

THE PARISH OF WALSHAM-LE-WILLOWS : TWO ELIZABETHAN SURVEYS AND THEIR MEDIÆVAL BACKGROUND

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In Volume XVII of the Suffolk Records Society entitled *The Field Book of Walsham-le-Willows, 1577*, K. M. Dodd has provided us with the most detailed example of a manorial survey ever published for Suffolk. Indeed the only other full transcript in print is John Hervey's *Ickworth Survey Boocke 1665* which appeared as long ago as 1893. However it would be wrong to assume from this that such documents are rarities. In fact verbal surveys of this sort survive for a considerable number of Suffolk manors, particularly from the Elizabethan and early Stuart periods. Nor is it the best of its kind: the 1625 survey of Ixworth is more detailed and has a contemporary map; at Norton transcripts of court-rolls and charters were included and one manor was surveyed three times between 1494-5 and 1607; Thrandeston has a survey of 1579 which is exceptionally well written and organised; while the estates of Sir Michael Stanhope in the Orford area gave rise to John Norden's well-known 'atlas' of 1600-2.¹ Nevertheless the Walsham survey of 1577 is certainly of a high standard, and on analysis it yields important and diverse evidence.

The text published by Mr. Dodd is a survey or field-book, written in English in 1577, but Walsham also possesses a second survey or *terratorium* written in Latin only four years later in 1581.² It is related to the first, yet is by no means identical in content and lay-out. In order to underline the opportunities and problems presented to local historians by such detailed and relatively plentiful sources,³ both surveys of Walsham are here used to generalise on two topographical aspects of local life, settlement and farming. Throughout,

¹ Ixworth survey of 1625, Suffolk Record Office (hereafter S.R.O.), (Bury St Eds.), 2753/16/39; map in the possession of J. Cross, Dairy Farm, Ixworth; 4 surveys of Norton (1494-5, 1561, 1589, 1607), S.R.O. (Bury St. Eds.), 553/91; Thrandeston survey of 1579, S.R.O. (Ipswich), V11/3/3; Norden atlas of estate of Sir Michael Stanhope (1600-2), S.R.O. (Ipswich), Y5/22/1—for reproduction see *Orford Ness: Selection of maps . . . presented to J. A. Steers* (1966).

² Chicago University Library, Sir Nicholas Bacon Collection, 968 and 969.

³ Mr. Dodd's introduction (*Suff. Records Soc.* xvii) usefully summarizes the history of the local manors and the organisation of manorial surveys. He also suggests certain methods of analysis which are not dealt with in this paper. A pioneer article is W. J. Corbett, 'Elizabethan village surveys', *Trans. Royal Hist. Soc.*, N.S. xi (1897), pp. 67-87, based on Norfolk examples from college archives.

the two documents are distinguished as the field-book of 1577 and the *terratorium* of 1581.

Houses and People

As each piece of land in the parish is described by reference to the land it abuts (abuttals), it is usually possible within fairly close limits to identify where people lived in Elizabethan Walsham. For example an attempt has been made in the map (Fig. 62) to reconstruct the north side of the main village street. In spite of a few uncertainties, this reconstruction implies that the settlement-pattern has been relatively stable since the late 16th century. Several of the sites and sometimes actual buildings can still be positively identified. 'Fullers' tenement is now the Six Bells Inn. 'Marlers' tenement stood on the site now occupied by The Maltings House. The tenement belonging 'to the townshipp of Walsham' is the building still known as the Workhouse; the present structure is partly 16th century in style, so it is of especial interest to glean from the surveys that the house was rebuilt in the years 1577-1581.⁴

The same length of village street raises social and economic questions as well as purely topographical ones. In 1577 there were 13 tenements, of which one was 'decayed'. Ten were copyhold and three were free. By 1581 one of the tenements was referred to merely as a copyhold cottage, while the decayed tenement had apparently been restored or rebuilt. (It should be noted that the word 'tenement' is here used in the narrow sense of a house or farmstead. Elsewhere in the two surveys the same word is used in the broad sense of a complete holding, consisting of house *and* farmland.) We are given the names of tenants not only for 1577 and 1581 but also for 1695 when the *terratorium* was fortunately updated.⁵ It is interesting that in only one case out of 13 was the occupant's surname the same in the late 17th century as it had been just over a century earlier: this is a reminder partly of the mobility of the rural population in pre-industrial times, and partly that the lack of male heirs will always result in the disappearance of some local surnames.⁶ Having three versions of the same survey, we also have a better chance of relating these personal names to other sources such as

⁴ In origin this tenement was probably a guildhall, which became the property of the township in 1547 and was converted subsequently into a parish workhouse. See *The Buildings of Walsham-le-Willows*, W. Suffolk Planning Dept. (1967); an inventory of the workhouse exists for 1783, S.R.O. (Bury St. Eds.), 159/7/45.

⁵ S.R.O. (Bury St. Eds.), V5/6/5.13. In its topographical details, this document closely copies that of 1581 and ignores changes which had occurred in the interval, but at least it updates the names of people.

⁶ See A. R. Wagner, *English Genealogy* (1972), p. 241 for 'continual extinction of surnames'.

