the family was new to the manor is indicated by his first sources of land. Between 1400 and 1413, John Baldok I took on three small holdings by grant from the lord, and a semi-virgate (from a tenant) on which family inheritance had ended.<sup>3</sup> His son, John Baldok II, inherited a part of his father's land. When he died, in 1465, he had built up by gradual means a farm of some 30-35 acres, half of which passed to his son, John Baldok III.<sup>4</sup> John Baldok III had started to buy up land on his own account in the 1450s. In 1455 he acquired 20 acres from Richard Hammond,<sup>5</sup> and by 1471 his copyhold lands in the manor

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1. They perhaps originated from Baldock in Hertfordshire. 2. He held some 20 acres, part co-jointly with his son, John II (C.R.O. IN 59, m. 7). 3. IN 59, mm. 1, 1d, 3-4, 7. 4. IN 60, m. 2d; IN 61, m. 5. 5. IN 60, m. 4d.

totalled 100 acres.<sup>1</sup> This large farm was dispersed in three ways. In 1479, John surrendered 30 acres 1 rood to Thomas Hammond.<sup>2</sup> Then, in 1496, probably just before his death, John surrendered 20 acres to one son, John Baldok IV, and a cottage and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  acres to another son, William.<sup>3</sup> Fourteen acres went to William's son, Thomas.<sup>4</sup> In the 1520s, William Baldok had a farm of about 20 acres in Arlesey Bury, but he also held over 40 acres of land in Etonbury.<sup>5</sup> His son Thomas had acquired copyholds in excess of 60 acres in Arlesey Bury by 1528,<sup>6</sup> and he also held land in Etonbury.<sup>7</sup> By the end of the 1520s, Thomas' sons, Thomas junior and William, had lands in Arlesey Bury of at least 25 acres and 41 acres respectively. So, by 1530, four members of the Baldok family owned about 150 acres of copyhold in the one manor.

#### The Hammond family

The Hammonds had been resident in Arlesey since the beginning of the fourteenth century.<sup>8</sup> By the fifteenth century they were a large family with several branches, and it is impossible to unravel a pedigree. The family had begun to acquire land long before the sixteenth century, but our concern is with Thomas Hammond (d. 1500), and his son William (d. 1510). Thomas Hammond held 71 acres of copyhold land at his death. He had built up his farm from about 1465, the greater part in three transfers: 25 acres in 1468, 24 acres in 1473, and 30 acres in 1479.<sup>9</sup>

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1. IN 60, 2d, 4d; IN 61, m. 9.      2. IN 61, m. 11d.      3. IN 62, m. 2.  
4. IN 62, m. 2.      5. IN 167, fo. 3r.      6. IN 62, mm. 5, 11, 16.  
7. IN 167, fo. 3r (a messuage, a semi-virgate, and a pightel).  
8. Hervey, pp. 5-6.      9. IN 61, mm. 8, 9, 11d.

His son already held at least 12 acres when he inherited his father's land. In 1502, William acquired  $1\frac{1}{2}$  virgates (perhaps 40-50 acres) from Richard Lorymer and Thomas Phelip,<sup>1</sup> and his copyhold lands then amounted to between 120 and 130 acres. No sooner had he amassed this land than he began to sell off large parcels: 40 acres in 1504 to Thomas Baldok,<sup>2</sup> and 35 acres in the following year to John Hemming.<sup>3</sup> Between 1505 and his death in 1510, William must have disposed of a further 25 acres. There is no record of the transfer but at his death he left the residue of his land - about 23 acres - to his widow.<sup>4</sup> In the way in which he quickly sold off a large part of his land, William appears to have been something of a speculator. Two purchasers, Baldok and Hemming, were both actively interested in the land market. We do not have a full record of the involvement of the Hammonds with land in Arlesey. In 1480, Robert Tanfield, lord of Etonbury, leased lands in the village to Thomas Hammond.<sup>5</sup> Nothing more is known of this property.

#### The Hemming family

The Hemmings of Hitchin first appear in Arlesey Bury in the mid-fifteenth century. Their early activities belie their influence.<sup>6</sup> It is not until the advent of John Hemming at the end of the century that

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1. Thomas Phelip was an inhabitant of nearby Stotfold, where his family held both freeholds and copyholds (C.R.O. HA 510, m. 2).  
2. IN 62, m. 5.  
3. IN 62, m. 6.  
4. IN 62, mm. 8-9.  
5. C.R.O. AD 337.  
6. Richard Hemming, the first member of the family to appear in the register, entered two tofts and a cottage and curtilage between 1452 and 1454 (IN 60, mm. 5d, 5d-4d). He was a manorial juror in 1475-7 and an ale-taster in 1475 (IN 102, mm. 3d-4). William Hemming was a juror and affeeror in 1464 (P.R.O. SC2/173/37, m. 7d).

we can see the growth of their lands in the village. Between 1505 and his death in 1526, John built up and then dispersed a copyhold farm of over 90 acres. Thirty-three acres came from William Hammond, and a further 24 acres from William's widow.<sup>1</sup> Ten acres came from Richard Lorymer,<sup>2</sup> and 16 acres from John Wilkinson.<sup>3</sup> In 1514, John Hemming became the lessee of the abbey's manor.<sup>4</sup> Four years later, in 1518, he surrendered 16 acres to John Travell, himself engaged in acquiring land in the Arlesey Bury manor.<sup>5</sup> In 1521, he surrendered 24 acres to Richard Page.<sup>6</sup> The rest of his land passed to his son Robert.<sup>7</sup> John's interests extended beyond the one manor. The Hemmings held land in Hitchin.<sup>8</sup> In 1519-20, John was farmer of the rectory manor in Barford.<sup>9</sup> He also held a small tenement in the Etonbury manor in Arlesey.<sup>10</sup> John Hemming had another son, Thomas, and it was very probably this man who bought the Arlesey Bury manor from the Crown in 1544.<sup>11</sup>

#### Richard Lorymer

Richard Lorymer was one of three sons of John Lorymer of Stotfold, a village just to the east of Arlesey. The first mention of the family in connection with Arlesey Bury occurs in 1500 when Richard entered four tenements whose combined area probably exceeded 60 acres.<sup>12</sup> He negotiated

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1. IN 62, mm. 6, 10.      2. IN 62, m. 8.      3. IN 62, m. 10.  
4. H.R.O. AR 492, no. 79917.      5. IN 62, m. 12.      6. IN 62, m. 13. By 1529, Travell had accumulated at least 39 acres in Arlesey Bury (IN 62, mm. 8, 10, 12, 17).  
7. IN 62, m. 15.      8. C.R.O. CRT 130/4 (Arlesey).  
9. 'Two Monastic Account Rolls', ed. G. D. Gilmore (B.H.R.S. xlix, 1970), p. 24.      10. IN 167, fo. 4r.  
11. V.C.H. ii. 262 (not Heneage as stated here). Thomas paid £709, or 20 years' purchase at the Dissolution value.      12. IN 62, m. 4.

the life-lease of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  virgates with Henry Phelip, another Stotfold man;<sup>1</sup> acquired a semi-virgate of 15 acres from William Mekys, and an acre of land from John Cowper; and took on a parcel of land from the lord. On these he paid entry fines of 30s, 20s, 1s 8d, and 40s respectively. Between 1500 and 1515, Richard engaged in 25 transfers of land in the one manor, as both "enterer" and "surrenderer".<sup>2</sup> After 1515 we lose track of his land deals in the manor.<sup>3</sup> He died in 1529.<sup>4</sup>

Richard was, in effect, a land speculator, and a prosperous one. From the reconstruction of his career at Arlesey, we can see the rapid turnover in land which such a man generated, and the effect he had on its redistribution. Between 1500 and 1511, he acquired, amongst other holdings, seven small tenements: an acre in 1500, another acre in 1503, a croft and 2 acres in the same year, a cottage and garden in 1505, a rood in 1509, an acre in 1510, a cottage and 1 acre  $3\frac{1}{2}$  roods in 1511.<sup>5</sup> In 1512, he sold all these to one man, John Bolles.<sup>6</sup> The larger parcels which he acquired were also sold within a few years. The life-interest in Henry Phelip's land passed to William Hammond in 1502.<sup>7</sup> The semi-virgate acquired in 1500 went to John Wilkinson in 1505.<sup>8</sup> Eight acres bought in 1502 passed to John Smith in 1509.<sup>9</sup> Richard's interests were much wider than many of his fellow tenants, for the Lorymer family held land in Stotfold. In 1519-20, Richard was the farmer of the Newnham Priory manor there.<sup>10</sup> He was one of the jurors of the Inclosure Commission

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1. Above, p. 104, n. 1.                      2. Table 16.                      3. There is a stray record of one, in 1517, but this may have been in the Etonbury manor (C.R.O. AD 339).                      4. IN 62, m. 17.                      5. IN 62, mm. 4-5, 7, 8, 10.                      6. IN 62, m. 10.                      7. IN 62, m. 4.                      8. IN 62, m. 6.                      9. IN 62, m. 6.                      10. 'Two Monastic Account Rolls', p. 24.

in the county in 1517,<sup>1</sup> and on two occasions we find him described as "yeoman".<sup>2</sup> At the same time as he was buying and selling land in Arlesey, he was actively engaged in land-dealing in Stotfold. He was bailiff of Brays manor there in 1514,<sup>3</sup> and in the following year he acquired the water mill by surrender from Richard Page.<sup>4</sup> Between 1515 and 1518, Richard took on holdings of some 14 acres and 10 acres,<sup>5</sup> and surrendered one of 30 acres.<sup>6</sup> In the Newnham manor, he acquired at least three holdings between 1501 and 1518: a semi-virgate,<sup>7</sup> a messuage and 6 acres 1 rood,<sup>8</sup> and a messuage and 7 acres.<sup>9</sup> He probably held land in Astwick as well, for he was fined there in 1512 for default of suit.<sup>10</sup>

#### Richard Page

Richard Page was another outsider to become involved in the land market at Arlesey in the early sixteenth century. He was probably from Henlow,<sup>11</sup> just to the north of Arlesey, and he married an Arlesey woman, Cecily Green.<sup>12</sup> Between 1515 and 1521, Richard amassed a copyhold estate in Arlesey Bury of over 80 acres. This was achieved in 10 transactions.<sup>13</sup> At his death, in 1521 or 1522,<sup>14</sup> he left these lands to his widow and his son, John.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, Richard had built up a sizeable holding in the Etonbury manor. He may well have inherited a family estate there,

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1. The Domesday of Inclosures, ed. I. S. Leadam (2 vols., 1897), ii. 459.
  2. In 1517 (C.R.O. AD 339), and in 1504 (C.C.R. 1500-9, p. 111).
  3. C.R.O. HA 500, m. 4.      4. Below, p. 108.      5. HA 500, mm. 5-5d.      6. HA 500, m. 5.      7. C.R.O. X17/10, m. 8.
  8. *ibid.* m. 10.      9. *ibid.* m. 12.      10. B.M. Add. Roll 34995.
  11. Luton Register, p. 96, states that Richard Page, who joined the Luton Guild in 1521, was from Harlow, but this is probably an incorrect extension of a contraction.      12. C.R.O. CRT 130/6 (Arlesey).
  13. Table 17.      14. IN 62, m. 14; P.C.C. ii. 399.
  15. IN 62, m. 14.

for, in 1519, he held a freehold of 40 acres. In addition, he held numerous closes and odd plots of land, and about 20 acres at-will. In the Etonbury rental he was described as a "gentleman",<sup>1</sup> as he was in the Stotfold Newnham court roll in 1516.<sup>2</sup> Like Richard Lorymer, Richard Page held copyhold land in Stotfold.<sup>3</sup> In 1515, he acquired the farm of the water mill in Brays manor from Peter Thorp and immediately transferred this to Lorymer. Among the draft court papers is the letter he wrote to the steward of the manor on this occasion:<sup>4</sup>

"Right Worshipful, I hertly recomende me vnto you. And wher as it was presented by Nicholas Lorymer at M. Bray is courte late holdyn in Stotfold that Peter Thorp, myller, made a surrender of Stotfold Mylle into the Lord's hands to my vse, I pray you that ther may be a copy made oute to Richard Lorymer of the said Mylle after the custome of that manor. And by this byll, I surrender myn intereste in his vse accordyngly therof. And thus our Lord kepe you, wrytyn the v<sup>th</sup> day of Apryll, by yor own assuered, Richard Page".<sup>5</sup>

Also surviving among the papers is the note the steward's clerk made to remind himself that the copy had to be made out to Lorymer.<sup>6</sup>

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1. IN 167, fos. 4v-5r. 2. C.R.O. X17/10, m. 12. 3. He took up a messuage, croft, and 6 acres in the Newnham manor in 1516 (X17/10, m. 12), and 3 roods with his son in Brays manor in 1519 (C.R.O. HA 500, m. 7). 4. The addressee's name is not given, but I assume that he was the steward. 5. HA 501, m. 6. The court was held on April 2nd (m. 7). 6. ibid. m. 5.

John Smith of Hitchin

Like Richard Page, John Smith first appears in the court register at the beginning of the sixteenth century. By the time of his death in 1521-2,<sup>1</sup> he had acquired a customary estate in excess of 100 acres in the village, the greater part in the Arlesey Bury manor.<sup>2</sup> In 1502, John bought three tenements from Thomas Lawrence: 22 acres, a cottage and about 5 acres, and two further cottages.<sup>3</sup> Six or seven years later, he obtained a parcel of meadow and a tenement of 8 acres from Richard Lorymer.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, he took from the lord a 99-year lease of 44 acres of land, plus other parcels and various tofts and crofts.<sup>5</sup> His son, John junior, appears to have held land in Astwick in 1529; in that year he stood surety for another tenant's absence from the manor court.<sup>6</sup>

These six case studies are by no means typical of the activities of tenants in general at Arlesey. They are, however, typical of a particular group of people: the rising "yeomen" and the minor "gentry".<sup>7</sup> They show how one or two families consolidated their position in the manor in the fifteenth century and began to acquire considerable holdings. They show how men from outside the manor came to see in Arlesey scope for their enterprise and acumen. Particularly noteworthy are those men from Hitchin - the Hemmings, John Smith - who added an estate in the surrounding countryside to their interests in the town. Men began to invest in copyholds, to buy

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1. IN 62, m. 14; P.C.C. ii. 486.      2. In Etonbury, he held a virgate and various small parcels of land and property (IN 167, fo. 4r).  
3. IN 62, m. 4.      4. IN 62, m. 6.      5. IN 62, mm. 7-8  
(March 24, 1509, including a detailed terrier).      6. B.M. Add. Roll 34999.  
7. A similar group at Leighton Buzzard is discussed below, pp. 174-83.



and sell for profit. They acquired their holdings in a few, large transfers, often over a short period. They often bought and sold amongst themselves. In the six cases discussed, it is noticeable that the growth of large farms was essentially a feature of the years after 1450, and mostly after 1500. The number of tenants at Arlesey to engage in 10 or more transfers after 1450 was twice the number before that date (eight as against four). Of the copyhold farms of 60 acres or more, all but one (nine out of ten) reached their peak after 1450.

#### The main body of tenants

The activities of most of the 65 active land-dealers were less spectacular than those of the few who dominated the land market in and after 1500. The majority held their land longer, engaged in fewer and smaller transfers, and held less land in the manor. The average length of tenure at Arlesey lay between 26 and 30 years from the first known entry to land. The main reasons for variation from the norm were early death and longevity, with speculation becoming increasingly important as a reason for short-term tenure towards the end of the fifteenth century. For many tenants, old-age and the approach of death marked the natural end to their careers as tenants and land-dealers, the time when they began to dispose of their land. As for the variations in the size of holdings which land-dealers built up, over half fell within the middling range of 10-30 acres. Apart from the growth in large holdings in the hands of a few tenants after 1450, the growth of farms to their highest point shows a remarkably even distribution over the century. The

development of holdings can best be studied in case studies of individual tenants, and 12 of these are discussed below. They comprise a systematic sample of the active land-dealers in the manor.<sup>1</sup> Each is considered individually, together with a discussion of the family background. We shall then discuss the characteristics of the tenants' holdings in general.

### The sample

The Bonde family had lived in Arlesey since the beginning of the fourteenth century.<sup>2</sup> In the later fifteenth century, the family appears to have died out in the male line. John and Agnes Bonde had two children: a son William, who appears to have died childless in 1484;<sup>3</sup> and a daughter Isabel, who married Thomas Fanne, a member of another long-established local family.<sup>4</sup> William Bonde inherited a tenement of 24 acres from his father in 1468.<sup>5</sup> Prior to that, he had already acquired an acre in 1460,<sup>6</sup> a cottage with 16 acres in 1462,<sup>7</sup> and another cottage with 1 acre  $3\frac{1}{2}$  roods in 1464.<sup>8</sup> At his death, William held 48 acres of land and three cottages, all of which passed to his mother and sister.<sup>9</sup> A year later, they surrendered 22 acres to John Renhale.<sup>10</sup> Agnes, William's mother, must have died in or shortly after 1485, for two years later, when Isabel had married Thomas Fanne, these two were confirmed in their possession of the land which William had held.<sup>11</sup>

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1. I have chosen one in five. An alphabetical list of the tenants can be assumed to provide a random distribution with regard to time and social status. 2. Hervey, pp. 5-6. 3. His land passed to his mother and sister (IN 61, m. 9d). 4. IN 62, m. 1. 5. IN 61, m. 8; P.R.O. SC2/173/38, m. 6d. 6. IN 60, m. 2d. 7. IN 61, m. 2. 8. IN 61, m. 4. In that year, he served as a manorial juror (SC2/173/37, mm. 2d, 7d). 9. IN 61, m. 9d. 10. *ibid.* 11. IN 62, m. 1.



John Bryd started to acquire land in Arlesey Bury in the 1420s.

He does not appear to have been a native of the manor, but was probably from a neighbouring village.<sup>1</sup> In 1421, he and John Hammond received a life-grant of two messuages, a cottage and garden from Christine Halybred, a widow.<sup>2</sup> In 1435, this property was seized when Bryd and Hammond attempted to transfer it without the lord's licence to Matilda Plot.<sup>3</sup> But between 1435 and 1438 the transfer went through properly, on this occasion to John Semper, Matilda's third husband.<sup>4</sup> Between 1421 and 1429, John Bryd acquired a messuage and semi-virgate from John Bregge,<sup>5</sup> a life-lease of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  acres from the lord,<sup>6</sup> and a messuage and  $4\frac{1}{2}$  acres from John Thorp.<sup>7</sup> In the 1430s, he gained a further 5 acres from the lord,<sup>8</sup> and in 1449, the lord granted a cottage and garden to him and William Grene to hold jointly.<sup>9</sup> By 1451, John had begun to shed land: his interest in the parcel of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  acres fell in, and he and Grene surrendered the cottage and garden to Thomas Lawghin.<sup>10</sup> Other parcels of land went to Hugh Knotte and John Aubry.<sup>11</sup> John's son, John Bryd junior, had died in 1443, holding a semi-virgate which passed to his widow as guardian of their own infant son, another John.<sup>12</sup>

The Ferrour family first appear in Arlesey Bury in the mid-fifteenth century, when John Ferrour took from the lord a cottage which lay ruined.<sup>13</sup> He had two, possibly three, sons who inherited the land he acquired in

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1. There is no record of the Bryds in Arlesey before John. He was a manorial juror in 1421 (SC2/173/35, m. 3). 2. IN 59, mm. 3d-4d.  
3. IN 60, mm. 4-5. 4. IN 60, mm. 5-6. 5. IN 59, m. 4d.  
6. This appears to have been a parcel of the demesne as it was let at will (IN 59, m. 5d). 7. IN 60, m. 3. 8. IN 60, mm. 5-6.  
This does not appear to have been demesne. 9. IN 60, m. 7d.  
10. IN 60, m. 5d. 11. IN 60, m. 7d. 12. IN 60, m. 9.  
13. IN 60, m. 8d.

Arlesey.<sup>1</sup> The greater part, a tenement with 10 acres, passed to John Ferroure junior in 1474.<sup>2</sup> In the following year, John Ferroure junior bought a cottage and 1½ acres of land from Richard Knotte.<sup>3</sup> A few years later, after his father had died in or before 1479, he surrendered this cottage and land to his brother, Robert.<sup>4</sup> In 1485, John acquired a large holding of 36 acres from John Plot.<sup>5</sup> As far as we know, he maintained his tenement at between 45 and 50 acres for some years. Shortly before his death, he sold a cottage and garden to William Kympton,<sup>6</sup> and an acre to Richard Lorymer.<sup>7</sup> John Ferroure junior died in 1503-4, when his land descended to his wife and his son Thomas.<sup>8</sup> We learn no more of Thomas until 1526-7, when he acquired an acre from Robert Hemming.<sup>9</sup> Another branch of the Ferroure family lived in Stotfold, where Richard Ferroure was a copyholder in the 1470s and 1480s.<sup>10</sup>

Between 1440 and his death in 1464, William Grene built up a holding of some 30-40 acres. His daughter Alice married a John Grene de Stotfold.<sup>11</sup> She and her daughter Elizabeth inherited William's land: Alice received three small parcels of land amounting to perhaps 10 acres in all, while the granddaughter received 28 acres.<sup>12</sup> No doubt Alice's land augmented the land which her husband had been accumulating. In 1449, John Grene had

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1. IN 61, m. 11d.	2. IN 61, m. 11.	3. ibid.
4. IN 61, m. 11d.	5. IN 61, m. 9d.	6. IN 62, m. 4.
7. IN 62, mm. 4-5.	8. IN 62, m. 5.	9. IN 62, m. 15.
10. C.R.O. HA 510, m. 1; X17/10, mm. 2d, 4d.	11. IN 61,	
m. 4; P.R.O. SC2/173/37, m. 2d.	12. IN 61, mm. 4, 9.	

acquired  $1\frac{1}{2}$  acres in Arlesey Bury; in 1451, a cottage and garden; and in 1453, an interest in a small tenement.<sup>1</sup> Then, in 1468, he took on a semi-virgate from the lord,<sup>2</sup> and three years later he bought a cottage and 2 acres 1 rood from William Osbern.<sup>3</sup> At his death in 1473, John's land passed to his son John,<sup>4</sup> and eventually on to his grandson, another John.<sup>5</sup> The land which Elizabeth Grene had inherited from her grandfather remained in the family and descended to John Grene de Stotfold's grandson. In 1508, when the grandson died, he held eight distinct tenements in Arlesey Bury amounting in all to 50 acres or more.<sup>6</sup> This John Grene was succeeded by his daughter Cecilia, widow of Robert Clifford,<sup>7</sup> and it was very probably she who married Richard Page, gentleman, of Henlow.<sup>8</sup>

The Jacob family had held land in Arlesey since the end of the fourteenth century.<sup>9</sup> Members of the family were still tenants of the Arlesey Bury manor in the sixteenth century.<sup>10</sup> Although we possess a fair amount of information about several individuals, we cannot trace the relationships between them. Thus, with Adam Jacob,<sup>11</sup> we do not know his parents, and it seems probable that he had no surviving children when he himself died. However, the register of the abbey's manor enables us to trace all the land he held in the manor. Between 1420 and 1462, he acquired about 50 acres of arable in five transfers: about 28 acres in 1421;<sup>12</sup> a semi-virgate in 1439;<sup>13</sup> a cottage and 5 acres in 1448;<sup>14</sup> an

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1. IN 60, mm. 7d, 6d, 5d.      2. IN 61, m. 8.      3. IN 61, m. 9.  
4. *ibid.*      5. IN 62, m. 6.      6. *ibid.*      7. *ibid.*  
8. Above, p. 107.      9. IN 58, mm. 1d-2d.      10. IN 62, m. 5.  
11. In 1414, Adam was placed in tithing as he was then aged 12 (P.R.O. SC2/173/34, m. 2d); he was elected rent-collector in 1459-60 (SC2/173/36, m. 4).      12. IN 59, mm. 3d-4d.  
13. IN 60, m. 6.      14. IN 60, m. 8d.

acre in 1457;<sup>1</sup> and another acre in 1462.<sup>2</sup> At his death in 1468, he still held all this land. The large parcel of about 28 acres<sup>3</sup> was held by feoffees and was sold by them 10 years later.<sup>4</sup> The cottage and 5 acres were held by his wife Eleanor for life. The reversion was vested in feoffees to sell for the good of Adam's soul.<sup>5</sup> The semi-virgate and the two acres were retained by Adam apparently without any restriction on their descent, but we do not know to whom they passed. John Jacob, presumably a relation of Adam, built up a smaller holding in the manor. By 1446, he appears to have ceased accumulating land.<sup>6</sup> Between 1465 and 1489, when he died, John surrendered nearly 16 acres of land in nine transfers, the largest of which was the cottage, garden, and 4 acres  $\frac{1}{2}$  rood which passed to feoffees on his death to sell for the benefit of the parish church.<sup>7</sup>

The difficulties of distinguishing family relationships are far more serious in the case of the Knottes. A family of this name had lived in Arlesey from at least the beginning of the fourteenth century.<sup>8</sup> By the fifteenth century, there appear to have been several families bearing the same name within the manor, and the relationships between them, if any, are not clear.<sup>9</sup> An additional complication arises in the 1420s when we can trace three, and probably four, distinct John Knottes: a John Knotte senior (or de Caldewelle); his son, John; a John Knotte bocher; and a John Knotte who was firmarius in 1429,<sup>10</sup> and who may have

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1. IN 60, m. 3d.      2. IN 61, m. 1.      3. Described as 25 acres in 1468 (IN 61, m. 8).  
4. IN 61, m. 11.      5. IN 61, m. 8;  
SC2/173/38, m. 10.      6. The register recorded only one entry to land made by John, in 1446. Thereafter, he surrendered his land (IN 60, m. 9d).  
7. IN 62, m. 1.      8. Hervey, pp. 5-6.      9. Above, p. 23.  
10. IN 59, m. 6d.

been any one of the above or a separate person. The register was usually consistent in distinguishing between John Knotte senior and John Knotte bocher, with whom we shall be concerned. It seems a reasonable assumption that the distinctive bocher would have described the firmarius of 1429 had they been the same person. However, all we can do is to assemble the detail relating to John Knotte bocher and trust that we have gathered together most of his land transfers.<sup>1</sup> In fact, we can trace John Knotte bocher building up a holding in excess of 60 acres between 1423 and 1453. The greater part of his land came from the lord's hands in 1445, when he entered two vacant tenements totalling 38 acres.<sup>2</sup> He had bought a messuage with 9 acres  $1\frac{1}{2}$  roods in 1435.<sup>3</sup> His other acquisitions, five in all, were small-scale, the largest being  $3\frac{1}{2}$  acres.<sup>4</sup> In the 1440s, John sold two small parcels of land to Thomas Sturgeon,<sup>5</sup> but it was not until 1460 that he began to disperse his holding. Then, he sold 28 acres to William Grene and Elizabeth, William's granddaughter;<sup>6</sup> and a cottage and  $2\frac{1}{2}$  acres passed to his son, Richard Knotte.<sup>7</sup> In 1465, John Knotte surrendered a close and semi-virgate to Thomas Loryng.<sup>8</sup> By 1476 he was dead.<sup>9</sup> We do not know what happened to his remaining land. Presumably John used his land, or a part, to breed sheep or cattle to maintain his business as a butcher.<sup>10</sup> His son Richard bought and sold land on several occasions between 1460 and 1490. The cottage and  $2\frac{1}{2}$  acres which came to him from his father in 1460 was sold straightaway.<sup>11</sup> Another cottage, acquired in 1473, was sold two years later.<sup>12</sup> A semi-virgate acquired in 1474 was sold in 1483.<sup>13</sup> A third cottage, acquired in 1483, was sold in 1489.<sup>14</sup>

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1. We can trace most of the land that appears to have been his, or, alternatively, belonged to another John Knotte, by following the descent of the land as closely as possible. 2. IN 60, m. 9. 3. IN 60, mm. 4-5. 4. IN 60, m. 5d. 5. IN 60, mm. 8, 8d. 6. IN 60, m. 2d. 7. IN 60, m. 2d. 8. IN 61, m. 5. 9. His wife was then a widow (IN 61, m. 11). 10. "Johannes Knotte (1d) est carnifex et vendidit contra statutem" (P.R.O. SC2/173/37, m. 2d). 11. IN 60, m. 2d. 12. IN 61, mm. 9-11. 13. IN 61, mm. 11-11d. 14. IN 61, m. 11d; IN 62, m. 1.

Thomas Loryng started to acquire land in the abbey's manor in the middle of the fifteenth century. By 1478, he had pieced together perhaps 20 acres of land: 5 acres in 1451, 3 roods in 1462, a close and semi-virgate in 1465, a cottage and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  acres in 1478.<sup>1</sup> In 1479, he sold the close to William Jacob, and the cottage and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  acres to William Lanam, clericus.<sup>2</sup> In 1484, he bought a cottage and 2 acres of land.<sup>3</sup> Ten years later, he surrendered a cottage and 10 acres to William Loryng, probably his son.<sup>4</sup> As far as we know, William did not add to this tenement. Certainly, when he died in 1522, this land was all he held in the manor.<sup>5</sup> However, he had held a messuage, a croft, a close, and a semi-virgate in the Etonbury manor.<sup>6</sup> The Loryngs may have been tenants, first and foremost, of this or a neighbouring manor. A Richard Loryng was miller at Astwick in 1487.<sup>7</sup> However, the family took part in the affairs of the Arlesey Bury manor. Thomas was elected a rent-collector in 1456,<sup>8</sup> served as a manorial juror,<sup>9</sup> and was an ale-taster in 1475.<sup>10</sup> William was a tithingman in 1509-10.<sup>11</sup>

The Plotte family are first found in Arlesey Bury in the first half of the fifteenth century. In 1419, Thomas Plotte bought a smallholding from William Goodhew. Over the next 20 to 30 years he added to this a half-acre, a cottage, and a tenement with 10 acres.<sup>12</sup> John Plotte senior probably inherited the greater part of his father's land.<sup>13</sup> Before his

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1. IN 60, m. 7d; IN 61, mm. 1, 5, 11d.      2. IN 61, m. 11d.  
3. IN 61, m. 10d.      4. IN 62, m. 2.      5. IN 62, m. 14.  
6. IN 167, fo. 3v.      7. B.M. Add. Roll 34990.      8. IN 102, mm. 5d-6.  
9. SC2/173/37, m. 2d.      10. IN 102, m. 3d.  
11. IN 62, final covering membrane is part of the original court roll, 1509-10.      12. IN 59, mm. 3d, 5d; IN 60, mm. 4, 9d.  
13. IN 60, m. 3d.



father died, he had already begun to acquire land himself: in 1457, he and his wife took a vacant semi-virgate from the lord,<sup>1</sup> though they surrendered this to Thomas Mekys three years later.<sup>2</sup> In 1458, John's father surrendered  $2\frac{1}{2}$  acres to him and William Clyston.<sup>3</sup> In 1460, John sold an acre to William Bonde.<sup>4</sup> Thirteen years later, he acquired two small parcels of land totalling 1 acre  $\frac{1}{2}$  rood,<sup>5</sup> and in 1474 he sold  $1\frac{1}{2}$  roods to William Jacob.<sup>6</sup> In 1483, he sold  $1\frac{1}{2}$  acres to Thomas Lawrence.<sup>7</sup> The main family holding descended to his son, John junior, who sold it in 1485 to John Ferroure senior.<sup>8</sup>

The Rankediche family was long-established in Arlesey.<sup>9</sup> In the later fifteenth century, the family disappeared in the male line when the son of Giles Rankediche left the manor. Giles's land then passed to his daughter, and so out of the family by marriage. Giles inherited land from his parents when they died: a toft and 6 acres from John Rankediche in 1439,<sup>10</sup> and two cottages from Agnes in 1443.<sup>11</sup> Earlier, in 1428, he had acquired a tenement from Christine Strenger, a widow.<sup>12</sup> In 1447, the lord granted Giles the tenure of a vacant cottage,<sup>13</sup> and in 1453 he granted him  $2\frac{1}{2}$  acres, a half-acre of which he immediately sold to John Baldok III.<sup>14</sup> In 1452-3, Giles apprenticed his son Thomas to John Banham, a Dunstable merchant.<sup>15</sup> This act marked, in effect, the end of the

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1. IN 60, m. 3d.	2. IN 60, m. 2d.	3. IN 60, m. 3d.
4. IN 60, m. 2d.	5. IN 61, m. 9.	6. IN 61, m. 10.
7. IN 61, m. 10d.	8. IN 61, m. 9d (two tenements containing 36 acres).	9. Hervey, pp. 5-6; B.M. Cotton Tiberius, C. ix, fo. 236v.
10. IN 60, m. 6.	11. IN 60, m. 9.	12. IN 60, m. 3.
13. IN 60, m. 8d.	14. IN 60, m. 5d.	15. IN 60, m. 5d; Godber, p. 144.

Rankediches' connections with the Arlesey Bury manor. Giles continued to hold land until his death in 1462, when he had about 15 acres. Eight acres passed out of his family altogether, and  $6\frac{1}{4}$  acres went to his daughter Alice, who married William Body.<sup>1</sup>

The Smiths of Arlesey were another family which lived in the manor for many years. Between 1380 and 1500, we have a particularly clear pedigree of the main branch of the family. John Smith (who died in 1391) and his wife, Mariot Rankediche, had five children, two sons and three daughters. The greater part of the family property descended to William Smith. Thereafter, we can trace the family fortunes through a further four generations. It is instructive in this instance to concentrate more on the family than on an individual, for we can trace in the court register the way in which much of the land which descended to William Smith passed out of the family in the fifteenth century. In addition, at the end of the fourteenth century, the Smiths were definitely one of the more important families in the manor, and so repay a closer study.

John Smith had inherited a semi-virgate in Arlesey Bury from his father sometime before 1377. His marriage with Mariot Rankediche brought to him a virgate which she had inherited. These two tenements, perhaps 40 acres in all, passed to William Smith when John died.<sup>2</sup> John, however, had already provided in a modest way for his other children. His second son had received a cottage and croft in 1387.<sup>3</sup> His three daughters had each received similar small parcels of land or property.<sup>4</sup>

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1. IN 61, m. 2.      2. IN 58, m. 8.      3. IN 58, m. 5.  
4. IN 58, mm. 4, 5, 7.

John Smith emerges from the register as an important tenant, and as an influential person in manorial affairs. He was a bailiff of the manor in the 1380s,<sup>1</sup> and on several occasions he stood pledge for the payment of another tenant's entry fine.<sup>2</sup> William Smith I, like his father, served as bailiff of the manor.<sup>3</sup> His main interests appear to have lain elsewhere, or, certainly, not in his land. In 1393, he was given licence to lease all his lands in the manor for eight years to John Cook of Meppershall.<sup>4</sup> When this lease fell in, William then farmed out his land to John Wilbon for a further six years.<sup>5</sup> Wilbon's lease was renewed informally. When the manorial authorities eventually discovered this, in 1414, William was given leave to continue the arrangement.<sup>6</sup> At this date, he was described in the register as William Smith coteler, and the court roll recorded that he was then living at Waltham (Essex).<sup>7</sup> Presumably he had let his lands in order to concentrate on his business interests. William died in 1416-17, when he left his land to his wife for her life and then to his son, William II.<sup>8</sup> Matilda Smith, widow of William I, did not die until 1437,<sup>9</sup> so she may have barred her son from enjoying his full inheritance. In 1426, William II took on a further semi-virgate from the lord.<sup>10</sup> When he died, in 1439, he was in possession of the virgate and semi-virgate which had descended to him from his grandfather and father.<sup>11</sup> This land passed to his widow, Johanna, who

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1. IN 58, m. 4.      2. IN 58, mm. 1-4.      3. IN 58, m. 4d. He had been hayward in 1385 (m. 5).      4. IN 58, m. 8.      5. IN 59, m. 3.      6. IN 59, m. 2d; P.R.O. SC2/173/34, m. 2d.      7. Some years later, a William Smith, coteler, of Waltham was bound under £20 to appear before king and council, and it is possible that this was William's son (C.C.R. 1419-22, p. 253).      8. IN 59, m. 2d.      9. IN 60, m. 6d, where it is recorded that she had died in 1437 (entry sub anno 1451-2).      10. IN 59, m. 6d.      11. IN 60, m. 6.

then married William Algar. They surrendered it to William Phelip, "husbandman", of Stotfold,<sup>1</sup> and with that transaction the two tenements (the core of the Smiths' land in the manor) passed permanently from the family. Of the other land which William I had held at his death, a tenement called Bouches descended in the family throughout the fifteenth century.<sup>2</sup> A semi-virgate called Crowches had a checkered history. It appears to have passed out of the family (perhaps by a lease) between 1427 and 1450. In 1461, John Smith, grandson of William II, surrendered the tenement to Richard Body. It then passed through a succession of owners before returning to the Smith family in 1483. Shortly afterwards, Thomas Smith, John's son, surrendered the semi-virgate out of the family again.<sup>3</sup> A messuage called Garkynes descended in the family until 1498, when John Smith transferred it to Thomas Lawrence.<sup>4</sup> A cottage called Anables passed out of the family in 1444 when William Smith III transferred it to William Paite.<sup>5</sup> Finally, a parcel of meadow was transferred by William Smith III in 1440 to Roger Megur, clericus.<sup>6</sup> Thus, much of the land which John Smith had acquired in the fourteenth century had passed from the family by the mid-fifteenth century. Thereafter, members of the family were forced into the market for land. John Smith acquired a cottage in 1460,<sup>7</sup> a toft in 1462,<sup>8</sup> and a cottage with 24 acres in 1472.<sup>9</sup> His son Thomas acquired three separate acres between 1472 and 1475,<sup>10</sup> 1 $\frac{1}{2}$  roods in 1483,<sup>11</sup> a cottage in 1485,<sup>12</sup> and another cottage together with

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1. IN 60, m. 7. The surrender was made at Waltham: "Apud Waltham Sancte Crucis in Vigilia Pentecoste anno regni regis Henrici vj. xvij. venerunt Willelmus Algar et Johanna uxor eius nuper uxor Willelmi Smyth, ipsa Johanna sola per senescallum examinata...". The Phelips were a prominent Stotfold family in the fifteenth century (C.R.O. HA 510, m. 2; XL7/10, m. 2). 2. Appendix 4 no. 7. 3. *ibid.* no. 18.  
4. IN 62, m. 3. 5. IN 60, m. 9. 6. IN 60, m. 8.  
7. IN 60, m. 2d. 8. IN 61, m. 1. 9. IN 61, m. 9.  
10. IN 61, m. 9-11. 11. IN 61, m. 11d. 12. IN 61, m. 9d.

4 acres and a half-rood in 1489.<sup>1</sup> As far as we can tell, Thomas was the last of the Smiths to hold land in the manor.<sup>2</sup> Although the fortunes of the family appear to have been in decline from about 1440, the tradition of service in office lingered on. William Smith III was elected a rent-collector in 1465;<sup>3</sup> Thomas Smith was ale-taster in 1477.<sup>4</sup>

The bailiff of the manor was often in a position to benefit from the action of the lord or his steward.<sup>5</sup> When the latter seized land on some pretext or held it when it had fallen vacant, the bailiff must have been an obvious person to hold the land, either short-term or long-term. With Henry Waryn, bailiff between 1440 and 1466,<sup>6</sup> we can study his landholding in the light of his position in the manor. Henry was probably a descendant of William Waryn, alias Bocher, bailiff of the manor in the first decade of the fifteenth century.<sup>7</sup> William had acquired a freehold in Arlesey in 1407.<sup>8</sup> Although Henry Waryn was bailiff of the abbey's manor as early as 1440, it is not until 1451 that he appears in the register as a tenant. Then, he and William Deye were granted the tenure of a virgate containing 28 acres. This had been seized from John Knotte bocher for his refusal to pay rent and perform the necessary services.

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1. IN 62, m. 1.      2. The Arlesey Smiths do not appear to have been related to the Smiths of Hitchin.      3. IN 102, m. 1.      4. *ibid.* m. 3d.      5. Here, bailiff and firmarius were one and the same person. On the manors of Ramsey Abbey, the bailiff received favourable treatment as a tenant. For example, at Shillington, in 1398-9, the bailiff held a certain piece of meadow de gracia as long as he held office (B. M. Harley MS. 445, fo. 4r); and at Cranfield, in 1447, the bailiff paid a reduced entry fine "quia ballivus" (*ibid.* fo. 211r).      6. The register recorded no other person serving as bailiff between those years, though the mention of a man as bailiff was to some extent incidental.      7. IN 59, mm. 3, 6. He was rent-collector in Etonbury in 1402-3 (B. M. Harley Roll A. 37).      8. P.R.O. CP25(i)/6/74, fo. 16.