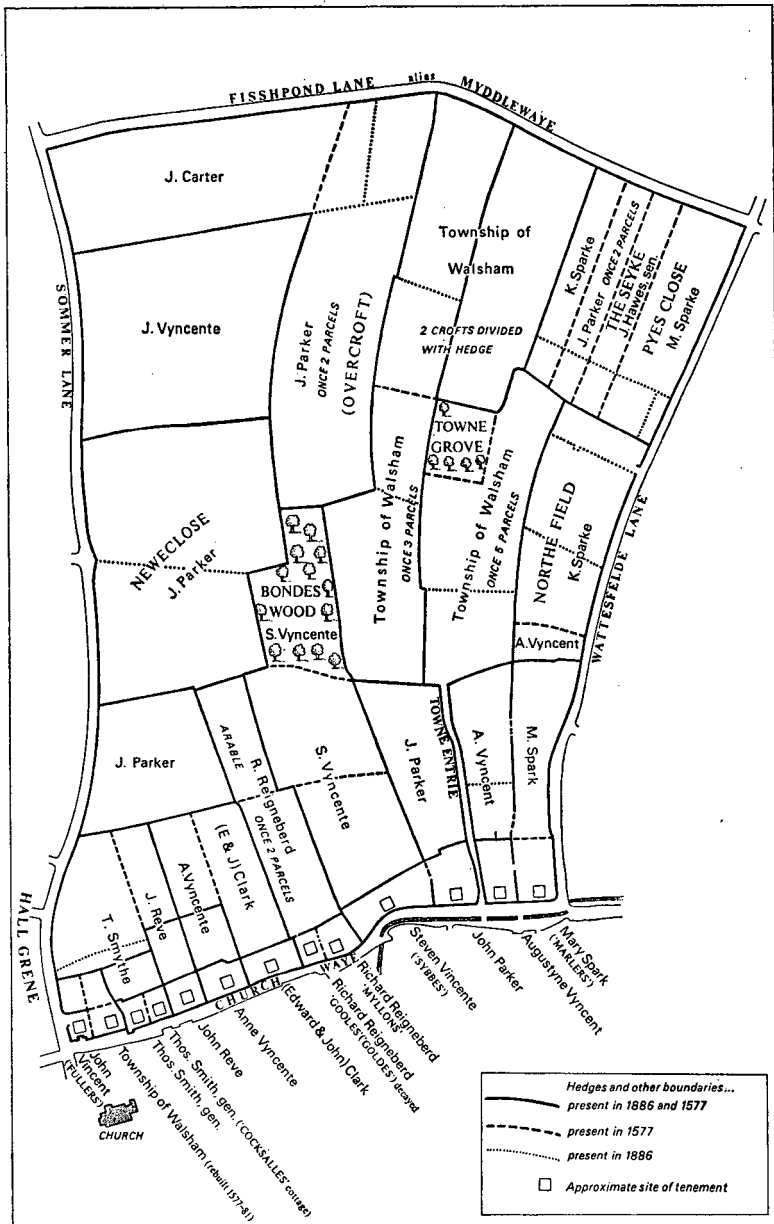


FIG. 62.—Area north of village street: an interpretation of the 1577 survey (ff. 134a-144b), based on O.S. 25-in. map (1886) and here reproduced at 1 in. to c. 220 yds. Information in brackets derived from *Territorium* of 1581. N.B. there are many discrepancies between the two surveys especially in acreages. Also some abutments are clearly wrong. (Drawn by Brian Dear.)

wills, inventories, title-deeds and Hearth Tax returns, and thereby of throwing more light on the buildings and their successive occupants. Retrospectively we also have the advantage of tenants' names *before* 1577-81: for some buildings and pieces of land, the *terratorium* in particular gives as many as four successive tenants before the present one. Some of these names must go back to late medieval times. In these various ways we gradually build up the tenurial, social and personal history of a village and its houses, and can give the study of vernacular architecture a vital new dimension.

Only one example of this kind of research has so far been published for Walsham. The farm now known as the Woodlands is a 16th-17th century building of some complexity, which can be associated with a long list of varied documents. As a result, its occupants can be traced from the mid-16th century onwards. They include, for example, Richard Rampley, an Elizabethan yeoman whose forbears had lived in Walsham since at least the 13th century, and the Revd. John Salkeld who was a well-known presbyterian minister ejected from his living at Worlington *c.*1662 and living in uneasy retirement at Walsham until his death in 1699.⁷

For the two manors in Walsham, both surveys mention the traditional names of over 40 tenements—such as Saddes, Paynes, Fullers and Wardes. In most cases these seem to derive from the surnames of tenants or co-tenants centuries before (and might even on occasions relate to the first tenant of a particular holding). Thus Sares tenement may have been held by Radulphus Sar who is mentioned in an extent of *c.*1275, and Kemballes tenement by Galfridus Kembald, a villein who features in a late 13th-century rental.⁸ The fact that these correspondences are frequent surely suggests that many of these tenements, bond and free, were in existence before the end of the 13th century. This is by no means exceptional for Suffolk. Stanton, a neighbouring parish, has several tenements which can be traced still further back, and tie up with actual individuals mentioned in the *Kalendar* of Abbot Samson, compiled *c.*1180.⁹ Indeed David Douglas has argued that the tenemental system in East Anglia has Danish origins, long before the Norman Conquest.¹⁰ On the other hand, whenever tenements

⁷ D. P. Dymond, *Archaeology and History: a plea for reconciliation* (1974), pp. 151-3.