Henry's share of the land was only temporary, for, by 1460, John Knotte had regained possession of the virgate.<sup>1</sup> In 1464, Henry Waryn received from the lord the tenure of  $7\frac{1}{2}$  acres of land, formerly held by Giles Rankediche and now forfeited for want of an heir.<sup>2</sup> (This was a full tenancy: in 1473, Henry sold off  $3\frac{1}{2}$  acres to Thomas Hammond.)<sup>3</sup> Five years later, in 1469, the lord granted a ruinous cottage together with 8 acres to Henry Waryn. This land and property had been forfeited by John Barker for waste and failure to make repairs.<sup>4</sup> In 1472, Henry received another cottage, and 4 acres of land, from the lord.<sup>5</sup> When he died, in 1473-4, this passed to his widow who sold it to Thomas Meek.<sup>6</sup>

The final case-study concerns John Wilkinson who bought up three parcels of land in the manor between 1504 and 1509, and sold them in the following two years. In 1504-5, he acquired a croft from the lord; in 1510, he sold it (now described as a cottage and  $2\frac{1}{2}$  acres) to John Hemming. Also in 1504-5, he acquired a tenement containing 19 acres from Richard Lorymer; in 1511, this too passed to John Hemming. Then, between 1507 and 1509, he acquired an acre of land from the lord, and in 1510 sold it to Richard Lorymer.<sup>7</sup> In 1519, John Wilkinson, "husbandman", leased 58 acres of arable and a parcel of meadow in the Etonbury manor.<sup>8</sup> In his transactions in Arlesey Bury, John Wilkinson appears to have been a speculator. The men to whom he sold land, Hemming and Lorymer, were certainly in that category.<sup>9</sup>

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1. IN 60, mm. 5d, 2d.

2. IN 61, m. 4.

3. IN 61, m. 9.

4. IN 61, m. 8.

5. IN 61, m. 9.

6. IN 61, mm. 10-11.

7. IN 62, mm. 5-6, 8, 10.

8. IN 167, fo. 4v.

9. Above, pp. 104-6.

### Conclusion

At Arlesey in the fifteenth century the demand for land was never very great. Three things point to a lack of pressure on land: the recurrent transfer of land, the number of large parcels of land which changed hands, and the small part played by widows in the redistribution of land. Much of the land market, whether small parcels or whole tenements, was supplied from a "pool" of land on which family succession had ceased. Holdings passed from family to family in haphazard fashion as individuals sought temporarily to satisfy their desire for a larger holding. Although sales of small parcels of land were numerically more important than sales of larger portions and of whole tenements, few individuals appear to have been confined solely to the small-scale market to extend their holdings. As land was cheap and relatively plentiful, many tenants could take on larger parcels as and when they became available. Thus, the development of holdings at Arlesey, while conforming to a general pattern,<sup>1</sup> shows a rather uneven progression - small purchases and sales were inter-mixed with the acquisition and dispersal of one or more larger parcels of land. In fact, one or two transfers of large parcels of land had a much greater effect on the size of a man's holding than the cumulative effect of a number of small-scale transfers. It is noticeable, too, that the occasions on which tenants engaged in the land market were often spread out over 20, 30, or 40 years. Few tenants at Arlesey accumulated land or sold it at all rapidly. Those who did were the small

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1. Above, p. 101.

number of prosperous and ambitious men who came to dominate the traffic in land at the start of the sixteenth century. In general, widows were not important as a source of land to landless or ambitious men at Arlesey in the fifteenth century. This is a sure sign that land was plentiful and that there was little competition for it.<sup>1</sup> In the course of the century, some new families established themselves in the manor and took advantage of this situation. In all these respects, Arlesey, and other rural manors in Bedfordshire, resembled other Midland villages. The situation at Arlesey was in contrast, however, to that at Leighton Buzzard, a small country market town some 18-20 miles to the west. Here, the market in customary land was much larger, and the turn-over in land more rapid. The principal manor at Leighton Buzzard (which also included the town) was one of the largest manors in the county. Its splendid series of court rolls of the second half of the fifteenth century enable us to study the market there in considerable detail, and we can see how the presence of the town affected it.

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1. R. J. Faith, 'Peasant families and inheritance customs in medieval England', AgHR xiv, no. 2 (1966), p. 91.



## Chapter 5: Leighton Buzzard

Leighton Buzzard lies to the north of the Chilterns in the extreme south-west of Bedfordshire. The old parish contained some 8900 acres set in the angle where the river Ouzel turns northwards to flow into the river Ouse. The river marked the southern and western bounds, and it formed a part of the county boundary with Buckinghamshire. The land in the parish, which reaches its highest point of between 450 and 500 feet in the north, slopes southwards and westwards to the river valley at 275-300 feet. The trend of the slope is broken, firstly by the valley of the Clipstone Brook which flows into the Ouzel just to the south of Leighton Buzzard, and, secondly, by the hill on which Billington lies. The Ouzel valley narrows northwards as it cuts through the gap between Linslade and Leighton Buzzard, and then broadens again west of Heath and Reach. Like so much of Bedfordshire, the soil is largely heavy clay, and soil drainage tends to be imperfect.<sup>1</sup> Alluvium covers much of the valley floor.

As well as the town of Leighton Buzzard, the parish included a number of small villages: to the north, Heath and Reach; to the east, Eggington, Clipstone, and Stanbridge; and to the south, Billington. In the late Middle Ages, Heath, Reach, Eggington, and Clipstone were separate settlements. Although they were paired for convenience of manorial administration, contemporaries usually distinguished between Heath and Reach or between Eggington and Clipstone when referring to the location of land or buildings.

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1. Map 6. D. W. King, Soils of the Luton and Bedford District (Harpenden, 1969), p. 14. High-backed ridge-and-furrow has survived in the landscape at Stanbridge, a sign of drainage requirements (Godber, plate X).

There may have been two, possibly three, groups of houses in Billington. Some land transfers mentioned West Billington,<sup>1</sup> others East Billington,<sup>2</sup> while most referred simply to Billington.<sup>3</sup>

### The Manors

By 1500, there were several manors within the parish. The principal manor, at that date in the hands of the dean and canons of St George's Chapel, Windsor, overshadowed the others in size and value. This manor included the town and much of the land in the parish, though the village of Stanbridge lay outside it.<sup>4</sup> Once an ancient demesne manor, between 1164 and 1414, it had been a part of the English endowment of Fontevrault Abbey.<sup>5</sup> Towards the end of the twelfth century, the abbey established a cell at Leighton Buzzard and a part of the property, known as Grovebury, was set aside as its demesne.<sup>6</sup> During the protracted wars with France in the fourteenth century, the lands of the alien priories were often in the king's hands. Fontevrault's attempts to retain its lordship seem to have been successful, but Leighton Buzzard was in the hands of a lay keeper from 1338, and, long before the end of the century, the abbey's interest in the manor was a purely financial one.<sup>7</sup> In 1338 the Crown had granted

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1. C.R.O. KK 623, mm. 43d, 59.      2. XV.25.80; C.R.O. KK 725, fo. 6r.

3. Today there are three distinct clusters of buildings in the village (OS 1: 25000, SP 92: grid refs. 933225, 940230, 943225).      4. Land in Stanbridge lay in the manor, the village did not. W. O. Ault is incorrect in maintaining that manor and vill were coincidental ('Manor court and parish church in fifteenth-century England: a study of village by-laws', Speculum 42 (1967), p. 63).      5. The foundation of Fontevrault is discussed in R. W. Southern, Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages (Harmondsworth, 1970), p. 312, and its English dependencies are listed by D. Knowles and R. N. Hadcock, Medieval Religious Houses: England and Wales (1971), pp. 104-5.

6. V.C.H. iii. 404. Although accounted for as a part of the manor, Grovebury retained its identity throughout the Middle Ages and was leased separately (below, p.137). Two copies of a rental of lands in Grovebury have survived (XV.61.38; C.R.O. KK 771; dated 1457). In the seventeenth century, Grovebury contained about 530 acres, mostly meadow and pasture (XV.25.113, m. 7). It lay to the south of Leighton Buzzard in the valley of the Ouzel.      7. Very little is known of the history of the cell after 1300 (V.C.H. i. 403-4).

the custody of the manor to Matilda de Burgh, Countess of Ulster.<sup>1</sup> By 1349, the manor was in the hands of her brother Henry, then Earl, later Duke, of Lancaster.<sup>2</sup> In 1364, the keepership was granted to John Bele and his wife Joan for their lives.<sup>3</sup> Following John's death, Joan's interest passed to her second husband, Walter Walsh,<sup>4</sup> and then to her third husband, John Worship, who was given leave to treat with the abbess and convent for the purchase of the manor.<sup>5</sup> John Worship died in 1413,<sup>6</sup> and the keepership passed to Sir John Philip.<sup>7</sup> In the following year, when the property of the alien priories was finally confiscated, Sir John received a grant of the manor.<sup>8</sup> He died in 1415,<sup>9</sup> and his child-wife, Alice Chaucer,<sup>10</sup> grand-daughter of the poet, eventually married William de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk.<sup>11</sup> In 1444, William and Alice granted the reversion of the manor and of other lands to Eton College, Henry VI's new foundation.<sup>12</sup> Two years later, they granted the College possession of these lands at a yearly rent of £220.<sup>13</sup> The College enjoyed the revenues of Leighton Buzzard for some years,<sup>14</sup> but soon after he came to the throne, Edward IV questioned

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1. C.P.R. 1338-40, p. 95.      2. Cal. Papal Reg., Letters, iii, 1342-62, pp. 39-40. Henry was still in possession of the manor in 1354-5 (XV.25.26, m. 18).      3. C.P.R. 1361-4, pp. 440, 562.      4. C.P.R. 1370-4, p. 447.      5. C.P.R. 1408-13, p. 296. John Worship was a knight of the shire for Bedfordshire between 1392 and 1407 (C.C.R. 1392-6, pp. 115, 278; 1396-9, pp. 134, 303; 1402-5, p. 125; 1405-9, p. 398.)  
6. His will is printed by H. Jenkinson and G. H. Fowler, 'Some Bedfordshire Wills at Lambeth and Lincoln', B.H.R.S. xiv (1931), pp. 118-9.  
7. C.P.R. 1413-16, pp. 67, 131.      8. C.P.R. 1413-16, p. 229.  
9. C.C.R. 1413-19, pp. 234-5.      10. According to C.P. xii, pt. 1, p. 448, she was born c. 1404.      11. William was created marquis in 1444 and duke in 1448 (ibid. pp. 443-8). He was Alice's third husband (J. H. Wylie, The Reign of Henry the Fifth (3 vols., Camb., 1914-29), ii. 47-8).      12. Rot. Parl. v. 77-8.      13. XV.25.57.      14. They were doing so in 1457-8 (XV.61.39).

Alice's right to alienate her land.<sup>1</sup> By 1464, Alice, dowager Duchess of Suffolk following William's death in 1450, appears to have regained possession of Leighton Buzzard.<sup>2</sup> She was to regain full title in the manor in place of a debt of 2800 marks owed her by the king.<sup>3</sup> On her death in 1475, Alice was succeeded by her son, John de la Pole.<sup>4</sup> In 1480, he and his wife alienated the manor to the dean and canons of St George's Chapel, Windsor.<sup>5</sup> There may well have been more to this arrangement than meets the eye. In 1506, John's son, Edmund de la Pole, petitioned Henry VII: "...as to the town of Leighton Buzzard, which king Edward enforced the said ducis fader to relese to the colleage of Windesor, the said duc besecheth humbly the kinges highnesse to bee good lord to him therin, and that he maye be restored therunto...".<sup>6</sup> Nothing came of this plea, for the manor remained the property of the dean and canons for over three hundred years. On the surface, the vicissitudes of ownership in the fifteenth century were in sharp contrast to the continuity in ownership before 1414 and after 1480: the intervening years were a short interlude between long periods of ecclesiastical lordship. However, the interruptions to the

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1. Ostensibly, Edward IV appears to have queried the terms of the original grant to Sir John Philip (Rot. Parl. v. 470, 524). His real motive was his desire to despoil Eton College, the foundation of his rival, Henry VI (M. Morgan, The English Lands of the Abbey of Bec (Oxford, 1946), p. 132; Dalton, p. xix). 2. Manorial courts were held in her name in 1464 (C.R.O. KK 622, m. 1). 3. C.P.R. 1467-76, p. 362.

4. According to John Benet's Chronicle for the years 1400 to 1462, ed. G. L. and M. A. Harriss (Camden Misc. 4th ser. ix, 1972), p. 224, John de la Pole was demoted from duke to earl at the Coventry parliament in 1459. However, he is referred to as duke in C.A.D. v. 95-6 (no. A 11118, October 1471), and in XV.61.49 (Leighton Buzzard account roll, 1476-7).

5. C.P.R. 1476-85, pp. 172, 219. The canons were holding courts as early as July 1479 (C.R.O. KK 622, m. 56). 6. Letters and Papers...Richard III and Henry VII, ed. J. Gairdner (2 vols., Rolls Ser., 1861-3), i. 281.

authority of Fontevrault and the system of leasing the manor which the canons inherited probably combined to free Leighton Buzzard from the paternalism which many towns suffered at the hands of church landlords.<sup>1</sup>

Fontevrault Abbey had received grants of land and rent in a number of neighbouring villages. These followed the same descent as Leighton Buzzard, and, for purposes of account, were considered appurtenant to the larger manor.<sup>2</sup> This additional property lay in Bow Brickhill, Simpson, Caldecotte, Stewkley, Radnage, and Northall, in Buckinghamshire;<sup>3</sup> and in Studham, south of Whipsnade, in Bedfordshire.<sup>4</sup>

In 1500, the other manors in and around Leighton Buzzard were smaller than the one which passed to the canons of Windsor.<sup>5</sup> Richard Chamberleyn's estate in Stanbridge and the nearby village of Tilsworth included some 950 acres of arable, of which 304 acres were the former demesne. In 1486, the demesne was leased, along with the manor site and 54 acres of meadow, to William Davy at a yearly rent of £15 6s 8d.<sup>6</sup> The manor which the Corbet family inherited from Sir William Lucy was said, in 1513, to include only 100 acres of arable, 40 acres of pasture, and 10 acres of meadow,<sup>7</sup> though

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1. There was no monastery to dominate the town as there was at nearby Dunstable (Godber, pp. 119-21). Elsewhere, townsfolk and monasteries were frequently at loggerheads (R. B. Dobson, Durham Priory 1400-1450 (Camb., 1973), p. 35). 2. Below, p. 139. 3. V.C.H. Bucks. ii. 90-1; iii. 345, 421; iv. 291-2, 460. 4. V.C.H. iii. 429. A list of the lands in Studham was drawn up in 1454 (XV.25.114, badly rubbed on dorse). 5. Their descents are given in V.C.H. iii. 405-8. 6. C.R.O. CH 4, m. 9 (rental). This shows that Chamberleyn's inquisition post mortem was wildly inaccurate. This gave the arable acreage as 200 acres (Calendar, i. 552). 7. V.C.H. iii. 405.

this may have been an underestimate. Thomas Reynes' manor was smaller still.<sup>1</sup> In their time, both Richard Chamberleyn and Sir William Lucy were tenants of the principal manor,<sup>2</sup> and Sir William served as steward under Eton College.<sup>3</sup> The Billingdons, the Morells, and the Mannes were local families, each with a small manor in the vicinity.<sup>4</sup> Also, they held a good deal of copyhold as tenants of the main manor.<sup>5</sup> At the end of the fifteenth century, a part of the Billingdon estate passed by marriage to the Haslewoods,<sup>6</sup> and was sold in 1527 to Robert Dormer.<sup>7</sup> The greater part of the Morells' land passed to Bernard Brocas by marriage in 1490.<sup>8</sup>

Inevitably, our attention will be turned most to the main manor. Many more sources have survived for this than for the others. The Leighton Buzzard court records which have already been mentioned all come from this manor. In addition, there are 26 bailiffs' account rolls for years after 1450.<sup>9</sup> The distribution of these is as follows:

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1. Presumably this was the 95 acres with which Thomas Reynes enfeoffed John Morell (C.C.R. 1468-76, pp. 111-12; C.C.R. 1476-85, p. 387; P.R.O. C1/65/61-3).
  2. Sir William held land in Grovebury in 1457 (C.R.O. KK 771). Chamberleyn held land in Stanbridge (C.R.O. KK 622, m. 25d).
  3. XV.61.37.
  4. Court rolls and papers of the Manne manor in Eggington have survived. C.R.O. X/310/1 is a roll of membranes covering the years 1297-1506, though with many gaps. After 1400, the following years are represented: 1413, 1425, 1428, 1433, 1500, 1506. There are draft court papers for October 1501, August 1502, June 1514, May and August 1529 (C.R.O. X/310/2-4), and extracts from the rolls for 1529 and 1531 (C.R.O. RY 46d). In 1633, the manor contained 160 acres of tenant land and 80 acres demesne arable (RY 54).
  5. Below, pp. 174-80.
  6. V.C.H. iii. 406. Edmund Haslewood owed suit of court in and after 1498 (C.R.O. KK 623, mm. 37d-52d).
  7. V.C.H. iii. 406. The Dormers were a prominent Buckinghamshire family who had made their fortune in the wool trade (E. M. Elvey, 'Early Records of the Archdeaconry of Buckingham', Records of Bucks. xix, pt. 1 (1971), p. 58).
  8. V.C.H. iii. 407. This branch of the Brocas family also came from Buckinghamshire, where they held land in villages near Leighton Buzzard (C.C.R. 1461-8, p. 466; V.C.H. Bucks. iii. 331; B.A.S. P26/27, P26/35). Bernard Brocas married Ann Morell whose land included the manor of Stanbridge and lands in Houghton Regis, Whipsnade, Eggington, and Totternhoe (M. Burrows, The Family of Brocas of Beaurepaire and Roche Court (1886), pp. 174-5).
  9. Listed in Dalton, pp. 126-9.

<u>Decade</u>	<u>Surviving accounts</u>
1450-9	2
1460-9	3
1470-9	5
1480-9	3
1490-9	9
1500-9	2
1510-19	2

Eleven receiver's accounts have survived, appended to the bailiff's account, the majority (8) for years between 1466 and 1477. These two sorts of account show clearly the income which Alice Chaucer and the canons drew from the manor, and they provide much incidental detail about the manor and town. The accounts are realistic documents designed to show, to the auditors' satisfaction, the state of the manorial finances at the close of the accounting year (Michaelmas).

It is unfortunate that there are no surviving rentals of the later fifteenth century to complement the extant account and court rolls. The rentals of the first half of the century are not particularly helpful. Those for Eggington and Clipstone and for Heath and Reach probably date from the middle of the century,<sup>1</sup> while that for Leighton Buzzard and Billington is dated 1407.<sup>2</sup> A number of grants and leases supplements the main sources.

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1. XV.53.76; XV.53.90.

2. XV.61.33.

The principal manor in the fifteenth century

The topography of the manor which passed to the canons of Windsor is an elusive subject. While there are many records which show the composition of individual holdings and which provide incidental detail, there are none which provide a view of the manor as a whole, or even the demesne, in the Middle Ages.

The arable lay in large open fields. Leighton Buzzard, Heath, Reach, Eggington, Clipstone, Stanbridge, and Billington each had their own fields, though how many is not clear. It appears that those of Heath and Reach were grouped in one system, and those of Eggington and Clipstone in another, so the manor contained the whole or parts of five distinct field systems.

By Bedfordshire standards, Leighton Buzzard had an exceptional amount of meadow.<sup>1</sup> Much of this must have lain in the valley of the Ouzel, especially to the south where the valley was at its widest. Several streams which drained into the Ouzel from the east doubtless had meadow along their banks. A lot of the meadow was demesne and probably lay severally.<sup>2</sup> The tenants' meadow may have been reallocated annually. Certainly, greater care was taken over its division than was accorded the arable. The description of the latter in the several hundred land transfers of the fifteenth century

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1. Domesday Book recorded enough meadow to support 40 ploughteams. Among Bedfordshire townships, only Kempston (20) and Toddington (30) approached this figure (V.C.H. i. 222). 2. The meadow at farm at various points in time is listed in the rentals (above, p. 132, nn. 1-2).



shows that its measurement was a matter of estimation and customary usage. Meadow, on the other hand, was measured more accurately, with a rod. Compared with the arable, it was relatively scarce. Thus, each acre was more valuable in terms of rent, and meadow was divided into much smaller parcels.<sup>1</sup>

Fallow land appears to have provided most of the commonable land. There were pasture closes in various parts of the manor. Most appear to have been part of the demesne, but little else is known about them.<sup>2</sup> The crofts and tofts in and around the various settlements must have been an additional source of pasture to the tenants. There were stands of woodland in the manor, principally in Heath and Reach.<sup>3</sup> Throughout the fifteenth century, the sale of timber and underwood brought in a valuable income.<sup>4</sup> A woodward (custos bosci) was employed at a yearly stipend of 13s 4d.<sup>5</sup>

Most of the land held by the tenants of the manor was customary land - or copyhold as it came to be known during the fifteenth century.<sup>6</sup> There were free tenants and free land in the manor, but our sources yield only the barest references to either.<sup>7</sup> The free tenants also held customary

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1. Land measurement is discussed in Appendix 1. 2. Often we do not even know their acreage. 3. In the seventeenth century, Kingswood in Heath and Reach contained an estimated 400 acres (XV.25.113, m. 10). 4. Between 1501-4, 30 acres of underwood were sold for £20 (XV.61.63). 5. In 1455-6, the woodward received 13s 4d pro diligentibus labore suo (XV.61.37). The office still carried the same fee in 1542 (XV.25.79). Between 1458 and 1475, the rent collector in Heath and Reach acted as woodward for which he received 6s 8d in addition to his fee of 20s (XV.61.39-48). 6. The earliest example of the term copyhold I have found at Leighton Buzzard is in 1413 (C.R.O. KK 725, fo. 7v). (Copyhold tenure is discussed more fully below, p. 153). 7. There is a list of freeholders in the sixteenth-century transcript of the court roll of January 1415 in which 12 names appear (ibid. fo. 9r). In 1445, John Asbye held lands and tenements freely (ibid. fo. 19r). He was probably the John Assheby who was bailiff in 1455-6 (XV.61.37), and who made grants of land in Leighton Buzzard in 1443 and 1458 (B.M. Add. Ch. 19950, 19949). In 1476, John Hogge acquired  $\frac{1}{2}$ -acre of copyhold in Stanbridge surrounded by free land (C.R.O. KK 622, m. 44). The latter may have been held of Chamberleyn's manor in Stanbridge.

land and it is as tenants of this that they appear in the court records. Although there came to be little social difference between the two sorts of tenure, the legal distinction between customary land and free was maintained. Customary tenure was a greater source of profit to the lord, particularly in his right to entry fine and heriot. However, any vestiges of servility which attached to customary tenure disappeared during the fifteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

The rentals of the first half of the fifteenth century show that the basis of land-holding had been the virgate and semi-virgate. Neither term occurs in the court rolls of the second half of the century. The great amount of land-dealing combined with the end of villeinage to render the ancient divisions largely meaningless.<sup>2</sup> Throughout the century, land remained the source of most tenants' wealth, whether directly, through farming, or indirectly, through trading in agricultural produce. By mid-century, farming at Leighton Buzzard meant mixed farming in which animals - sheep, cattle, pigs - were as important as corn. It is not clear how far this was a new development.<sup>3</sup> Many by-laws were made to regulate the pasturing of animals by the tenants: they form indirect yet insistent evidence for the importance of livestock to the inhabitants. Most expressed the concern of the community to regulate access of tenants to pasture in order to conserve a limited resource. There were four ways

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1. Sums of money paid for commuted labour services were incorporated into the general renders of farms and rents. Lists of commutations survive for the reigns of Richard II and Henry VI (XV.53.71; XV.61.40). 2. A lease of 1591 mentions a half-yardland in Billington (S.B.T. DR18/B.397). 3. The sources for the period before 1450 are not full enough to show us clearly. It is quite likely that the fifteenth century did see a growth in pasture farming (above, pp. 8-9).

in which this was done. The first and most common was the by-law which forbade commoning in certain furlongs for certain periods of the year. Out of a total of 94 by-laws of this kind issued between 1464 and 1508, fully half were directed against sheep. Most of the rest were directed more generally against flocks and herds together.<sup>1</sup> The second involved attempts at communal grazing under a common herder.<sup>2</sup> The third way was to fix a pasture stint. This was applied throughout the manor at the rate of 5 sheep for each acre a tenant held.<sup>3</sup> The fourth method concerned pigs: a number of by-laws were passed which insisted that pigs turned loose to root were ringed.<sup>4</sup> Pigs were pastured communally too.<sup>5</sup> These forms of action were almost certainly made necessary by the growing pressure of animals on the commonable land. Unfortunately, we have no direct evidence of the size of tenants' flocks and herds, though some may have run flocks of a 100 sheep or more.<sup>6</sup>

Some portions of the manorial demesne and its appurtenances were let at farm as early as 1342,<sup>7</sup> but it was not until the end of the fourteenth century that the greater part of the demesne was leased.<sup>8</sup> No one individual

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1. These sorts of by-laws are discussed generally by W. O. Ault, Open Field Farming in Medieval England (1972), pp. 40-8. 2. Presumably communal grazing was normal practice, and the sporadic by-laws were attempts to give the principle new force (ibid. p. 48). 3. An isolated by-law at Leighton Buzzard in 1504 fixed the stint at 5 sheep per fallow acre (C.R.O. KK 623, m. 59). One by-law for Heath and Reach fixed a stint of 8 sheep per acre, but later this was altered to 5 (KK 623, mm. 31d-32). 4. This was to discourage destructive rooting (Ault, p. 50). 5. KK 623, m. 62-62d. 6. Stints were usually defined as 100 sheep per 20 acres. Perhaps there is an implication that individuals ran flocks of this size or more. 7. P.R.O. SC6/741/4. 8. In 1390, part of the demesne was still exploited by John Worship, the keeper (XV.61.32). By 1400, portions of the demesne were at farm (C.R.O. KK 725). By 1407, the process looks to have been complete (XV.61.33).

farmed the manor. The arable, meadow, and pasture were let in parcels to the tenants.<sup>1</sup> From the start, leases of 10 years or more were common.<sup>2</sup> Throughout the fifteenth century, the successive owners of the manor retained in their hands the manor courts and the woodland. The mills,<sup>3</sup> the market and fair,<sup>4</sup> the warren, and the demesne at Grovebury were all let separately at first.<sup>5</sup> By 1456, the last two were farmed together, at that date by William Anable, a member of a Dunstable family long settled in the area.<sup>6</sup> Ten years later, they were let to John, Lord Wenlock,<sup>7</sup> and, following his death at the battle of Tewkesbury in 1471, they were farmed to Thomas Fowkes and Richard Smith.<sup>8</sup> In 1480, the dean and canons granted a life-lease of Grovebury to Cecily, Duchess of York, mother of Edward IV.<sup>9</sup> In 1505, Grovebury was let for a term of 30 years to Thomas Hobbes,<sup>10</sup> Thomas Rowthale,<sup>11</sup> and Richard Rowthale.<sup>12</sup> William Hancock farmed

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1. XV.53.76; XV.53.90; XV.61.33.      2. C.R.O. KK 725, fo. 3r (10-year lease, March 1398).      3. There were two water mills in one building (V.C.H. iii. 408-9).      4. The annual fair was held 18-20 May. In 1447, Eton College had received a grant of two extra fairs (ibid. 401). In the seventeenth century, two fairs were said to be "newly purchased and of small value unlesse they happen upon the market day" (XV.25.113, m. 4).  
5. XV.61.35 (for the position in 1439-40).      6. XV.61.37. The Anables (or Analby) were a wealthy family with land in the villages around Dunstable (P.R.O. CP25(i)/6/74, fo. 9; CP25(i)/6/81, fo. 24; P.C.C. i. 11; H. Jenkinson and G. H. Fowler, 'Some Bedfordshire wills at Lambeth and Lincoln', B.H.R.S. xiv (1931), p. 113). In 1523, Thomas Analby of Dunstable was assessed for the Subsidy on goods worth £60 (P.R.O. E179/71/109, m. 3).  
7. XV.61.41. Wenlock's career is given by J. S. Roskell, 'John Lord Wenlock of Someries', B.H.R.S. xxxviii (1958), pp. 12-48. In addition to his estates in and around Luton, Wenlock appears to have invested in land and property as and when he could. In 1437-8, he farmed a parcel of demesne in the Ramsey manor of Shillington (P.R.O. SC11/43); he held land in Barton (P.R.O. SC2/179/67, m. 2-2d); in 1452-3, he rented a parcel of land in Higham Gobion (Bodl. MS. Beds. Roll 3).      8. XV.61.46. Fowkes was a local man who ended up in Bedford gaol in 1480 (C.P.R. 1467-76, p. 80; C.P.R. 1476-85, p. 212).  
9. XV.25.63.      10. A canon of Windsor, he became dean in 1507 (Fasti, pp. 38-9).      11. He was prebendary of Leighton Buzzard, secretary to Henry VII, and was appointed bishop of Durham in 1509 (R. Richmond, Leighton Buzzard and its Hamlets (Leighton Buzzard, 1928), p. 139; D.N.B. sub Ruthall).  
12. Probably a relation of Thomas. Described as "gentleman" in the lease (XV.25.73). He was bailiff of the manor in the first decade of the sixteenth century (XV.61.64-7). He was assessed on lands worth £100 at Moulsoe (Bucks) in 1534-5 (J. Cornwall, 'The early Tudor gentry', EcHR 2nd ser. xvii, no. 3 (1965), p. 475; Burrows, The Family of Brocas..., p. 202). The farm of Grovebury, which had stood at £24 throughout the second half of the fifteenth century, was now raised to £26 13s 4d.

the mills for 30 years between 1455-6 and 1485-6.<sup>1</sup> Richard Hancock, probably William's son, was the miller in 1492.<sup>2</sup> The stallage and tolls of the market and fair were usually farmed to the bailiff.<sup>3</sup> Local gentry and others were quick to seize the chance to farm parts of the manor. In particular, Grovebury, with its meadow and pasture in the Ouzel valley, was an attractive proposition. In the first half of the sixteenth century, other parcels of meadow and pasture were taken on lease by various local gentry.<sup>4</sup>

Between 1457-8, when the main series of accounts starts, and 1510-11, when it breaks off, there were only three bailiffs. Richard Southwode, a local man from Billington,<sup>5</sup> held the position until 1475.<sup>6</sup> He was followed by William a Lee, who was bailiff until the end of the century - he received a life-grant of the office from John de la Pole and was retained by the canons at the same yearly fee, £6 13s 4d.<sup>7</sup> He may possibly have been a member of the Alley family of High Wycombe.<sup>8</sup> Richard Rowthale was

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1. XV.61.37-51. When he first took the lease, the rent was £9 6s 8d. By 1465-6, it had fallen to £8. In 1467-8, a new lease was negotiated at the half-year. The rent was fixed at £6 13s 4d, and it was still this in 1525 (XV.25.76). 2. C.R.O. KK 623, m. 21. He was not necessarily the farmer. 3. At £2 13s 4d a year. 4. XV.25.75; XV.25.91. 5. C.R.O. KK 622, m. 12d. Described as "yeoman" in Year Books of Edward IV. 10 Edward IV and 49 Henry VI, A.D. 1470, ed. N. Neilson (Seldon Soc., 47, 1930), p. 167. 6. XV.61.39-48. He must have died in or just after 1475 for his widow, Alice, began to dispose of their copyholds. In 1477, she surrendered a close and 12 acres (C.R.O. KK 622, m. 48). Shortly before her death in 1490, she surrendered an acre of land to the Fraternity of Leighton Buzzard (KK 623, m. 12d), and sold the greater part of her land, 90 acres, to John Billington (ibid. m. 12d, and below, p. 178). 7. XV.61.49. Southwode's stipend had been 20s (XV.61.42), but with William's appointment a new development occurred in the management of the manor (below p. 144). William was still alive in 1503, so may well have continued in office until then (KK 623, m. 54d). He was described as "yeoman" in C.P.R. 1485-94, p. 2. 8. J. Parker, The Early History and Antiquities of Wycombe in Buckinghamshire (Wycombe, 1878), p. 76; The First Ledger Book of High Wycombe ed. R. W. Greaves (B.R.S. xi, 1956), pp. 49, 52-3. The receiver, Christopher Wase, came from High Wycombe (below p. 140).

bailiff in the first decade of the sixteenth century.<sup>1</sup> In 1439-40, the bailiff of the manor, John Sewelle, had also acted as bailiff at two other manors of William de la Pole and Alice Chaucer.<sup>2</sup> There is no indication in the later account rolls that subsequent bailiffs had other manors in their care.<sup>3</sup> The bailiff was described as the "farmer" of the manor, though "manager" might be a better word to describe his job. He was responsible for collecting the rents,<sup>4</sup> and for putting in hand repairs to the manorial buildings and bridges.<sup>5</sup> As bailiff, he was responsible for a fixed charge from the rents of the copyhold tenants and the farms of the demesne lands. During the second half of the fifteenth century, these stood at £26 17s 9½d for Leighton Buzzard; £17 10s 6½d for Eggington and Clipstone; £25 17s 0d for Heath and Reach;<sup>6</sup> £28 16s 2½d for Billington;<sup>7</sup> and £7 9s 2½d for Stewkley. The bailiffs successfully claimed allowances against these sums for "decay of rent".

Each bailiff was accountable to the receiver. Until 1480, the receiver was an important intermediary in the flow of cash from the manor to its owner. Thereafter, the importance of the receiver as a separate post diminished. The canons took over most of his responsibilities and the bailiff became directly accountable to them. Christopher Wase served as receiver of Leighton Buzzard under Alice Chaucer, and it is his accounts that survive. He served as receiver again in 1479-80, 1485-6, 1486-7,

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1. Above, p. 137. His stipend was also £6 13s 4d (XV.61.65-7).

2. XV.61.35. The manors were Marsh Gibbon (Bucks) and (probably, though the MS is not too clear) Kettlebaston (Suffolk).

3. Marsh Gibbon was taken out of the sphere of interest of any bailiff of Leighton Buzzard when William de la Pole and Alice Chaucer set it aside as an endowment of the Ewelme Almshouse, c. 1440 (Bodl. MS. d.d. Ewelme A 23 (i); V.C.H. Bucks. iv. 207).

4. The collection of rents under Richard Southwode is described below, pp. 143-4.

5. In 1489-90, £15 6s 8d was spent on the reconstruction of Lovetend Bridge (XV.61.53).

6. This included about 35s rent from Bow Brickhill which was accounted for regularly under Heath and Reach.

7. The rents in Studham and Northill were usually included in the Billington account, but were added to this fixed render. In the later fifteenth century this additional sum came to about £5.

1489-90, and 1490-1. Before 1480, all manorial income passed through his hands; under the canons, he was only responsible for the income from Grovebury (£24), the mills (£6 13s 4d), and Radnage (£4).<sup>1</sup> Christopher Wase lived at High Wycombe (Bucks), and was a man of some standing there, for he was mayor of the town in 1480.<sup>2</sup> He also acted as rent-collector at Radnage for which he received a fee of 6s 8d.<sup>3</sup> As receiver to Alice Chaucer, he would ride over to Leighton Buzzard, and presumably call at Radnage before striking westwards to Ewelme (Oxon) where he rendered his account.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps he and Richard Southwode, the bailiff, rode together.<sup>5</sup> After Wase's death in 1492, his son John succeeded to the receivership.<sup>6</sup> Robert Pygott acted as receiver in 1477-8.<sup>7</sup> Throughout the 1490s, he acted as under-steward of the manor court, for which he received an annual fee of £1 13s 4d.<sup>8</sup>

Richard Fowler had acted as receiver before Christopher Wase.<sup>9</sup> He was steward of the manor between 1473 and 1476; he received a fee of £5 and an annuity of £15 from the manorial revenues.<sup>10</sup> As steward, it was

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1. At first, his fee was £5 (XV.61.46), but by 1476-7 it had risen to £6 13s 4d (XV.61.49). Wase was steward of the manor in 1465-6 (C.R.O. KK 622, mm. 2-4). 2. L. J. Ashford, The History of the Borough of High Wycombe... (1960), p. 48; First Ledger Book, p. 49. 3. Until this was subsumed in his increased fee in 1476-7 (above, n. 1). 4. XV.61.45. 5. Richard Southwode claimed expenses in travelling to Ewelme to render his account, e.g. 16d in 1474-5 (XV.61.48). 6. The will of Christopher Wase is printed in F. W. Ragg, 'Fragment of folio MS. of Archdeaconry courts of Buckinghamshire', pt. iv, Records of Bucks. xi, no. 4 (1922), p. 201. John's accounts have not survived though they are mentioned in the bailiff's accounts (XV.61.55-8). This John Wase was probably the man who, along with many others, was pardoned for infringing the regulations of the wool trade (C.P.R. 1494-1509, p. 448). The pedigree of John Wase, gentleman, is printed in Ashford, p. 57. In 1524-5, John's land in High Wycombe was assessed at £7 (Subsidy Roll for the County of Buckingham, anno 1524, ed. A. C. Chibnall and A. V. Woodman (B.R.S. viii, 1950), p. 28). 7. C.R.O. KK 622, m. 59. 8. XV.61.53-8. He may have been a member of the Pygott family who owned freehold land in Chalgrave (Calendar, ii. 357), or the Robert Pygott, gentleman, of Horwood Parva, Bucks. (BuRO D/A/We/1, fo. 149v; Musters, p. 191). 9. XV.61.41. 10. XV.61.47-8. Fowler's biographical details are summarized by R. Somerville, History of the Duchy of Lancaster, i (1953), p. 391. At various times, he had held similar posts on other estates. With Alice Chaucer and John Broughton, Fowler was a founder of the Fraternity of Leighton Buzzard (C.P.R. 1467-76, p. 417).

his responsibility to preside over the manor court.<sup>1</sup> Sir William Stonor was steward of the manor between 1478 and 1482,<sup>2</sup> and he held the receivership in 1480.<sup>3</sup> Sir William was related to Fowler, and the Stonors were friendly with Alice Chaucer, so he probably owed his positions to these contacts.<sup>4</sup> Not all the officials were men from outside the manor. Hugh Billington served as steward in 1466.<sup>5</sup> The senior member of the Billington family which lived in and around Leighton Buzzard, he was, like Wase at High Wycombe, a man of some substance in the local community.<sup>6</sup> However, from the 1480s, the canons of Windsor acted as manorial stewards and receivers, one man effectively combining the two posts.<sup>7</sup>

On many estates in the fifteenth century, stewardships and similar posts passed into the hands of the gentry (and even, in some cases, the nobility) who held them as sinecures or in an honorary capacity.<sup>8</sup> The

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1. Whether Fowler actually presided is not clear; there may have been an under-steward. However, in earlier years he certainly visited Leighton Buzzard when courts were held (XV.61.41). 2. C.R.O. KK 622, mm. 50-4; XV.60.54. In 1482, his expenses included 5s "to the pleyers of Leytyn Bosard" (Stonor Letters and Papers, 1290-1483, ii, ed. C. L. Kingsford (2 vols., Camden 3rd ser. xxix-xxx, 1919), p. 140. 3. C.R.O. KK 622, m. 59. 4. Stonor Letters and Papers, i. xxiii; Somerville, i. 391. 5. KK 622, mm. 5-7. He may well have served in this office before. He had been bailiff at some date prior to 1455-6 (XV.61.37). 6. Described as "gentleman" in C.P.M.R. 1437-57, p. 61; in C.P.R. 1429-36, pp. 75, 81; and in P.R.O. Cl/21/1. He held freehold land in Stanbridge (P.R.O. CP25 (i) /6/82, fo. 3). He died in 1468 (KK 622, m. 8d). 7. Four canons feature in the account rolls of the 1480s and 1490s: John Seymour, canon 1471-1501, chapel treasurer 1474-6, 1483-4, chapel steward 1485-7, receiver at Leighton Buzzard 1485-7, steward there 1486-7 (Fasti, p. 74; Dalton, pp. 108-9, 114; XV.61.51-2); William Cretyng, canon 1489-1519, chapel treasurer 1496-7, chapel steward 1490-5, receiver and steward at Leighton Buzzard 1489-91, 1492-5 (Fasti, p. 137; Dalton, pp. 109, 114; XV.61.53-8; KK 623, mm. 21-6). Richard Arnold, canon 1488-91; French Secretary to Henry VII, receiver and steward at Leighton Buzzard 1489-90 (Fasti, p. 67; XV.61.53; KK 623, m. 13); Thomas Bowde, canon 1496-1501, steward at Leighton Buzzard 1495-6, 1497-8, chapel treasurer 1491-3, chapel steward 1496-1501 (Fasti, p. 67; Dalton, pp. 109, 115; XV.61.59; XV.61.61). 8. K. B. McFarlane, The Nobility of Later Medieval England (Oxford, 1973), pp. 216-7. An interesting example of an important and well-connected person serving as bailiff on two manors near Leighton Buzzard is provided by John Cutte. He was bailiff to Sir Reynold Bray at Eaton Bray and Houghton Regis in 1497-8. He was a protege of Bray, and receiver-general of the Duchy of Lancaster (Somerville, i. 401).



history of the manor of Leighton Buzzard under Alice Chaucer and John de la Pole provides a vivid illustration of this trend. A succession of gentry - some minor men, others of more importance - held the posts of steward and receiver. In 1476-7, the position of bailiff was transformed: William a Lee's life-grant carried the relatively substantial fee of £6 13s 4d.<sup>1</sup> He and his predecessor were both "yeomen", and his successor a "gentleman". We do not always know if all these men played an active part in the manorial administration, nor if their duties extended beyond the one manor. However, Christopher Wase's office does not seem to have been a sinecure under Alice Chaucer;<sup>2</sup> and Sir William Stonor held more than one post on the estates of St George's Chapel.<sup>3</sup>

The elected officials of the manor were responsible to the steward for the maintenance of law and order in social life and trading. These manorial officers, elected by the tenants from among themselves, were the constables, tithingmen, and ale-tasters. Two, occasionally three, constables were elected in each of Leighton Buzzard, Heath and Reach, Eggington and Clipstone, and Billington. In the town, there were two tithingmen and two tasters; in the villages, one man usually served in both capacities. There was no regular pattern to the elections: some men served for one year only, others for several years at a stretch. The constables presented petty criminals in court; the tithingmen presented persons newly placed in tithing,

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1. Above, p. 138. In 1470-1, Richard Carlile's fee as receiver for 17 manors (11 in Beds) of Edmund Grey, Earl of Kent, was £6 13s 4d (Valor, pp. 46-7). 2. Though we may note that his diminished duties after 1480 were not accompanied by a reduction in fee. 3. XV.60.54; XV.60.57.

and those defaulters over suit of court. In practice, constables and tithingmen appear to have assumed a joint responsibility in these presentments. The ale-tasters presented offenders against the assizes of bread and ale. Their powers of presentment extended to butchers and other traders.

#### The income of the manor

The principal manor was both large and valuable. Throughout the fifteenth century, the gross receipts of the manor and its appurtenant property regularly exceeded £140. The account rolls reflect the attempts successive owners of the manor made to control and maintain this income. There were four main stages in the development of the accounting system. Until 1456, the bailiff was responsible to the receiver for all the revenues of the manor. When Richard Southwode took over as bailiff, Eton College reorganized the financial administration of the manor.<sup>1</sup> Rent-collectors were appointed in Eggington and Clipstone (one man) and in Heath and Reach (one man). At first, the bailiff continued to account for the rents in Billington and Stewkley, but by 1465-6, separate rent-collectors had been appointed in these villages too.<sup>2</sup> The rent-collectors probably submitted their accounts direct to the receiver. On the engrossed account roll, the section for Leighton Buzzard was followed by separate sections

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1. XV.61.37. 2. XV.61.39; XV.61.41. They received a fee of 20s. In 1472-3, one man, Ralph Smedley, acted as rent-collector in Eggington and Clipstone, Heath and Reach, and Billington (XV.61.46). In 1473-4, Nicholas Wase, presumably a relation of the receiver, was rent-collector in Eggington and Clipstone, and Billington (XV.61.47). In 1474-5, Nicholas Potter was rent-collector in Eggington and Clipstone, Heath and Reach, and Billington (XV.61.48).

for each sub-division of the manor, each an account in its own right, with a statement of arrears, income, allowances, expenses, cash handed over, and the amount outstanding. The deliveries of cash from the bailiff and the rent-collectors went to the receiver, and it was he who was responsible for supplying cash to the owner of the manor. While the bailiff accounted for items of expenditure within the manor (such as repairs), any major items of expenditure which the landlord authorized from the manorial income (such as annuities and personal bills) were accounted for by the receiver.<sup>1</sup>

With the appointment of William a Lee as bailiff in 1475-6, the system changed.<sup>2</sup> The rent-collectors disappeared. The bailiff resumed responsibility for the various villages.<sup>3</sup> For a year or two, probably until the canons came into possession of the manor in 1480, the importance of the receiver continued.<sup>4</sup> By 1485-6, a further development had taken place. William a Lee continued as bailiff of the manor and as rent-collector in the villages; he no longer accounted for the farms of Grovebury and the mills, which were now the direct care of the receiver, but he assumed greater responsibility for the deliveries of cash to St George's Chapel. When cash was handed over, he dealt directly with the canons. Although still styled "receiver", Christopher Wase became little more than a glorified rent-collector.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Table 6.      2. The reorganization must have been the decision of John de la Pole, or his advisers, when he acceded to the manor on the death of Alice Chaucer in 1475.      3. In 1476-7, the bailiff accounted for the income from Radnage, usually the preserve of the receiver (XV.61.49).  
4. The receiver's account for 1476-7 (XV.61.49) shows the system working as before. The next surviving account for 1485-6 (XV.61.51), shows the new system. Although we do not have a receiver's account for 1479-80, the bailiff's account (XV.61.50) suggests that the receiver was still important, for the bailiff still accounted for the mills and for Grovebury.  
5. XV.61.51-2; XV.61.54.

Whatever the immediate occasion for the changes in the accounting system, it appears that each was intended to assist the lord of the manor to maintain his income. In this, the owners were reasonably successful. Throughout the second half of the fifteenth century, income remained remarkably steady. As the accounts of the receiver (in his full capacity) have survived only in the 1460s and 1470s, the analysis of manorial income and expenditure falls naturally into two - before and after 1480.

The manorial income accounted for by the receiver between 1465-6 and 1474-5 is set out in Table 5, and the charges on this income are listed in Table 6. Once minor expenses and allowances had been met, the yearly income from Leighton Buzzard and its members was around £130 to £140.<sup>1</sup> Like many of her contemporaries, Alice Chaucer was faced with a problem in the accumulation and collection of arrears. In some ways, the problem was more illusory than is at first apparent. For example, John Wenlock, farmer of Grovebury from some time before 1465 until 1471, accumulated arrears which stood at £46 at his death.<sup>2</sup> However, Wenlock received an annuity of £20 from the manor,<sup>3</sup> and as his arrears grew by a steady £4 a year, it is possible that the growth of his arrears was little more than a way of adding to his annuity. Then, there was the large sum of arrears which Christopher Wase owed to Alice Chaucer between 1465 and 1470.<sup>4</sup> The problem here was simply one of money reaching Wase after he had rendered his account.

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1. The drop in income between 1468 and 1469 (Table 5) was the result of a temporary accumulation of arrears at Heath and Reach. 2. XV.61.46.  
3. XV.61.43-4. 4. £57 in 1465-6; £88 by 1468-9 (XV.61.41-3).

In 1470, he finally caught up and was able to pay off £83 5s 3d.<sup>1</sup> Thereafter, any arrears he owed were minimal.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, arrears did mount up on the bailiff's account. In 1456, the total outstanding was £237 17s 11½d, of which nearly £84 were owed by the bailiff, John Assheby.<sup>3</sup> Richard Southwode inherited this debt, but with the appointment of rent-collectors in the villagers, the responsibility for arrears in the future was spread.<sup>4</sup> In any case, reasonably successful attempts were made to recoup at least a part of the outstanding sum. Various "desperate debts" were written off. Others were paid off, including most, if not all of John Assheby's.<sup>5</sup> By 1467-8, the total amount of arrears had been reduced to £94 18s 4d.<sup>6</sup> It then fluctuated around this level until Southwode was replaced by William a Lee.

After 1480, the bailiff's account took on a different structure. The income from the various parts of the manor was still entered under different headings; outgoings were not. These were listed at the end of the account, after the final total of income and arrears had been reached. The cash deliveries were listed, and then the various expenses and allowances. Finally, the amount still due from the bailiff to the canons was entered. Unfortunately, this debt was no longer broken down further. The bailiff's account no longer encompassed the income from Grovebury, the mills, and from Radnage. To the figures derived from the accounts we have to add to

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1. XV.61.44.                      2. In 1486, his arrears were 6s 8d (XV.61.51-2).  
3. XV.61.37.                      4. The receiver was responsible for collecting arrears  
from the rent-collectors, and his accounts show him accounting for instalments,  
as in 1476-7 (XV.61.49).                      5. His debt, over £83 in 1456, stood at £31  
by 1458. By 1466, it had either been paid off or written off (XV.61.37-41).  
6. XV.61.42.

the canons' income an estimated £28 (net) drawn from these sources. In the 1480s and 1490s, the income from all sources, including Grovebury, the mills, and Radnage, still came to £130 or more a year. The net income for which the bailiff was responsible declined slightly as decays and allowances of rent increased. Around the year 1480, about 5 per cent of the income from rents and farms was lost. By 1494, this proportion had risen to about 10 per cent,<sup>1</sup> but the decline may have only been temporary for by 1498 the proportion lost had fallen to about 6 per cent. Fluctuations in income also arose from the changing sums derived from the courts and from the sale of timber and underwood. From the manor the canons drew, on average, £82 a year between 1490 and 1511 (plus the estimated £28).<sup>2</sup> The charges which the bailiff met included his own fee (£6 13s 4d), the fee of the under-steward (£1 13s 4d), a pension paid to Dunstable Priory as a result of the acquisition of the rectory of North Marston (Bucks),<sup>3</sup> and the expenses of the courts. Together with a variety of small expenses, these amounted to between £20 and £30 a year. When William a Lee became bailiff, any arrears left by Southwode ceased to be entered on the account. He started with a clean sheet. However, his own arrears soon began to mount. By 1495, they stood at over £100.<sup>4</sup> We cannot tell if William a Lee was really getting into debt, or if cash was just slow in reaching him. His arrears fell substantially between 1496 and 1497, from £92 to £34, but the account for 1496-7 is incomplete and does not show us how the arrears were reduced.<sup>5</sup>

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1. XV.61.57.      2. Table 7.      3. The dean and canons exchanged Weedon Bec with the Priory for North Marston (XV.7.14; XV.7.16-18). By 1510-11, the pension stood at £5 (XV.61.67).      4. XV.61.59.  
5. XV.61.60.

By the standards of the day, the accounts reveal to us a competent financial administration. The gift of the manor to the canons of Windsor was clearly a generous one, for it was a valuable property, and it appears all the more surprising in the light of the declining fortunes of the de la Poles in the later fifteenth century,<sup>1</sup> but, as we have seen, more may have lain behind the gift than meets the eye.<sup>2</sup>

### The town

The most important settlement in the principal manor was the town of Leighton Buzzard. It grew on the east side of the river Ouzel at a point where the valley narrows between two low ridges. This was probably the most convenient crossing-place. The present-day town retains something of the medieval street-plan. The junction of the roads from Linslade (to the west), Billington (to the south), and Heath and Reach (to the north) marks the centre of the town.<sup>3</sup> The town buildings, houses, cottages, and crofts spread out along these streets, the plots running back at right angles to them. At the end of these tenements were the fields and closes. The main clusters of farms and cottages lay in the "ends" - Leckende,<sup>4</sup> Lovetende,<sup>5</sup> Northende<sup>6</sup> - at the further end of the main streets. Nearer

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1. S. B. Chrimes, Henry VII (1972), pp. 93-4.      2. Above, p. 129.  
3. The triangular meeting point of three roads was a common topography of a market town (A. Everitt, 'The marketing of agricultural produce', A.H.E.W. p. 480).      4. Present-day Lake St.      5. Present-day Bridge St. Lovatt was a name by which the Ouzel was sometimes known (W. Bradbrook, 'Manor court rolls of Fenny Stratford and Etone (Bletchley)', Records of Bucks. xi, no. 6 (1924), p. 292).      6. Now North St. Northend was so called on the tithe map of 1840, at the north end of the road to Woburn (C.R.O. MAT 29/1/1).

the centre were other houses and buildings. The town had a court house,<sup>1</sup> a prison,<sup>2</sup> at least one forge,<sup>3</sup> shops,<sup>4</sup> and a permanent or semi-permanent market shambles.<sup>5</sup> The market extended westwards from the fine cross in the town centre along what is now Bridge Street towards the bridge over the Ouzel.<sup>6</sup> In the sixteenth century, Leighton Buzzard had a specialist cattle market.<sup>7</sup>

The Lay Subsidy roll for 1524-5 provides the only real indication of the town's population in the late Middle Ages, but we can only make a rough estimate from it.<sup>8</sup> The Subsidy lists 131 people in the town, and it may have had a total population of between 550 and 650, with perhaps a further 250-300 in the villages of the parish, excluding Stanbridge.<sup>9</sup> The aggregate assessed wealth of the Leighton Buzzard inhabitants was taxed at £16 19s 4d.<sup>10</sup> Of these, 63 were assessed on wages of £1 a year,

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1. "Le mote hall" (C.R.O. KK 623, m. 55). In 1474-5, repairs were made to "la porche apud Mootehall" (XV.61.48). Miss Godber suggested the court house existed but found no reference earlier than 1585 (Godber, p. 161).  
2. XV.61.39. 3. KK 623, m. 46. 4. KK 622, mm. 32d, 47d.  
5. XV.61.43; XV.61.49. 6. Godber, p. 161. 7. Everitt, p. 590; below, p. 207. 8. The roll for 1523-4 is defective. Without this, it is difficult to be at all accurate (J. Cornwall, 'English country towns in the 1520s', *ECHR* 2nd ser. xv, no. 1 (1962), pp. 54-69). Unfortunately, none of the later fourteenth-century poll tax returns have survived for Bedfordshire, and, as Leighton Buzzard was a peculiar within the diocese of Lincoln, wills, which would be a useful insight into the town and its people, were registered locally and few have survived. The only ones known to me are the few sixteenth-century wills in C.R.O. PLBP/WR/1 (wills of the members of the Fraternity), and the two wills in BuRO D/A/We/1, fos. 308r, 311r.  
9. The method used to establish these figures follows Cornwall, pp. 59-60. In 1547, it was claimed that "in the said parishe of Laiton are five hundrethe houselinge people (communicants) whiche repare to the parishe church to here the divine service" (P.R.O. SC12/2/2, fo. 20v). In 1643, Leighton Buzzard with hamlets was said to contain "above a thousand communicants" (Fifth Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts (1876), p. 108).  
10. P.R.O. E179/71/114, mm. 2-4 (Hereafter, 71/114).



and a further 27 on goods worth £2 a year. These two groups made up the labouring class, though among those assessed at £2 were probably some small land-holders and craftsmen who hired themselves out as part-time workmen. Twenty-eight people were assessed on goods valued at between £3 and £10. They constituted a lower middle class of farmers and tradesmen. Above them was an elite of some thirteen men whose assessments ranged from 20 marks (£13 6s 8d) to £40.<sup>1</sup> These wealthier people owned half the aggregate assessed wealth.<sup>2</sup> At their head was William Taillour, local merchant and land-speculator, assessed on goods worth £40.<sup>3</sup> Others - Robert Heth,<sup>4</sup> Thomas Leceter,<sup>5</sup> Thomas London,<sup>6</sup> and William Manne<sup>7</sup> - were members of long-established local families. We know less of the lineage of Thomas Billyng.<sup>8</sup> Of the wealthier people, John Dyxson and Henry Toppyng were relative newcomers to the town.<sup>9</sup>

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1. I have followed Cornwall's article in my class divisions.

2. I have included in this group Thomas Garner who was assessed on lands worth £6 a year (71/114, m. 3). 3. Below, pp. 180-2.

4. The family can be traced in the manor in 1332 (Hervey, p. 152). Robert Hethe held a copyhold farm of some 30 acres in Heath in 1508 (C.R.O. KK 623, m. 71d). In 1524, his goods were assessed at £20 (71/114, m. 2).

5. Family traced in Stanbridge in 1332 (Hervey, p. 147). In 1524, his goods were assessed at £20 (71/114, m. 2). 6. Family traced in Eggington in 1377 (C.R.O. X/310/1, m. 6). In 1524, Thomas's goods were assessed at £20 (71/114 m. 2).

7. Below, pp. 177-8.

8. He does not feature in the court rolls of the manor. He was obviously a man of some substance for, in 1519-20, he leased pastures in Leighton Buzzard from the dean and canons for a 25-year term at £37 a year (XV.25.75). In the lease, he was described as a "yeoman". In 1523, he took up the lease of the canons' manor in Long Crendon (Bucks) for 10 years at a rent of £20, and he was described in this lease as "of Leighton Buzzard" (XV.15.43). Two years later, he took the lease of the mills at Leighton Buzzard at a rent of £6 13s 4d (XV.25.76). In 1524, his goods were assessed at £20 (71/114, m. 2). 9. Dyxon first appears in the court rolls in 1507 (C.R.O. KK 623, m. 69); Toppyng in 1505 (ibid. m. 61d). Both were assessed on goods worth 20 marks in 1524 (71/114, m. 2). Henry Toppyng, "husbandman", made his will in 1545 (C.R.O. PLBP/WR/1, fo. 12v).

The Subsidy of 1524-5 can only act as a rough guide to the distribution of wealth among the population as a whole, and to the wealth of individuals. Men were assessed on their most important source of income, and, at Leighton Buzzard, this was, in almost every case, considered to be goods. Income from land was the distinguishing feature between gentlemen and yeomen - "practically all gentlemen were landowners, many yeomen were not. When the yeoman was a freeholder his estate did not amount to more than £5-6 a year. The £10 freeholder would have been a gentleman".<sup>1</sup> At Leighton Buzzard, where so much land was copyhold, the Subsidy underestimates the importance of land to the community and to the individual.<sup>2</sup> For all his local prominence, William Taillour was not exceptionally wealthy by the standards of many early Tudor provincial merchants and yeomen-farmers.<sup>3</sup> By 1508, he had amassed a farm in the main manor of well over 100 acres, but he was essentially a tenant rather than a landowner, and this probably explains why he is never apparently called "gentleman".

A few miles to the south of Leighton Buzzard lay Dunstable, another Bedfordshire market town. It is unfortunate that neither the Subsidy for 1523-4 nor that for 1524-5 have survived in full, so denying us a comparison between the two towns.<sup>4</sup> Dunstable was no larger than Leighton

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1. J. Cornwall, 'The early Tudor gentry', ECHR 2nd ser. xvii, no. 3 (1965), pp. 464-5. 2. We cannot be sure how far copyholds were taken into account in making an assessment. In the Buckinghamshire Survey of 1522, copyholds were only mentioned once for the whole county (Musters, p. 18).

3. Cornwall, 'English country towns...', pp. 54-69; W. G. Hoskins, Essays in Leicestershire History (Liverpool, 1950), pp. 146-59.

4. The earlier subsidy is torn away (P.R.O. E179/71/109, mm. 3, 7). Membrane 7 is torn at the foot, and membrane 3 is not the start of the Dunstable entry. The second Subsidy roll is also incomplete (71/114, m. 7).

Buzzard,<sup>1</sup> yet its assessment was higher than Leighton Buzzard's.<sup>2</sup> The number of wealthy men whose assessments on goods ranged upwards from 20 marks was greater.<sup>3</sup> The wealthiest Dunstable man of whom there is a record - Ambrose Bradman - was assessed on goods worth twice those of William Taillour at Leighton Buzzard.<sup>4</sup>

The court rolls and other sources provide glimpses of the trades and traders of the town.<sup>5</sup> There were any number of brewers, ale-sellers, and bakers, and those who brewed and baked probably combined these activities with others. There were tanners and glovers in the town.<sup>6</sup> These men, like the butchers, no doubt relied on the town's cattle market for their raw materials. Some may have had their own flocks and herds. There were dyers, tailors, and hosiers too.<sup>7</sup> In fact, Leighton Buzzard seems to have been a local centre for the leather trade and for cloth-making and cloth-working.<sup>8</sup> The local mercers and chapmen - men like Thomas Smalhard,<sup>9</sup> John Esgoer,<sup>10</sup> and William Taillour - traded in a variety of goods, both in Leighton Buzzard

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1. At the end of the sixteenth century, Leighton Buzzard was larger than Dunstable (Godber, p. 265). 2. £30 6s 3d in 1523 compared with Leighton's £16 19s 4d in 1524. 3. As can be judged from the surviving parts of both Subsidies. 4. Bradman's goods were assessed at £80 on both occasions (E179/71/109, m. 7; 71/114, m. 7). Usually, the second assessment was lower than the first, so it is possible that Taillour's assessment in 1523 was more than £40. 5. There are very few wills (above 149, n. 8). 6. C.R.O. KK 623, mm. 8, 29, 37; C.P.R. 1467-76, p. 499 (tanners); KK 622, mm. 46d, 57; KK 623, m. 52d (glovers). William Aleyn was described as a saddler in 1517 (KK 147). In the sixteenth century, there were shoe-makers in the town (C.P.R. 1566-69, p. 331). 7. P.R.O. C1/59/53; C.P.R. 1452-61, p. 649 (tailors); XV.25.55; Godber, p. 118 (dyers); C.C.R. 1402-5, p. 321 (hosier). 8. Foreigners from Holland and Brabant settled in Leighton Buzzard in the first half of the fifteenth century; they were very probably cloth workers (C.P.R. 1429-36, pp. 559, 565, 568). 9. Below, p. 193. 10. Described as "mercier" in C.R.O. KK 148. A transcript of his will, (dated 1519) (P.C.C. i. 190) is in C.R.O. CRT/130 (Leighton Buzzard).

and in the surrounding countryside.<sup>1</sup> In the fifteenth century, Leighton Buzzard men traded at Aylesbury, some ten miles to the south-west.<sup>2</sup> The vast majority of the inhabitants were engaged in humbler activities, principally farming, and those trades and crafts which it fostered. Many were labourers and servants employed full-time by the wealthier few.<sup>3</sup> In many aspects, Leighton Buzzard must have resembled other country towns.<sup>4</sup>

Although Leighton Buzzard was never a seignorial borough and had no burghage tenure, it appears to have had some pretensions to burghal status. It paid the burghal tenth in 1472-3,<sup>5</sup> but in the 1490s it contributed to the fifteenth.<sup>6</sup> We get no clear idea from the court rolls of the extent of urban property, that is, homes without land attached, or of the number of smallholders who lived in the town. Tenure in the town and the rest of the manor was "inheritance by copy of court roll, finable at the lord's will".<sup>7</sup> Originally, Leighton Buzzard had been an ancient demesne manor. Tenants in ancient demesne were in a peculiar position at law, and there was considerable difficulty in saying whether they were freeholders or not. In the fifteenth

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1. In 1513, William Taillour was fined at Winslow (Bucks) for being a common baker, and for selling bread contrary to the assize (B.A.S. 2/57, m. 17). He may well have had trading connections with Luton (below, p. 182.

2. E. M. Elvey, 'Aylesbury in the fifteenth century: a bailiff's notebook', Records of Bucks. xvii, pt. 5 (1965), pp. 324-5; a Leighton Buzzard glover died in 1499 when he fell into a deep pit on the road to Aylesbury (Mrs. J. R. Green, Town Life in the Fifteenth Century (2 vols., 1894), ii. 31-2.

3. William Taillour left 3s 4d to his servant, William Alen (C.R.O. PLBP/WR/1, fo. 5v). Others had servants too (ibid. fo. 9v; KK 622, m. 16; KK 623, mm. 11d-12, 27d, 29).

4. Cornwall, 'English country towns...', p. 55.  
5. XV.61.46. 6. XV.61.55-6. 7. As stated in a seventeenth-century rental (C.R.O. KK 774).

century, it came to be held that if a tenant in ancient demesne conveyed land by feoffment he was a freeholder.<sup>1</sup> It is clear that tenure at Leighton Buzzard remained customary tenure. There are several examples in the court records of attempts to convey customary land by charter,<sup>2</sup> and it is possible that the court officials were particularly anxious to prevent any attempts to convert customary tenure to freehold.<sup>3</sup>

During the fifteenth century, Londoners began to invest in copyholds in the manor, chiefly in the town.<sup>4</sup> We cannot be sure if their interests in Leighton Buzzard extended further, but it is likely that some of them traded in the town. Tenant-status may have been a useful toe-hold when it came to trade.<sup>5</sup> Richard Hale, citizen and grocer of London, bought land in Leighton Buzzard in the 1460s.<sup>6</sup> He settled this on his daughter, Margaret, wife of John Harryson, citizen and tailor of London.<sup>7</sup> They in turn sold it to John Chester, a merchant of the staple.<sup>8</sup> In 1491, a year after acquiring it, John gave the land to the dean and canons of St George's Chapel.<sup>9</sup> William Bodley, a London grocer, bought a messuage and close in the town in 1502.<sup>10</sup> A year later he was plaintiff in a plea of debt for 22s brought against Richard Freeman;<sup>11</sup> merchants may have been a convenient source of loans to lesser townsfolk. Robert Amadas and Nicholas Worley,

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1. A. W. B. Simpson, An Introduction to the History of the Land Law (1960), pp. 155-6. 2. KK 725, fos. 7v, 10v, 11v, 13v.

3. In 1537, tenants of Houghton Regis asserted a right to a fee simple interest in ancient demesne; such disputes were often protracted (I. S. Leadham, 'The security of copyholders in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries', E.H.R. vii (1893), pp. 691-3). 4. In this paragraph I

have attempted to bring together most of the detail relating to Londoners. Later discussion of the land market is confined more to the local participants.

5. Butchers and bakers were sometimes presented in court for selling goods bought from strangers. 6. XV.25.59; KK 622, m. 16. 7. Probably on his death, c. 1489 (KK 623, m. 10; XV.25.64). 8. KK 623, m. 11d.

9. *ibid.* m. 17. 10. *ibid.* m. 51d. 11. *ibid.* m. 55.

London goldsmiths, bought a messuage in Leighton Buzzard in 1505.<sup>1</sup> John Saunders, draper and merchant of the staple, was another London merchant who invested in land in the manor.<sup>2</sup> In 1508, George Monoux, another draper, bought up a messuage and 40 acres of land in Leighton Buzzard.<sup>3</sup> He built up an estate elsewhere in the county and, in 1514, was Lord Mayor of London.<sup>4</sup> Leighton Buzzard was certainly well placed for trade. Watling Street ran close by; Dunstable was only half a dozen miles away; London just 30 miles further on.<sup>5</sup>

The Lay Subsidy roll for 1523-4 lists 76 names under Billington, Heath, Reach, and Eggington and Clipstone.<sup>6</sup> Of these, 44 were assessed on goods and wages worth £2 or less a year; 27 were assessed on goods valued at between £3 and £10 a year; and five men's assessments ranged between 20 marks and £22. Only in Reach, where Thomas Taillour (no known relation to William) and Richard Allen were both assessed on goods worth 20 marks, were there two men whose goods were valued at more than £10.<sup>7</sup> In Heath, John Gryssell, gentleman, owned goods whose assessed value (£20) accounted for more than half of the total for the village.<sup>8</sup> William Billington in Billington and Thomas Doget in Eggington and Clipstone were by far the wealthiest men in their villages.<sup>9</sup> In the villages, the middle class, those men assessed on goods worth between £3 and £10, formed a greater proportion of the total

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1. C.R.O. KK 623, m. 62d (C.C.R. 1500-9, pp. 216-7: Amadas; C.P.R. 1485-94, p. 136: Worley). 2. KK 623, mm. 9d, 42. 3. *ibid.* m. 72d.  
4. Godber, p. 140. 5. The setting of Leighton Buzzard and its trade are discussed further below, pp. 207-9. 6. 19 names were listed in Billington in 1523-4, but only 15 in 1524-5 (P.R.O. E179/71/109, mm. 2, 9-11; 71/114, m. 6). 7. E179/71/109, m. 9. 8. *ibid.* m. 10.  
9. E179/71/109, mm. 2-6.

population than in the town.<sup>1</sup> The labouring class was proportionately smaller.<sup>2</sup> Most of the men in the villages were farmers; the landless tended to congregate in the town.

#### The land market in the principal manor

As Leighton Buzzard never became a chartered borough, the manorial courts acted as the main administrative agency in the community. Several courts were held a year. By the middle of the fifteenth century an attempt had been made to regulate the intervals between courts, for it had become customary to hold four or five a year.<sup>3</sup> By 1485 a definite pattern had been adopted. Five courts met each year - in February, May, August, and October, with the fifth either in April or July.<sup>4</sup> In the second half of the fifteenth century, the record of the View of Frankpledge<sup>5</sup> followed a set pattern, as follows:

- 1 Essoins: one tenant's surety for the non-attendance of another.
- 2 Presentments by the constables, tithingmen, and ale-tasters of Leighton Buzzard, Heath and Reach, Eggington and Clipstone, and Billington.
- 3 Miscellaneous business: private litigation; elections to manorial offices; by-laws.

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1. 35% as against 23%.      2. 58% as against 69%.      3. Table 8.  
4. Six courts met in 1498 when an extra court was held in June (C.R.O. KK 623, mm. 34d-39).      5. Leighton Buzzard was unusual in having four Views a year; the August court was not a View. The extra Views were probably a response to the size of the manor and the need for effective administration. In practice, the proceedings of the View were separate from the proceedings of the Court Baron which followed it, but on the court roll the distinction between the two was not made, save under Parva Curia. E. Kerridge, Agrarian Problems in the Sixteenth Century and After (1969), p. 24, describes the differences.

- 4 The names of the jurors.
- 5 The record of the Parva Curia: the register of changes in tenancies.
- 6 The affeerors: the two tenants whose duty it was to assess the fines levied on offenders.
- 7 The income of the court.

The August court, which was not a View, recorded business for Leighton Buzzard alone, except when by-laws were registered by the other townships. The record of this court usually contained little more than a note of essoins, and the names of the homage and defaulters.

The most impressive series of entries on the rolls comes under the heading Parva Curia.<sup>1</sup> In this section were recorded changes by both inheritance and surrender. Between 1464 and 1508, over 900 changes were registered.<sup>2</sup> When land changed hands, the court roll entry commonly included the names of the interested parties; the amount and the kind of land; details of any appurtenances such as dwellings, gardens, crofts; the sub-division and location of the land (more especially for small acreages); and the entry fines.<sup>3</sup>

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1. The grouping of changes in tenancy under a separate heading was a common feature in court rolls of the later fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It can be found in the rolls of Willington, Beds. (C.R.O. R.212/12; B.M. Add Roll 26813); Salford, Beds. (Bodl. MSS. All Souls' College, c. 164, 165); Winslow, Bucks. (B.A.S. 2/57); and Iver, Bucks. (B.A.S. 133/53).

2. The total in the extant rolls is 907, but this is not a complete record. The records of several courts are missing: there are none for 1484.

3. Towards the end of the fifteenth century, fewer and fewer fines were, in fact, copied onto the engrossed court roll, although a space was always left for the amount to be inserted. Presumably the clerk did not have the figures to hand when he made a fair copy of the court business.



From this mass of detail it is a relatively straightforward matter to compile an index of the people involved in land transfers, and to distinguish between inheritance and extra-family transfers. Of just over 900 transfers registered between 1464 and 1508, 604 (67 per cent) were extra-family: these constituted the land market proper. Of the rest, 221 (24 per cent) represented family inheritance arrangements, 69 (8 per cent) were unspecified entries to land, usually grants from the lord of property which had come into his hands, and 13 (1 per cent) were extra-family transfers made on the death of a tenant.<sup>1</sup>

Most of the transfers in the land market included arable land (424 out of 604). Of these 424, over 80 per cent (352) were smaller than 10 acres, and nearly two-thirds (265) were smaller than 3 acres. Some 288 of the 424 transfers of arable (66 per cent) involved no other sort of land or property, and all but three of these were smaller than 10 acres. Thus, the land market at Leighton Buzzard between 1464 and 1508 was chiefly one in small parcels of land. Most tenants were content, or were constrained, to increase their holdings in the manor by the piece-meal addition of odd acres and half-acres.

Arable was not always sold by itself. Quite often it was sold together with a messuage or cottage and other pieces of land - crofts, gardens, parcels of meadow and pasture. Of 136 transfers of arable and other

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1. It is possible that these were sales before death; some may have been legacies.

property (out of the total of 424 transfers which included arable), 102 (75 per cent) included a messuage or cottage. Half of these dwellings lay in the town; the rest were distributed more or less evenly between the surrounding villages (excluding Stanbridge). Half of the transfers of land and property (69 out of 136) consisted of parcels larger than 10 acres. As a general rule, the larger the amount of land to change hands, the greater was the likelihood that the transfer included other property. There were also examples of messuages and cottages changing hands with no land attached other than a garden or croft. Most of these were in the town (66 out of 85 cases). The turn-over in residential property in the later fifteenth century was not great. A natural increase in population may have accounted for a part of the demand.<sup>1</sup> It appears that newcomers to the town and rentiers accounted for a part. A scrutiny of the court rolls suggests that some 30 to 40 "new" men bought residential property in the manor between 1464 and 1508, most of this in the town.<sup>2</sup> Not all these men settled in Leighton Buzzard. We have already seen how Londoners were beginning to buy up property in the manor.<sup>3</sup> Other men probably acquired messuages to use for business purposes or to sublet: William Taillour bought up six messuages and five cottages between 1497 and 1508.<sup>4</sup> Some tenants bought residential property and open, unbuilt sites adjoining their own buildings, probably to extend their homesteads.<sup>5</sup>

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1. It is very difficult to use court rolls to reveal demographic trends. An attempt to follow the approach of Miss S. L. Thrupp ('The problem of replacement rates in late medieval English population', ECHR 2nd ser. xviii, no. 1 (1965), pp. 101-19) suggests that there was no upsurge in replacement in the later fifteenth century. This would tally with the population history suggested by Miss Thrupp (*ibid.* pp. 116-9) and by Dr. Blanchard (*above*, p. 6, n. 3). 2. Checks on local families are provided by A. T. Gaydon, The Taxation of 1297 (B.H.R.S. xxxix, 1959), pp. 83-8; Hervey, pp. 16, 22-4, 146-7, 151-3; and the court records.

3. *Above*, pp. 154-5. 4. The existence of these apparently vacant dwellings is probably evidence of subletting: perhaps they were occupied by the truly landless labourers. William Taillour's activities are discussed below, pp. 180-2. 5. Below, p. 166.

The survival of the court rolls for six years at the end of the fourteenth century provides an opportunity to compare the land market at that date with the market in the second half of the fifteenth century.<sup>1</sup> The comparison can only be tentative for the earlier sample is so much smaller. Between 1393 and 1398, the court rolls recorded 128 transfers, of which 89 were extra-family and 33 were inheritance arrangements. Three-quarters of the transfers which made up the land market (the 89) included arable land, and most (50 out of 64) were smaller than 3 acres. There was little dealing in larger amounts of arable, and practically none in dwellings.

From a comparison of the years 1393-8 and 1464-1508, three aspects of the land market stand out. Firstly, when measured in the number of transfers a year passing through the courts, the market was running at about the same level in both periods. Secondly, the land market at the end of the fourteenth century was almost entirely small-scale and characterized by the transfer of land only. Small transfers still dominated the land market at the later date but not to the same extent. Thirdly, a market in larger parcels of land and in residential property had developed by the 1460s. Between 1464 and 1508, transfers of 10 acres or more ran at a level of between 15-20 per cent of the market as a whole.<sup>2</sup> In the years 1393-8, it is tempting to see the local land market in its last days as an exclusively small-scale affair.

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1. C.R.O. KK 619. 2. In the fifteenth century, the turn-over in larger parcels of land was a feature of many parts of the country (R. H. Hilton, The Economic Development of some Leicestershire Estates in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries (Oxford, 1947), p. 105; R. H. Tawney, The Agrarian Problem in the Sixteenth Century (1912), p. 70).

Between 1464 and 1508, there was a gradual contraction in the level of the land market at Leighton Buzzard.<sup>1</sup> The decline was not continuous but probably marked a real diminution in activity. Throughout the second half of the fifteenth century, the market in small parcels of land (less than 5 acres) remained fairly constant as a proportion of the total volume of transfers, never falling below 65 per cent. It reached a peak in the 1480s when it amounted to 80 per cent of the market. The market in larger parcels, having developed over the first half of the century, did not develop significantly after 1460. Any rise or fall in the level of the market as a whole was a response to the fluctuating demand for small parcels of land.

#### Recurrent transfers

As the court rolls of Leighton Buzzard did not record names of tenements, the phenomenon of recurrent transfers is much less noticeable on this manor than at Arlesey. Nevertheless, many examples of the recurrent transfer of land can be traced in the court rolls. For most, we have two recorded changes in ownership. This simply reflects the limited time-span of the rolls. A number of holdings changed hands three times or more, enough to suggest that the phenomenon at Leighton Buzzard was similar to that at Arlesey. The interval between transfers varied haphazardly, and the vast majority represented a clear break in family ownership.

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1. Figure 2.

Despite the similarities, there were important differences between Arlesey and Leighton Buzzard. At Arlesey, we can trace the descent and partition of holdings in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries as families died out or moved away. It was suggested above that the low level of demand for land was largely met from land on which family inheritance had ceased. Individuals were not constantly selling off parcels of land from their own family holdings.<sup>1</sup> At Leighton Buzzard, there appears to have been a greater continuity in land-holding, a greater demand for land, and a greater tendency for holdings, once abandoned by a family, to fragment rather than to retain their unity and identity (as exemplified at Arlesey in the tenement names). It seems that fewer families died out or moved away from the principal manor during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and that fewer holdings were left vacant. Where they were, they did not retain a separate identity but split into several parcels.<sup>2</sup> The result was a greater tendency for the market at Leighton Buzzard to be supplied with land from a family holding rather than from a distinct "pool" of property. Whereas recurrent transfers accounted for about 70 per cent of the land market at Arlesey, at Leighton Buzzard their share was smaller, probably about 20 per cent. This, together with the disappearance of the virgate as a viable unit of tenure,<sup>3</sup> suggests that the integrity of the tenement was abandoned in the face of the demand for land. On the rural manors, where the demand for land was not so great, the virgate and semi-virgate survived.<sup>4</sup>

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1. The position at Arlesey is discussed above, pp. 94-7.

2. Vacant tenements which were split between several tenants were noted on the rentals (XV.61.33; XV.53.76; XV.53.90). 3. Above, p. 135.

4. Discussed in Chapter 4.

Fragmentation and consolidation

In a manor as large as Leighton Buzzard, the patchwork of holdings was intricate to the point of confusion. When land changed hands, terriers were frequently and necessarily included in the record of the transfer copied on the court roll. The information in the terriers can be used to investigate the scatter of land and the extent to which people tried to rearrange their holdings to overcome this. Unfortunately, we do not possess sufficient detail to reconstruct the lay out of the fields and furlongs in the late Middle Ages. The terriers in the court rolls were limited in their scope. They usually named the township in which the land in question lay, and the furlongs in which it lay divided. Some recorded the owners of adjoining land. Most described small parcels of land: of 139 terriers discussed below, only 20 (14 per cent) described parcels larger than 5 acres.

The fields of the manor were arranged in the classic "Midland" pattern. They lay open, divided into numerous furlongs by balks, headlands, and tracks. A tenant held his land in strips scattered over several or many furlongs. A strip consisted of one or more selions, the basic division of the furlong, and could measure anything from a half-rood to 2 acres or more.<sup>1</sup> Sometime in the first half of the fourteenth century, a tenement in Eggington and Clipstone was divided, on the steward's order, between a number of tenants.<sup>2</sup> The record of this division provides our earliest

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1. Land measurement is discussed in Appendix 1. Some land transfers at Leighton Buzzard gave the division in selions rather than in strips (C.R.O. KK 623, mm. 60d, 62d). 2. KK 624, m. 4.

opportunity to study the scatter and size of one person's strips. John Gilbert had held about 21 acres of arable made up of some 45 strips in 21 furlongs. Eleven strips measured one rood, 30 measured half an acre, three measured one acre, and one measured  $1\frac{1}{2}$  acres.<sup>1</sup> There were 10 furlongs in which John had held more than one strip but in no case did they lie side by side. Later examples show the same kind of scatter. In 1464, William Straunge surrendered to John Morell junior a holding of  $34\frac{1}{2}$  acres in the fields of Leighton Buzzard.<sup>2</sup> The strips lay in some 40 furlongs. There were ten in which William had held more than one strip, but only in one did his land exceed one acre.<sup>3</sup>

There are three ways in which the terriers can be used to examine the effect of the land market on the structure of a person's holding. Firstly, the location of the strips which made up a transfer can be studied to show the extent to which they were grouped or dispersed. Secondly, we can examine the activities of various individuals to assess the extent to which they attempted to group strips together. Thirdly, there are several examples in the court rolls of specific consolidations of land and property.