⁸ Lord Francis Hervcy, *The Pinchbeck Register*, II (1925), pp. 202-4; S.R.O. (Bury St. Eds.), V5/6/5.2.

⁹ R. H. C. Davis, *Kalendar of Abbot Samson* (1954), pp. 37-9; 1569 Survey of Blackbourn Hundred, Iveagh MSS, Elveden Hall.

¹⁰ David C. Douglas, *The social structure of medieval East Anglia* (1927). The number and sizes of the Walsham tenements still need to be established. In nearby Norton there were probably between 40 and 50 tenements, bond and free; a survey of 1607 lists 26 customary tenements, some with early-sounding names like Ailewardes and Erchbawdes, ranging in area from $\frac{1}{2}$ to 17 acres, and usually fragmented among several tenants.

were first created, they could be reorganised and re-allotted from time to time, and it would therefore be a mistake to assume absolute physical stability for both house and farmland. A further complication is that new tenements could be created, as when Pyckardes tenement was built on the site of the former manor-house (Field-book f.149b), and re-naming was always a possibility (for example, in 1577 Fyberdes was also known as Peppers, f.42b). In spite of the fact that tenements became minutely sub-divided among many families under the pressure of medieval population, their legal, topographical and tenurial identity was carefully preserved. For example, down to the 16th century the reeves and messors of Walsham were chosen, not by the straight election of individuals, but by a rotation of the old tenements.

One of the most important changes revealed by the Walsham surveys is that a certain number of tenements, messuages and cottages had been abandoned by Elizabethan times. For example the *terratorium* mentions over 20 sites in Walsham as formerly built (*quondam edificatum*) or ruinous (*decasiatum*). Most of these were dotted around the parish, particularly along the main road which leads from the village to Allwood Green. At least one such site was in the main village street itself: a close of pasture where the Village Hall now stands, belonged to Thomas Lacye and had once contained a house. These desertions were probably not recent, for the earlier part of Elizabeth's reign was a period of rising wealth and population. Instead they are likely to belong to the great contraction of rural population in the late 14th and 15th centuries.

There is no doubt that Walsham suffered a serious decline of population during the later Middle Ages. One important contributory factor, though no doubt not the only one, was the Black Death which struck the parish in 1349. Between June and November of that year, 115 deaths are recorded in the court-rolls which survive.¹¹ Of these no fewer than 102 were listed at the court of 8 June, which suggests that the first shattering impact of the disease was felt in May-June. We do not know the total number of deaths for some court-rolls from this fateful year have perished, nor unfortunately do we know the proportion of those who died to the total population. Nevertheless certain important after-effects can be positively identified.

For the vast majority of holdings, heirs were found either immediately or within a few months. Most of the heirs were sons, brothers, daughters or sisters, though in some cases a more distant relative had to be found. But the signs of impending decline are also clear:

¹¹ The court-rolls of Walsham Manor survive intermittently from the early 14th century; S.R.O. (Bury St. Eds.), V5/6/1.1-1.35. Dodd, *op. cit.*, pp. 14-15 quotes manorial accounts of Walsham, with references to decayed tenements.

a few holdings were not claimed by any heirs but were granted off to other individuals; by 18 November there were still five holdings in the hands of the lord because no heirs had appeared; finally, before the end of 1349, some dwellings were already decaying for orders were given for the rebuilding of two houses and one cottage. By the 1360s there are persistent references to wasted tenements, to fugitives who had fled the manor, and to the difficulties of getting people to do labour-services. On occasions we are specifically told of attempts to dismantle houses; for example, at a court held on 27 June 1359, Agnes Lene is accused of making waste in a certain tenement by taking out 'le Walsshesperres' of a house, while Robert Lene had carried off old timber from the doors and windows of Sheperdes tenement.

Serious though the mortality of 1349 was, it probably led to the immediate abandonment of only a few habitations. It was not until later, probably as a result of renewed outbreaks of plague, that the shrinkage of the built-up area became really marked. In the 1380s and 90s, the occasional court-rolls to survive repeatedly mention the decay of houses, and the same is true of the period 1410-11. For example, in Easter week 1390, three men were prosecuted at the same court, while in May 1410 the court was showing concern not only for houses but also for a barn and a cow-house. Fines and penalties imposed by the manor court clearly did not stop the rot for in 1389 the surveyor and the bailiff were authorized to inspect 'all the bond tenements which had become waste' and again in 1438 the jury of the manor were required to do the same.

Because of the lapse of time, it may seem remarkable that so many deserted sites were recorded in 16th-century surveys.¹² The main reason for this was probably to preserve the lord's financial interest, but it is also worth remembering that in a parish like Walsham, the emphasis on pastoral farming would have enabled earthworks to survive which local people could still recognize and remember as the sites of former buildings. For example, in 1577 a parcel of ground is described as 'invironed rounde aboute with a moate conteyninge aboute j roode upon the which as it seemethe in tymes paste hath bin some capytall messuage scituated' (f.124b). References of this kind are unlikely to be a full record of desertions in the late Middle Ages, and no doubt there are other abandoned sites in the parish such as archaeological field-workers are now finding in surprising numbers in the arable fields of Mendlesham,

¹² Other good examples on which published work has been done are the surveys of Chippenham, Cambs. (1544) in Margaret Spufford, *A Cambridgeshire Community* (1965) and of Forncett, Norfolk (1565) in F. G. Davenport, *The Economic Development of a Norfolk Manor 1086-1565* (1906).

Laxfield and Ubbeston.¹³

The scattered nature of medieval settlement in Walsham parish, with its isolated farmhouses and hamlets like West St. and Cranmer Green, is still apparent in spite of later losses and additions. It probably had some connection with local inheritance customs. In the Middle Ages the holdings of freemen were always likely to fragment because free land could usually be disposed of without restriction, but in some manors like Walsham the holdings of the unfree villeins displayed the same tendency—because of the custom of partible inheritance. This demands that a villein's tenement be 'equallie devided and parted amongst all his sonnes'.¹⁴ In 1365, the court-rolls of Walsham provide an excellent example of this system. When a customary tenant called John Robhood died, his six sons (described as 'villeins of the lord by blood') were accepted as his heirs 'because these tenements are partible between males according to custom'.¹⁵ This kind of inheritance must have helped to produce smaller plots of land and a thickening scatter of farmsteads throughout the manor, especially during periods of population pressure such as the 12th and 13th centuries.¹⁶

By 1577-81 the surveys reveal that a certain amount of rebuilding was going on in Walsham. At least 8 dwellings and 4 barns are referred to as 'newlye buylded'. This is the local start of a national phenomenon which W. G. Hoskins has called the Great Rebuilding of Rural England. With rising living standards, it became fashionable for better-off people to rebuild their homes on or near the site of their earlier houses.¹⁷ They adopted new layouts, elevations and

¹³ In Mendlesham, Mr. & Mrs. R. Colchester and family have just completed a field-survey of the parish which has resulted in the discovery of dozens of abandoned medieval sites. Publication is eagerly awaited. At Laxfield and Ubbeston, members of the Laxfield Museum Group are achieving similar results. In the light of its documentation, Walsham would be a good candidate for future field-work.

¹⁴ S.R.O. (Bury St. Eds.), EL 159/3/2.5: customs of both manors at Walsham, Court of Survey, 4 March 1578.

¹⁵ S.R.O. (Bury St. Eds.), V5/6/1.6 (Thurs. after Annunciation, 39 Edw. III): Et quod Robertus Nicholaus Petrus Walterus Ricardus et Johannes filii eiusdem et nativi domini de sanguine sunt heredes propinquoires quia tenementa illa sunt partibilia inter masculos secundem consuetudinem.

¹⁶ For the effects of partible inheritance, see Alan R. H. Baker, 'Some fields and farms in medieval Kent', *Arch. Cant.*, LXXX (1965). Half-messuages may also be connected with partible inheritance. For example (f. 10r) there were two half-messuages in 1577 between Cranmer and Allwood Greens; they were side by side, and look like one original unit. It is interesting that archaeological field-work at Mendlesham has identified many small clusters of medieval sites, often in twos and threes.

¹⁷ Hoskins, *Provincial England* (1965), Ch. VII. Dodd, *op. cit.*, p. 37: there were about 85 tenants in Walsham in 1577, so he suggests a total population of 400-600 people; he shows that over half the available land was held by 13 people.

modes of decoration which have made a major contribution to the appearance of many Suffolk villages and towns. Mrs Colman in her work on the domestic architecture of Walsham has confirmed that 'it is in buildings of the later 16th and early 17th centuries that Walsham le Willows abounds.' At the same time she demonstrates that some of the older buildings were being, not totally rebuilt, but modernised; this was done principally by the addition of brick chimneys and the insertion of first-floor rooms into former open-halls, but not surprisingly no hint of this appears in the surveys.¹⁸

Finally, to return to the main village street, it was not until the 19th century that the gaps between the older tenements and messuages were filled in by modern development, and the street took on the tightly-crowded appearance it has today. This was in response to another period of sharply rising population: between 1811 and 1851 the population of the parish rose from 948 to an all-time peak of 1,297; thereafter it slowly declined but remained at over 1,000 until the end of the century. To accommodate more people, houses and rows of cottages, built largely of brick, were inserted between the older timber-framed dwellings. Simultaneously a great deal of older property was sub-divided: by 1821 over 51% of Walsham's houses had been partitioned into tenements, and held two or more families. As an extreme example there were 2 houses at this date which each contained 5 families and 35 individuals.¹⁹

Farming

Nearly every individual field in the two manors of Walsham is also described in the surveys of 1577 and 1581, and this gives us the opportunity of studying the farming which was practised and the sort of landscape which resulted. In an analysis of land-use, field-sizes and the degree of enclosure, the *territorium* of 1581 is the better source because it is the more systematic and consistent, but nevertheless the 1577 field-book is valuable for its more random and lengthy comments.

The field-book describes various categories of land, of which closes and crofts seem to be the most numerous, followed by pightles, parcels, grounds and pieces. The *territorium* simplifies this pattern into four main groups: closes (*clausa*) bounded by ditches and hedges, pieces (*peciae*) which were presumably unenclosed, and crofts (*crofta*) or pightles (*pictella*) which were small enclosures usually near farmsteads. For every field the *territorium* normally gives

¹⁸ *The Buildings of Walsham-le-Willows*, W. Suffolk Planning Dept. (1967).