Where we have the evidence of the terriers, transfers of land larger than half an acre can be divided into three:

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1. Two half-acre strips were not located; for one, a furlong name is illegible. 2. KK 622, m. 1-1d. This transfer is noted by Godber, p. 162. 3. The half-acre was the commonest size of strip here, and at Arlesey and Blunham. The sixteenth-century terrier of the Greys' manor in Blunham describes some 680 acres lying in 1186 strips, 841 of which were half-acres (C.R.O. L26/214).

- 1 those in which all strips lay in different furlongs
- 2 those in which the strips lay in the same furlong
- 3 those in which some strips lay in the same furlong

The sample (139) breaks down as follows:

1	71	(51%)
2	46	(33%)
3	22	(16%)

The first category consisted in the main of small parcels of arable, for example, one acre divided between two furlongs, two acres divided between four furlongs. The second category included examples ranging in size from three roods to 12 acres.<sup>1</sup> Thirty-one measured 2 acres or less. Of these, half (15) were not in effect single strips but a holding composed of two or more separate strips within the one furlong. Of the examples which measured more than 2 acres, ten lay similarly divided in the furlong. Thus, there were few examples of the transfer of holdings made up of contiguous strips. The third category consisted mostly of larger pieces of arable, save for a group of transfers of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  acres. These were divided in two: a half-acre strip in one furlong, two half-acre strips in another.

It appears that tenants made little attempt to consolidate their farms by a conscious attempt to overcome the scatter of strips. This impression may be tested by examining the activities of individual tenants,

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1. C.R.O. KK 622, m. 63d (a 12-acre parcel called Waterfurlong).



particularly those who added two or more small parcels of arable to their farms. Where the locations of their purchases are known, we can hope to pick out attempts to group strips in close proximity. In this way we can study 25 tenants in the period 1464-1508.<sup>1</sup> Most, if not all, of these men held more land than the two or three small parcels which interest us here. The larger their holdings, the greater would have been the dispersal of their strips over many furlongs. With this in mind, the importance of the grouping that did take place among the 25 was slight and the acreage involved was minimal. Most strips which people acquired in small transfers were distributed over different furlongs. In fact, many tenants held land in different field systems within the manor.<sup>2</sup>

A few examples have come to light of tenants buying land or property adjoining their own where it is clear that the purchase of the holding was a deliberate act of consolidation. Where a tenant held strips either side of one held by another, there were obvious advantages in acquiring the middle one.<sup>3</sup> Other examples, where the purchaser held land on one side of his new acquisition, may have represented consolidations where just one strip was involved.<sup>4</sup> Where just one strip out of several transferred lay next to the purchaser's land, it may have been little more than coincidence. In the town, a move to enlarge homesteads may have resulted in amalgamations of property.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Table 9.            2. Discussed below, pp. 196-7.

3. E.g. C.R.O. KK 622, mm. 29d, 44.            4. E.g. KK 623, m. 41d.

5. E.g. KK 622, mm. 2d, 3d, 26, 31, 35d, 42, 43d, 48d, 49d, 53d; KK 623, mm. 2, 3d, 9, 36, 40d, 41, 41d.

On the surface, it appears that there was little deliberate consolidation of arable at Leighton Buzzard in the fifteenth century. Some people took the chance to piece together a few strips here and there. Where a great deal of land changed hands it was inevitable for some grouping of strips to occur, but the land market failed to alter radically the appearance of the open fields. However, while it continually affected the pattern of land ownership, individuals could mitigate some of the effects of extreme fragmentation by recourse to subletting.

At Leighton Buzzard, pleas entered on the court rolls show that tenants did not always farm all the land they held. Throughout the second half of the fifteenth century, there were occasions when tenants claimed arrears of rent from their neighbours for land they had sublet to them. In 1468, for example, William Duple claimed 1s 4d from William Truncheville for three pightels and a rood of meadow which Truncheville rented from him. One of the pightels lay iuxta mesuagium predicti Willelmi (Truncheville), while another lay inter croftas dicti Willelmi ex utraque parte. The rood of meadow lay iuxta pratum dicti Willelmi.<sup>1</sup> Three years later, William Truncheville owed rent to Isabel Ponde for a croft. She also let land to Henry Grisell.<sup>2</sup> In 1507, William Doget claimed rent from four people for parcels of land of 3 acres, 2½ acres, and an acre.<sup>3</sup> A year later, he claimed rent from two further subtenants.<sup>4</sup> In the first example,

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1. C.R.O. KK 622, m. 11.  
m. 69-69d.

2. KK 622, m. 23.  
4. KK 623, m. 70d.

3. KK 623,

it is clear that William Truncheville rented this land to simplify his farming; in the second, Isabel Ponde was a widow, and so probably incapable of working all her land;<sup>1</sup> in the third, William Doget was one of a long-established and relatively prosperous Eggington family.<sup>2</sup> No doubt he farmed, but he was a rentier too.

The examples of subletting in the court rolls are, of course, only those which ended in litigation. As such, they do no more than show that subletting occurred. The full amount may have been substantial.<sup>3</sup> The examples given above probably typify the sorts of situation which arose over and again, at Leighton Buzzard and elsewhere. A man rented land adjacent to some of his own in order to cut down the time spent in travelling between furlongs and to give him more scope; another let off some of his more distant strips to simplify his own holding; the old and the impotent let land for cash.<sup>4</sup> Wealthier men and merchants who bought up copyholds probably rented out the whole or a part of their lands. In these ways the fragmentation of holdings was modified. There was not, however, a "well-defined movement...for the gradual modification or dissolution of the open field system".<sup>5</sup> At Leighton Buzzard, open-field farming persisted into the nineteenth century. There is little or no evidence that the land market in the fifteenth century resulted in the substitution of a few large blocks for many scattered strips. Open-field farming was not necessarily as inconvenient and as cumbersome as it appears at first sight.<sup>6</sup>

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1. Her husband had died in 1469 (KK 622, m. 17). 2. Below, p. 183. In 1523, Thomas Doget of Eggington was assessed for the Subsidy on goods worth £22 (P.R.O. E179/71/109, m. 2). 3. Above, pp. 21-2.  
4. A full discussion of subletting under conditions of farm-fragmentation is provided by M. Chisholm, Rural Settlement and Land Use (1962), pp. 46-65.  
5. As Tawney believed (Agrarian Problem, pp. 165-6). 6. J. D. Chambers and G. E. Mingay, The Agricultural Revolution, 1750-1880 (2nd edn., 1970), pp. 48-50.

Rents and entry fines

The transfers registered on the court rolls provide a lot of information about the entry fines paid by the incoming tenants. Rents, however, were rarely recorded. The little detail there is on rents is enough to show that there was no fixed ratio between the yearly rent and the entry fine. Likewise, entry fines show no fixed ratio to the size of holding. Throughout the fifteenth century, entry fines charged on holdings of a similar size varied considerably and apparently at random. It appears that fines were fixed arbitrarily "at the will of the lord" or by agreement between steward and tenant. Neither the general level of rents nor that of fines seem to have grown during the fifteenth century. Rents remained fixed,<sup>1</sup> protected by custom. As we have no standard from which to work (such as the general level of fine for a virgate or semi-virgate), it is difficult to judge movements in the levels of entry fine. A rough and ready guide can be obtained by comparing the levels in the 1390s, the 1460s, and at the end of the century.<sup>2</sup> The comparison is valid for parcels of land alone. Where land was transferred with a messuage and other property, we have no means of deciding the "weight" to attach to each component in the size of the fine. The usual entry fines charged on small parcels of arable were as follows:

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1. Above, p. 139.  
on the court rolls diminishes towards the end of the fifteenth century (above, p. 157, n. 3). I have included fines for 1490-1508 in the last series.

2. As the number of fines entered

<u>acreage</u>	<u>1390s</u>	<u>1460s</u>	<u>1490-1508</u>
$\frac{1}{2}$	4d-6d	4d	4d-6d
1	8d-10d	4d-6d	6d-8d
$1\frac{1}{2}$	1s	1s	9d
2	1s	1s	1s-1s 4d
$2\frac{1}{2}$	-	1s-1s 8d	1s-1s 8d
3	2s	2s	1s 3d

These figures suggest a general stability over the fifteenth century. On larger parcels of land, with or without appurtenances, there was considerable variation in the level of fine, but levels appear generally to have been relatively low. Entry fines were seldom over 20s; where they were, they were nearly all for large transfers (20 acres or more) which included other property. But large transfers frequently bore a lower fine. The general stability in the level of entry fines at Leighton Buzzard is borne out by the fines levied on the recurrent transfers. From these we can see if fines on one holding rose or fell between 1464 and 1508. Of 61 examples, 23 showed a rise in fine (often by very little: ten rose by 8d or less), 22 remained stable, and 16 showed a decrease in the fine. On a number of occasions, the fine charged on one holding rose and then fell, sometimes to its former level, sometimes lower.

The tenants and the land market

So far we have considered only the impersonal, statistical aspects of the land market and its effects. The wealth of detail in the court rolls and other sources enables us to study the activities of many individuals, and it is to these that we must now turn to complete a study of the manor and its land market.

It is unfortunate that the short time-span of the fifteenth-century court rolls cuts off our view of the activities of a number of tenants. We do not know what men were doing before 1464 and after 1508. To take a particularly frustrating example, we can study William Taillour amassing one of the largest copyhold farms in the manor. We know that he was the richest man in the town in 1524, and that he did not die until 1537 or 1538. Yet, after 1508, we all but lose track of him.<sup>1</sup> For only a few tenants can we hope to trace the whole or the greater part of their activities. For most, we have only a partial record, and then only a record for one manor. As the principal manor was a large one, it is likely that a number of tenants did not hold land elsewhere, but we do not know who these men were or whether they were in a majority. For these reasons, even more so than at Arlesey, the court rolls can only show particular sorts of activity. However, the court rolls are far more detailed than the Ramsey or Arlesey registers. For many tenants at Leighton Buzzard, we possess the raw materials for "biographies", and these give some indication of the people who played a prominent part in the life of the community.

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1. See below, pp. 180-2.

Besides the locals, there were several, perhaps many, tenants of the manor whose main interests lay elsewhere. There were also families for which it is difficult to judge where their main interests lay. London merchants were one sort of person.<sup>1</sup> Another was the county gentleman who had land nearby and who bought up a copyhold or two. John Broughton, armiger, who owned the main manor in nearby Toddington as well as much land elsewhere,<sup>2</sup> held land from Alice Chaucer in Grovebury in 1457.<sup>3</sup> In 1466, he tried to avoid paying an entry fine on four selions of copyhold land acquired from William atte Hall.<sup>4</sup> Richard Decons, who inherited the "Reynes" manor in Leighton Buzzard at the end of the fifteenth century,<sup>5</sup> bought three messuages in 1501, and 6 acres of land in 1503.<sup>6</sup> He also held land in Marston Moretaine and Flitton (Beds), and in Clifton Reynes (Bucks).<sup>7</sup> On the same social level as Decons was Richard Cutte, brother of Sir John Cutte, the receiver-general of the duchy of Lancaster in the 1490s.<sup>8</sup> Richard married a daughter of John Billington of Leighton Buzzard. He made his will at Leighton Buzzard in January 1505, leaving £20 a piece to his two sons.<sup>9</sup> Shortly before this, in 1504, he had bought 20 acres of copyhold in the manor.<sup>10</sup> Lower down the social scale were families like the Kegills of Edlesborough (Bucks),<sup>11</sup> the

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1. Above, pp. 154-5. 2. Calendar, i. 238-41. 3. C.R.O. KK 771. Broughton was one of the founders of the Fraternity of Leighton Buzzard (above, p. 140, n. 10). 4. KK 622, m. 7. 5. V.C.H. iii. 407. 6. KK 623, mm. 47d, 66. 7. V.C.H. iii. 309, 328; V.C.H. Bucks. iv. 318. He was one of the commissioners enquiring into enclosure in the county in 1517 (The Domesday of Inclosures, 1517-18, ed. I. S. Leadam (2 vols., 1897), ii. 454-5). 8. Above, p. 141, n. 8. 9. BuRO D/A/we/1, fo. 311r. This establishes his relationship to Richard and to the Billingtons. 10. KK 623, m. 60. He was described as "gentleman" in 1502 (KK 144). 11. Wills of the family are in BuRO D/A/we/1, will nos. 97, 100 (fos. 59r, 60v); their connections with Edlesborough and the surrounding area may be traced in B.A.S. Halton rental, 1475; B.M. Add. Roll 67932 (court roll, Edlesborough, 1485); Musters, p. 167. A branch of the family held land in Totternhoe in 1482 (W.A.M. 3391, m. 1). The Kegills' connections with Leighton Buzzard may be traced in KK 622, m. 4 9; KK 623, m. 6d.

Turneys of Slapton (Bucks),<sup>1</sup> the Wiggess of Mentmore (Bucks),<sup>2</sup> and the Pedders of Totternhoe (Beds),<sup>3</sup> all of whom had held copyholds in the manor at some time in the later fifteenth century. Then there were other families, holding larger tenements in the manor, who held land in neighbouring villages and for whom it is difficult to decide where their main holdings lay. For example, Robert Ryot, alias Newman, held land in Leighton Buzzard and in Winslow (Bucks),<sup>4</sup> while the Stanbridge family, to take a more complicated example, had several branches holding land in a number of villages, as well as in Stanbridge and Leighton Buzzard.<sup>5</sup> Another Stanbridge family, the Boynons, also held land in the manor and elsewhere.<sup>6</sup> The Gurney family, a branch of which settled in Eggington and Clipstone in the later fifteenth century, was a third family which held land in various villages.<sup>7</sup> No doubt several other families had a similar scatter of interests.

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1. BuRO D/A/Wf/1, will no. 3; Musters, p. 176; KK 622, mm. 30d, 39; KK 623, m. 50. A John Turney was bailiff of Tilsworth in 1472-4 (C.R.O. CH 4, m. 1-1d, etc). 2. BuRO D/A/We/1, fo. 39; Musters, p. 187; KK 623, mm. 1, 4d, 16. 3. W.A.M. 3391, m. 1; W.A.M. 9219 D, m. 1d; KK 622, m. 11d. 4. C.R.O. KK 622, mm. 2d, 10, 31; B.A.S. 2/57, mm. 8, 13. Robert was a tax-collector in Bedfordshire in 1468 (C.F.R. 1461-71, p. 231), and was farmer of the subsidy and alnage of cloths in Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire in 1498 (C.F.R. 1485-1509, p. 267). 5. Northall and Edlesborough in Bucks (B.A.S. Halton rental; Musters, pp. 167-8); Whipsnade in Beds (W.A.M. 9219 D, m. 1d); for Leighton Buzzard, KK 623, mm. 2, 5, 52. 6. Chalgrave and Eaton Bray (P.R.O. E179/71/109, m. 5; W.A.M. 3391, m. 2d); KK 622, mm. 32, 40d, 51. The will of William Boynon, 1537, is in C.R.O. PLBP/WR/1, fo. 6r. 7. Totternhoe, Beds (W.A.M. 3391, m. 1; W.A.M. 9219 D, m. 1); Halton, Bucks (A. V. Woodman, 'A fifteenth-century pedigree', Records of Bucks. xvi, no. 1 (1953-4), pp. 43-7; B.A.S. Halton rental). The "Gurney MSS" in B.A.S. contain a mass of unsorted papers relating to the history of the Eggington Gurneys. William Gurney was a freeholder in the Mannes' manor in Eggington in 1506 (C.R.O. X310/1, m. 13); KK 623, mm. 14d, 18d, 19, 44d.



Turning to Leighton Buzzard, we can distinguish 90 to 100 tenants who dominated the turn-over of land in the manor.<sup>1</sup> Among them were individuals and families who stood out from their fellow tenants by the scale of their activities. These are considered below in seven case studies. As the short time-span of the court rolls rarely enables us to see the whole of a person's activity in the land market, it is unrealistic to divide the remaining land-dealers into "enterers", "surrenderers", and "enterers-and-surrenderers". It seems more sensible to consider them as one group and to study them by means of a systematic sample.<sup>2</sup> We shall consider 15 case-studies to illustrate the general characteristics of individual activity. These are discussed after the studies of selected families and tenants. We shall then go on to consider briefly some of the general features of the main group of tenants as a whole. As at Arlesey, there were some tenants at Leighton Buzzard who require separate notice for they stand apart from their fellows by the scale of their activity. The studies which follow concentrate on those men and families which amassed the largest farms, those people who were among the wealthiest in the local community.

#### John Billington

The Billingtons had been settled in and around Leighton Buzzard since the early fourteenth century.<sup>3</sup> By the middle of the fifteenth century, there were two or more branches of the family holding land in the main manor.

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1. I have included those tenants involved in five or more transfers, excluding family transfers, and some who, though involved in less, built up large holdings, and for whom the end of the court rolls truncates the development of a holding. 2. Grouped alphabetically, we can be reasonably sure that a list will produce a random selection when sampled systematically. In the cases considered below, I have sampled one in five. 3. Hervey, p. 152.

The family owned two small manors adjacent to the principal manor,<sup>1</sup> and they had other freeholds in and around Leighton Buzzard.<sup>2</sup> When Hugh Billington, gentleman, died in 1468,<sup>3</sup> his copyhold land, together with the manors, descended to his grandson John.<sup>4</sup> It was probably this land which passed out of the family by marriage in 1496 when Joan Billington married Edmund Haslewood.<sup>5</sup> A John Billington (designated "of Leighton Buzzard" in the court rolls to distinguish him from his relatives) had begun to acquire land in Billington and Leighton Buzzard in the 1460s. By 1480, he had acquired about 30 acres (in addition to any land he may have inherited), including 20 acres from Isabel Ponde, widow, and  $7\frac{1}{2}$  acres from Cecilia Sampson, another widow.<sup>6</sup> In 1490, he acquired a very large holding, 90 acres, from Alice Southwode, widow of the former bailiff.<sup>7</sup> In the same year, he bought  $7\frac{1}{2}$  acres from Edmund and John Lyveriche.<sup>8</sup> By 1495, John had built up a holding of at least 129 acres, paying in the process £6 15s 4d in entry fines. In that year, he transferred  $28\frac{1}{2}$  acres to Robert Martin,<sup>9</sup> and in 1507 he transferred a further 25 acres to John Billington, probably his son, and William Hogge.<sup>10</sup>

John Billington was obviously a prosperous man. His daughter married Richard Cutte, a wealthy man with wealthy connections.<sup>11</sup> John served a term as constable in Leighton Buzzard,<sup>12</sup> and he served frequently on manorial juries.<sup>13</sup> In 1502, he was president of the Fraternity of Leighton Buzzard.<sup>14</sup> As early as 1470 we find him described as "gentleman".<sup>15</sup>

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1. V.C.H. iii. 406-7.      2. P.R.O. CP25(i)/6/73, fos. 9-10; 6/78, fo. 16; 6/82, fo. 3.      3. KK 622, m. 8d.      4. His son, Hugh junior, was already dead (KK 622, m. 8d).      5. V.C.H. iii. 406.      6. KK 622, mm. 5d, 16d.      7. KK 623, m. 12d.      8. KK 623, mm. 13d-14.      9. KK 623, m. 28.      10. KK 623, m. 67d.      11. Above, p. 172.      12. KK 622, m. 53.      13. KK 622, m. 11 - KK 623, m. 65.      14. KK 144.      15. Year Books of Edward IV, p. 167.

### The Fowlers

Like the Billingtons, the Fowlers had lived in the manor since the early fourteenth century.<sup>1</sup> In the later fifteenth century, we can attempt to trace a pedigree for the family. It appears that William Fowler, who died in 1499, married twice. By his first marriage he had a son John; by his second, a son Henry. Henry must have been considerably younger than his half-brother for it was he who inherited the bulk of his father's land.<sup>2</sup> John, William's son, engaged in a number of transfers between 1468 and 1505. He sold land to others on 17 occasions, but on only one of these did the amount of land exceed 6 acres.<sup>3</sup> In 1505, he passed on 23 acres to Robert Fowler (probably a son).<sup>4</sup> John's son, John Fowler junior, acquired some 75 acres in the manor between 1486 and 1508. The bulk came in two transfers: one of 33 acres from Robert Wellys, another of 40 acres from Thomas Lane.<sup>5</sup> Henry Fowler inherited 70 acres of land and 10 acres of meadow from his father in 1499; a year later, Agnes Fowler, his widowed mother, quitclaimed this holding to him.<sup>6</sup> In three purchases between 1503 and 1506, Henry added only 2 $\frac{3}{4}$  acres to this large farm.<sup>7</sup> Most of the land which various members of the family held lay in Eggington and Clipstone; Henry Fowler also held land in the Mannes' manor in Eggington.<sup>8</sup> By 1508, the Fowlers held over 150 acres in the main manor.

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1. KK 624, m. 4.      2. KK 623, m. 40.      3. KK 622, mm. 8, 11d, 14, 25, 47d, 53d, 65; KK 623, mm. 3, 6d, 9d, 17d, 44d, 60d.      4. KK 623, m. 60d.      5. KK 623, mm. 7d, 52.      6. KK 623, m. 45. It is just possible that this was an additional surrender rather than a quitclaim. The descriptions of the land, while similar, are not identical.  
7. KK 623, mm. 55, 58d, 63d.      8. C.R.O. x310/2, m. 1.

### John Halsey

John Halsey was a member of a more obscure local family.<sup>1</sup> But in the number of transfers in which he was involved, he was the most prominent single land-dealer of his generation at Leighton Buzzard. Between 1465 and 1504, he was involved in 40 land transfers. In 24 he added to his holding; in 16 he diminished it.<sup>2</sup> John's passion appears to have been acquisition rather than the amassing of a large farm. In 18 entries, he added no more than some 30 acres to his holding. On other occasions, he gained small parcels of meadow, gardens, a barn, a croft, a messuage, and two cottages. The sources of this land were widespread, for he acquired it from at least 18 different people. He bought as and when he could over a period of 35 years, though most of his arable was acquired in 1474. His sales of land were equally small in scale. However, in 1503, he made seven separate transfers to John Barnard: 4 acres, 2 acres, 1 acre, a half-acre, 6 acres and a croft, 2 acres, and a garden.<sup>3</sup> In 1504, he surrendered four cottages and a garden to three relatives.<sup>4</sup> In addition to his interest in the land, John Halsey was a chapman, a local trader.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps this was the source of the money he invested in land and property. He was one of the Leighton Buzzard men who traded at Aylesbury in the 1460s and 1470s.<sup>6</sup>

### The Mannes

The family of Manne held a small manor in Eggington and Clipstone.<sup>7</sup> In addition, the family held land as tenants of the principal manor. John Manne, who died in or after 1502, had four children. Between 1491 and 1502,

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1. First mentioned in the fifteenth century, the family does not feature prominently in the court rolls. 2. Table 10. 3. KK 623, m. 56. Barnard paid entry fines totalling 9s. 4. KK 623, m. 58d.  
5. Year Books of Edward IV, p. 167. 6. Elvey, 'Aylesbury in the fifteenth century...', p. 325. 7. Above, p. 131.

he divided his copyhold lands between them. Thomas Manne received 49 acres,<sup>1</sup> John Manne junior received 35½ acres,<sup>2</sup> and William, who was probably the youngest son, inherited a small parcel of land from his mother in 1498.<sup>3</sup> He and his father probably kept an ale-house for they were often fined in court for breaking the assize of ale.<sup>4</sup> In 1524, William was one of the wealthier inhabitants of the manor, for he was assessed for the Subsidy on goods worth £20.<sup>5</sup>

### The Martens

The Martens were another relatively long-established local family.<sup>6</sup> By the later fifteenth century, there appear to have been two branches of the family in Billington. John Marten, clerk of the manor court in the 1470s,<sup>7</sup> inherited a messuage and shop and 17¼ acres of land from his father in 1482.<sup>8</sup> When he died, in 1506, he left 35 acres to his son Richard.<sup>9</sup> Richard had begun to acquire property in a small way as early as 1494, but it was not until he inherited his father's land that his holding started to grow. In 1508, he acquired a further 52 acres from Thomas London.<sup>10</sup> In the Subsidy of 1523, he appears as a moderately prosperous man, assessed on goods worth £10, the second most wealthy man in Billington.<sup>11</sup>

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1. KK 623, mm. 17, 26, 52.      2. KK 623, mm. 17, 26.      3. KK 623, m. 37d. The other child was a daughter, Agnes, who received a close in 1491 (KK 623, m. 17).      4. KK 623, mm. 1-26, 34-54.      5. P.R.O. E179/71/114, m. 2. In the sixteenth century, malsters and brewers were frequently among the wealthiest men in their communities (Everitt, 'The marketing of agricultural produce', *A.H.E.W.* p. 556).      6. C.R.O. X310/1, m. 6 (later fourteenth century).      7. XV.61.46.  
8. KK 622, m. 62.      9. KK 623, m. 64.      10. KK 623, m. 73d.  
11. P.R.O. E179/71/109, m. 11.

Robert Marten (possibly a brother of John) amassed a holding of at least 56 acres in Billington and Leighton Buzzard between 1472 and 1504. Between 1472 and 1493, he acquired 26 acres in 13 transfers. Of these, only two appear to have come from members of the same family: a shop and 1 acre  $3\frac{1}{2}$  roods from Henry Marten in 1481,<sup>1</sup> and a close from John Marten in 1489.<sup>2</sup> Twelve acres came from Alice Southwode, a widow, in 1477;<sup>3</sup> another purchase measured 5 acres;<sup>4</sup> a third, 4 acres.<sup>5</sup> The remaining acquisitions were all less than 2 acres. In 1495, he bought  $28\frac{1}{2}$  acres from John Billington.<sup>6</sup> Robert died in 1505 when his land passed to his widow and son.<sup>7</sup>

#### The Moreells

The Moreells had lived in the vicinity of Leighton Buzzard since the thirteenth century.<sup>8</sup> The manor which they possessed in the surrounding villages passed by marriage in the second half of the fifteenth century to the family of Brocas who held land in and around Edlesborough (Bucks).<sup>9</sup> Like the Mannes, the Moreells held land as tenants of the main manor in Leighton Buzzard.

We can construct a pedigree of the family between 1464 and 1508.<sup>10</sup> Our main interest lies with the two sons of John Morell senior. William Morell built up a farm of some 90 acres between 1468 and 1492. Most of

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1. KK 622, m. 63.      2. KK 623, m. 11d.      3. KK 622, m. 48.  
4. ibid.      5. KK 622, m. 59.      6. KK 623, m. 28.  
7. KK 623, m. 63d.      8. Gaydon, pp. 87-8.      9. Burrows, pp. 174-5. The Moreells were sometimes described as "of Dunstable" (ibid. p. 174; C.C.R. 1476-85, p. 387). They held freeholds in several villages near Leighton Buzzard and Dunstable (P.R.O. CP25(i)/6/82, fo. 3; C.C.R. 1468-76, pp. 209-10; C.C.R. 1476-85, p. 45).      10. Figure 3.

this came in two transfers: 20 acres from his mother on her death in 1470;<sup>1</sup> and 40 acres from John Harlingdon in 1479.<sup>2</sup> In 18 other transfers, all apparently purchases, he added a further 31 acres. All of these were under 7 acres; 11 were two acres or less.<sup>3</sup> In 1497, William started to sell off land: in that year William Gunthorpe bought 52 acres from him.<sup>4</sup> At his death in 1503, he left his remaining land to his wife and children.<sup>5</sup> William had been active in Eggington and Clipstone as a tithingman and constable, and had served on many manorial juries.<sup>6</sup> He had also held land in the Mannes' manor.<sup>7</sup> John Morell junior, the other son of John senior, held a considerable amount of land in the principal manor. In 1464, he acquired  $34\frac{1}{2}$  acres from William Straunge.<sup>8</sup> In 1476, he entered a further 80 acres.<sup>9</sup> Twenty years later, he surrendered this land (the 80 acres) to Bernard Brocas, his relation by marriage.<sup>10</sup>

#### William Taillour

A Taillour family had lived in Leighton Buzzard since the thirteenth century.<sup>11</sup> Several members of the family lived in or near the town in the fifteenth century but none featured prominently in the court rolls until the late 1490s when William Taillour started to build up a sizeable copyhold estate. His appearance in the court rolls is enigmatic for they

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1. KK 622, m. 19; quitclaimed by his father in 1471 (KK 622, m. 28d).
  2. KK 622, m. 55d.
  3. Table 11.
  4. KK 623, m. 34.
  5. KK 623, mm. 54, 57.
  6. KK 622, mm. 1-38; KK 623, mm. 1-33.
  7. C.R.O. X310/1, m. 13.
  8. KK 622, m. 1-1d.
  9. KK 622, m. 42d. From whom is not clear.
  10. KK 623, m. 31d.
  11. Gaydon, pp. 83-5.

offer no clue to his pedigree or his business interests. Yet his holding was the largest any one person built between 1464 and 1508, and by 1524 he was the wealthiest man in Leighton Buzzard.<sup>1</sup> We know from other sources that he was a local man,<sup>2</sup> and a general merchant,<sup>3</sup> probably dealing in a wide range of goods.<sup>4</sup> After 1508, we have no indication of his interests in land, but as he did not die until 1537 or 1538,<sup>5</sup> he may well have continued to buy and sell. He held land elsewhere too.<sup>6</sup>

William Taillour's first recorded acquisition was in 1491 when he bought a close and an acre of meadow in Heath and Reach from William Truncheville.<sup>7</sup> By 1499, he had acquired 29 acres of arable from Truncheville,<sup>8</sup> and held in all some 45 acres. Between 1503 and 1506, he bought up nearly 100 acres in 12 transfers; the greater part came in four: 24 acres,<sup>9</sup> 14 acres,<sup>10</sup> 26 acres,<sup>11</sup> and 28 acres.<sup>12</sup> In addition, he acquired

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1. His goods were assessed at £40 (P.R.O. E179/71/114, m. 2).
  2. B.A.S. 2/57, m. 17; Luton Register, p. 217. A William Taillour was a member of the mercers' company in London in the early sixteenth century (Acts of Court of the Mercers' Company, 1453-1527, ed. L. Lyell (1937), p. 699), but it was unusual for a London company to have country members, and the mercers did not record any (S. L. Thrupp, 'The Grocers of London: a study of a distributive trade', Studies in English Trade in the Fifteenth Century, ed. E. Power and M. M. Postan (1933), p. 276).
  3. KK 142, 144, 147 describe him as "mercier". A provincial mercer was a general dealer (Thrupp, pp. 290-2).
  4. The very wide range of goods which a country mercer stocked is illustrated by D. G. Vaisey, 'A Charlbury mercer's shop, 1623', Oxoniensia, xxxi (1966), pp. 107-116.
  5. His will is dated 7 March 1537 (C.R.O. PLBP/WK/1, fo. 5v). In 1537-8, a dirge was said for him by the Luton Guild of which he was a member (Luton Register, p. 217).
  6. He owed suit of court at Chalgrave (C.R.O. MC 3, mm. 3-5). He may have been the William Taillour with goods worth £1 in Linslade in 1522 (Musters, p. 191).
  7. KK 623, m. 14d.
  8. KK 623, mm. 32, 41.
  9. KK 623, m. 59d.
  10. KK 623, m. 58d.
  11. KK 623, m. 62.
  12. *ibid.*



numerous crofts, messuages, and parcels of meadow. The sources of his land were widespread - other active land-dealers, lesser people, other speculators. In 1506, he sold off the holding of 26 acres, a year after its acquisition, to John Barnard.<sup>1</sup> But by 1508, in a flurry of further transactions, this time smaller ones, he gained about 20 acres, and his farm then totalled between 130 and 140 acres.<sup>2</sup> Taillour obviously saw in land a useful investment for money made from trade, and he probably used his land to supply his trading with some of its raw materials - meat, grain, wool, leather. His wealth brought him social prominence. In 1500-1, he was admitted a member of the Luton Guild.<sup>3</sup> In 1505, he was president of the Fraternity at Leighton Buzzard.<sup>4</sup>

Most of the men mentioned above were among the wealthiest of the manorial inhabitants and tenants, members of long-established families, several of which held manors or freeholds in the nearby villages. These local "gentry" were the men who built up the largest copyhold farms in the manor. The way in which they accumulated land tended to follow a pattern. One or more large additions came by inheritance or purchase while the piece-meal accumulation of much smaller parcels of land continued over a number of years. The importance of the large acquisition and its impact on farm-size cannot be over-emphasised, but the scale of the market in the odd acre and half-acre is equally striking. The source of land included various sorts of person. As at Arlesey, active land-dealers often bargained

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1. KK 623, m. 66. We have already come across Bernard acquiring land from John Halsey (above, p. 177). 2. KK 623, mm. 67, 67d, 69, 70, 70d. Taillour's transactions are listed in Table 12.  
3. Luton Register, p. 41. 4. BuRO D/A/we/1, fo. 311r.

amongst themselves. Widows were another important source of land.<sup>1</sup> Large holdings did not always pass intact from father to son. Generally, it appears that fathers were concerned to provide for all their children. Thus, copyholds were often split between heirs. The land of John Manne is one example.<sup>2</sup> That of John Doget is another. In 1476, he divided his farm of 80 acres between his three sons: 30 acres to one, 28 acres to another, 22 acres to a third.<sup>3</sup> It is possible that some men used the land market at Leighton Buzzard to provide for their younger children while the eldest inherited land elsewhere. For others, the market appears to have offered an attractive investment. We have seen William Taillour piling up holdings.<sup>4</sup> One of the people who bought land from him was John Bernard, the man who had acquired 15½ acres from John Halsey in 1503.<sup>5</sup> As the court rolls end in 1508, we lose track of Bernard, but in three years he had acquired 41½ acres, and he appears to have been on the way to amassing a large farm.<sup>6</sup> Most of the features displayed by these larger farms in the way they grew can be seen in the development of farms among the main body of the tenants of the manor.

The activities of most land-dealers at Leighton Buzzard were less spectacular than those discussed above. However, they included a variety of people. Some were the social and economic equals of people like the

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1. Below, pp. 198-200.

2. Above, pp. 177-8.

3. KK 622, m. 44. Thomas, the youngest son, became a member of the Guild at Luton in 1521 (Luton Register, p. 92), and was assessed at Eggington and Clipstone on goods worth £22 in the Subsidy of 1523 (P.R.O. E179/71/109, m. 2).

4. Above, pp. 180-2.

5. Above, p. 177.

6. Described as "of London" but we do not know his occupation.

Billingtons and Mannes, but held less copyhold land in the manor. Some were members of families from other villages who extended their interests into Leighton Buzzard. Others appear to have been simply local farmers who held most, if not all, of their land in the one manor. The case-studies discussed below show some of the ways in which tenants built up holdings or dispersed them. From several we get a fairly clear idea of the cycle of farm development, its rise and decline. For several it is obvious that the court rolls do not coincide with the full history of a person's land-dealing. As there were different sorts of tenant, we shall consider each case-study separately and examine their family background and circumstances. In this way we shall hope to do full justice to the sample. Then we shall review the evidence as a whole and attempt some conclusions.

#### The sample

William Andrewe inherited a large holding of 66 acres from Richard Andrewe in 1503.<sup>1</sup> Richard, probably William's father, had built up this holding in Eggington and Clipstone between 1472 and 1492.<sup>2</sup> Between 1504 and 1508, William added a further 11 acres in four purchases.<sup>3</sup> In 1523, he was one of the wealthiest men in Eggington for he was assessed on goods worth £10. Three other members of the Andrewe family were assessed on goods worth only £2.<sup>4</sup>

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1. KK 623, m. 55d.      2. KK 622, mm. 32, 40d, 45, 49, 57; KK 623, mm. 5, 20.      3. KK 623, mm. 59d, 63d, 70d, 73d.      4. P.R.O. E179/71/109, m. 2. In his will, dated 18 November 1545, William described himself as "husbandman" (C.R.O. PLBP/WR/1, fo. 14r).

Robert Brame bought and sold land on a small scale. Between 1464 and 1475, we have a record of him taking on  $4\frac{1}{2}$  acres and a parcel of meadow in three transfers;<sup>1</sup> between 1477 and 1490, he sold off  $8\frac{1}{2}$  acres, a close, and two cottages and a croft.<sup>2</sup> When he died in 1495, he held a cottage in Leighton Buzzard and a half-share in a parcel of meadow in Heath and Reach, both of which passed to his son Thomas.<sup>3</sup> Robert may have been the Robert Brame who held land in Cheddington (Bucks) in the later fifteenth century.<sup>4</sup> (Cheddington is only half a dozen miles to the south of Leighton Buzzard.) He was another of Leighton Buzzard's general merchants,<sup>5</sup> and is probably to be identified with the Robert Braun de Letun who traded at Aylesbury.<sup>6</sup> He was a frequent juror at Leighton Buzzard, and a constable in the town in 1492-3.<sup>7</sup>

By the later fifteenth century there were two or three branches of the Clobber family in Heath and Reach. Richard Clobber de Heth surrendered lands totalling 57 acres between 1468 and 1497. In 1479, he transferred  $25\frac{1}{4}$  acres to John Clobber,<sup>8</sup> and 20 years later he sold 28 acres to John Walter.<sup>9</sup> The rest of his transfers were small-scale, spread out over a number of years.<sup>10</sup> William Clobber was a contemporary (and perhaps a brother) of Richard. Between 1479 and his death in 1499, he dispersed a holding of 42 acres in Heath and Reach. When he died, twenty-nine acres passed to his widow,<sup>11</sup> and the rest of his land and meadow passed to his son John.<sup>12</sup>

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1. KK 622, m. 1d, 24, 39d. 2. KK 622, m. 48d; KK 623, mm. 8, 9, 9d, 13. 3. KK 623, m. 28. 4. BuRO D 12, no. 5; H.R.O. AH 743-4, 746. 5. Year Books of Edward IV, p. 167. 6. Elvey, 'Aylesbury in the fifteenth century...', p. 324. 7. KK 622, m. 1 - KK 623, m. 23; KK 623, m. 21. 8. KK 622, m. 54d. 9. KK 623, m. 35. 10.  $1\frac{1}{2}$  acres in 1468; a garden in 1472; 1 acre  $2\frac{1}{2}$  roods in 1483; a croft in 1486; 1 acre of meadow in 1495; two closes in 1497 (KK 622, mm. 8, 30, 67; KK 623, mm. 3d, 29, 32d, 35). 11. KK 623, mm. 40d, 42. 12. KK 623, m. 42.