¹⁹ Parish copy of 1821 census, S.R.O. (Bury St. Eds.), EL 159/7/50. By 1931, the population of Walsham had declined to 791.

both land-use and the kind of tenure, whereas the field-book frequently omits both. In about 200 cases we are also given the names of fields; in this respect the field-book is slightly more informative than the *terrororium*.

As a means of studying the farming landscape, the first twenty folios of the *terrororium* were analysed. These covered several blocks of land in the eastern part of the parish, near Cranmer Green. Here there were 55 'pieces' with an average size of two acres, 43 closes with an average size of 7.2 acres, 20 pightles with an average size of 1.1 acres, 11 crofts with an average size of 0.5 acres, one pasture of 30 perches, and one enclosed meadow of two acres. This means that at least 75 out of 131 plots of land, or 57.3% were enclosed. Expressed in acreages, the proportion of enclosed land was much higher: 341.6 acres out of 453, or 75.4%.

Already therefore this was a predominantly enclosed landscape. There are abundant references in the surveys to hedges (*cepes* or *sepes*) and in only a few cases were they said to be wooden fences (*cepes mortua* literally 'dead hedge'). Walsham's manorial and tithing customs, also recorded in Elizabethan times, confirm that hedges, ditches and hedgerow timber were well-established features. For example 'our custome is for our fence Ditches between partie and partie, and by the heighwayes throughout the Towne, to make them three foote wide from the sett or springe, and further are allowed half a foote for the bote or Dole.'²⁰ The sett or spring is the base of a living hedge, while the bote or dole refers to a narrow strip of land left unploughed on the outer lip of the ditch. There are also elaborate regulations for the felling and selling of hedgerow timber. The fact that in the sample-area the closes had an average size of only 7.2 acres, emphasizes how frequent and conspicuous hedges and ditches must have been, and the amount of land they must have taken up. Nor should we forget the 'woody pastures' and small patches of woodland which also existed. The survey of 1577, for example, talks of a good pasture of approximately four acres which 'hath good store of boulding or pollard growynge thereuppon' (f.69b), and of Hulkes Grove which covered less than an acre but was 'well replenished with timber trees' (f.64a).²¹

²⁰ S.R.O. (Bury St. Eds.), EL 159/3/2.5.

²¹ Only c. 90 acres of woodland were left to the 2 manors of Walsham in the period 1577-81, of which Northehaughe Wood (20 acres) and Ladyes Wood (37 acres, actually in Badwell parish) were the most important and belonged to the lord. There were 12 or more small groves held by various tenants, most of them less than 5 acres in extent. Clearance had clearly taken place in the none-too-distant past: e.g., Trundlewood ('the round wood' of at least 45 acres) was described in 1577 as closes of pasture (ff. 1a, 3a), while Sares pasture 'now beyng good pasture ground hath bene or the greatest parte thereof hath bene in tymes past a wood' (f. 69b). There was a separate perch of 18 ft. for woodland in Walsham (S.R.O. (Bury St. Eds.) EL 159/3/2.5).

The unenclosed land, accounting for 25% of the sample-area, certainly contained remnants of arable open-fields. For example the 'pieces' referred to in the *terratorium* often give the impression of being intermixed strips, for they are far more likely than any other farmland to be arable, and more than half of them were one acre or less. In addition, several highly significant terms appear throughout both surveys. At least 13 'felds' were specified—such as South Field, Mill Field, Lounde Field and Well Field. In each of these cases the word 'field' seemed to apply to an area of open-field, former or actual, though in three or four other occurrences the word may have been used in the modern sense of a hedged enclosure in individual ownership. The large number of these 'fields' is a reminder that the standard 2- or 3-field system does not normally apply in East Anglia, and that we are dealing with a landscape which had many areas of strips associated with a tight road-system and a considerable degree of scattered settlement. Even more frequent in the Walsham surveys were references to the sub-divisions of open-fields, the furlongs, wents, wongs and *quarentinae*. Clearly these were still useful points of reference, often being defined by roads and tracks. Lastly there were several mentions of headlands (*forerae*), in origin the places where plough-teams turned at the end of strips. These were sometimes used as farmland and sometimes, significantly, as access-roads (for example, 'the way called Payntors Hedland', f. 38v).²²

But it is the field-book of 1577 which best reveals both the existence of open-fields and their break-up. For example it describes a close as 'sometime a Common or open Feld and called Westreat Feld but now devided into sondry partes with hedges and dykes' (f. 53b). The disappearance of old land-marks clearly presented the Elizabethan surveyors with problems: a large pasture called Hornes Close, consisting significantly of both free and copyhold land, was measured as one piece 'by reason that ye ould mencions as meares, Furrowes, hedlonde and other markes are Filled up and worne awaye' (f.57a). Yet in spite of the effects of progressive enclosure, parts of the old system were still functioning. For example, at the west end of the parish near the hamlet of West Street, was a 'comon fylde of arrable grownde' in which two farmers still held intermixed strips. Thomas Smythe, gentleman, held over 7 acres in 5 pieces, and John Parker held 4½ acres in 4 pieces (f.170b).

²² In some W. Suffolk parishes, the archaeological traces of former headlands are still clear as broad, low banks surviving over considerable distances. There are at least 3 examples in the parish of Stanton (grid refs. TL/968731, 964728 and 971738).