But he had already sold off  $11\frac{1}{2}$  acres of arable in three separate transfers.<sup>1</sup>

Thomas Dymmok may well have been an outsider who became a tenant of the manor by marriage. Sometime before 1490 he had married Agnes Doget, widow of John Doget, and a member of one of the more prosperous families in the manor. When Agnes died in 1490, she surrendered 20 acres of land and a parcel of meadow in Eggington and Clipstone to Thomas. William Doget, son of Agnes by her first marriage, quitclaimed any interest in this land.<sup>2</sup> It is possible that this quitclaim was only intended to safeguard Dymmok's title during his own lifetime. In 1508, when he attempted to alienate land which must have been a part of the holding he inherited, William Doget successfully contested his right to sell it, and was admitted tenant of three parcels measuring  $3\frac{1}{2}$  acres in all.<sup>3</sup> Thomas Dymmok must have bought or inherited other land in Eggington and Clipstone for, in 1491 and 1492, he sold off  $17\frac{1}{2}$  acres of arable and two parcels of meadow to four tenants: William a Lee, the bailiff, bought 1 acre, John Snowe bought 14 acres and a parcel of meadow, for which he paid an entry fine of 7s 4d.<sup>4</sup> Thomas served as constable in Eggington and Clipstone between 1486 and 1492.<sup>5</sup>

William Fyll, like Thomas Dymmok, is another person about whom we know very little. He appears to have lived in Eggington.<sup>6</sup> Between 1471 and 1477, he bought four parcels of land and sold five. All his transactions were very small, the largest being the  $2\frac{1}{2}$  acres he sold to William Morell in 1471.<sup>7</sup>

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1. KK 622, m. 57; KK 623, mm. 14, 40.      2. KK 623, m. 14.  
3. KK 623, m. 73.      4. KK 623, mm. 17d, 18, 18d, 19. John Snowe  
may have been from Winslow (Bucks) where a Snowe family held land (Musters,  
p. 183; B.A.S. 2/57, m. 28).      5. KK 623, mm. 3-18.      6. KK 622,  
m. 25.      7. *ibid.*

However, they were not altogether straightforward. In 1471, he exchanged an acre with William Bunser for another,<sup>1</sup> and bought a further  $1\frac{1}{2}$  acres of meadow from Bunser.<sup>2</sup> In 1477, he bought an acre from Henry Hutte and sold to him a half-rood of his own land.<sup>3</sup> In 1471, his first attempt to sell a half-acre to William Fowler was thwarted, for Fowler failed to pay the entry fine.<sup>4</sup> This transaction did go through later.<sup>5</sup> In the following year, 1472, William transferred a messuage to John Fowler, but the messuage was seized when John failed to pay the entry fine.<sup>6</sup> This transaction took place properly in 1473.<sup>7</sup> In that same year, Fyll and Richard Lane attempted to exchange a half-acre of land without paying entry fines, and the land was taken into the lord's hands. Fyll had attempted to alienate this new half-acre together with another acre he held lying by it to Robert Welles.<sup>8</sup>

John Gressell also dealt in small parcels of land, but we know more about his family than William Fyll's. The Gressell or Grysell family had lived near Leighton Buzzard since the thirteenth century.<sup>9</sup> By the end of the fifteenth century the family was among the wealthiest in the manor; various of its members had begun to call themselves "gentlemen".<sup>10</sup> However, the Gressells did not hold a large copyhold farm in the main manor at Leighton Buzzard. Presumably they held a freehold estate in the vicinity.<sup>11</sup>

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|---|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1. KK 622, m. 25-25d.   | 2. KK 622, m. 25d. | 3. KK 622, m. 45d.   |
| 4. KK 622, m. 25.   | 5. KK 622, m. 25d. | 6. KK 622, m. 30.    |
| 7. KK 622, m. 35d.  | 8. KK 622, m. 35.  | 9. Gaydon, pp. 86-7. |
| 10. BuRO D/A/We/1, fo. 311 (1505); P.R.O. E179/71/109, m. 10 (1523).  |                    |                      |
| 11. The family may have been related to the Thomas Gresell, citizen and grocer of London, who was enfeoffed with lands near Leighton Buzzard in 1487 ( <u>Calendar</u> , i. 252-3). |                    |                      |

The copyhold land which John Gressell bought between 1488 and 1499 must have been incidental to his main interests. His acquisitions amounted to 9 acres from six purchases. He bought two 2-acre parcels from Robert Brame,<sup>1</sup> two half-acre parcels from John Lane,<sup>2</sup> and a garden and path from John Halsey.<sup>3</sup> John Gressell served on many manorial juries between 1479 and 1508, and he was constable in Heath and Reach in 1492-3.<sup>4</sup>

The Harding family of Billington had lived in the manor since the thirteenth century.<sup>5</sup> John Harding, constable of Billington between 1468 and 1477,<sup>6</sup> inherited land from his father in 1477.<sup>7</sup> Prior to that, he had started to build up a holding of his own. In 1468, he had taken a lease from the lord on 7 acres of meadow.<sup>8</sup> In 1472, he bought 3 acres of land from John Lyveriche; this land lay divided as 1 acre, 3 roods, two half-acres, and 1 rood. The two half-acres both lay next to land already held by John Harding, and the rood lay in between two of his strips.<sup>9</sup> In the same year, he acquired 3 roods from Thomas Smalhard and John Halsey junior. They were probably acting as executors for John Marchall for they received the land from him on his death-bed and surrendered it at once to John Harding.<sup>10</sup> In 1481, he and Johanna Fordan, in pura viduitate, surrendered a messuage, meadow, and 37 acres of arable in Billington to Stephen Byssshop.<sup>11</sup> We do not know the connection between

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1. KK 623, mm. 8-9.      2. KK 623, mm. 9, 21.      3. KK 623, mm. 32, 40d.      4. KK 623, m. 20.      5. Gaydon, pp. 85-6.  
6. KK 622, mm. 14-46.      7. KK 622, m. 47d. The acreage was not recorded, the entry fine was 30s.      8. KK 622, m. 12d; rent, 16s 8d, fine 3s 4d.      9. KK 622, m. 29.      10. KK 622, m. 32d.  
11. KK 622, m. 59.

John and Johanna. She may have been his daughter, or he may have rented the land from her on the death of her husband. It is possible that she was his mother, widow of John's father, and that the 37 acres was, in fact, the land John had inherited in 1477. John had died by 1498,<sup>1</sup> and his widow lived on until 1506.<sup>2</sup>

William Harding held land in Leighton Buzzard.<sup>3</sup> Between 1469 and 1491, he dispersed a farm of some 62 acres, the greater part in three transfers: 16 acres to Richard Hale de London' in 1469,<sup>4</sup> 13½ acres to William Truncheville in 1478<sup>5</sup> (a holding he had acquired the year before),<sup>6</sup> and 30 acres to Robert Harding in 1489.<sup>7</sup> The rest of William's transfers were small-scale.<sup>8</sup> Robert Harding, to whom he transferred 30 acres, was a goldsmith and alderman of London.<sup>9</sup> He was, in all probability, a relation of the Hardings of Leighton Buzzard and Billington. In his will, dated 19 August 1500, Robert left 10s "to the reparation of the chapel of Billington" and 4d to each of 40 "poor householders of the town of Leiton Bussard".<sup>10</sup> These benefactions would be consistent with a family connection. In 1492, Robert sold the 30 acres to John Fuller.<sup>11</sup>

Thomas Heyrek stands apart from many of the land-dealers in the manor for his transfers were mostly of town property. This reflects what we know of his business interests. He was a brewer and ale-seller and, more

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1. KK 623, m. 36.  
a brother of John.

2. KK 623, m. 65.  
4. KK 622, m. 16.

3. He may have been  
5. KK 622, m. 51d;  
entry fine 5s.

6. KK 622, m. 46d; acquired from the lord, entry fine  
3s 4d.

7. KK 623, m. 9.  
8. A pightel in 1472, a half-acre  
in 1472, 1½ acres in 1473, a small parcel of meadow in 1483, and an acre in  
1491 (KK 622, mm. 30, 30d, 33d; KK 624, m. 5; KK 623, m. 15d).

9. KK 623, m. 9; an outline biography is provided by S. L. Thrupp, The  
Merchant Class of Medieval London (Chicago, 1948), p. 348.

10. Major  
Heales, 'Cranley', Surrey Arch. Coll. vi (1874), pp. 38-40.

11. KK  
623, m. 19.



significantly, was engaged in the leather trade as a leather dresser.<sup>1</sup> Between 1483 and 1492, he bought two cottages, a croft, and a garden in Leighton Buzzard.<sup>2</sup> In 1496, he surrendered a cottage to his son Thomas, and the reversion of the garden to his second son John.<sup>3</sup> Another cottage went to his cousin, William Reyner.<sup>4</sup> A messuage and garden went to William Garner and Richard Noke.<sup>5</sup> John Heyrek surrendered two messuages to Richard Decons, armiger, in 1501.<sup>6</sup> In 1524, John was assessed for the Subsidy on wages of 20s a year.<sup>7</sup>

John Hogge of Billington provides a classic example of a local man accumulating small parcels of land over a number of years. Between 1471 and 1486, he bought  $10\frac{1}{2}$  acres of land. Of this, 8 acres and a butt lay in Billington; 1 acre lay in Leighton Buzzard, 1 acre in Stanbridge, and a half-acre in Eggington and Clipstone. He acquired his land in 12 transfers, eight of which were separate half-acres.<sup>8</sup> In all, he paid 8s in entry fines, the highest being 1s 8d for  $4\frac{1}{2}$  acres in 1477.<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, we do not know the size of the farm which John inherited or which he passed on at his death, so we do not know the proportion by which he added to his holding.

The Lyveriche family was another which had lived in the manor since the thirteenth century.<sup>10</sup> Edmund Lyveriche died in 1500.<sup>11</sup> By 1470, it appears that he had ceased adding to his holding, if he added to it at all.

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1. KK 623, mm. 8, 29.      2. KK 622, m. 67; KK 623, mm. 7d, 19.  
3. KK 623, m. 31.      4. *ibid.* William Reyner had held burgesses in Fenny Stratford, Bucks (BuRO Doddershall Colln. D/P Anct. Deeds, no. 230).  
5. KK 623, m. 31. This passed to them on the death of Heyrek's wife. Richard Noke was also engaged in the leather trade (KK 623, m. 8).  
6. KK 623, m. 48d.      7. P.R.O. E179/71/114, m. 4.      8. Table 13.  
9. KK 622, m. 47.      10. Gaydon, pp. 85-6.      11. KK 623, m. 42d.

Between 1477 and 1499, he dispersed it, bit by bit, some 23 acres in all. Thus, from the court rolls we can get a clear picture of the second part of the cycle of farm-development. In 1477, he sold off an acre to John Hogge; two years later, he sold a butt to the same person; in 1481, another acre was sold; in 1485, a butt; in 1486,  $7\frac{1}{2}$  acres; in 1489, 3 acres; in 1490,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  acres; in 1491,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  acres and a pightel; in 1492, a small plot of meadow; in 1495, 2 acres; in 1496, a half-acre; in 1497, an acre of meadow and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  acres of arable; and, finally, in 1499, a close and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  acres to his son John.<sup>1</sup> At his death, Edmund held only a garden plot. His land had lain divided between Leighton Buzzard and Billington.

Edmund's son, John Lyveriche, acquired a holding of 29 acres in 1477.<sup>2</sup> Between 1481 and 1490, he sold off  $9\frac{1}{2}$  acres:  $4\frac{1}{2}$  acres to Robert Marten,<sup>3</sup> and 5 acres to John Billington.<sup>4</sup> He gained a little land from his father in 1491 and 1499, and in 1501 he acquired 31 acres in Billington from Thomas Salcok.<sup>5</sup> Between 1485 and 1498, he was tithingman and ale-taster in Billington;<sup>6</sup> in the latter year he was elected constable, a position he still held in 1508.<sup>7</sup> In 1524, his goods were valued at £6 13s 4d, so he was a moderately prosperous man.<sup>8</sup> When his wife Alice drew up her will in 1539, she was sufficiently well-to-do to leave her servant, Elizabeth Stanley, her second best feather-bed, together with a bolster, a pair of sheets, and a coverlet.<sup>9</sup>

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1. KK 622, mm. 46d, 54d, 64; KK 623, mm. 1d, 4, 11d, 13d, 16-17d, 18d, 26, 29d, 32-33d, 41. 2. KK 622, m. 45d. 3. KK 622, m. 59; KK 623, m. 11. 4. KK 623, m. 14. 5. KK 623, m. 45d. 6. KK 623, mm. 1-35. 7. KK 623, mm. 35-73d. 8. P.R.O. E179/71/114, m. 3. 9. C.R.O. PLBP/MR/1, fo. 9r-v.

By the middle of the fifteenth century there were two or more branches of the Mariory family holding land in the manor.<sup>1</sup> William Mariory died in 1477, and we can study the dispersal of his land. At his death, he held just a cottage and garden which passed to Alice Mariory.<sup>2</sup> In the preceding 14 years he transferred 30 $\frac{3}{4}$  acres of arable as well as various messuages, gardens, and parcels of meadow. The bulk of this land was sold off in three portions: 7 $\frac{1}{4}$  acres in 1464 to William Owndehull;<sup>3</sup> 15 acres in 1470 to Robert Whaddon;<sup>4</sup> and 5 acres in the same year to William Stevenes.<sup>5</sup>

Alice Mariory is probably to be identified with the Alison Margery of Houghton Regis who, in her will in 1500, disposed of a house in Leighton Buzzard and left 3s 4d to the town church.<sup>6</sup> The Mariorys were probably not from Leighton Buzzard, but from Houghton itself or another nearby village.

Thomas Pyccher lived in Heath and Reach where he served as tithingman between 1465 and 1501.<sup>7</sup> Between 1468 and 1504, he dispersed a holding of some 41 acres. This process was interrupted momentarily in 1497 when he inherited 10 acres from his father.<sup>8</sup> His early transfers were small-scale. In 1468, he sold a half-acre of meadow; in 1479, half an acre of arable; in 1486, 2 acres; in 1489, 4 acres; in 1490, 3 acres; in 1494, a parcel of meadow; in 1499, 2 $\frac{1}{2}$  acres.<sup>9</sup> Then, in two transfers, in 1500 and 1504, he disposed of 29 acres.<sup>10</sup> By 1495, he was also engaged in subletting land.<sup>11</sup>

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1. The name was almost certainly pronounced "Marjory". 2. KK 622, m. 48d. 3. KK 622, m. 1d. 4. KK 622, m. 21d. 5. KK 622, m. 24. 6. English Wills, p. 7. 7. KK 622, m. 3 - KK 623, m. 48d. 8. KK 623, m. 34d. 9. KK 622, m. 8, 53d; KK 623, mm. 4d, 11, 13d, 23, 40. 10. KK 623, mm. 42d, 58d. 11. KK 623, m. 28.

Thomas Smalhard was a local chapman.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps he, like William Taillour, invested the profits of trade in land, or he may have farmed land himself. Between 1465 and 1479, we can study him piecing together a holding of about 29 acres. His first four acquisitions brought him just 10 acres, for which he paid entry fines of 8s 4d.<sup>2</sup> But in 1479 he acquired  $18\frac{1}{2}$  acres from William Fowler; for this land, plus a messuage, he paid a fine of 16s 8d.<sup>3</sup> Thomas may well have been buying land before 1464; as we do not know when he died, we cannot see how much land he went on to acquire after 1479.<sup>4</sup>

The problem of insufficient detail does not apply to every tenant. With William Truncheville, we have a clearer idea of the full cycle of his farm's history. He inherited land from his father in 1480, two messuages, a cottage, two pightels, and 49 acres of land in Leighton Buzzard and Heath and Reach.<sup>5</sup> Over the next 20 years he transferred most, if not all, of his land in the manor. As he died by 1506,<sup>6</sup> we can be reasonably confident of tracing most transactions in which he was involved. By 1480, he held at least 60 acres, having acquired  $13\frac{1}{2}$  acres in 1478 from William Harding.<sup>7</sup> Between 1480 and 1499, he sold off  $28\frac{1}{2}$  acres in eleven transfers, and he also disposed of various parcels of meadow, three closes, and two messuages.<sup>8</sup> In 1499, he settled a messuage and 6 acres on his wife,<sup>9</sup> and sold 24 acres to William Taillour.<sup>10</sup>

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1. KK 622, m. 6.            2. KK 622, mm. 3d, 6, 22, 32d.            3. KK 622, m. 53.            4. He was still alive in 1483 (KK 139).            5. KK 622, m. 61-61d.            6. KK 623, m. 66.            7. KK 622, m. 51d.            8. Table 14.            9. KK 623, m. 39d.            10. KK 623, m. 41.

Our final case-study concerns Richard Wellys. He was probably one of a family from Eggington and Clipstone,<sup>1</sup> but between April 1479 and February 1481 he married Amicia Clobber, a widow of Heath and Reach.<sup>2</sup> In so doing, he inherited a life interest in her former husband's land which consisted of a messuage in Heath, a close, and  $25\frac{1}{4}$  acres of land, 3 acres of meadow. Over the next 20 years, Richard added a further 38 acres to this land. His acquisitions were all small: the largest was one of 8 acres from William a Lee in 1489.<sup>3</sup> Richard had spasms of activity. In 1486, he bought parcels measuring  $2\frac{1}{4}$  acres, 2 acres,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  acres, and 1 acre, all from different people.<sup>4</sup> In 1489, he took on 8 acres, 4 acres, and 3 acres;<sup>5</sup> in the following year, 3 acres,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  acres, 1 acre, and a half-acre.<sup>6</sup> After 1499, it seems he took on no more land, though he was still alive in 1508.<sup>7</sup> A John Wellys, perhaps Richard's son, appears in the Subsidy of 1523 as a man of middling fortune, assessed on goods worth £7.<sup>8</sup>

### Conclusions

In drawing together the various aspects of individual activity and enterprise discussed above, our conclusions may be grouped under two main headings. Firstly, there are the holdings: the way in which they grew and diminished, the effects of inheritance and speculation, the emergence of large holdings, the location of a man's land. Secondly, there are the people involved in the market: the different social groupings, the men from outside the manor, the effect of widows.

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1. KK 622, m. 8.	2. KK 622, m. 59.	3. KK 623, m. 8d.
4. KK 623, mm. 2, 3d, 4d.	5. KK 623, mm. 8d, 11.	6. KK 623, mm. 12d, 13d.
7. KK 623, m. 71d.	8. P.R.O. E179/71/109, m. 10.	

At Leighton Buzzard in the later fifteenth century there were two principal sorts of cycle in the development of a copyhold tenement. On the one hand, there were those built up piecemeal over a number of years, and, although we rarely see the complete cycle, we may include those holdings which were sold off in the same way as representative of the same pattern. Some acquired holdings were very small. John Hogge was by no means unique. His  $10\frac{1}{2}$  acres accumulated in 12 transfers are matched by the 7 acres acquired by Richard Wayn in nine transfers between 1483 and 1506.<sup>1</sup> Others were larger, although we can observe a ceiling of roughly 60 acres. The holdings which fell in this first category were mostly those belonging to local men. Often, a part of the land acquired or sold off included an inherited portion, but it is striking how often we have little or no detail about a person's original holding. A person's purchases in one year were his sales in another.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, there were farms which were accumulated rapidly, or in a few, large transfers. These were usually the holdings acquired by the wealthier members of the community, or by outsiders. It does not seem too strong to call some of their activities "speculation". It can be seen clearly in the case of William Taillour, in some of the holdings gained by marriage with widows,<sup>3</sup> and probably in some of the cases where men acquired large holdings and subsequently sold them intact.<sup>4</sup> Tenements accumulated in these ways were often very large, over 100 acres. It is striking to see at Leighton Buzzard,

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1. Table 15.      2. As was the case in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries on the estates of Peterborough Abbey (E. King, Peterborough Abbey, 1086-1310 (Camb., 1973), p. 169).      3. Below, pp. 198-200.  
4. E.g. in 1502, John Tommys sold 48 acres of land to Thomas London; Thomas sold this land in 1508 (KK 623, mm. 52, 73d).

as at Arlessey, that these very large copyhold farms emerged at the end of the fifteenth and at the beginning of the sixteenth centuries.<sup>1</sup>

With local families, whether the "gentry" or the main body of tenants, inheritance continued to play an important, but by no means an overwhelming part in the redistribution of land. As far as we can tell, holdings were not often passed on intact from parent to child. As we have seen, the statistical evidence for a market in small parcels of land is impressive.<sup>2</sup> When seen through individual examples, this market takes on a new significance. Gradual, piecemeal accumulation and dispersal was the typical situation. A man might inherit a large holding, but he reverted to buying up small amounts of land.<sup>3</sup> Another might pass on land to a son or sell off a large portion, but, again, he reverted to the piecemeal disposal of his remaining acres.<sup>4</sup>

Although Leighton Buzzard was a large manor with several settlements, in practice most tenants held at least half their land in one township, though at some time in their lives many held land in two or more. Of 86 tenants for whom we have evidence of five or more land transfers, most (70 per cent) held at least four-fifths of their land in one township, and a third of them appear to have held all their land in one only. However, at some period, half held arable in two or more townships within the manor. Usually, a tenant's holding in a second was very small, and it is clear that most had home farms from which to extend their activities.

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1. Above, p. 110.

2. Above, p. 158.

3. E.g. William Andrewes.

4. E.g. Edmund Lyveriche.

Still, the fact that men were prepared to own small plots of land scattered over two or more field systems suggests that distance was no great drawback to the acquisitive. John Hogge's  $10\frac{1}{2}$  acres were spread over four field systems.<sup>1</sup>

During the later fifteenth century, it appears that the group of between 90 and 100 tenants which effectively dominated the turn-over in land at Leighton Buzzard increased their hold on the market. This can be seen in part in the growth of large holdings and the concentration of land in fewer hands. It can also be seen in the source and direction of land transfers; between 1464 and 1508, 54 per cent of the people from whom the active land-dealers gained land were other active land-dealers. In the same period, 61 per cent of the people to whom active land-dealers transferred land were other active land-dealers. At the same time, this group also dominated the government of the manor. It was these men who were elected constable, tithingman, and ale-taster, and who served most frequently on manorial juries. Two-thirds of their number held, for varying lengths of time, at least one of the three main offices.<sup>2</sup> Where land was so important to the community, it was inevitable that there should have been a close link between land-holding on the one hand and authority and responsibility on the other.<sup>3</sup> It is possible that the bare record of the manorial court roll hides from view the kind of "oligarchy" that often developed in country towns in the late Middle Ages.<sup>4</sup> But the market in

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1. Table 13.                      2. 60 per cent held the post of constable, perhaps the most important of the three.                      3. This link is explored by J. A. Raftis, 'Social structures in five east Midland villages', EoHR 2nd ser. xviii, no. 1 (1965), pp. 83-100.                      4. Cornwall, 'English country towns...', pp. 54-69.



copyholds was noteworthy for the different sorts of people it attracted. Aldermanic merchants rubbed shoulders with prominent local families and the peasantry in the competition for land. While it is interesting to see outsiders taking advantage of the free market which had developed, the locals formed the backbone of the market. We have seen in the case studies several examples of families anciently settled in the manor whose members were, at the end of the fifteenth century, prospering into the ranks of the yeomen and gentry.

One convenient way in which a local man could increase the size of his farm, at least temporarily, or obtain land for the first time was by marrying a widow. In the later Middle Ages, widows were an attraction to the landless or to the ambitious at all levels of society.<sup>1</sup> In rural society, in a period when inheritance customs generally lost much of their strength, widows' rights remained strong.<sup>2</sup> Where a widow had a life-estate in land, or held it in her own right, she was susceptible to remarriage, especially where the demand for land was maintained.<sup>3</sup> At Leighton Buzzard, widows often played an important part in the land market. For example, between 1477 and 1486, Agnes Skylful surrendered parcels measuring  $2\frac{1}{2}$  acres of land and 4 roods of meadow, 6 acres of land, and a further  $2\frac{1}{2}$  acres;<sup>4</sup> and Margery Lockley sold three parcels of arable totalling 9 acres in 1487.<sup>5</sup>

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1. K. B. McFarlane, The Nobility of Later Medieval England (Oxford, 1973), pp. 10-11. 2. R. J. Faith, 'Peasant families and inheritance customs in medieval England', AgHR xiv, no. 2 (1966), p. 91. 3. *ibid*; J. Z. Titow, 'Some differences between manors...in the 13th century', AgHR x, no. 1 (1962), pp. 10-13. 4. KK 622, mm. 45, 66; KK 623, m. 4. 5. KK 623, mm. 6d, 7.

However, many widows were considerable landholders and so were a considerable "prize" to a new husband. We have already seen Richard Wellys come into  $25\frac{1}{4}$  acres, and Thomas Dymnok 20 acres, in this way.<sup>1</sup> Other widows, perhaps older women, did not remarry but sold off their late husband's land. Alice Southwode transferred 90 acres to John Billington in 1490.<sup>2</sup> He had already acquired  $27\frac{1}{2}$  acres from two other widows.<sup>3</sup> Isabel Godynche sold 60 acres of land to Richard Assheby in 1503.<sup>4</sup> Assheby was probably one of a family with a local freehold.<sup>5</sup> In 1501 and 1502, he had begun to acquire copyholds in the manor, and it looks as if his large purchase from Isabel was the work of a man who stepped in at the strategic moment.<sup>6</sup> Occasionally we have an insight into the arrangements which lay behind the sale of land by a widow. In 1501, Isabel Capron surrendered to John Tommys a messuage and close, 11 perches of meadow, and 48 acres of land, and another close, all in Billington. Isabel retained a tenement and close in which she lived. John agreed to maintain at his own expense three cows and three sheep belonging to Isabel, and to deliver to her the issue of an acre of wheat, an acre of barley, and an acre of beans. He further agreed to pay her 3s 4d a year for the rest of her life, and to pay to her or her executors £5 10s for the land.<sup>7</sup> The same conditions remained in force when Tommys sold the land in 1502.<sup>8</sup> Arrangements of a different sort were made by

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1. Above, pp. 186, 194.

2. KK 623, m. 12d.

3. Above, p. 175.

4. KK 623, m. 55d.

5. Above, p. 134, n. 7.

6. KK 623, mm. 48d, 51d.

7. KK 623, m. 47.

8. KK 623, m. 52.

Juliana Gressell in 1506. She transferred to her executors 35 acres of land for them to sell, the proceeds to be spent for the good of the souls of her late husband and herself.<sup>1</sup> In 1507, the executors sold 12½ acres of this land to William Hicches and 10 acres to William Taillour,<sup>2</sup> and in the following year, an acre of meadow and a close to Richard Aleyn.<sup>3</sup> At Arlesey, where the demand for land was not nearly so strong as at Leighton Buzzard, widows featured far less prominently in the transfer of land in the fifteenth century.<sup>4</sup>

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1. KK 623, m. 66d.      2. KK 623, m. 70.      3. KK 623, m. 71d.  
4. Over a century and a half, I have been able to trace only eight or nine examples of land acquired from widows by men of a different family.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

So far in our discussion of the land market, we have scarcely touched on the motives which lay behind the activities of individuals. On these, the sources are silent. They record the transactions; the needs and aspirations of the participants were not their concern. Our search for motives is largely a matter of interpretation and hypothesis. Helpful parallels may be drawn between the land market in the village and the land market among the merchant class, the gentry, and the nobility. These suggest some of the reasons why men and women bought and sold land, for the basic concerns of families were often the same at each level of society.<sup>1</sup> The two most important motives which the middle and upper classes had in acquiring land were, firstly, provision for the family in the future, and, secondly, a natural acquisitiveness which was part of the cult of family status.<sup>2</sup> Parents were anxious that the family property should descend intact in the family, and yet they were equally concerned to provide for all their children. Land acquired by marriage or purchase could be shared among younger sons, or dispersed as seemed best.<sup>3</sup> In addition, land was a safe investment, a source of income, and could always be sold to raise cash

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1. E. King, Peterborough Abbey, 1086-1310 (Camb., 1973), p. 170.

2. S. L. Thrupp, The Merchant Class of Medieval London (Chicago, 1948), p. 123.

3. K. B. McFarlane, The Nobility of Later Medieval England (Oxford, 1973), p. 71; King, pp. 169-70. The same principles guided the actions of the villagers of Rossendale in the sixteenth century (G. H. Tupling, The Economic History of Rossendale (Manchester, 1927), p. 76).

or used as security.<sup>1</sup> Most, if not all of these motives were at work in rural Bedfordshire in the fifteenth century, contributing, if not to the scale of the market, then to its particular character.

Villagers were as acquisitive of land as the gentry and the nobility: this is as true of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries as of the fifteenth.<sup>2</sup> Some men, like John Halsey at Leighton Buzzard, "hoarded" land, buying up small parcels here and there over a number of years. For the most part, the land purchases made by the ordinary villager appear to have been provision for the family, whether for marriage portions for daughters,<sup>3</sup> for younger sons when the family holding was passed on, or to meet the needs of the family as children were born and as the number of mouths to feed multiplied. We cannot establish from court records any correlation between births and land purchases, indeed it is doubtful if one would emerge. But behind the observed growth and decline in the size of holdings, the influence of family-size may have been as insistent a pressure as the age and capability of the head of the family. The small size of many of the parcels of land which changed hands,<sup>4</sup> especially at

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1. Thrupp, p. 122. I have not come across any clear examples of mortgages of copyholds in the fifteenth century court rolls used in this study. While they were probably uncommon in any case, their absence from the rolls may be explained in part by the fact that they probably did not have to be presented in court unless unredeemed. A clause to this effect was included in the Cranfield customals of 1484 and 1651 (C.R.O. AD 341; BS 1761). Copyhold mortgages were common in other parts of the country in the fifteenth century (J. P. Dawson, A History of Lay Judges (Camb., Mass., 1960), pp. 236-7).

2. The prosperous peasant was "a great buyer of land" (E. Miller, The Abbey and Bishopric of Ely (Camb., 1951), p. 150).

3. Among the nobility, the practice of granting land as a marriage portion died out at the end of the thirteenth century (McFarlane, p. 64), but it may have remained common among the peasantry.

4. Small-scale peasant land transactions were endemic in rural society in the Middle Ages (R. J. Faith, The Peasant Land Market in Berkshire (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Univ. of Leicester, 1962), pp. 70-2.)

Leighton Buzzard, and the piecemeal way in which so much land was acquired and then dispersed again suggests family-size as a factor in determining the nature of the village land market. Studies of other peasant societies have suggested that the size of a family was important in determining the size of a family holding and the intensity with which it was cultivated.<sup>1</sup> The sources do point in a general way to the care which tenants took to provide for their families. We have seen how, at Arlesey and Leighton Buzzard, husbands and wives usually shared a tenancy so that a widow enjoyed a life-estate in a part or the whole of the family's land. We have seen, too, that it became common for a man to divide his customary land between his children. While the principle that "acquired" land could be divided or alienated still held good, the grip of primogeniture on rural society weakened in the fifteenth century. By 1500, villagers appear to have had few qualms in dividing the family holding.<sup>2</sup> One of the reasons why men so often passed on land to their son or sons during their own lives was probably to ensure that entry fines and heriots were paid at a time convenient to the family, rather than at the death of the father.<sup>3</sup> In the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, provision for the family and speculation appear to have been purely short-term aims. Each generation looked to its own. Land was accumulated only to be alienated at a later date. It was a characteristic of peasant society that folk had little desire to "found a family".<sup>4</sup>

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1. A. V. Chayanov, The Theory of Peasant Economy (Homewood, Illinois, 1966), pp. xv-xvii, 54-69; S. H. Franklin, 'Systems of production: systems of appropriation', Pacific Viewpoint, vi, no. 2 (1965), p. 148; S. H. Franklin, The European Peasantry (1969), pp. xiii, 18-19; B. Proudfoot, 'Studies of Conacre', Irish Geography, iii, no. 3 (1956), pp. 162-7. This is an idea which Prof. Postan has put forward independently for England in the Middle Ages (C.N. pp. xxxiv-xxxv). 2. Tupling, p. 76. 3. Disposal of land before death was common in earlier centuries (B. Dodwell, 'Holdings and inheritance in medieval East Anglia', ECHR 2nd ser. xx, no. 1 (1967), pp. 63-4). 4. Tupling, p. 76.

Bedfordshire court rolls of the fifteenth century contain plenty of evidence that ambition and investment were the driving forces behind many land transactions. While the lot of the peasantry in general improved, one development in rural society which has attracted a lot of attention was the growth of a group of wealthy peasants.<sup>1</sup> The ownership of land conferred status at all levels of society, not least in the village, and, where land could be acquired cheaply, it made undoubted sense to invest against the future. In the fifteenth century, the customary land market was invaded by men of superior social status to the peasant. This invasion dated very largely from the last two or three decades of the century, and may well have been connected with the growing protection of copyholders in Chancery and under the common law, particularly the latter once copyholders had been given the right, in 1481, to sue out an action of trespass against a lord who threatened eviction.<sup>2</sup> The chronology of the involvement of merchants in the market at Leighton Buzzard, and of the local gentry both there and at Arlesey, suggests that these people started to acquire a considerable amount of customary land only after it had gained a measure of security in common law. Although the copyholder may always have had less security at law than the freeholder,<sup>3</sup> merchants and gentry

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1. Noted by R. H. Tawney, The Agrarian Problem in the Sixteenth Century (1912), p. 70. 2. Above, pp. 10-11. 3. There was no copyhold equivalent to the final concord which secured a free estate with the backing of a royal court. In the last resort, the copyholder's title depended not on his own copy, but on the court rolls themselves which were in the keeping neither of himself nor of royal authority. In the fifteenth century (c. 1449-53), copyholders petitioned Chancery for a writ to examine the court rolls where it was thought that an incorrect entry had been made (A. Savine, 'Copyhold cases in the Early Chancery Proceedings', E.H.R. xvii (1902), p. 300). Later, in the sixteenth century, arrangements were often made for copyholders to have access to the court rolls on payment of a search fee (E. Kerridge, Agrarian Problems in the Sixteenth Century and After (1969), p. 79).

were probably at an advantage in acquiring copyhold land for their security and interests were protected in some measure by their social status. A man like Richard Page of Henlow could write to the steward of the manor about his transactions, and may well have approached him as his near social equal.<sup>1</sup> Thus, attracted by its legal protection and the ease with which it could be bought and sold, merchants and gentry invested and speculated in copyhold land. They were joined in this by the wealthier members of the peasantry, the emergent yeomen, who also bought and sold land with an eye to the profit to be made. The existence of a "yeoman-class" within the ranks of the peasantry was no new development;<sup>2</sup> what was new was the increased size of the group. By the end of the fifteenth century, it had come to dominate the turnover in land at Arlesey and Leighton Buzzard.

Men appear to have speculated purely for the immediate financial advantage of a deal. It is too much to see any of the Bedfordshire men described in chapters 4 and 5 as "professional" land-jobbers. As in sixteenth-century Rossendale, apart from the activities of one or two people, most speculation in the land market was of an occasional and modest nature.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, we have no evidence of the price which speculators and others paid for customary land in Bedfordshire,<sup>4</sup> and we know very little of how bargains were struck and payments made. Except

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1. Above, p. 108.

2. Miller, p. 151.

3. Tupling, p. 93.

4. In Rossendale in the sixteenth century, the purchase price for copyholds was sometimes entered on the court roll (ibid. p. 91).



with the smallest sums or the wealthiest people, payment was probably spread over a number of years.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps annual payments were made after harvest when people had sold their cash crop and had money to hand. Credit, important in the rural economy in the sixteenth century, must have played its part at an earlier date. Then, the network of neighbours, friends, and relatives which operated in the marketing of agricultural produce, with its advantageous terms for those concerned, probably extended to the land market.<sup>2</sup>

We know little about the uses to which people put the land they acquired. If they farmed it themselves, then they must have relied on hired labour to help cultivate some of the larger holdings. This may not have presented any great problem at Leighton Buzzard where the town was the home of many landless labourers.<sup>3</sup> If many tenants let out a part of their holdings to others, we are still left with the problem of how the sub-tenants farmed the land. The country market towns like Leighton Buzzard and Hitchin must themselves have provided a market for some of the agricultural produce of their neighbourhoods. In addition, they probably acted as centres for the collection of agricultural produce and its redirection to London where the growing size of the capital created

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1. Payment for small parcels of freehold was spread over a term of years. In 1491, Thomas Huet of Stanbridge bought 10 acres from Edmund Wiredrawer for £7 13s 4d. Thomas paid 4 marks cash down, and agreed to pay 4 marks at regular intervals until payment had been completed (P.R.O. C1/96/29).

2. A. Everitt, 'The marketing of agricultural produce', A.H.E.W. pp. 557-8.

3. Above, pp. 149-50.

an ever-expanding market for foodstuffs. Certainly, in the sixteenth century, the cattle market at Leighton Buzzard was supplying meat to London and other places;<sup>1</sup> and the market towns of Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire, including Hitchin, Luton, Shefford, and Dunstable, collected the surplus grain of the south Midlands "and were onely upholden and maynteyned by the trade of making Maults and of the cariage therof up to London by horse and carts".<sup>2</sup> There seems little reason to doubt that the trade with London was developing in the later fifteenth century, or that some of the customary land which changed hands grew corn or supported sheep and cattle which eventually went to the capital to help feed its population. The men who amassed large holdings may have done so partly to increase the number of sheep and cattle which they could pasture in the open fields and commons.<sup>3</sup>

One of the aspects of the land market which has emerged from this study is the distinction between rural Bedfordshire and Leighton Buzzard. In the fifteenth century, the influence of towns on the market in copyhold land was felt in two ways. Firstly, there was the general influence of an urban centre. The main example here is London. Apart from the extreme south of the county, Bedfordshire lay outside the area in which London had most impact.<sup>4</sup> However, London was sufficiently near (Bedford

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1. Third Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts (1872), p. 7. 2. F. J. Fisher, 'The development of the London food market, 1540-1640', EoHR 1st ser. v, no. 2 (1935), p. 60. 3. Above, p. 9.  
4. Fisher, 'The development of the London food market...', p. 56.

lies 50 miles from the capital, Dunstable about 30 miles) to facilitate trading and other links: by the later sixteenth century the city drew much of its corn from the south Midlands, and in the seventeenth century Bedfordshire had begun to send eggs and poultry to London.<sup>1</sup> Its inhabitants, looking beyond Middlesex and Hertfordshire, started to buy up both freeholds and copyholds in the county. To the east of Dunstable, the Chilterns were no great barrier to communication, and Dunstable itself lay astride Watling Street, one of the principal highroads to the north. On a less exalted level, there were the market centres such as Hitchin and Leighton Buzzard within their own, local setting. Although Leighton Buzzard must have competed with places like Luton and Dunstable as a general trading centre in southern Bedfordshire, its specialized cattle market probably attracted trade from quite a wide area.<sup>2</sup> In addition, its position at a convenient crossing-place over the river Ouzel was an advantage, for the town was well situated to attract trade from the west, and from the north, along the river valley. Thus, a town affected the land market in that it brought prosperity to its inhabitants who then sought to invest a part of their earnings in land near their homes, and it attracted outsiders who wished to invest or speculate in land as well as establish their own trade.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Fisher, 'The development of the London food market...', pp. 50-1, 60-1.

2. It is difficult to be more precise. A town like Preston (Lancs) attracted trade from a radius of some 14 miles in the sixteenth century. With cattle, the distance which people were ready to travel to market may well have been larger still (H. B. Rogers, 'The market area of Preston in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', Geographical Studies, 3 (1956), pp. 46-55).

3. The court rolls furnish a little evidence on the place of origin of some outsiders, more especially where a place-name was appended to a man's name to distinguish him from a local of the same name. Most place-names thus recorded lay within a 7-8 mile radius (Hockliffe; Little Brickhill, Bucks; Milton Bryant; Potsgrove; Slapton, Bucks; Tingrith; Totternhoe; Woburn): two men came from Ampthill and Luton, about 14-15 miles away.

Secondly, there was the specific influence which a town exerted on its immediate neighbourhood. Compared with Arlesey and other rural manors in the county, the concentration of population in and around Leighton Buzzard helped produce a greater demand for land and a more active land market. Local merchants and craftsmen joined with the parish gentry in competing for land as they built up large customary holdings. At the same time, the influence of a town on the local land market extended further, as its inhabitants sought investments in the surrounding countryside. This can be seen quite clearly at Arlesey where, in the later fifteenth century and early sixteenth century, Hitchin families began to buy up copyholds in the village, some 5 miles to the north of their home town. The influence of the greater demand for land which a place like Leighton Buzzard engendered can be seen in the large number of very small parcels of land which changed hands, the more rapid turnover in land, and the importance of widows in its redistribution. On the rural manors, the turnover in land ran at a lower level. In terms of the average number of transfers a year, the customary land market at Leighton Buzzard was four times the size of that on the rural manors. The greater number of whole tenements which changed hands at places like Arlesey, Shillington, and Willington,<sup>1</sup> together with the recurrent transfer of many tenements, point

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1. At Leighton Buzzard, the proportion of transfers larger than 5 acres never rose above 35 per cent of the market, based on a 10-year moving average, 1464-1508. It exceeded 30 per cent in 16 out of 35 years (45 per cent). At Arlesey, this proportion often rose over 40 per cent in the period 1377-1500; it exceeded 30 per cent in 89 years out of 124 (72 per cent).

to a slacker demand,<sup>1</sup> and suggest that land was cheaper to buy in terms of the consideration one tenant paid to the other. However, the behaviour of entry fines, at Leighton Buzzard and on the rural manors alike, suggests that copyhold land was relatively inexpensive to rent from the lord in the fifteenth century. The Bedfordshire evidence generally concurs with Rogers' suggestion that the rent of an acre of arable was about 6d throughout the century.<sup>2</sup> We have seen how, at Willington, rents of customary tenements fell during the century. Elsewhere in the county, rents appear to have remained remarkably stable. Only at Blunham were rents raised significantly between the beginning of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century, and here there was a corresponding decrease in the level of entry fines. This reorganization was a deliberate attempt to bring order to a situation in which rents and fines had varied considerably.<sup>3</sup> In Midland England in general, the fifteenth century seems to have been a period of stable or falling customary rents.<sup>4</sup> The great increase in rents associated with the Tudor Age did not commence until the 1520s.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps the strongest evidence for the lack of demand for land

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1. As they did in Worcestershire (R. K. Field, The Worcestershire Peasant in the Later Middle Ages (Unpublished M.A. thesis, Univ. of Birmingham, 1962), pp. 184-5.) 2. J. E. T. Rogers, A History of Agriculture and Prices in England, i. 688. Presumably this figure does not represent the true cost of land to the tenant, for the real rent of customary land should be adjusted to include the incidental payments, such as entry fine and heriot, sums which, all too often, are not entered on the court roll.