Frequent references in the medieval court-rolls of Walsham show that the open-fields were systematically grazed according to the possession of various rights. For example in 1462, one John Becon was fined for erecting a sheep-fold on demesne-land where he had no right to do so, of commoning with horses, cows and other beasts where again he had no right, and finally of over-grazing lands and pastures in each part of the township in 'Straytime'.²³ In the 15th century there is a large number of references to the illegal folding of sheep, which may well stem from difficulties caused by enclosure (see below).

Of similar form to the arable open-fields was the large strip of dole-meadow which lay along a shallow valley in the west of the parish. This was the Great or Mickle Meadow, later known as the Lammas Meadow because it was thrown open for grazing on Lammas Day (1 August). Physically it was sub-divided into scores of open strips, where hay was grown in the first half of the year and cut by specified tenants of the two manors. We are told in 1577 that this meadow 'is occupyed in comon by suche as have meadowe within the same accordinge to the proporcion of meadowe they have' (f.175a). In fact about 32 people seemed to claim rights here, and were both freeholders and copyholders. A special perch of 14½ feet was used in the Great Meadow, instead of the standard perch of 16½ feet which was used elsewhere in Walsham.²⁴

The land-use of the sample-area in the *territorium* was overwhelmingly pastoral. 87% of the closes, 44% of the 'pieces' and all the crofts and pightles were described as pasture, that is 95 out of 131 plots or 72.5%. When one turns to the acreages involved, the tendency is even more marked: 93.5% of the closes, 56.2% of the 'pieces' and all the minor categories bore grass in 1581. Out of a total acreage of 453, pasture accounted for 384, which is nearly 85%. Although this sample may not be exactly characteristic of Walsham as a whole, or of the rest of the wood-pasture region known as High Suffolk, it does imply that arable farming was of quite minor importance in some manors.²⁵ Whenever it had occurred,

²³ S.R.O. (Bury St. Eds.), V5/6/1.14 (Friday in Pentecost week, 2 Edw. IV). The details on regulated common grazing show that the term 'common-field' as defined by Thirsk *et al.* is justified in Walsham. See Preface to the 3rd edition (1967) of C.S. & C.S. Orwin, *The Open Fields*; also *Ag. Hist. Rev.*, vol. 17 (1969), No. II, pp. 136-40.

²⁴ A map of 1817 shows the sub-divisions of the Lammas Field just before enclosure, S.R.O. (Bury St. Eds.), 373/26.

²⁵ In the 17th century the champion parts of Suffolk 'doth not only serve itself with corn but is forced continually to supply the woodland, especially in cold wet years'. M. R. Postgate, 'Field systems of East Anglia' in Baker and Butlin (eds.) *Studies of Field Systems in the British Isles* (1973), p. 286. See Dodd, *op. cit.*, p. 34, for calculations based on the field-book of 1577.

the swing towards pastoral farming must have been a major factor in promoting enclosure and the breakdown of the open-fields.²⁶ Admittedly some land was being broken up for tillage in 1577, but pasture was undoubtedly the most profitable form of land-use, especially where a crop of hay could be mown (f. 20b).

One of the most intriguing aspects of the 1581 *terratorium* is the large number of closes, mainly of pasture, which were described as in some way sub-divided. About 70 closes were divided into two parts, and over 50 into three or more parts. In at least one case, there were as many as 9 sub-divisions. Nor is this a purely 16th-century phenomenon. For example in 1360 there is a reference to the surrender of $1\frac{1}{2}$ rods 'in a certain enclosure', while in the 1460s a close called Saresrowe contained 3 pieces and another called Westhorpe-field contained 3 acres of customary land and 7 acres of free. All this is a relatively common phenomenon in Suffolk, and it appears in other manorial surveys and on early manuscript maps.²⁷ More detailed research is needed, but it seems likely that such closes are parts of the original open-fields in process of enclosure. More strictly, groups of tenants had been enclosing areas of land before they were fully consolidated. For example, in 1577 a close is described in which were 'two peces of arrable land in sondrye mens occupienge' (f.21a). As time went on, further consolidation (by exchange, lease or purchase) tended to obliterate the pattern: for example, another close in 1577 is described as 'sometyme devided into iij parcelles now beyng all into one' (f.60b).

Nevertheless it must be fully recognised that there was an opposite process at work whereby some closes were still being further sub-divided into smaller ones. Sometimes this may have happened when it was realized that no more consolidation of parcels within closes could be arranged, as with a close which was said in 1577 to be 'newly devyded wherin is bothe fre and cobby' (f. 91a). But in other cases where a close was 'Latley parted into two partes'

²⁶ Robert Reyce in his well-known 'Breviary of Suffolk' (c. 1603) says that the animal husbandry of High Suffolk was then based on milking cows and bullocks, and to a lesser extent on pigs and sheep. The first specific reference to dairy cows in the Walsham court-rolls seems to be in Sept. 1420: Wm. Shepherde was accused of damaging a field of oats *cum vacc' dayer'* S.R.O. (Bury St. Eds.), V5/6/1.11. Already by 1283, there were 283 head of cattle in Walsham: see Edgar Powell, *A Suffolk hundred in . . . 1283* (1910), Appendix 33. See Dodd, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

²⁷ The glebe of some parishes in High Suffolk survives into the 19th century as a series of scattered parcels, often in the form of small strips within closes (see, e.g., the tithe-maps of Stansfield and Cockfield). This anomaly may be explained by the fact that no consolidation or enclosure occurred on the holdings of certain parsons, who preferred to lease the land and live off rents rather than farm it themselves. In this sense, the glebe seems to preserve the shape of a late medieval peasant holding.