3. A similar reform resulted in a greater uniformity of rents on the northern estates of the Percy family in 1517 (J. M. W. Bean, The Estates of the Percy Family, 1416-1537 (Oxford, 1958), p. 61). 4. M. Spufford, A Cambridgeshire Community (Leicester, 1965), pp. 34, 37; E. B. Dewindt, Land and People in Holywell-cum-Needlingworth (Toronto, 1972), pp. 145-6.

5. I. Blanchard, 'Population change, enclosure, and the early Tudor economy', ECHR 2nd ser. xxiii, no. 3 (1970), pp. 434-5.

on many manors lies in the behaviour of entry fines.<sup>1</sup> At Arlesey, the general level of fines increased towards the end of the century, but elsewhere fines appear to have remained as stable as rents. At Leighton Buzzard, where the demand for land was stronger, there are no signs that entry fines were higher than elsewhere or that they increased in the fifteenth century. Like rents, entry fines came to be protected by manorial custom, particularly on manors where copyhold was of inheritance. On manors where copyhold was for a term of years or for life, entry fines were often "uncertain", the result of bargaining between tenant and steward, but they were not supposed to have been "unreasonable".<sup>2</sup> As late as 1540, Sir John Gostwick could urge his son to "take not above one yeres rent for a fyne", this at Willington, a manor where copyhold was for a term or for life.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps rents at Willington had begun to climb from their fifteenth-century nadir by this time.

The differences in the land market between Leighton Buzzard and the rural manors can be explained largely in terms of the town's size and trade, and the demand for land which these brought about. It is much more difficult to decide which factors may have accounted for the trends in the market in the countryside in the fifteenth century, both those which produced differences between manors, and those which encouraged the trends which we have studied on just one manor. Perhaps the most marked difference between the manors studied above lay in the virtual disappearance of a

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1. Faith, The Peasant Land Market, pp. 88-9.      2. Kerridge, pp. 38-9.  
3. A. G. Dickens, 'Estate and household management in Bedfordshire, c. 1540', B.H.R.S. xxxvi (1956), p. 44.

market in small parcels of land at Shillington, Barton, Cranfield, Blunham, and Willington between about 1400 and 1450, and its continued presence at Arlesey throughout the century, despite the importance there of the turnover in semi-virgates and virgates. Those factors which may have influenced the rural land market include differences in the pressure of population on land, differences in tenure, in estate administration, and in the site and situation of manors.

The fifteenth century appears to have been a time when there was little population pressure in Bedfordshire. Rather, the sources reflect the absence of this pressure. Rural mobility may have led to greater concentrations of population in certain localities, perhaps where there were more favourable soil conditions, or where there were tenurial advantages. At Arlesey, for example, where copyhold tenure was of inheritance, this may have proved attractive to people in manors where tenure was for life or for a term of years. The continuous occupation implicit in copyhold of inheritance lent force to the manorial custom which protected a family's title.<sup>1</sup> But there is little sign that the other copyhold tenures in Bedfordshire were any less secure to customary tenants in the fifteenth century - many landlords cannot have been in a position to dictate terms to their tenants. And at Arlesey, there is no evidence to suggest that the manorial population grew before the sixteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Thereafter, there are signs from Blunham that the

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1. I. S. Leadam, 'The Inquisition of 1517: Inclosures and Evictions', pt. i, T.R.H.S. new ser. vi (1892), pp. 253-4. 2. Above, p. 96.

land market began to respond to an increase in the village population. The market in small parcels of land revived, and the number of customary tenants fell as a few men consolidated their position in the manor, buying up land and driving others off it.<sup>1</sup>

Estate administration may have had an important effect on the rural land market. It is noticeable that on those manors where the demesne was let in parcels to the tenants at the end of the fourteenth century (the Ramsey manors, Blunham, and Willington), the market in customary land came to be one dominated by quarterlands, semi-virgates, and virgates. The extra land available to the tenants, coupled with the absence of any population pressure, removed any real demand for small parcels of land, for land was plentiful and relatively cheap. Perhaps at Arlesey the continuing importance of a turnover in small parcels of land was due to the demesne being in the hands of one firmarius,<sup>2</sup> which deprived local people of an extra source of land. The effect which an administrative decision could have on the land market can be seen quite clearly at Blunham in the wake of the "charter" of 1471 which aimed at stopping the complete disintegration of whole tenements. The rental of 1498 shows that the "charter" was successful in maintaining the core of a number of tenements which might otherwise have split further.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps the turnover in whole

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1. Above, p. 69.                      2. We do not know for sure who farmed the demesne in the fifteenth century. The bailiff of the manor was often described as being the firmarius too, but at Leighton Buzzard the bailiff-cum-firmarius was primarily a rent collector, and this may have been the function of the Arlesey firmarius. On the other hand, most of the demesne appears to have been let to one man in 1514, and it may well have been let like this at an earlier date (above, pp. 91-2.)

3. Above, p. 66.



tenements, which was so marked on the rural manors, was encouraged in some way by those landlords who did not wish to see the basis of their former labour services disappear.

The site and situation of manors in Bedfordshire may have had only a general effect on the land market in the fifteenth century. Where so much of the county was covered with heavy clay soils, there can have been few places in which soils positively favoured the turnover in land. In the north and north-west, the remoteness of the area from any urban centre, combined with the poor soils, may have resulted in an environment less favourable to land-dealing than that further south. At Podington, for example, for the 31 years between 1384 and 1457 for which we have a record, the court rolls recorded only 77 land transfers of all descriptions - an average of just over two a year, less than half that at Shillington or Arlesey over a similar period.<sup>1</sup> Distance from a market centre and ease of communication may have had as important an influence on the land market as local topography. The history of Arlesey in the fifteenth century lends support to this suggestion. Here, the village lay close to Hitchin and other market towns in Hertfordshire, which in turn fell within the area over which the London food market exerted considerable influence. Within the one village, individuals may have tried to buy parcels of land in furlongs where soils and drainage were better than in others. But where

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1. Based on the Podington court rolls (C.R.O. OR 798-800).

so much land changed hands, and often in such large parcels, the random distribution of strips over fields and furlongs must have been an effective barrier to such conscious decision-making.

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Appendix 1: Land measurement in England in the Middle Ages

Before the growth in demesne farming in the thirteenth century, surface or areal measurement was largely unknown in rural England. For many centuries men had worked by linear measure alone.<sup>1</sup> As the thirteenth century progressed, it became increasingly common for landlords to introduce onto their estates the measured survey of the demesne. The change from a traditional to a more rigorous measurement was gradual and spasmodic,<sup>2</sup> but much land which had been measured in customary acres in 1200 would have been measured in statute acres a century or so later.<sup>3</sup> Customary land, however, continued to be measured in customary acres.<sup>4</sup> The acres, half-acres, and roods which made up a customary holding referred, not to an accurate measure of land, but to the strips of arable as they lay in the open fields. As Maitland put it, "The acre does not begin by being 4840 square yards; it begins by being a strip (i.e. "selion") in the fields that is ploughed in a forenoon".<sup>5</sup> A strip was itself a unit of tenure,<sup>6</sup> which

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1. G. H. Fowler, Four Pre-Enclosure Village Maps (B.H.R.S. Quarto Memoirs, ii, 1936), p. 25. While there is evidence for accurate linear measure in the 10-12th centuries, there is less for an accurate conversion of linear measures into areal.
2. On the manors of the bishopric of Winchester, measured acres were used in and after 1232, but on a number of manors customary measurement was reintroduced later on (J. Z. Titow, Winchester Yields (Camb., 1972), pp. 9, 150-1).
3. The change can be followed particularly clearly at Cuxham, Oxon (P. D. A. Harvey, A Medieval Oxfordshire Village (Oxford, 1965), pp. 41-4). The statute acre was measured with a 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ -foot perch; there was a great variety of perch-lengths in England in the Middle Ages, and references to "statute" measure, or "the king's perch", often meant little more than measurement by one particular perch.
4. There are, of course, examples of customary holdings being measured (and of discrepancies between their customary and statute acreage) but generally customary measurement continued. At Sedgenho, an effort was made to bring order to the tenements in the wake of the political disturbances of Stephen's reign. The arable was redivided "per provisum seniorum et per mensuram pertici...et unicunque rationabiliter assignandas" (P. Vinogradoff, Villainage in England (Oxford, 1892), pp. 233-4, 457-8). Clear examples of the discrepancies between customary and a more rigorous measurement may be seen in the extents of the manors of Bury St Edmunds, 1357 (B.M. Add. MS. 14849, fos. 6r-29v).
5. F. W. Maitland, Domesday Book and Beyond (Camb., 1897), p. 449.
6. The commonest size of strip in Bedfordshire in the Middle Ages was the half-acre, but strips varied in size considerably. Reasons behind the variations are not fully understood (H. M. Clark, 'Selion size and soil type', AgHR viii, no. 2 (1960), pp. 91-8.)

consisted of one or more selions. The selion was the basic unit of ploughing, corresponding to the "ridge" on the ground. An acre in the open fields consisted of a number of selions. While it was common for an acre to consist of four selions, each roughly one rood in size, not all selions were the same size.<sup>1</sup> The simplest way to assess the size of a parcel of land was to count the selions it contained.<sup>2</sup> The acreage was worked out by assessing the surface area of each selion.<sup>3</sup> While each acre in a tenement was probably roughly the same size, variations could occur, and a person with, say, ten acres might conceivably have held more land than one with eleven.<sup>4</sup>

Although peasant arable was not usually measured accurately, meadow land often was. Bedfordshire court rolls contain numerous references to holdings of so-many perches of meadow, or poles, or chains.<sup>5</sup> The greater care taken over the division of meadow reflected its relative scarcity, its greater value per acre compared with arable, and its lack of a natural

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1. At Northill (Beds) the court roll for 1495 contained descriptions of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  selions containing half an acre and half a rood, and 4 selions which were estimated to contain 1 acre (P.R.O. SC2/153/35). 2. At Leighton Buzzard, a parcel of land was only occasionally measured in selions (C.R.O. KK 623, mm. 60d, 62d); when butts and headlands were transferred, they were seldom measured. In other parts of the country, notably Lincolnshire, it was more common for land to be measured in selions than in acres, though the estimated size of a selion was sometimes noted. The most convenient source for Lincolnshire is the Registrum Antiquissimum of the Cathedral Church of Lincoln, ed. C. W. Foster and K. Major (10 vols., L.R.S. 1931-73).

3. Registrum Antiquissimum, ii. 238-9, for a typical example.

4. The differences in the size of individual acres could be quite significant. At the end of the twelfth century, the monks of Thame exchanged land in Stoke Talmage,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  acres for  $3\frac{1}{2}$  acres "et he tres acre et dimidia non excedunt quantitatem predictarum duarum acrarum et dimidie in mensura" (The Thame Cartulary, ed. H. E. Salter (Oxfordshire Rec. Soc. 25, 1947), pp. 100-1). At Leighton Buzzard, in 1515, one acre of land contained only 3 roods (S.B.T. DR 18, unnumbered). 5. Leighton Buzzard (KK 622, mm. 5d, 62), Arlesey (C.R.O. IN 58, m. 8), Henlow (C.R.O. L26/686; six "cheins" of meadow).

division into selions. However, it is never clear whether the measurement of meadow was an areal or a linear measure. In many cases, measurement by the perch may have meant the measure of the width of the parcel. The length was "as it lay", the length of the particular furlong in which the meadow lay. This was standard to all parcels within the one furlong and so did not need to be measured.<sup>1</sup>

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1. A clear example of this method of measuring meadow occurs in the Eynsham Cartulary; at Eynsham, the width of the meadow was measured, and the length of some parcels too, while others were estimated: "...tenet pro i roda in latitudine iiii partes pertice, iii pedes (et) longitudinis ut iacet" (The Cartulary of the Abbey of Eynsham, ed. H. E. Salter (Oxford Hist. Soc. xlix, li, 1907-8), ii. 35-6).

Appendix 2: The Blunham "Charter" of 1471 (C.R.O. L26/229)

The trewe coppye of Blunham Charter made unto them by Edmonde late Earle of Kent.

To all to whome this present writing indented shall coome, Edmonde, Earle of Kent, lorde of Hasting', Weyfford, and of Ruthin send gretyng. Knowe ye us to have graunted by this present' at the especiall labo', instaunce, and request of our Tenautes of our Lordship of Blounham to our sayde Tenautes theare yt<sup>1</sup> they shall holde of us their Mess', Cotages, landes, meadowes, and pastures with their appurtenaunces within our sayde Lordship after the forme and tenure of auncient demeane according to certayne articles here ensuing To have and to houlde to enioye of us and our heayres to them and to their heayres for ever.

Firste, we will and graunte yt<sup>2</sup> yt shall be lawfull for every tenaunte of our sayde Lordship to bye and sell theyre Mess', Cotages, landes, tenementes and all other tenures of theirs theare to everie other tenaunte of ours theare in manner' and forme as ensueth, reserving to us such Fyne, gersume, and dutie as shall growe to us by righte and custome of the sayde tenure.

Item, as ofte as any tenaunte alieneth or chaungeth any Mess' or Cotage, he shall paye to us the duble of his rent that is leyde and assigned unto the same Mese or Cottage for the fyne of the same.

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1. that.            2. that.

A halfe yarde lande ys  
xiiij acres of lande and  
ij acres meade

A quarter lande ys  
vij acres lande and  
one acre meade

Item, that everie halfe yarde lande  
and everie quarter lande at everie  
alyenacion' and chaunge from one tenaunte  
to an other for everie acre lande  
shall pay to my Lord vj<sup>d</sup>, and for  
everie acre of meade to pay to my  
Lord xx<sup>d</sup> for the Fyne of the same.

Item, that no tenaunte shall sell nor alien an acre of lande, halfe acre,  
ne roode by them selfe but to the tenaunte of the same Lord and suche as  
will be residente within the sayde Lo<sup>r</sup>dship, or elles not.

Item, if any tenaunte will sell his Mese, lande, and meade hole together,  
that he shall sell yt to whome he will after the forme above rehersed so  
that the seyde byer shalle receant upon the same.

Item, that everie tenaunte shall kepe and repayre his mese or Cottage  
sufficyent at his proper coste and so leave yt at his departing fro the  
same; and at the firste tyme when yt is defectyve of any reparacon' to be  
amended by a reasonable daye upon a certeyne payne to be lymyted by our  
stewarde of our sayde Lordship for the tyme being; and yf yt be not by  
that day sufficyently repayred, that then yt shall be lawfull for us and  
our heayres to cease suche Mese or Cotage into our handes from the sayde  
tenaunte and his heayres for ever.

Item, that no tenaunte that holdeth a Cotage shall not breake nor dismeamber  
any parte theireof, and yf he will sell yt he shall sell yt hole to whome  
he will after the forme above rehersed.

A halfe yarde lande as  
afore of xiiij acres lande  
and ij acres meade  
must leave vj acres lande

A quarter lande of vij  
acres and j acre meadowe  
must leave iij acres lande

As for the meadowe they  
maye sell yt without  
excepcon'

Item, that everie tenaunte that  
holdeth a Cotage may purchase any  
lande of any tenaunte and occupy  
yt with his Cotage and the sayde  
Lande to sell and alyen to what  
tenaunte of ours that he will after  
the form aforesayde but to none  
other.

Item that everie tenaunte that holdeth  
of my Lorde a Messuage and halfe a  
yarde lande shall leave

styll unto the sayde messuage vj acres of Lande at all tymes unsolde  
unlesse than he selleth his hole messuage and the lande lyeing theareto;  
and everie tenaunte that holdeth a messuage and a quarteron' of land shall  
leave still to the sayde messuage iij acres of lande unsolde at all tymes  
in forme abovesayde, or elles the bargayne voyde; Provided allwayes that  
if any tenaunte of the sayde Lordship will alien any mess Cotage landes  
tenementes medowes or pastures or any other of their appurtenaunces,  
that they shall make a surrender before the steward and the Baylyffe for  
the tyme being and so the Baylyffe to present yt at the next Court.

In wytnes whereof to the one parte of this writing remayning with us /  
Thomas Malyns, Thomas Stephens, John Style, Geffery Osebourne, Thomas  
Pecke, Wyllm Brystall, Walter Plowright, Edmonde Butler, John Fysssher,



John Passelowe, Willm. Lorde, John Rawlyn, John Yereld, John Wymonde,  
Willm. Wymonde, Thomas Raulyn, John Est, John Clay, Richard Lovelyche,  
John Nokke, Robert Fysshier, Walter Smyth, Roger Taylour, Thomas Raulyn,  
clarke, Rauffe Taylour, Jn. Mylward, John Osebourne, Jn. Passelowe, Jn.  
Ward, Adam Poulter, Thomas Parthing, Jn. Moore, Walter Samwee, Edw.  
Cooper, Nich. Edmond, and Rich. Garsing, nowe our Customary tenauntes  
of our seyde Lordship, have set theire seales and to the other parte  
hereof remayning with or seyde Tenauntes, we the sayde earle have set  
our seale of armes; yeven at our mannor of Ampthill, the viij<sup>th</sup> day of  
July, the yeare of the raygne of king Edward the forthe, after the Conquest  
the xj<sup>th</sup>.

[Endorsed]

Manerium de Blunham

A trew cople of the Charter which Blunham men doo clayme for theyre  
Customes in the same Mannor

Blunham

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Appendix 3: The Cranfield Custumal of 1484 (C.R.O. AD 341)

The olde auncient Custome belonginge to the landes  
and tenementes of the mannor of Cranefeilde in the  
Countie of Bedforde by Coppye of Courte role, and  
ther used and accustomed time out of minde, presented  
and confirmed at the leet and Courte ther holden die  
Sabbati festo sancti Dionisii Anno Domini M<sup>O</sup>CCCC  
Lxxiiiiii Anno Regni Regis Ricardi tercii post  
conquestum secundo, et Anno domini Johannis Wardeboys  
Abbatis duodecimo.

The Homage and Tennantes of the saide mannor dothe saye and allwaies  
have sayd that the Coppieholders doe holde ther Coppieholdes to them  
[their] heires and assignes by the Virge at the will of the lorde after  
the Custome of the mannor payeing ther rentes and doeing ther Customes  
and services as of auncient time have byn accustomed and used.

Also, the Custome is at the deathe of every Coppyholder ther is due to  
the Lorde an Harryot, that is to saye, the best of any quicke cattell that  
the Tennant had at the time of his deathe, and for lacke of syche cattells  
the best thinge of his other goodes shalbe taken.

Also, they saye and alwaies have saide the Custome of the said mannor  
is that uppon the takeinge of any such harryot at the death of any Tennant  
of this mannor as before is saide, the same harryot is them to be praysed  
by thre or fower substanciall Customary Tennantes of this mannor. And

they saye allso that it hath ever here byn accustomed that the Tennant or onor<sup>1</sup> of any such Harryot so taken, as is aforesaide, is to have then the same harriot againe payeing to the lordes officer or officers so much for the same Harryot as the saide Tennantes have praysede it by this our Custome.

Also, at the next Courte and Leet followinge after the deathe of the Tennant, the homage must find who is next heire or what other person ought to have his landes; and yf the Tennant have a wife at the time of his deathe, then she is intituled to have for terme of hir life all his Coppie holdes, Except suche as shalbe Surrenderede from hir before the death of hir husbonde, and shalbe admitted the lordes tennant by payeing of a penny without any fyne payeing and yelding an harriot at hir Death. And after the death of the woman, the heire or any other person haveinge the Revercion shall paye for every Coppie holde that he entereth into a severall fyne to the lorde accordinge to the Custome.

Also, they saye that for suche Coppie holdes as the heire or any other person maye emediatle enter into, the Fine or Fines are to be paide at the next Leet Courte followinge and shall not tarry the womans deathe. And for every Coppie, a severall fine accordinge to the Custome of the mannor.

Also, the woman so holdinge, as before is saide, maye doe no waste nor spoile the woddes. And if she doe, the heire or any other person haveing the revercion maye enforme the homage therof and if the waste be proved

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1. Owner.

and fonde by them, Then the womans estate shalbe avoyded and the heire or any other person haveinge the Revercion payeinge ther fine shall enter. And to knowe howe she may forfytt and luse hir estate, That is if she doe make any wast or spoile in the timber and woddess or underwoddess let downe the howses make default in payeinge the Lordes rente. These are the forfittes wherby she may luse hir widowes Estate to the heire or other haveinge the Revercion or the Remainder. But the widowe so holdinge may take sufficient fier wodde as loppe of such tres as are to be lopped, plashe wodde and bushes, howse boote, Carte boote, and plough boote, kepe all manner of repracions of all such Coppy holdes as she holdeth, And uppon the same to be susspended payeing the lordes rent and a Harriot at hir deathe or at suche time as she maketh any Surrender or suche forfitt as is aforesaide.

Also, the widowe haveinge hir Estate, as before is saide, doe marry oute of the lordshippe and not dwellinge within the same may not cutt downe and carry awaye oute of the lordshippe any such kinde of howse boote, Carte boote, and Ploughe boote as to hir before limmitted to maintaine any other with all, but only them which she holdeth within the saide Lordshippe uppon paine of forfiture to the heire as aforesaide or to any other to the same Intituled.

Also, they saye that all Allienacions ought to be made by Surrender yether in the face of the Courte or ells into the handes of the Stewarde, Highe Baylye, or els into the handes of the Headborowe, sworne by the delivering

of a Rodde according to the Custome of every Surrender so made out of the face of the Courte, oughte to be presented at the leete Courte then next following. But if a Surrender be made uppon any Condicion of any coppie holde lande, the same maye remaine and stande in force so longe as the parties be agreede uppon and unto such time as the parties do call it againe and make the same void without any fine paieinge or Harryot yeldinge.

Also, every such Allienacion the Tennant that surrendereth shall yelde an Harryot. And he that taketh shall paye to the lorde for every coppie holde a severall fyne according to the Custome. But alwaies ther shalbe yelden one Harryot. And yf the Tennaunt kepe any of his Coppie holdes still in handes, Then ther is no harryot to be paide untill his death or untill such time as he dothe otherwise allienat all his Coppie holde landes.

Also, they saye that no Coppie holder is ponishable for any waste unlesse a widowe, as before is sayde.

Also, they saye that the Coppie holders of this Mannor have had alwaies to ther owne proper use the woodegrowing uppon ther Coppie holdes.

Also, if any person be Intituled in Revercion or Remainder to any Coppie holde land within this lordshippe the same may make Allienacion therof into the Headborowes hands so that the same person be admitted Tennante to his Revercion wherby the lorde is to be aunswered the Fine and suche lyke profitts as are due by the Custome.

Also, they saye every Coppie holder of this Mannor maye lett his Coppie holde for three yeres without licence by the Custome Also, they saye if any man beinge no Tennante mary a widowe who hath righte or title by widowes Estate and doe dye before hir husband, Then ought he to paye for hir harryot the best of his goodes accordinge to the Custome of the mannor as before is saide.

Also, yf any man beinge free marry a bonde woman, He shall paye to the Lorde a Pursse and fyve Shillinges for hir enfranchising.

Finis

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Appendix 4

The descent of some named and unnamed tenements at Arlesey

Notes:

a. = acre            cot. = cottage            curt. = curtilage            gard. = garden  
mes. = messuage            r. = rood            s-v. = semi-virgate  
ten. = tenement            v. = virgate

ef = descent extra-family

f = descent within same family

Fine:            entry fine given in shillings and pence

Year:            dating in the court register runs from Michaelmas to Michaelmas.  
Transfers recorded under the year, say, 1393-4, have been listed  
under the year 1394.

Families:    details about Arlesey families in the 14th century are taken  
from Two Bedfordshire Subsidy Lists, 1309 and 1332, ed. S. H. A.  
Hervey (Suffolk Green Books, xviii, 1925), pp. 5-6, 155.

Source:        C.R.O. IN 58-62 (Arlesey court register)

Text:            pp. 94-7.

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1. AMTHULL

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
a) mes., s-v.	1397	3s 4d	f
tenement	1400	10s	ef
ten., v.	1421	20s	ef
ten., 25a.	1468	20s	ef
ten., 22a.	1477	20s	ef
ten., 22a.	1502	20s	ef
b) 1a.	1505	2s	ef
	1520	-	f
	1521	2s	ef
	1526	2s	f

Other named parcels:

$\frac{1}{2}$ a. (1390-5),  $\frac{3}{4}$ a. or 1 mes./cot.,  $\frac{3}{4}$ a. (1377-1446), 1a. (1383),  
1 mes., 2a. (1528),  $1\frac{1}{2}$ r. (1389).

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2. ANABLES

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
cottage	1417	-	f
	1444	3s 4d	ef
	1465	3s 4d	ef
	1485	4s	ef
	1495	6s 8d	f
	1497	5s	ef
	1502	10s	ef
	1505	-	seized
	1508	4s	ef
	1513	-	seized

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3. ANDREWES

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
mes., curt., $\frac{3}{4}$ a.	1377	2s	ef
do.	1378	2s	ef
cot., curt., $\frac{3}{4}$ a.	1389	2s	ef
mes., curt., $\frac{3}{4}$ a.	1392	-	ef
cot., gard., $\frac{3}{4}$ a.	1450	2s	ef
cot., $\frac{3}{4}$ a.	1465	-	f
cot., gard., $\frac{3}{4}$ a.	1496	-	f

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4. AUNCELL

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
a) $2\frac{1}{4}$ a.	1384	2s	ef
	1392	-	f
	1402	2s	ef
	1445	-	f
	1453	2s	ef
	1462	6s 8d	ef
b) $\frac{1}{2}$ a.	1453	8d	ef
	1496	-	f
	1510	-	f

The Auncell family lived in Arlesey in the early 14th century.

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5. BEDFORD

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
cot., garden	1396	2s	f
	?		(f)
	1445	1s 8d	f
	1449	-	ef
	1453	3s 4d	ef
	1460	-	ef
	?		(f)
	1483	4s	ef
	1489	6s	ef
	1501	8s	ef
	1505	5s	ef
	1506	8s	ef

The Bedford family held the tenement until the mid-15th century.

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6. BODDER

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
14a. land and meadow	1497	20s	ef
	1508	10s	ef
	1521	16s 8d	f
	1526	-	ef

John Bodder died in 1497.

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7. BOUCHES

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
tenement	1392	-	f
messuage	1417	-	f
	?		(f)
toft	1466	-	f
tenement	by 1477	-	ef
toft of 7a.	1508	10s	f
toft of 12a.	1517	10s	ef
do.	1521	8s	ef

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8. BOWGIS

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
cot., gard., 1a.	1494	3s 4d	ef
do.	1499	10s	ef
do.	1502	8d	ef
do.	1505	-	seized
cot. cont. 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ a.	1508	4s	ef
do.	1513	-	seized

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9. BRETTES

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
a) ten., s-v.	1461	3s 4d	ef
	1462	5s	ef
	1472	20s	f

9. BRETTES continued

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
b) $3\frac{1}{2}$ a.	1425	1s 6d	ef
$3\frac{1}{2}$ a.	1453	1s	ef
$2\frac{1}{2}$ a.	1464	-	ef
( $\frac{1}{4}$ a.)	1473	-	ef
$3\frac{1}{2}$ a.	1500	4s	f
$3\frac{1}{2}$ a.	1510	4s	f

In 1425, the  $3\frac{1}{2}$ a. consisted of the following strips:

2a. lr., 3r., lr., lr. In 1473, Johanna Waryn transferred lr. to Thomas Hammond, this being one of the roods mentioned in 1425. In 1500, Thomas Hammond was in possession of the  $3\frac{1}{2}$ a.

The Brette family held property b) in the first half of the 15th century.

10. BRYENS

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
ten., curt., croft of $1\frac{1}{2}$ a.	1378	3s 4d	ef
do.	1396	6s 8d	ef
do.	1397	6s 8d	ef
do.	1404	3s 4d	f
do.	1443	2s 6d	f
cot. cont. $1\frac{1}{2}$ a.	1468	3s 4d	f
do.	1473	4s	ef
do.	1475	4s	ef
do.	1480	5s	f
do.	1505	6s	f
do.	1508	3s 4d	f
do.	1511	8s	ef
do.	1526	-	f

11. BURGHES or HADDYS

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
a) cot., curt., $\frac{1}{2}$ a.	1381	-	f
do.	1392	-	ef
cot., $1\frac{3}{4}$ a.	1410	5s	f
$\frac{1}{2}$ a.	1424	-	ef
b) cot.	1447	1s 8d	ef
toft of la. $1\frac{1}{2}$ r.	1467	1s	ef
do.	1488	-	f
do.	1500	-	ef

It is not clear from the register whether a) and b) were really the same.

c) mes., s-v.	1438	-	ef
do.	1446/1467	-	
tenement	1496	-	f
do.	1506	-	f
do.	1510	-	ef
do.	1510	-	ef

The Burgh family held a) in the late 14th century. The Haddy family lived in Arlesey in the early 14th century.

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12. CAPPES

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
a) $\frac{1}{2}$ a.	1378	1s	ef
$\frac{1}{2}$ a.	1381	-	ef
ten., 4a. $3\frac{1}{2}$ r.	1400	3s 4d	ef
?	?		
<u>astrum</u>	1465	10s	f
do.	1528	10s	f
b) cot., curt., $2\frac{1}{2}$ a.	1392	3s 4d	f
do.	1397	-	f
lands and ten.	1414	-	f
c) 2a. $\frac{1}{2}$ r.	1397	6d	ef
do.	1414	1s	ef
1a. $3\frac{1}{2}$ r.	1415	1s	ef
?	1435	1s	f

Break-up of former tenement into various parcels. The Cappe family lived in Arlesey in 1332.

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13. CLYSTONS or DONNES, MEWIS, or WILBONS

	<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
a)	2a.	1397	1s	ef
	2a.	1411	1s	ef
	cot., gard., 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ a.	1439	1s 8d	f
	do.	1440	1s 8d	ef
	cot., 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ a.	1443	6s 8d	ef
	do.	1448	6s 8d	ef
	do.	1467	6s 8d	ef
	do.	1471	6s 8d	ef
	do.	1473	6s 8d	f
	cot., 2a.	1484	3s 4d	ef
b)	2a.	1397	1s	ef
	cot., 2a.	1401	2s	ef

In 1397, the lord divided a holding of 4a. into two.

c)	cot., 4a.	1505	6s 8d	ef
	3 $\frac{1}{2}$ a.	1505	8s	ef
	cot.	1534	3s 4d	ef
	cot.	1535	3s 4d	ef
	cot.	1536	3s 4d	ef

The families of Clyston, Wilbon, and Mewis were all resident in Arlesey in the 15th century.

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14. COKERELL in RATONROWE

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
?	1420	-	f
?	1422	-	ef
cot., gard.	1424	3s 4d	ef
do.	1438	3s 4d	f
cot., curt., ¼a.	1448	-	ef
cot., gard.	1451	1s	ef
cot. cont. ½a.	1459	-	ef
do.	1460	2s	f
do.	1464	3s 4d	f
3 cottages	1508	6s	ef

15. COOKYS

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
mes., croft	1410	1s 8d	ef
do.	1415	1s 8d	ef
mes., 2½a.	1427	1s 8d	ef
ten., croft	1448	8s	ef
cot., cont. 2½a.	1451	-	ef
do.	1460	2s	f
do.	1460	7s	ef
do.	1468	2s	ef
ten.	1493	10s	f
ten.	1520	13s 4d	ef
ten.	1522	10s	ef

John Cook held the property in 1410.



16. COPPYDHALL

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
cot.	1444	1s	ef
cot., curt.	1452	1s 4d	f
do.	1453	-	ef
do.	1454	1s	ef
cot.	1479	3s 4d	ef
	?		(ef)
cot., garden	1500	6s 8d	ef
do.	1506	6s 8d	ef

Other parcel:

$\frac{1}{4}$ a. (1449, 1500).

Both properties were held by the Hammond family in the 1440s. the quarter-acre continued in their ownership.

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17. COSYNS or LORCHOUSE

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
a) ?	1396	-	
?	1406	-	ef
mes., croft of 3a.	1421	-	ef
ten., do.	1429	-	ef
ten., s-v.	1445	-	f
ruined cottage	1448	-	ef
croft, 3a.	1451	-	ef
toft, croft, 3a.	1464	-	f

17. COSYNS continued

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
	?		(ef)
croft, 3a.	1503	-	ef
do.	1528	-	f
b) 2 tofts, 10a.	1505	20s	ef
	1510	13s 4d	ef
	1526	13s 4d	f

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18. CROUCHES

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
a) s-v.	1417	10s	f
ten., 13a.	1428	3s 4d	ef
mes., s-v.	1440	6s 8d	f
ten., 10a.	1445	-	f
ten.	1452	3s 4d	ef
ten., 12a.	1462	5s	ef
ten., s-v.	1464	6s 8d	f
ten., 12a.	1469	-	ef
ten., s-v.	1474	13s 4d	ef
do.	1483	13s 4d	ef
cot., 15a	1483	13s 4d	ef
12a.	1485	13s 4d	ef

18. CROUCHES continued

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
b) croft of la.	1503	-	ef
	1512	-	ef
	1516	-	ef
	1521	-	ef

Other parcels:

la. (1462, 1469, 1509-16), 2a. (1504-26), 6a. (1510).

The family of atte Crouch lived in Arlesey in 1332.

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19. DAMREYSYNS

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
a) ten., 24a.	1401	13s 4d	ef
do.	1447	13s 4d	f
do.	1457	-	f
do.	1464	seized on death of tenant	
cot., 24a.	1472	20s	ef
do.	1473	20s	ef
do.	1500	20s	f
ten., 24a.	1511	20s	ef
do.	1521	20s	ef
b) la.	1508	1s	ef
	1516	1s	ef
	1521	1s	ef

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20. GARKYNES

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
plot and croft	1417	-	f
mes., garden	1442	-	f
ten.	1466	-	f
ten.	1478	-	f
ten.	1499	-	ef

A messuage existed on the property in 1383, so it appears that this was pulled down or fell down and, eventually, another built.

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21. GOGONS

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
a) cot., 5a.	1484	6s 8d	f
	1488	-	f
	1514	-	f
b) cot., 1a.	1485	4s	ef
	1517	8s	ef
	1529	8s	ef

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22. GOODHEWES

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
a) mes., 1a.	1390	-	ef
	1427	2s	f
	1427	-	f
	1463	6s 8d	ef
	1464	3s 4d	ef
	1465	6s 8d	ef

22. GOODHEWES continued

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
b) cot., ¼a.	1391	-	ef
	1395	-	f
	1396	3s 4d	ef
	1406	3s 4d	ef
	1413	40s	ef
	?	-	(ef)
	1443	-	ef
	1463	3s 4d	ef
	1477	4s	f
	1479	4s	f
	1483	4s	f

The Goodhewe family lived in Arlesey in the late 14th century.

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23. GOODEWYNS or LECHES

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
mes., s-v.	1443	1s 8d	ef
do.	1443	20s	ef
ten.	1448	-	ef
mes., s-v.	1450	20s	ef
	?	forfeited at some date	
ten.	1468	-	ef
ten.	1473	10s	f
ten.	1508	3s	ef

John Leche held the property in 1443.

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24. HALIBRED

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
a) ?	1400	-	ef
mes., 2a.	1402	3s 4d	ef
cottage	1445	-	f
b) 2 mes.	1421	1s	ef
1 mes.	1435	-	ef
1 mes.	1438	-	ef
1 mes. cont. 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ r.	1457	-	ef
c) 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ a.	1391	-	ef
	1400	-	ef

Other parcels:

2 $\frac{1}{2}$ a. (1428), 1a. (1447),  $\frac{1}{2}$ a. (1473), 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ r. (1404), 1 cot., 1 curt. (1440)

From the complicated descent, it appears that a former tenement had split. The Halibred family was resident in Arlesey in the 14th and early 15th centuries.

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25. HELDER

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
cot., garden	1438	1s	ef
cot., gard., 1a. 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ r.	1439	1s	ef.
cottage	1450	-	ef
cot., 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ a.	1465	6s 8d	f
do.	1496	3s 4d	f
do.	1528	3s 4d	f

William Helder lived in Arlesey in the beginning of the 15th century.

---

26. HOLWELL

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
1a.	1379	-	ef
	1394	-	f
	1402	-	f
	1404	-	ef
	1404	-	ef
	1410	-	ef
	1411	-	ef

Other parcel:

a toft (1396-1438).

---

27. HOYES

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
a) <u>astrum</u> , s-v.	1403	1s 8d	ef
do.	1414	5s	f
	?		(ef)
ten., s-v.	1465	10s	f
ten., 7a.	1473	10s	f
b) croft of 3r.	1508	1s	f
	1511	6s	ef
	1522	3s 4d	f
	1532	3s 4d	f

The Hoyer family died out or left Arlesey in the 15th century.

---

28. KYNSTONS or WYLDES

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
2 tofts	1451	1s 8d	ef
	1453	8d	ef
	1456	8d	ef
	1457	-	f
	1464	1s	ef
	1520	4s	f

The Wylde family lived in Arlesey at the end of the 14th century.

---

29. LADDES or SHERMANS or SYWARDS

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
a) 3 s-v.	1383	-	f
3 s-v.	1406	13s 4d	ef
ten., s-v. (Sh) )			
ten., s-v. (Sy) )	1441	20s	f
tenement (L) )			
ten., s-v. (Sh) )			
ten., s-v. (Sy) )	1471	40s	ef
<u>astrum</u> , 28a (L) )			
2 ten., 30 <sub>4</sub> a. (Sh, Sy)	1479	40s	ef
do.	1500	40s	f
ten., 33a. (Sh)	1505	40s	ef
do.	1526	40s	f
b) 1a (Sy)	1503	-	ef
	1512	-	ef
	1516	-	ef



29. LADDES or SHERMANS or SYWARDS continued

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
c) cot., garden (Sy)	1420	-	ef
cot., cotland (Sy)	1434	-	ef
do.	1435	-	ef

The families of Sharman and Syward lived in Arlesey in the early 14th century.

---

30. MALYNS

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
mes., s-v.	1443	6s 8d	f
ten., s-v.	1450	-	ef
	?		
mes., 16a.	1511	20s	f
do.	1517	20s	ef
do.	1521	20s	ef

The Malyn family lived in Arlesey in the first half of the 15th century.

---

31. MATILDA MARIOTS

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
a) 10 <sup>4</sup> a.	1378	6s 8d	ef
s-v.	1400	6s 8d	ef
s-v.	1439	5s	ef
s-v.	1468	-	ef

31. MATILDA MARIOTS continued

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
b) toft of 6a.	1439	3s	f
	1440	3s 4d	ef
	1473	10s	f

Other parcels:

cot., curt. (1396), cot. (1377), croft (1377), toft, croft (1463),  
toft and croft (1451), 1a. (1509), 3a. (1509),  $\frac{3}{4}$ a. (1378).

---

32. MATILDA MAY

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
$\frac{1}{4}$ a.	1379	-	ef
	1394	-	f
	1402	-	f
	1404	-	ef
	1404	-	ef
	1410	-	ef
	1411	-	ef

Other parcel:

mes.,  $\frac{3}{4}$ a. (1396).

The family of le May lived in Arlesey in the early 14th century.

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33. MILE

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
a) ten.	1396	2s	ef
ten., 24a.	1401	13s 4d	f
ten.	1455	10s	ef
ten., 20a.	1455	10s	ef
do.	1496	20s	f
do.	1510	20s	f
b) ten.	1396	2s	ef
	1397	1s	f
	1397	6s 8d	ef
c) 1a.	1505	2s	ef
	1520	-	f

a) and b) were two halves of one tenement divided in 1396.

c) was a parcel of property a).