(f.87a), we are probably seeing a farmer creating smaller closes for his own convenience.²⁸

Now when did most of the enclosures occur? To some extent, as we have seen, the process was still going on when the Elizabethan surveys were being made, and the open 'pieces' of 1581 still remained to be consolidated and enclosed at a later date, but when were the hedges and closes created which already existed in great numbers in 1577-81?

The documentary evidence for earlier enclosure in Walsham is not easy to interpret. Certainly the court rolls of the late 14th and 15th centuries contain many references to closes. Less frequently hedges are specifically mentioned under the Latin word *sepes* (or *cepes*), and the English 'heggerowes' is used at least as early as 1359. Certainly too, some people were creating new hedges: in September 1368 two tenants were fined for obstructing a path by a hedge, and in October 1434 Robert Warde was accused of blocking a pedestrian and equestrian way by making a hedge. But there is no knowing whether such prosecutions reflect a real trend towards enclosure, or whether they are isolated instances. Furthermore it is likely that some land had always existed in the form of enclosures, even back to Anglo-Saxon times.²⁹

Nevertheless the evidence seems clear that Walsham experienced a genuine burst of enclosure in the later 15th century. From about 1445 onwards there is a noticeable increase in the number of references to hedges and ditches, and to encroachments on roads and commons. For example on June 10th 1453 John Shepherd is accused of obstructing a common way 'with ditches and hedges newly raised'; in June 1462 William Vyncent was fined for taking in a long narrow strip of land from a road, 4 perches by 2 feet, and putting a hedge on it. In 1460 a remarkable agreement was registered on the court-roll. Seven men who shared a holding of pasture in 'Hordsawebrook' agreed to partition it, 'so that each would know and have his own part separated from the others by a hedge and not by a ditch'. In July 1482 the road called Sledeweve was

²⁸ There seems to be no suggestion in either survey that such fragmentation was still being caused by partible inheritance, though this remains a theoretical possibility. By Elizabethan times, the customary tenants of Walsham Manor appeared to devise their holdings by will and by surrender to the use of named individuals.

²⁹ A rental which lists the demesne of Walsham in the time of Edward I (1272-1307) divides most of the land into *culturæ* and *crofta*. If one is right in assuming that the first word implies open-field and the second enclosures, then there were nearly 30 acres of closes as compared with 155 acres of open-field; put another way, 16.2% of the total was enclosed. S.R.O. (Bury St. Eds.), V5/6/5.2.

narrowed by two men; each was accused of ploughing two illegal furrows, taking in 2ft and then raising hedges and ditches.³⁰

So such evidence as we have suggests that piecemeal enclosure was going on intermittently from at least the late 14th century until 1600 and later, but that there was considerably increased activity in the second half of the 15th century. By early Elizabethan times, the few rolls which survive for Walsham Manor suggest that the court is no longer primarily interested in enclosure as such, but in the difficulties of managing an already enclosed landscape—keeping ditches scoured, hedges trim and stiles in good repair.³¹

A further problem concerns the stability of the enclosed landscape. Given that most of the agricultural land of Walsham had been enclosed by 1577, how far can we equate the Elizabethan hedgerows with those of today, or rather with those which existed until the hedge-destruction of the last 20 years? It is not easy to reconstruct a farming landscape from verbal surveys—certainly the problems are much greater than interpreting a contemporary map—but in plotting the details of 1577-81 for a small area north of the village street, one gets the impression that most of the main hedges shown on 19th and 20th century maps were already in existence in Elizabethan times (see Fig. 62). Certainly this is true of those against the roads, and of some internal ones, particularly where they form the main axis of the field-system. In plan these axial hedges are gently sinuous lines against which the shorter transverse hedges abut but do not cross. This kind of pattern is characteristic of the older hedgerows of High Suffolk, as recent field-work in parishes like Felsham and Rougham has demonstrated, and is probably the result of the early enclosure of open-field strips.³²

Of some interest here are the 200 field-names given in the two Elizabethan surveys. About a quarter of these *as words*, if not as

³⁰ S.R.O. (Bury St. Eds.), V5/6/1.15 (Thursday after feast of Apostles Peter & Paul, 22 Edw. IV). This practice of taking in long narrow strips of land from roads and commons had been commonplace in Suffolk since at least the 13th century (see *Rotuli Hundredorum*, II (1818), pp. 182-200, under 'purprestures'). In many cases it is probably connected with the creation of hedges and ditches; sometimes one also suspects that it results from digging the fourth side of a moat on 'common land'.

³¹ S.R.O. (Bury), V5/6/1.28-1.29. Miss Davenport found evidence for enclosure in Fornsett in the early 15th century (*op. cit.* (n. 12), pp. 80-1), and John Ridgard has recently identified widespread enclosure at Flixton-near-Bungay in the 1410s. Dodd, *op. cit.*, p. 44 shows that men's holdings in Walsham tended to be consolidated by 1577.