The Myle family lived in Arlesey in the early 14th century.

34. PLAYTER

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
croft of $\frac{3}{4}$ a.	1404	2s	ef
do.	1414	2s	ef
	?		(ef)
croft of 1a.	1445	1s	ef
	?		(ef)
1a.	1473	1s	ef
1a.	1497	2s	ef
1a.	1506	2s	ef

The family of le Pledour lived in Arlesey in the early 14th century.

35. QUARRER

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
a) ten.	1378	1s	ef
ten.	1384	3s 4d	ef
cotland, croft	1385	6s 8d	ef
do.	1426	13s 4d	f
b) mes., s-v.	1379	2s	ef
mes., s-v.	1392	-	f
<u>astrum</u> , s-v.	1401	-	f
tenement	1404	-	seized by lord
tenement	1405	2s	ef
ten., 9a.	1444	2s 6d	ef
ten., 10a.	1462	5s	f
do.	1463	10s	ef
do.	1474	13s 4d	f
	?		(ef)
2 tofts, 10a.	1505	20s	ef
do.	1510	13s 4d	ef
do.	1526	13s 4d	f

The Quarrer family lived in Arlesey in the early 14th century.

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36. RANKDICHES

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
ten., v.	1439	-	f
do.	1439	-	ef
do.	1460	-	ef
do.	1500	30s	ef
do.	1501	20s	ef
ten., 8a.	1502	10s	ef
do.	1509	26s 8d	ef

The 8a. (1502) was a parcel of the virgate.

The Rankdich family lived in Arlesey in the 14th and 15th centuries.

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37. SMYTHS

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
a) tenement	1429	-	f
ten., s-v.	1439	-	f
do.	1460	-	ef
do.	1500	-	ef
do.	1502	-	ef
b) cot., 2a. 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ r.	1439	1s 8d	ef
	1476	6s 8d	ef

The Smyth family lived in Arlesey in the 14th and 15th centuries.

William Smyth held property a) in 1439.

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38. SPENCERS

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
ruined cot., 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ a.	1446	-	ef
ruined cot., 16a.	1455	6s 8d	ef
do.	1462	6s 8d	ef
do.	1484	13s 4d	f
do.	1488	-	f
do.	1519	13s 4d	ef
close, 8a.	1527	-	ef

---

39. STIBBES

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
a) ten., croft of 1a., 3a.	1391	-	ef
croft of 1a., 3a.	1399	1s	ef
do.	1400	1s	ef
4a.	1414	5s	ef
4a.	1426	1s	f
	?		(f)
5a.	1465	-	(f)
b) cot., curt.	1386	1s	f
	1392	-	ef
	1420	1s	ef

---

40. STOYL

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
a) mes., 4a.	1378	2s	ef
do.	1394	6s 8d	ef
mes., 3a.	1422	-	ef
b) mes., s-v.	1386	-	ef
do.	1387	3s 4d	ef
<u>astrum</u> , s-v.	1395	3s 4d	ef
	?		(ef)
<u>astrum</u> , s-v.	1422	-	ef
ten., s-v.	1424	2s	ef
tenement	1438	2s	ef
toft	1453	6s 8d	ef
10a.	1483	10s	ef
croft, 12a.	1497	13s 4d	f
cot.	1504	5s	ef
cot.	1511	10s	ef

Matilda Stoyl held property b) in 1386.

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41. TASILCROFT

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
croft	1383	1s	ef
	1396	1s	f
	?		(ef)
	1445	-	ef
	1459	2s	f
	1485	3s 4d	ef
	1501	40s	ef
	1506	4s	ef
	1509	-	seized
	1516	2s	ef
	1521	1s 8d	ef

---

42. TURKYLL

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
cot., croft	1392	-	f
cot.	1392	-	f
cot., curt.	1394	-	ef
do.	1428	3s 4d	ef
do.	1462	-	ef
	?		seized
ruined cot.	1469	-	ef

The Turkyll family lived in Arlesey in the early 14th century.

---



43. WALKELYNS

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
mes., croft	1388	2s	ef
do.	1391	-	ef
do.	1393	3s 4d	ef
do.	1406	3s 4d	ef
(3a.)	(1407)	(8d)	(ef)
mes., s-v.	1422	3s 4d	ef
mes., 2a.	1423	3s 4d	ef
cot.	1447	4s	ef
cot., 4a.	1462	1s 8d	ef
cot., 4a.	1472	10s	ef
cot., 4a.	1473	10s	ef
cot., 4a.	1474	10s	ef
pightel, 4a.	1498	40s	ef
do.	1506	10s	ef
croft, 4a.	1512	6s 8d	ef
do.	1516	4s	ef
do.	1521	-	ef

The 3a. transferred in 1408 and the preceding holding were both held by William Reydon who surrendered them to John Bregge.

The Walkelyn family lived in Arlesey in the early 14th century.

44. WARE

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
a) messuage	1384	2s	ef
cot., gard., 2 houses	1426	1s	f
cottage	1455	3s 4d	ef
b) 28a.	1445	-	ef
	1451	10s	ef
	1460	10s	ef
	1464	-	f
	1509	20s	ef

The de Ware family lived in Arlesey in the early 14th century.

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45. WARENS or MEKYS

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
mes., s-v.	1444	2s	ef
ten., s-v.	1457	6s 8d	ef
tenement	1460	2s	ef
ten., 17a.	1487	20s	f
ten., 15a.	1488	20s	f
ten., 15a.	1500	20s	ef
ten., 19a.	1505	20s	ef
cot., 16a.	1511	20s	ef
cot., 16a.	1518	16s	ef

Thomas Waryn held the property in 1444. Between 1460 and 1500 it was held by the Mekys family.

---

46. WILLIAMS

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
mes., s-v.	1381	-	ef
mes., s-v.	1407	10s	ef
ten., s-v.	1461	5s	f
tenement	1467	-	f
ten., s-v.	1496	16s 8d	f

John William held the property in 1381.

---

47. WYMARKS

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
cot., curt, 4 $\frac{1}{4}$ a.	1396	5s	ef
mes., 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ a.	1426	3s 4d	f
cottage	1445	4s 4d	f
cot., 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ a.	1448	-	ef
do.	1468	2s 6d	f
cot., 5a.	1474	20s	f

John Wymark held the property in 1396.

---

48.

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
croft, 2a. 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ r.	1387	2s	ef
	1396	3s 4d	ef
	1397	-	ef
	1424	3s 4d	ef

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49.

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
mes., curt.	1383	-	ef
	1401	2s	ef
	1404	-	f
	1422	3s 4d	ef

---

50.

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
la.	1382	-	ef
cot., curt., la.	1397	2s	ef
do.	1404	2s 6d	ef
do.	1405	6d	ef
do.	1410	3s 4d	ef
do.	1416	-	ef

---

51.

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
mes., 4a.	1379	3s 4d	ef
	1394	3s	f
	1402	-	f
	1404	6s 8d	ef
	1404	5s	ef
	1410	-	ef
	1411	-	ef

---

52.

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
cot., $2\frac{1}{2}r.$	1379	1s 6d	ef
	?		(ef)
	1396	2s	f
	1400	1s 8d	ef
	1402	1s 8d	f
	1416	-	ef

---

53.

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
cot., $\frac{3}{4}a.$	1391	-	ef
	1395	-	f
	1396	3s 4d	ef
	1406	3s 4d	ef
	1413	40s	ef

---

54.

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
la.	1460	10d	ef
	1484	1s	f
	1488	-	f
	1515	-	f

---

55.

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
croft	1455	3s 4d	f
	1455	3s 4d	ef
	1466	3s 4d	ef
$\frac{1}{2}$ r. (parcel of the croft)	1473	4d	ef

---

56.

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
$\frac{1}{2}$ a.	1421	-	ef
	1429	1s 8d	ef
	1440	1s	ef
	1464	-	f

---

57.

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
$3\frac{1}{2}$ a.	1425	1s 6d	ef
$3\frac{1}{2}$ a.	1453	1s	ef
	?		(ef)
$2\frac{1}{2}$ a.	1464	-	ef
$\frac{1}{4}$ a.	1473	-	ef
$3\frac{1}{2}$ a.	1500	4s	f

The holding appears to have split and then been reunited.

---

58.

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
2 cotlands, 2a. 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ r.	1392	-	f
	?		(ef)
ten., 3a.	1439	3s 4d	ef
ten., 3a.	1440	3s 4d	ef
2 cotlands, 3a.	1440	3s 4d	ef
2 cot., 2 curt., 4a.	1443	5s	ef

---

59.

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
3a.	1391	-	ef
	1392	-	f
	1395	-	ef
	1397	2s	ef
	1403	2s	ef
	1406	1s 8d	ef
	1415	1s	ef
	1466	-	f
	1467	3s 4d	ef

---

60.

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
3 $\frac{1}{2}$ r.	1392	-	ef
	1418	-	ef
	1429	1s	ef
	1439	1s	ef

---

61.

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
4a.	1400	-	ef
	1409	6d	f
	1411	-	f
	?		?
	1462	8d	?

---

62.

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fine</u>	
mes., s-v.	1383	-	ef
	1395	-	f
	1397	5s	ef
	1427	6s 8d	ef

---



Table 1: The size and structure of holdings amongst the customary tenants  
at Blunham in 1498

<u>Holding</u> (acres)	<u>Number of</u> <u>Holdings</u>	<u>Structure</u>
0-9	10	6 were quarterlands or the residue of former semi- virgates 4 were odd parcels
10-19	9	5 were semi-virgates 2 were quarterlands plus demesne 2 were quarterlands plus odd parcels
20-29	4	3 were made up of two semi- virgates each 1 was a semi-virgate plus odd parcels
30-39	3	1 was two semi-virgates plus odd parcels 1 was a quarterland plus odd parcels, and demesne 1 was a semi-virgate plus odd parcels, and demesne
40-49	2	1 was two semi-virgates plus odd parcels 1 was a semi-virgate and demesne
50+	1	odd parcels, plus 21 acres freehold, and demesne

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Note: The figures exclude smallholders holding little more than  
a cottage or garden, and freeholders who held little or  
no customary land.

Source: C.R.O. L26/212

Text: p. 67.

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Table 2: The land market at Blunham, 1513-73

Transfers of parcels of customary land only

<u>Acreage</u>	<u>Number</u>
0-0.9	14
1-1.9	16
2-2.9	6
3-3.9	-
4-4.9	2
5-9	12
10+	3
	<u>53</u>

Transfers of parcels of customary land with appurtenant property

<u>Acreage</u>	<u>Number</u>
0-4	76
5-9	30
10+	4
QL	12
QL-SV	2
SV	22
SV+	1
	<u>147</u>

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Notes:     QL = Quarterland; SV = Semi-virgate

Source:    C.R.O. L26/55-60; L26/144; L26/146-50

Text:      p. 69.

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Table 3: Tenements held in the lord's hands at Willington, 1408-23

<u>Date</u>	<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Reason</u>
1408	semi-virgate	no heir
1408	semi-virgate	no heir
1408	semi-virgate	no heir
1411	semi-virgate	no heir
1413-19	two cottages	no heir
1416-23	semi-virgate	<u>impotens</u>
1417	quarterland	-
1420-23	quarterland	pauper/ <u>impotens</u>
1420-23	semi-virgate	no heir
1421-23	virgate	-
1421-23	quarterland	-
1422	semi-virgate	-
1423	semi-virgate	<u>impotens</u>
1423	semi-virgate	no heir
1423	semi-virgate	no heir
1423	cottage	no heir
1423	semi-virgate	-
1423	quarterland	-

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Source: C.R.O. R212/12/1-33

Text: p. 73.

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Table 4: John Warde and the land market at Shillington, 1406-50

<u>Date</u>	<u>Entry/Surrender</u>	<u>Land</u>	<u>Fine paid</u>
1406	E	m:v	20s
1409	E	m:v	13s 4d
1409	S	m:v:f	
1413	E	m:v	6s 8d
1413	S	p:v	
1415	E	8 acres	8s
1419	E	sv	3s 4d
1421	E	croft	1s
1425	E	m: 2 sv	3s 4d
1426	E	2m: 2v: 4 acres	26s 8d
1426	S	m: sv	
1429	S	m:v	
1450	S	m: 2v: 4 acres	

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Notes: f = forland; m = messuage; p = placea; sv = semi-virgate;  
v = virgate

Source: B.M. Harley MS. 445, fos. 47r, 73r, 68r, 88r, 95r, 104r,  
114r, 127v, 130r, 136r, 229v.

Text: p. 84.

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Table 5: Manorial income accounted for by the receiver at Leighton

Buzzard, 1465-6 to 1474-5

<u>Year</u>	<u>Income</u>		
	<u>£</u>	<u>s</u>	<u>d</u>
1465-6	142	16	2 $\frac{3}{4}$
1467-8	139	18	7 $\frac{1}{2}$
1468-9	127	13	5
1469-70	140	17	10
1472-3	144	2	5
1473-4	143	3	2 $\frac{1}{2}$
1474-5	144	6	9 $\frac{1}{2}$

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Notes: These figures include the income from all manorial sources together with any arrears paid over to the receiver from the bailiff and rent-collectors (and past holders of those offices.) They are net of the charges which the bailiff and rent-collectors met.

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Table 6: Cash deliveries and payments accounted for by the receiver at

Leighton Buzzard, 1465-6 to 1474-5

<u>Year</u>	<u>To owner</u>			<u>Other</u>		
	<u>£</u>	<u>s</u>	<u>d</u>	<u>£</u>	<u>s</u>	<u>d</u>
1465-6 <sup>a</sup>	25	-	-	80	-	-
1467-8 <sup>b</sup>	35	-	-	100	-	-
1468-9 <sup>c</sup>	100	2	6	20	-	-
1469-70 <sup>d</sup>	203	5	3	20	-	-
1472-3	135	5	9			
1473-4 <sup>e</sup>	117	13	2 $\frac{1}{2}$	15	-	-
1474-5 <sup>f</sup>	96	9	7 $\frac{1}{2}$	32	7	2

Table 6 continued:

Notes:

- a £60 paid to Edward Cheyne, armiger; £20 to Lord Wenlock
- b £40 paid to Henry Haydon: £40 paid to William Redeknap de London', mercer, "pro contentacione et solucione noui edificii tenement' domine apud Seynt Austeyn gate in London"; £20 to Wenlock
- c £20 to Wenlock
- d The receiver paid over £120, plus arrears of £83 5s 3d; £20 to Wenlock
- e £15 paid to Richard Fowler
- f The bailiff's arrears increased by over £18; £15 to Fowler; £17 7s 2d to William Galle, civi et cessori London', "pro diversis stuffuris artific' suo tang'"

Sources for Tables 5 and 6: XV.61.41-8

Text: p. 145.

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Table 7: Manorial income accounted for by the bailiff at Leighton Buzzard,  
1489-90 to 1510-11

<u>Year</u>	<u>Income</u>		
	<u>£</u>	<u>s</u>	<u>d</u>
1489-90	118	6	0 $\frac{3}{4}$
1490-1	109	19	5 $\frac{1}{4}$
1491-2	116	5	1 $\frac{3}{4}$
1492-3	110	3	11 $\frac{3}{4}$
1493-4	107	15	11 $\frac{1}{4}$
1494-5	112	11	8 $\frac{1}{4}$
1495-6	109	19	10 $\frac{1}{4}$
1496-7	104	10	4 $\frac{3}{4}$
1497-8	109	6	3 $\frac{3}{4}$
1506-7	102	18	2
1510-11	103	18	1

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Notes: These figures do not include the income from Grovebury, the mills, and Radnage. The gross income from these three was about £34. In 1505, the farm of Grovebury was increased from £24 to £26 13s 4d. The figures are net of allowances for the decay of rent and incidental expenses. From the totals given, the bailiff would pay out any fees and expenses authorized by the Chapel officials.

Sources: XV.61.53-67

Text: p. 144-5.

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Table 8: The dates of courts at Leighton Buzzard for which records survive,  
1464-1508

<u>Year</u>	<u>J</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>My</u>	<u>Ju</u>	<u>Au</u>	<u>O</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Total</u>
1464			x							1
1465									x	1
1466			x	x	x		x			4
1467									x	1
1468	x				x	x	x		x	5
1469	x			x	x		x	x		5
1470		x			x	x	x			4
1471	x				x	x	x		x	5
1472			x	x			x	x		4
1473	x				x	x	x			4
1474								x		1
1475		x		x	x					3
1476		x			x	x		x		4
1477	x			x	x		x			4
1478		x		x	x				x	4
1479	x			x		x			x	4
1480		x		x	x		x	x		5
1481		x			x	x	x			4
1482								x		1
1483		x		x	x					3
1484										-
1485								x		1
1486	x			x	x		x	x		5



Table 8 continued:

<u>Year</u>	<u>J</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>My</u>	<u>Ju</u>	<u>Au</u>	<u>O</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Total</u>
1487		x			x	x	x			4
1488									x	1
1489		x			x	x	x	x		5
1490		x		x		x	x	x		5
1491		x		x	x		x	x		5
1492		x			x	x	x	x		5
1493		x		x	x		x	x		5
1494		x		x	x		x	x		5
1495		x			x	x	x	x		5
1496		x		x	x		x	x		5
1497		x		x	x		x	x		5
1498		x		x	x	x	x	x		6
1499		x		x	x		x	x		5
1500		x			x	x	x	x		5
1501		x		x		x	x	x		5
1502		x		x	x		x	x		5
1503		x			x	x	x	x		5
1504		x		x	x		x	x		5
1505				x	x		x	x		4
1506		x		x		x	x	x		5
1507		x		x	x		x	x		5
1508		x			x	x	x	x		5
<hr/>										
	7	27	2	24	33	18	32	30	5	178
<hr/>										

Source: C.R.O. KK 622-4

Text: p. 156.

Table 9: The fragmentation of some parcels of land entered by various people at Leighton Buzzard, 1464-1508

a <u>Name</u>	b <u>Trans- fers</u>	c <u>Total acres</u>	d <u>Total strips</u>	e <u>Total furlongs</u>	f <u>Coincidence acres/strips</u>
Andrewe W.	3	6	5	5	-
Bernard J.	4	6	8	7	$1\frac{1}{2}/2$
Blake J.	4	$16\frac{1}{2}$	22	18	$5/5$
Boynon W.	2	$2\frac{1}{2}$	5	5	-
Chamberley n T.	2	$4\frac{1}{2}$	3	1	$4\frac{1}{2}/3$
Coursy R.	4	7	5	5	-
Dey J.	5	$4\frac{3}{4}$	10	9	$1/2$
Doget W.	9	$15\frac{1}{2}$	18	17	$1/2$
Fyll W.	3	$3\frac{3}{4}$	5	5	-
Fouler J.	5	$10\frac{1}{2}$	12	11	$1/2$
Fouler jun J.	5	10	16	12	$5/5$
Fouler W.	3	6	6	4	$4\frac{1}{2}/3$
Gressell J.	3	2	3	3	-
Hall W.	3	2	3	3	-
Halsey J. (EC)	4	3	4	4	-
Halsey J. (LB)	5	16	15	13	$2/3$
Harding J.	3	$4\frac{3}{4}$	7	6	$1\frac{1}{2}/2$
Harding W.	3	3	5	3	$1\frac{1}{2}/3$
Harrys R.	3	13	18	13	$2/3$ $1\frac{1}{2}/3$
Hycches W.	6	6	9	8	$1\frac{1}{2}/2$
Hogge J.	5	$3\frac{1}{2}$	6	6	-

Table 9 continued:

<u>a</u> <u>Name</u>	<u>b</u> <u>Trans-</u> <u>fers</u>	<u>c</u> <u>Total</u> <u>acres</u>	<u>d</u> <u>Total</u> <u>strips</u>	<u>e</u> <u>Total</u> <u>furlongs</u>	<u>f</u> <u>Coincidence</u> <u>acres/strips</u>
Lyveriche E. (LB)	4	3	5	4	$1\frac{1}{2}/2$
Lyveriche E. (B)	5	5	7	7	-
Marten R.	3	$1\frac{1}{2}$	3	2	$1/2$
Palmer J.	8	$15\frac{1}{4}$	19	16	$4\frac{1}{2}/4$
Wayn R.	7	$6\frac{1}{4}$	10	8	$1/2$ $1/2$
Wellys R.	10	$16\frac{3}{4}$	28	24	$1\frac{1}{4}/3$ $1\frac{1}{2}/2$ $1/2$

Notes:

column b = number of land transfers

c = the total acreage involved

d = the total number of strips in the total acreage

e = the total number of furlongs in which the strips lay

f = the degree of coincidence. For example, of the  $16\frac{3}{4}$  acres which R. Wellys entered,  $1\frac{1}{4}$  acres lay in 1 furlong as 3 strips;  $1\frac{1}{2}$  acres lay in one furlong as two strips; 1 acre lay in one furlong as 2 strips. The rest of his strips lay in separate furlongs.

B = Billington

EC = Eggington and Clipstone

LB = Leighton Buzzard

Source: C.R.O. KK 622-4

Text: p. 166.

Table 10: John Halsey and the land market at Leighton Buzzard

<u>Date</u>	<u>Entry to</u>	<u>From</u>	<u>Entry Fine</u>
1465	meadow (LB)	Jn Palmer	2s
	$\frac{1}{2}$ acre (EC)	Dominic Seller	6d
	2 acres (LB)	Rog Coursy	8d
1470	croft; path (LB)	Wm Owndehull	1s
1471	2 acres (LB)	Jn Palmer	1s
	4 acres (LB-EC)	do.	1s 8d
1472	$5\frac{1}{2}$ acres (LB)	Jn le Man	1s 8d
	$\frac{1}{2}$ acre (EC)	Rob Whaddon	4d
	3 acres (LB)	Jn Mariory	8d
	$6\frac{1}{2}$ acres (LB-EC)	Jn Palmer jun	2s 8d
	3 acres (LB)	Rog Coursy	1s
	parcel of land (LB)	Jn le Man	1s 4d
1474	messuage & garden (LB)	Wm Halsey	2s
	$1\frac{1}{2}$ acres (EC)	Wm Foulter	6d
1478	meadow and land (LB)	Landlord	9s
	barn and garden (LB)	Dominic Seller	20s
	1 acre meadow (LB)	Thos Colyn	1s
1479	garden (LB)	Hen Barbour	6d
	pightel (LB)	Ric Godynche	6d
1481	2 cottages (LB)	Thos Vyrre	5s
1482	5 headlands (LB)	Hen Gaddysden	8d
1489	1 acre (LB)	Hen Wolsey	6d
1495	garden (LB)	Wm Hynton	8d
1499	2 cottages; 2 closes (LB)	Jn Saunders	5s

Table 10 continued:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Surrender of</u>	<u>To</u>	<u>Entry Fine</u>
1474	cottage and garden (LB)	Thos Barnard	2s
1475	3 acres (LB)	Rob Brame	8d
1477	4 acres (EC)	Thos Wadlowe	1s 4d
1479	meadow (LB)	Wm Mund	1s 8d
1497	garden (LB)	Jn Gressell	-
1499	path (LB)	do.	1s 4d
1503	4 acres (LB-EC)	Jn Bernard	1s 8d
	2 acres (LB)	do.	1s
	1 acre (LB)	do.	6d
	$\frac{1}{2}$ acre (EC)	do.	6d
	6 acres; a croft (LB)	do.	4s
	2 acres (LB)	do.	8d
	garden (LB)	do.	8d
1504	2 cottages (LB)	Thos Halsey	1s 8d
	garden (LB)	Jn Halsey	8d
	2 cottages (LB)	Wm Halsey	-

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Notes: EC = Eggington and Clipstone; LB = Leighton Buzzard

Source: C.R.O. KK 622-3.

Text: p. 177.

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Table 11: William Morell and the land market at Leighton Buzzard

<u>Date</u>	<u>Entry to</u>	<u>From</u>	<u>Entry Fine</u>
1468	1½ acres; 1 toft (EC)	Lord	8d
1469	½ acre (EC)	Ric Boner	4d
1470	¾ acre (EC)	Jn Perkyn	4d
	messuage; 20 acres (EC-S)	Alice Morell	-
	1 acre (EC)	Thos Godfrey	6d
1471	20 acres (EC)	Jn Morell	12s
	2½ acres (EC)	Wm Fyll	1s
1472	½ acre (S)	Hen Boynon	4d
1476	2½ acre (EC)	Jn Fouler	1s 8d
	1½ acres (EC)	Jn Perkyn	1s
	1½ roods; a close (EC)	Jn Dey	4d
1478	1½ acres (S)	Wm Boynon	1s
	1 acre (S)	Wm Barton	8d
	1 acre (EC)	Jn Blake	8d
1479	3 acres (LB)	Wm Owndehull	1s 3d
	messuage and 40 acres (EC)	Jn Harlyngdon	13s 4d
	6½ acres (EC)	Jn Perkyns jun	2s
	cottage (E)	Wm Bunser	1s
1483	1½ acres (EC)	Jn Gouer	9d
1489	3 acres; meadow (EC)	Jn Fouler	1s 6d
1492	2½ acres (EC)	Wm Doget	1s 8d
<u>Surrender of</u>			
1497	messuage and 52 acres (EC)	Wm Gunthorpe	9s
1503	cottage and garden (EC)	Johanna More	-
	¾ acres (S)	Ric Marten	-
	13½ acres; meadow (EC)	Alice Morell	-
	5 acres (LB)	do.	-

---

Notes: EC = Eggington and Clipstone; LB = Leighton Buzzard;  
S = Stanbridge

Source: C.R.O. KK 622-4

Text: p. 180.

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Table 12: William Taillour and the land market at Leighton Buzzard

<u>Date</u>	<u>Entry to</u>	<u>From</u>	<u>Entry Fine</u>
1491	1 acre meadow; close (HR)	Wm Truncheville	2s 4d
1496	barn; garden; close; meadow; 15 acres (LB-HR)	Jn Bernard	14s 6d
1497	messuage; close; 5 acres (LB)	Wm Truncheville	-
1499	24 acres; 2 closes; meadow (HR)	do.	18s
1503	2 acres (HR)	Wm Hicches	-
1504	parcel of land (LB)	Lord	8d
	messuage; garden; croft; $\frac{1}{2}$ acre (LB)	Hen Hall	-
	messuage; 14 acres (HR)	Thos Pyccher	-
	messuage; croft; 24 acres (LB)	Rob Christmas	13s 4d
1505	meadow (LB)	Ric Bruer	-
	3 acres (LB)	Jn Heyrek	-
	meadow (HR)	Rob Carver	-
	cottage and garden (LB)	Jn Bandy	-
	messuage; garden; croft; 2 cottages; 26 acres (LB)	Jn Blake	-
	2 cottages; 28 acres (LB)	Ric Gode	-
1506	7 butts (LB)	Jn Fuller	-
1507	messuage; $\frac{1}{2}$ acre (LB)	Wm Bodley	-
	parcel of land (LB)	Jn Tommes	-
	$1\frac{1}{2}$ acres; meadow (HR)	Ric Rawlyns; Wm Aleyn	-
	10 acres (HR)	Ric Noke; Ed Vynter	-
1508	$4\frac{1}{2}$ acres (HR)	Jn Rose	-
	<u>Surrender of</u>		
1506	messuage; garden; croft; 2 cottages; 26 acres (LB)	Jn Bernard	-

---

Notes: HR = Heath and Reach; LB = Leighton Buzzard

Source: C.R.O. KK 623

Text: pp. 181-2.

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Table 13: John Hogge and the land market at Leighton Buzzard

<u>Date</u>	<u>Entry to</u>	<u>From</u>	<u>Entry Fine</u>
1471	$\frac{1}{2}$ acre (S)	Thos Godfrey	4d
1472	$\frac{1}{2}$ acre (LB)	Jn Marchall	4d
1474	$\frac{1}{2}$ acre (B)	Jn Boynon	3d
	$\frac{1}{2}$ acre (B)	Wm Fuller	3d
1476	$\frac{1}{2}$ acre (B)	Thos Federy	4d
	$\frac{1}{2}$ acre (S)	Ric Beek	6d
1477	1 acre (B)	Edm Lyveriche	8d
	$\frac{1}{2}$ acre (EC)	Hugh Capron	4d
	$4\frac{1}{2}$ acres (B)	Lord	1s 8d
1478	$\frac{1}{2}$ acre; meadow (?LB)	Wm Boynon	1s 2d
1479	1 butt (B)	Edm Lyveriche	2d
1482	cottage; close (B)	Wm Robert	1s 6d
1486	1 acre (B)	Eliz Capron	8d

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Notes: B = Billington; EC = Eggington and Clipstone; LB = Leighton Buzzard; S = Stanbridge

Source: C.R.O. KK 622-3

Text: p. 190.

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Table 14: William Truncheville and the land market at Leighton Buzzard

<u>Date</u>	<u>Surrender of</u>	<u>To</u>	<u>Entry Fine</u>
1480	cottage (LB)	Isabel Truncheville	3s 4d
	cottage; 1 acre (LB)	Ric Tomkyns	2s 8d
1486	1 acre (HR)	Ric Wellys	6d
	a close (LB)	Ric Rawlyns	-
1489	1½ acre (LB)	Jn Clerk	-
1490	1 acre (HR)	Ric Wellys	9d
	2½ acres (HR)	do.	1s 2d
1491	close; meadow (HR)	Wm Taillour	2s 4d
	6 acres (HR)	Thos Gressell	-
1492	1½ acres (LB)	Alice Stevyns	1s
	meadow (HR)	Rob Carver	1s 8d
	messuage; 3 acres (HR)	Rob Peynter	3s
1496	2 acres; meadow (HR)	do.	-
1497	messuage; close; 5 acres (LB)	Wm Taillour	-
1499	4 acres (HR)	Thos Gressell	2s 8d
	messuage; 6 acres (LB)	Clement Truncheville	10s
	2 closes; meadow; 2½ acres (HR)	Wm Taillour	18s

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Notes: HR = Heath and Reach; LB = Leighton Buzzard

Sources: C.R.O. KK 622-3

Text: p. 193.

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Table 15: Richard Wayn and the land market at Leighton Buzzard

<u>Date</u>	<u>Entry to</u>	<u>From</u>	<u>Entry Fine</u>
1483	$\frac{1}{2}$ acre (S)	Jn Rowell	4d
	$\frac{1}{2}$ acre (S)	Wm Wayn	4d
1487	1 acre (S)	Matt Baldok	1s
1491	1 acre (S)	do.	-
1494	1 acre (S)	Jn Baldok	8d
	2 acres (S)	do.	1s 4d
1497	$\frac{1}{4}$ acre (S)	Jn Day	4d
1500	$\frac{1}{4}$ acre (S)	do.	-
1506	cottage; $\frac{1}{2}$ acre; a parcel of land (EC)	Jn Carpenter jun	-

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Notes: EC = Eggington and Clipstone; S = Stanbridge

Source: C.R.O. KK 622-3

Text: p. 195.

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Table 16: Richard Lorymer and the land market at Arlesey

<u>Date</u>	<u>Land</u>	<u>Entry from</u>	<u>Entry Fine</u>
1500	2 tenements; 42 acres	Hen Phelip	30s
	tenement; 15 acres	Wm Mekys	20s
	land	Lord	40s
	1 acre	Jn Cowper	1s 8d
1502	tenement; 8 acres	Thos Phelip	10s
1503	meadow	Lord	40s
	1 acre	Jn Ferre	3s 4d
	croft; 2 acres	Wm Hammond	6s
1504	meadow; 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ acres	Lord	40s
1505	cottage; garden	Lord	13s 4d
	2 tofts; 10 acres	Lord	20s
1506	pightel; 5 acres	Jn Walker	12s
1509	$\frac{1}{4}$ acre	Alice Jeve	8d
1510	1 acre	Jn Wilkinson	2s
1511	cottage; 1 acre 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ roods	Hen Harryson	8s
1515	croft; 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ acres	Jn Smith	10s
<u>Surrender to</u>			
1502	2 tenements; 42 acres	Wm Hammond	20s
1505	tenement; 19 acres	Jn Wilkinson	20s
1509	meadow	Jn Smith	13s 4d
	tenement; 8 acres	Jn Smith	26s 8d
1510	2 tofts; 10 acres	Jn Hemming	13s 4d

Table 16 continued:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Land</u>	<u>Surrender to</u>	<u>Entry Fine</u>
1512	close	Jn Bolles	6s
	croft; 4 acres	do.	6s 8d
	cottage; garden	do.	-
	croft; 2 acres	do.	-
	1 acre	do.	-
	cottage; 1 acre $3\frac{1}{2}$ roods	do.	-
	1 acre	do.	-
	1 acre	do.	-
	$\frac{1}{4}$ acre	do.	-
1515	croft; $2\frac{3}{4}$ acres	Thos Kyrke	10s
1530	2 acres	Jn Page	-

---

Source: C.R.O. IN 62

Text: p. 106.

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Table 17: Richard Page and the land market at Arlesey

<u>Date</u>	<u>Land</u>	<u>Entry from</u>	<u>Entry Fine</u>
1516	1 acre	Lord	1s 8d
	$\frac{1}{2}$ acre	Jn Benett	1s
	croft	Ric Hurlebat	2s
	close	Jn Bolles	7s
	croft; 4 acres	Jn Bolles	4s
	cottage; garden; croft; 3 acres	Jn Bolles	10s
	cottage; 1 acre $3\frac{1}{2}$ roods; $2\frac{1}{4}$ acres	Jn Bolles	8s
	1 acre	Jn Rande	1s
1517	croft; 12 acres	Thos Cowper	10s
	messuage; 16 acres	Thos Cowper	20s
1519	cottage; 16 acres	Thos Fanne	13s
1520	1 acre	Jn Plott	6s
1521	tenement; 24 acres	Jn Hemming	20s
		<u>Surrender to</u> <sup>a</sup>	
1521 (dies)	messuage; 16 acres		20s
	1 acre		1s
	croft		1s 8d
	$\frac{1}{2}$ acre		6d
	1 acre		1s
	croft; 12 acres		8s
	1 acre		1s
(held)	croft		
	croft; 4 acres		
	tenement; 24 acres		

Table 17 continued:

Notes:           a = the first 7 properties were surrendered to John  
                      Mordaunt, knight, Cecily Page, Richard's widow,  
                      Nicholas Harding, John Page, Richard's son and heir,  
                      John Harding son and heir of Nicholas, and Richard  
                      Harding, son of Nicholas.

Source:           C.R.O. IN 62, mm. 10-14.

Text:            p. 107.

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a)

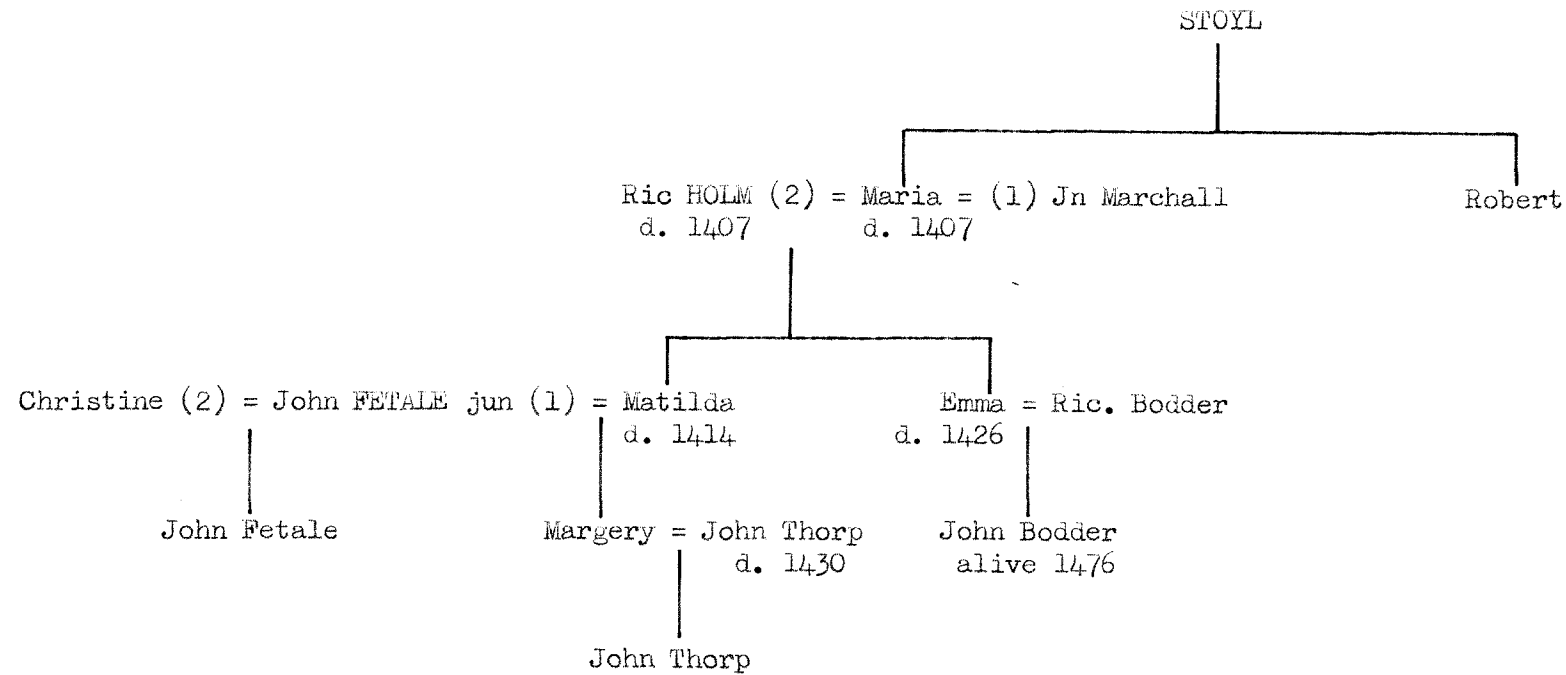


Figure 1: Some Arlesey genealogies

Source: C.R.O. IN 58-62

Text: p. 100.

b)

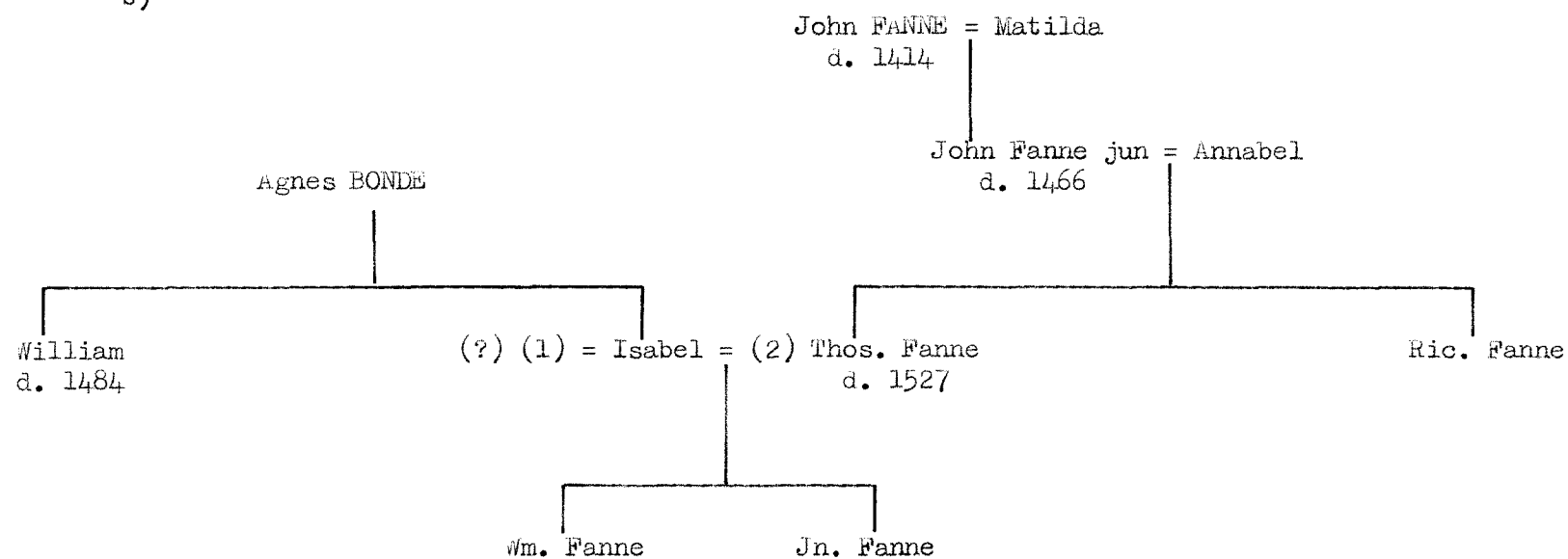


Figure 1 continued:

Source: C.R.O. IN 58-62

Text: p. 100.



c)

Robert HALIBRED = ( ? )

Roger Halibred (2) = Christine = (1) Ric. COLE  
d. 1420 d. 1385

Wm. FANNE (1) = Matilda = (2) John Plott, d. 1439  
= (3) John Symper

Ric. Fanne Jun.  
alive 1473

Figure 1 continued:

Source: C.R.O. IN 58-62

Text: p. 100.

d)

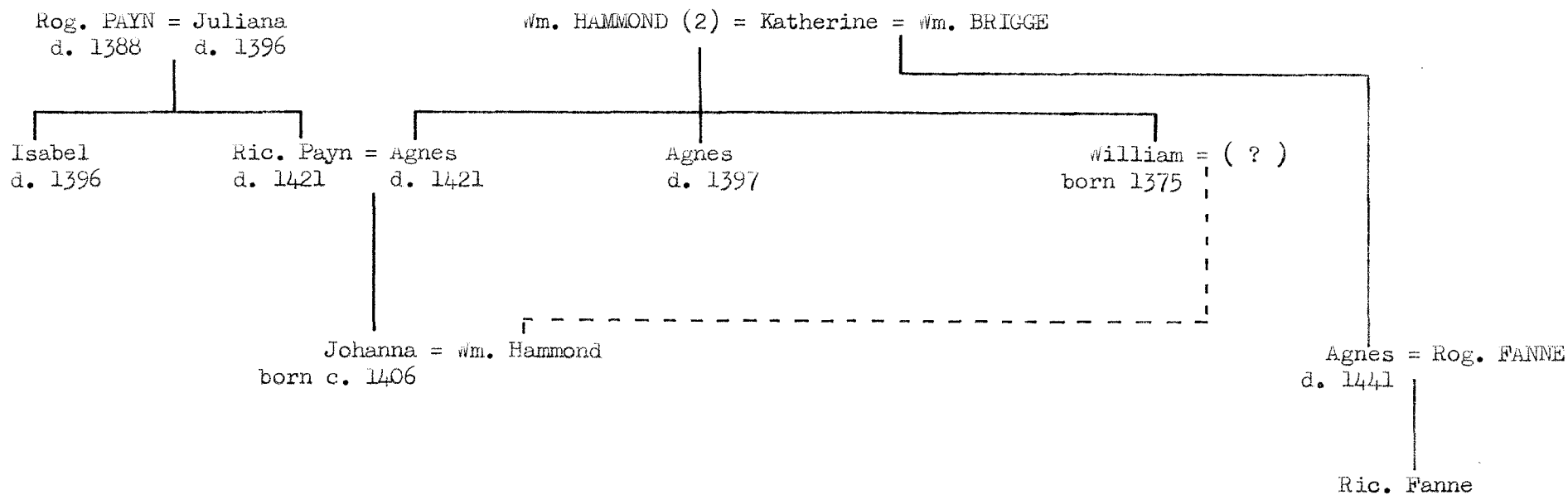


Figure 1 continued:

Source: C.R.O. LN 58-62

Text: p. 100.

e)

Walter RANKEDICHE = ( ? )

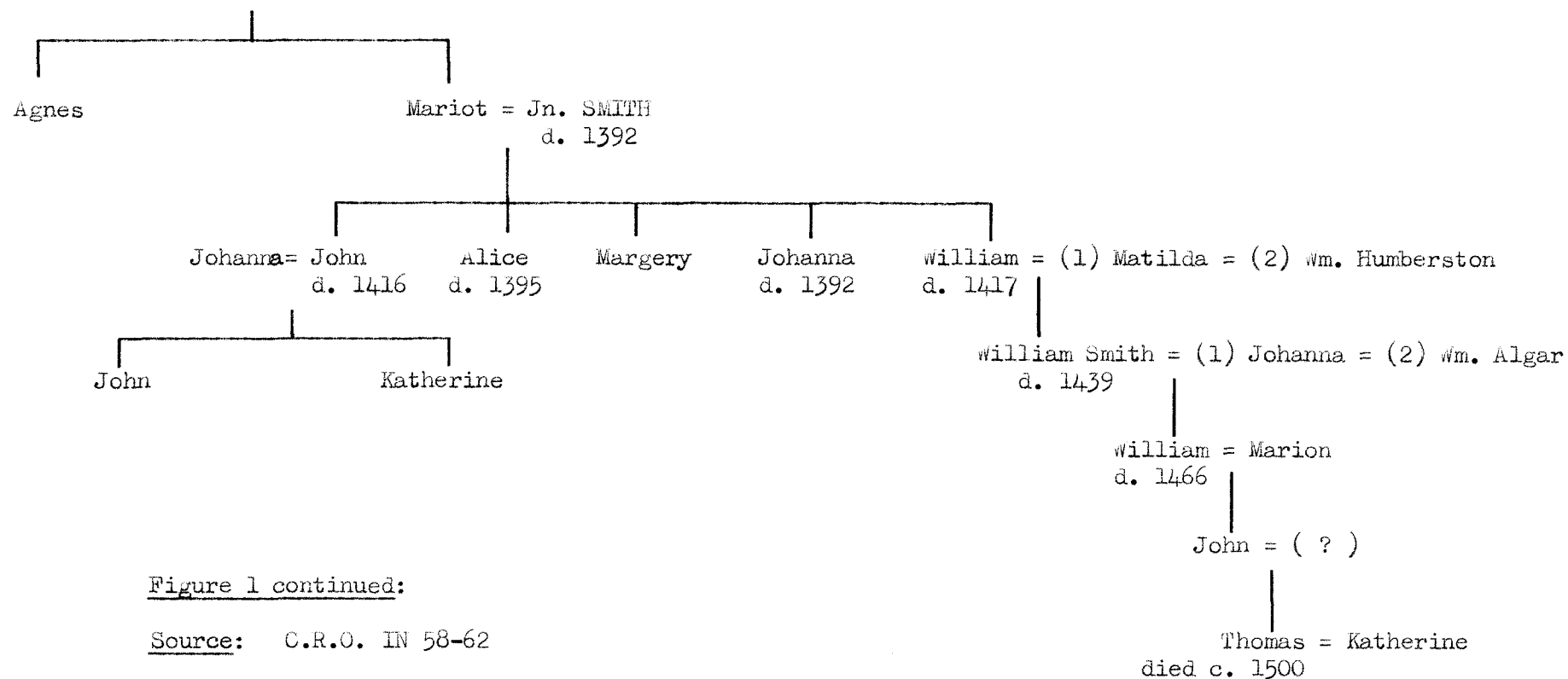


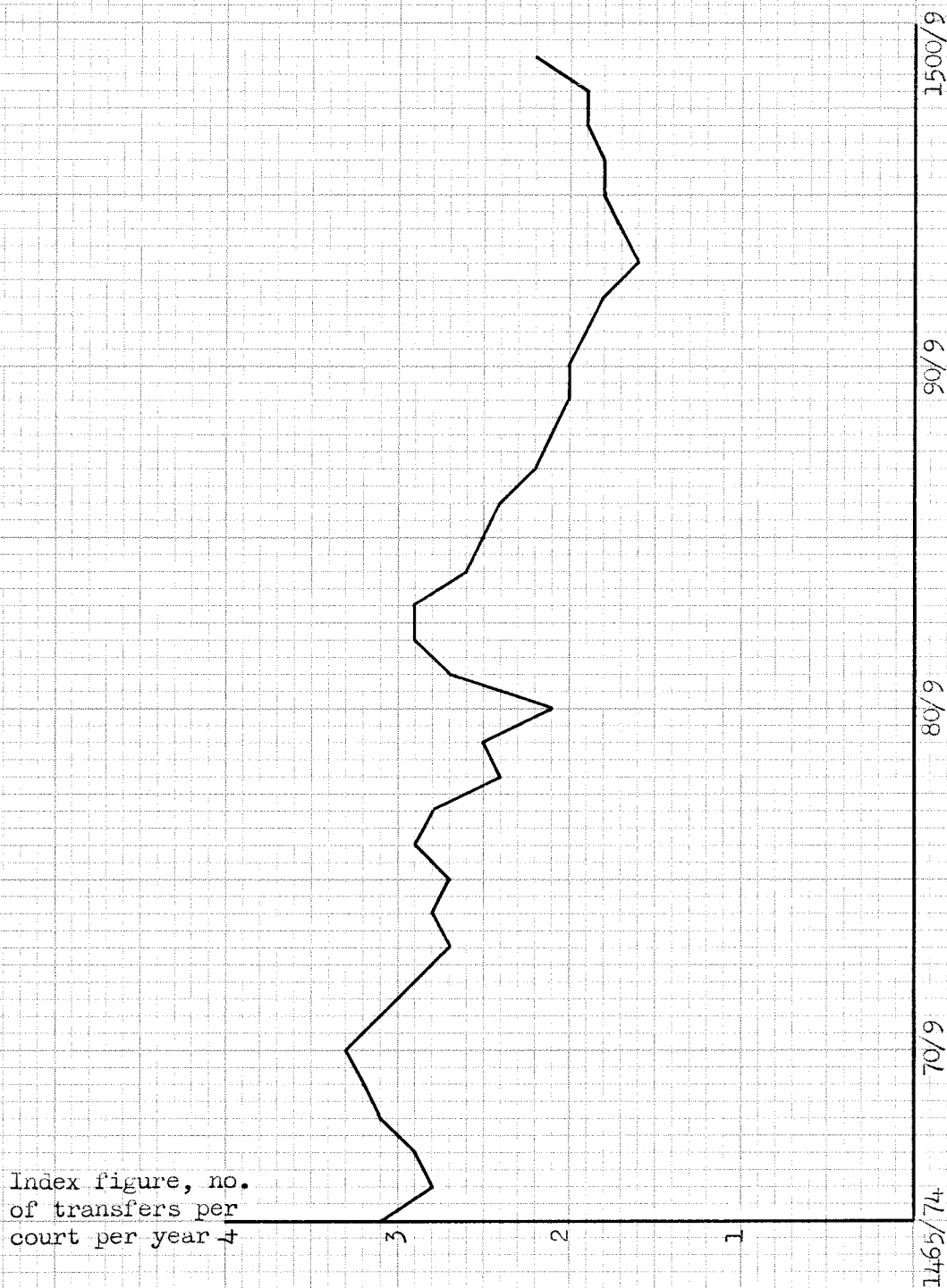
Figure 1 continued:

Source: C.R.O. IN 58-62

Text: p. 100.

Figure 2: The trend-line in land-dealing at Leighton Buzzard, 1414-1508

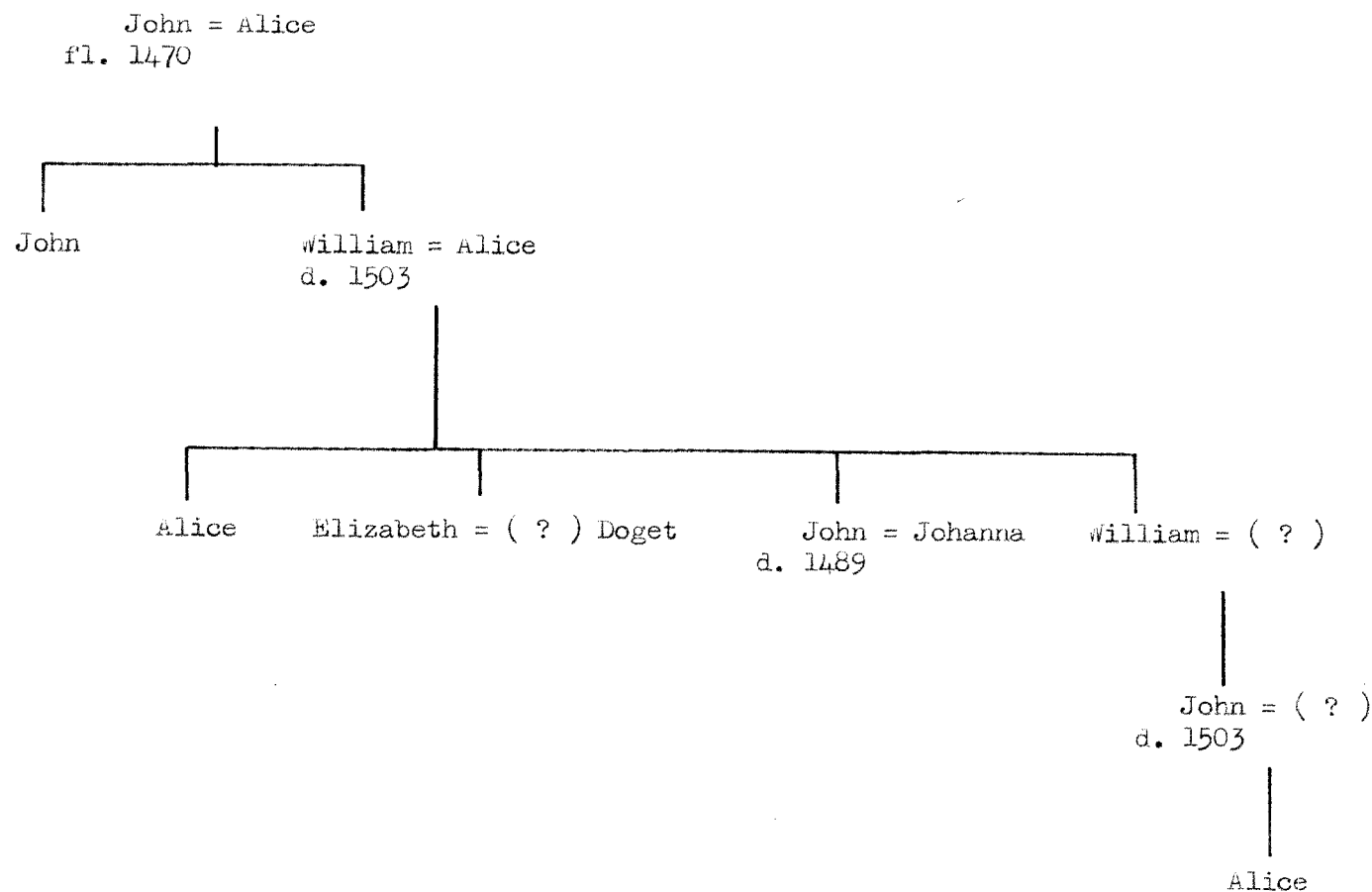
(based on a ten-year moving average of the number of transfers per court per year)



Index figure, no.  
of transfers per  
court per year

Source: Beds. C.R.O. KK 622, 623

Text: p.161.



Anna Brocas (nee) Morell was probably a daughter of John senior or junior

Figure 3: The Morell pedigree (Leighton Buzzard)

Source: C.R.O. KK 622-3

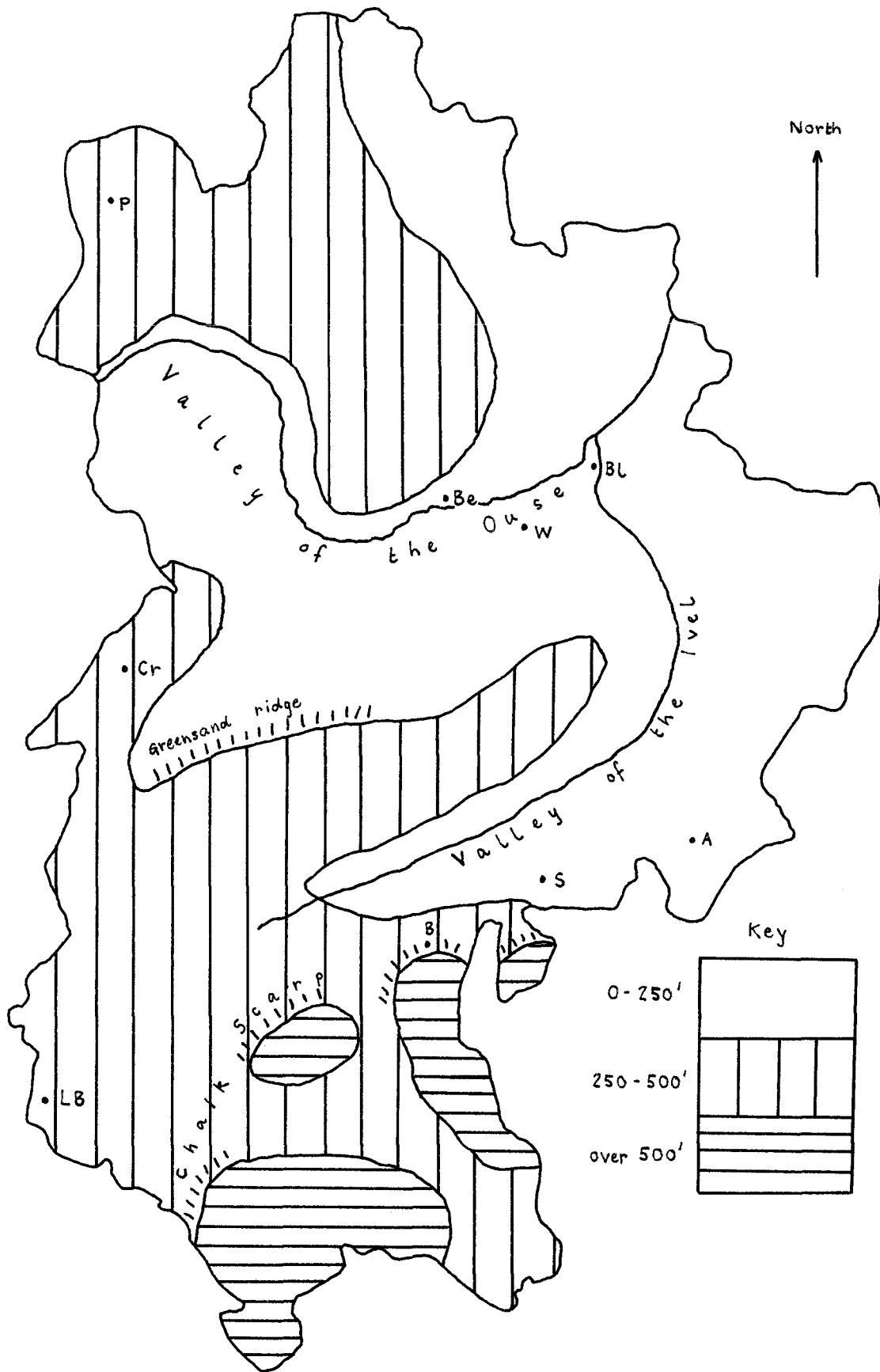
Text: p. 179.

A	Arlesey
B	Barton
Be	Bedford
Bl	Blunham
Cr	Cranfield
LB	Leighton Buzzard
P	Podington
S	Shillington
W	Willington

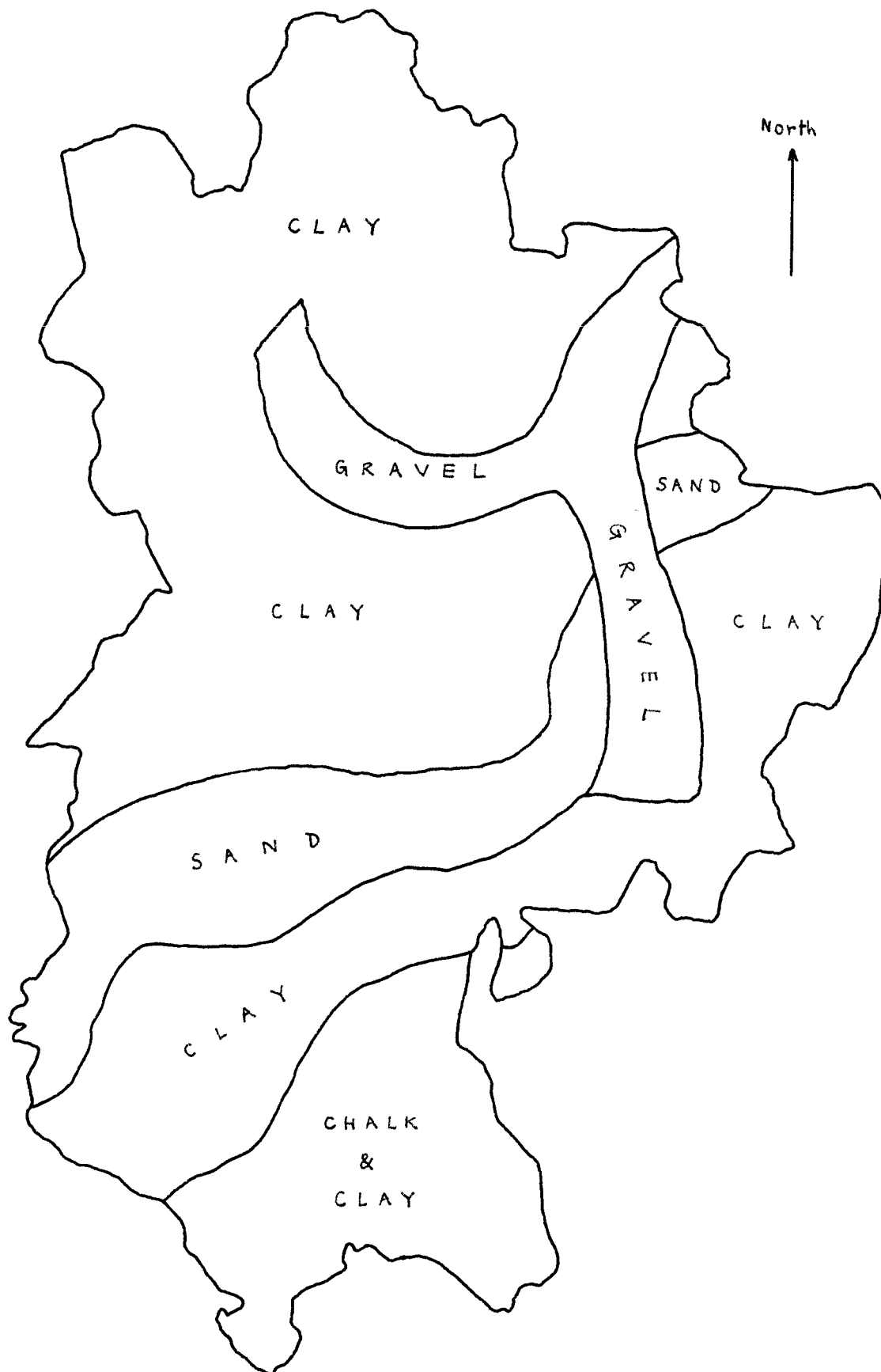
Map 1:      General Topography of Bedfordshire  
(showing principal manors discussed in the text)

Scale:      One inch = 4 miles

Text:      p. 31.



MAP 1



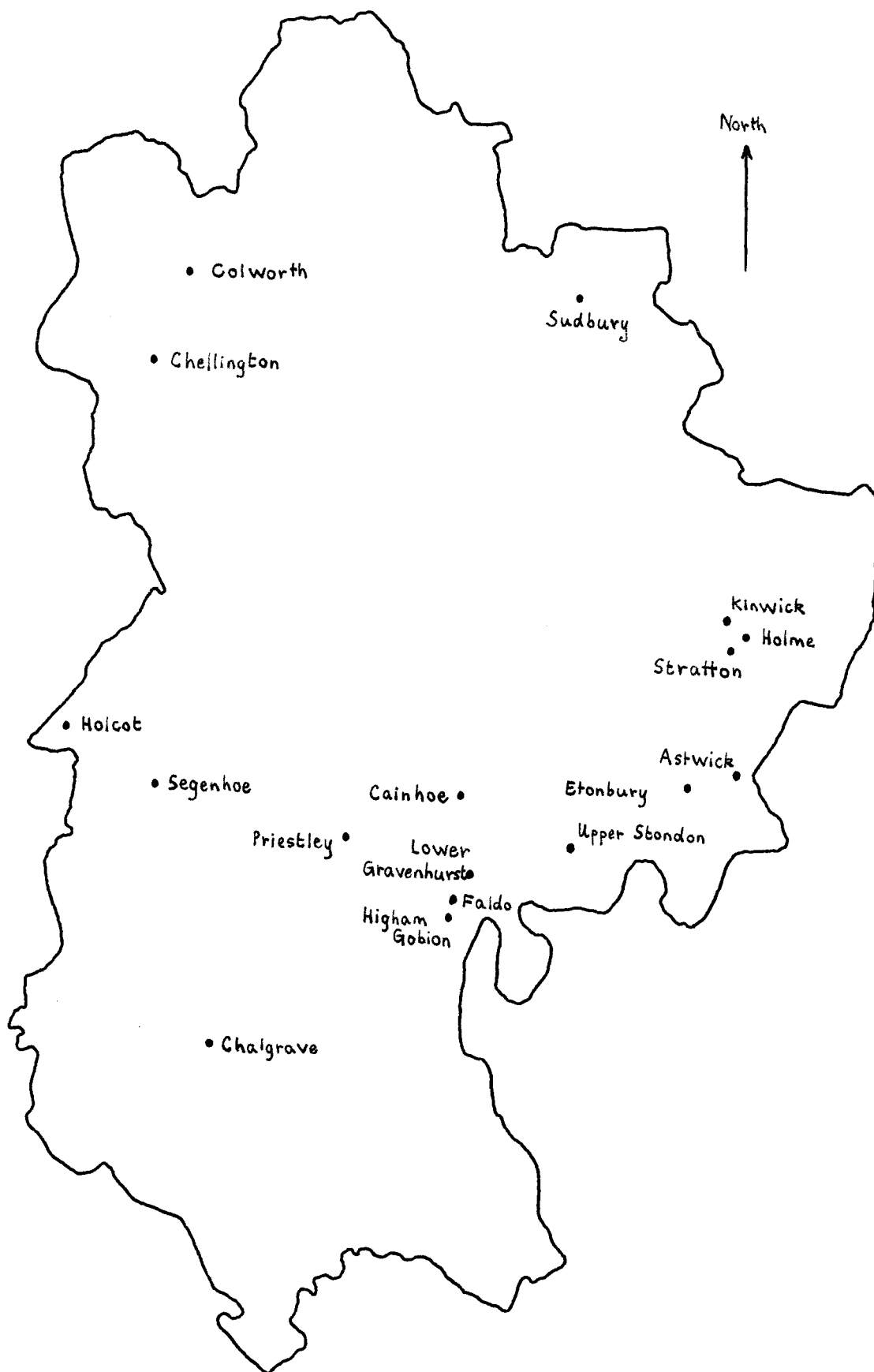
Map 2:      General soil map of Bedfordshire

Source:     Fitchett: King

Scale:      One inch = 4 miles

Text:       p. 32.



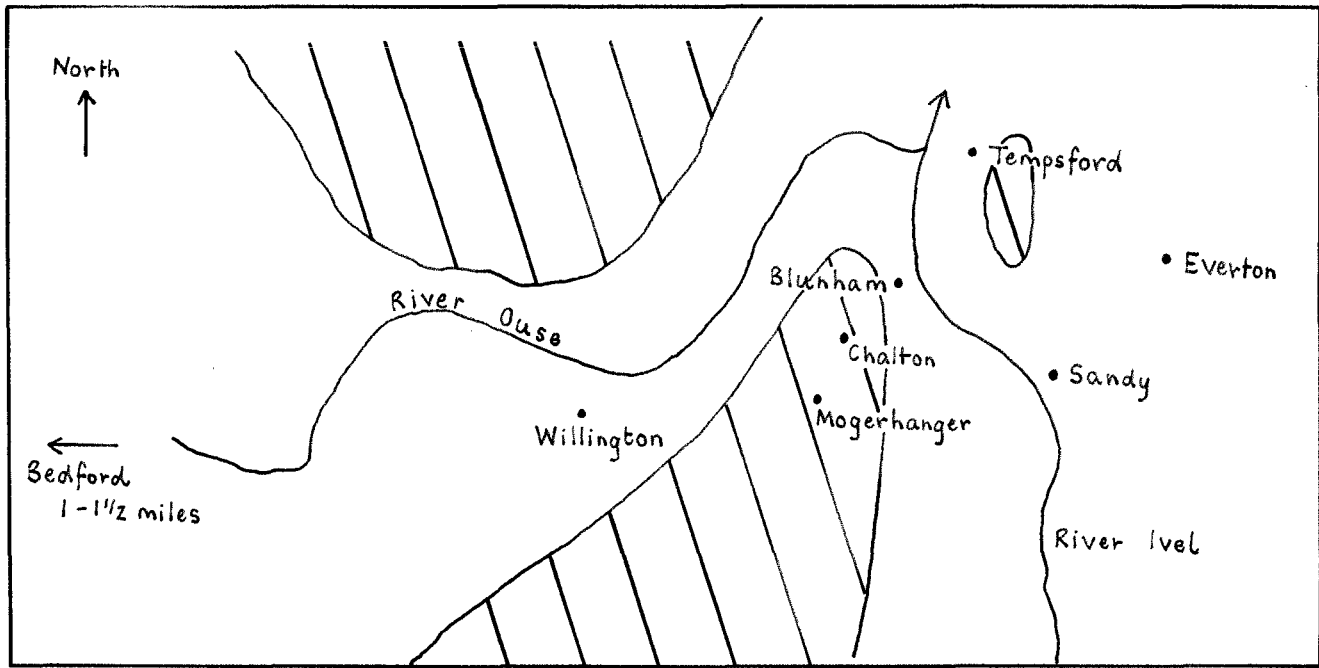


Map 3: Deserted and Depopulated Sites

Source: Deserted Medieval Villages, p. 183.

Scale: One inch = 4 miles

Text: p. 43.

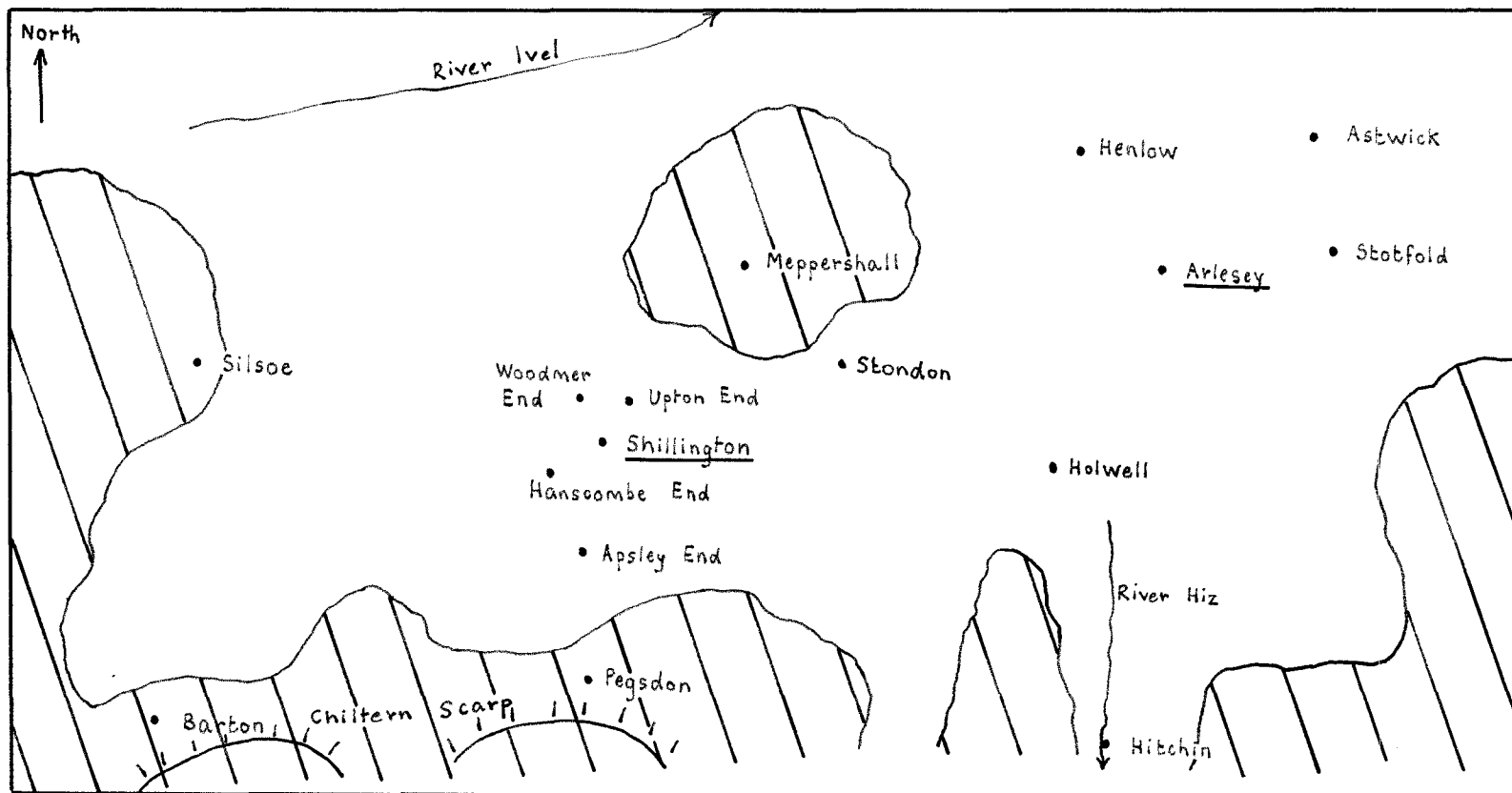


Map 4:      Blunham and Willington

Scale:      about one inch to one mile

Text:      pp. 60, 71.

(shaded area = land over 100 feet)

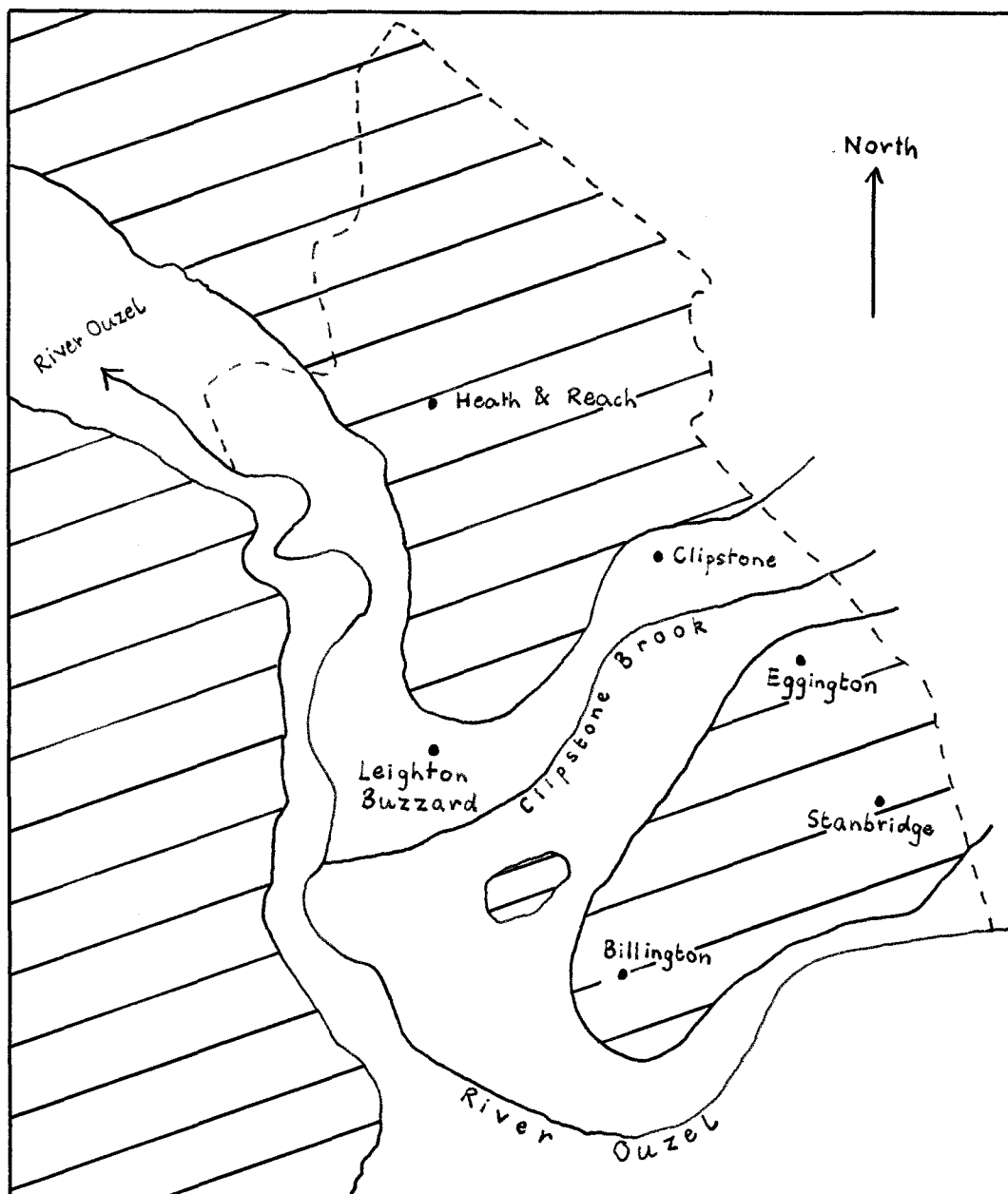


Map 5:     Shillington and Arlesey

Scale:     about one inch to one mile

Text:     pp. 75, 90.

(shaded area = land over 250 feet)



Map 6:      Leighton Buzzard

Scale:      about one inch to one mile

Text:      p. 126.

(Shaded area = land over 300 feet. Dotted line marks boundary of the ancient parish. In the south and west, the river level marked the boundary).

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DR 18/series B.	deeds (Leigh MSS.).
DR98/1857	Court book and custumals of Warwickshire manors (Kingswood, Rowington, Balsall, Knowle), 16-17th centuries (Willoughby de Broke MSS.).

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(MSS. listed in Dalton)

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| XV.15.43    | Lease of Long Crendon manor, 1523.  |
| XV.15.104   | Bundle of unnumbered papers, containing a custumal of 1588, and 17-18th century copies of court rolls and other court papers, Long Crendon. |
| XV.25.20    | Copies of 12 transfers of customary land at Leighton Buzzard, 1342-77.  |
| XV.25.26    | Copies of 18 transfers of customary land at Leighton Buzzard, 1352-1439.  |
| XV.25.55-91 | Leighton Buzzard deeds, 15-16th centuries.  |
| XV.25.113   | Survey of Leighton Buzzard, 17th century.   |
| XV.25.114   | Studham rental, 1454.   |
| XV.53.71    | Leighton Buzzard, list of commutations of labour services, temp. Ric. II.   |
| XV.53.76    | Eggington and Clipstone rental, 15th century.   |
| XV.53.90    | Heath and Reach rental, 15th century.   |
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| XV.60.57    | Acquittance from Stonor as steward at other manors, 1482.   |
| XV.61.32    | Leighton Buzzard account roll, 1389-90.   |
| XV.61.33    | Leighton Buzzard and Billington rental, 1407.   |
| XV.61.34    | Leighton Buzzard account roll, 1415-6.  |
| XV.61.35    | do. , 1439-40.  |
| XV.61.37    | do. , 1455-6.   |
| XV.61.38    | Leighton Buzzard (Grovebury) rental, 1457.  |
| XV.61.39    | Leighton Buzzard account roll, 1457-8.  |
| XV.61.40    | Leighton Buzzard, list of commutations of labour services, 15th century.  |

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XV.61.42	do. 1467-8.
XV.61.43	do. 1468-9.
XV.61.44	do. 1469-70.
XV.61.46	do. 1472-3.
XV.61.47	do. 1473-4.
XV.61.48	do. 1474-5.
XV.61.49	do. 1476-7.
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XV.61.51	Leighton Buzzard account roll, bailiff and receiver, 1485-6.
XV.61.52	Leighton Buzzard account roll, bailiff and receiver, 1486-7.
XV.61.53	Leighton Buzzard account roll, bailiff, 1489-90.
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XV.61.59	Leighton Buzzard, view of account, 1495-6.
XV.61.60	Leighton Buzzard account roll, 1496-7 (damaged).
XV.61.61	Leighton Buzzard account roll, 1497-8.
XV.61.63	Leighton Buzzard, account of the woodward, 1501-4.
XV.61.65	Leighton Buzzard, view of account, 1506-7.
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