³² Mrs. Ann Hart has completed an historical and botanical survey of the hedges of Felsham parish, using the 'Hooper method'. The average count of species is high, which implies a medieval origin for many of the hedges (publication forthcoming). A similar survey of the Rougham estate, carried out by C. R. Ranson and the writer, is also in preparation.

plots of land, can be equated with the field-names recorded in the Tithe Award of 1842.³³ For example, Hatchmere feld of 1577 remained as Hatchmere Field in 1842, and Mellfelde as Mill Field. Sometimes the word was somewhat corrupted but still remained recognizable: Cowe leyzer had become Cow Lizards, Cannons Hill had changed to Canham Hill, and Coldham Close had rather improbably become Golden Croft.

In a few cases it is possible to suggest that a field mentioned in 1577-81 has survived virtually unchanged into modern times. For example Master John's Close at the east end of the village and south of the road to Finningham, belonged to the Township in 1581 and was described as 6 acres; in 1842 it appears with exactly the same name and measuring 6 acres, 1 rod and 29 perches. Similarly the close of pasture lying immediately south of the last belonged to Thomas Page in 1581 and was measured at $2\frac{1}{2}$ acres; in 1842 it was called Glades Meadow and was reckoned as 2 acres, 1 rod and 11 perches.

But in the great majority of cases, change of some sort has intervened, usually as a result of making fields larger. For example, Stone Meadow to the south of Old Hall was measured at just over 7 acres in 1842: it appears to be the sum of three original pightles each called Stony lande in 1581. Understandably therefore, where a field-name seems to have survived into modern times, it often applies to a larger area than it did: thus the close of woody pasture called Cannons Hill (near West St.) was held by Robert Burman in 1581 and assessed at 4 acres; in 1842 its equivalent, Canham Hills, was given as over 7 acres. The same is true of Wardes Wood (near Brook Farm) which amounted to 3 acres in 1581 and was divided amongst four tenants; in 1842 Ward's Grove, then an arable field, was reckoned at over 6 acres. In these cases, for every name which survived, several must have dropped out of use.

Where, conversely, the modern equivalent of an Elizabethan field appears to be smaller in size, it can often be shown that it was originally open-field land. Thus the name Mill Field in the 19th century applied to two small closes amounting to about 9 acres, whereas it had originally been a much larger area of intermixed plots to the north of Crowland or Upstrete.

Some indication of the rate of change since Elizabethan times can be got by looking at a large group of fields. The same sample-area as was used earlier, taken from the *terratorium* of 1581, comprised 217 plots of land in the east of the parish, with an average size of 2.3 acres. The same area in 1842 consisted of only 102 plots, with an average size of 4.8 acres. Both averages may seem low,

³³ Walsham tithe-map and award, S.R.O. (Bury St. Eds.), T 115/1,2.

but it must be remembered that the sample includes not only the normal 'fields' of each period, but also tofts, gardens, orchards and the tiny closes surrounding farmsteads. One important period of hedge-clearance and field-amalgamation was undoubtedly the late 18th and 19th centuries, when there was a pronounced swing in Suffolk agriculture from pasture to arable. For example, a field near High Hall called Lower Paynes measured over 14 acres in 1842 and was large by early 19th century standards: it had been created since 1817 out of three smaller closes called First, Middle and Further Paynes.³⁴

This limited study shows once again how frequently field-names change, and that even where a name does survive for centuries, the plot of land it refers to will usually have altered in size and shape. Nevertheless it should not be forgotten that some names can be traced far back into the Middle Ages. For example, the Thieves Hedge of 1842, or Thevishedge of 1577, appears in a court-roll of 1349 as Thevesheg, while St Katheryns Close mentioned in 1577 re-appears in a list of demesne land in the reign of Edward I (1272-1307).³⁵

The process of hedge-clearance has of course re-occurred on a massive scale in the last 20 years, so that we are now left with only a small proportion of the landscape features which existed in Elizabethan times. A full botanical survey of the surviving hedges-rows might well confirm that many of them stem from the enclosures of the 15th century or earlier, as has been demonstrated recently at Felsham. Certainly the great hedge along the Hundred Lane and parish boundary, to the north of Botány Farm, is already accepted as about a thousand years old because of its rich botanical composition.³⁶ A great deal of what does remain in the parish was in existence by 1577, which means that this is in large part an ancient landscape which deserves more sensitive and intelligent treatment than it has sometimes received. In some parts of the parish, many features such as hedges, ditches, verges, banks and green lanes have been recently obliterated, with no attempt to distinguish and retain those which have the greatest historical, scientific and amenity value. At a time when the village itself has been rightly declared a Conservation Area, large parts of the farming-landscape, which is an equally precious inheritance, have been, and are being, unsystematically dismantled.

This topographical analysis of two manorial surveys leaves many important questions unanswered, mainly of a social and

³⁴ Compare the tithe-map with the 'enclosure' map of 1817, S.R.O. (Bury St. Eds.), 373/26.

³⁵ S.R.O. (Bury St. Eds.), V5/6/1.5 and V5/6/5.2.

³⁶ Norman Scarfe, *The Suffolk Landscape* (1972), p. 40.

economic kind. We need to know more about the changing social structure of local villages from the Middle Ages to the 16th century, about the kinds of farming adopted by different groups of farmers (including the lords on their demesnes), about the details of arable and pastoral farming in High Suffolk and about the trends towards consolidation and enclosure. Only a systematic study of surveys and other documents will provide these and other answers, for a period of fascinating change and adaptation.