

DISPERSED SETTLEMENT IN BEDFORDSHIRE

way in which the open field yardlands are distributed amongst the various 'ends' also yields interesting information (deeds and maps with field-names have been used to fix some tenements unlocated in the 1605 survey), summarised in Table 8.

TABLE 8
Distribution of virgates/yardlands
Lidlington 1605

		Acre	Virgates/yardlands	
Thrupp End	Free	174	6.7	} 9.7
	Copyhold	77.75	3.0	
Boughton End	Free	79	3.0	} 15.9
	Copyhold	336.125	12.9	
Marsh End	Copyhold	48.75	1.9	} 9.7
Battleden End	Free	63	2.4	
	Copyhold	190.5	7.3	} 6.4
Wood End	Copyhold	8	0.3	
Church End	Copyhold	90.5	3.5	} 6.4
Unlocated	Free	37	1.4	
	Copyhold	128.875	5.0	

This shows that both Thrupp and Battleden Ends had the same number of virgates allocated to them, but with the proportions of free and customary virgates reversed. If the unlocated virgates go with Church End, then the same total would apply there also, almost entirely customary. Since the evidence of field-names contained in a deed of 1695/6³³ shows that Marsh and Boughton Ends were close together (Marsh End being immediately south-east of Boughton End), then it may be permissible to link their totals together, to get twice that of the Thrupp and Battleden figures. These correspondences have their uncertainties, but are perhaps more than just a coincidence; they imply a very organised and controlled approach to the management of the dispersed medieval landscape of Lidlington.

Setting aside the unlocated free virgates, then Thrupp, Battleden and Boughton Ends account for twelve out of the 13½ free virgates which were produced as a result of the presumed expansion of the open fields. There is reason therefore to link their creation with this process of expansion. To this can be added their regular, planned appearance. Open field expansion would have been at the expense of wood pasture; at Domesday Lidlington had wood for 400 swine, a large figure. What the settlement pattern was like before this reorganisation we do not know — 'bury' field-names near Church End suggest an early manorial centre but a completely nucleated pattern cannot be presumed: but the effect of the change was to create rows of farms close to the edges of quite large areas of common pasture or of woodland; Thrupp, Church and Boughton Ends could have related to the Cow Common of the Enclosure Map, to which Broghborough Park at one time belonged; Battleden End maybe to wood-pasture in the north-west of the parish.

However, the remaining areas of woodland did not remain inviolate. In 1204 we find that Simon of Lidlington, probably the Abbey's steward or

farmer,³⁴ quitclaimed to the Abbey 30 acres of wood, pannage for his pigs in 'the wood of Litlington' and all common of pasture in the wood except for that belonging to his tenement of three virgates: in return he received a quitclaim for six acres of assart (Fowler 1919, p. 31). In 1202 the roll of the Bedford eyre has a case about the dispossession of Walter Haden by Simon of Lidlington of common of pasture which belonged to his free tenement (Fowler 1913, p. 92); this sounds like another reference to the taking in by an individual of land hitherto waste.

NORTH END, BLETSOE (TL 025594)

Bletsoe lies 9 km north of Bedford. The village, with its church and castle, occupies a low-lying position close to the east bank of the river Ouse. From the river, the ground, which is cut by a number of streams flowing westwards, rises to 87 m above O.D. at Galsey Wood in the north-east and to 90 m in the north-west. There are three small settlements in the parish in addition to the village. In the north is Bourne End, in the middle of a roughly triangular block of land marked off from the rest of the parish by the Stoke Brook; in the east, on the boundary with Thurleigh is Whitwick Green; North End lies on the road to Riseley 1 km north of Bletsoe village and consists now of a farm and a few cottages.

The earthworks occupy parts of two paddocks lying between three cottages at the southern end and North End Farm at the extreme north (Fig. 10). They can be divided into five parts, (a) — (e), all of which consist of generally rectangular areas bounded by ditches and scarps; although considerably mutilated, in the case of (a) by modern ploughing and elsewhere by the digging of brick pits and recent drainage ditches, they all contain the battered remains of building sites, and (b) to (e) have a hollow-way which represents the original alignment of the road.

The land to the east of the existing road is now arable and this was fieldwalked. Close to the road itself there was a dense scatter of medieval pottery, concentrated particularly in the centre where the modern road bows westwards (f). The material here was in sufficient quantity to indicate occupation, and seems to be mainly twelfth-fourteenth century in date. To the south of this was a scatter of Roman pottery (g), belonging to the first half of the Roman period. Further north at (h) was a very large quantity of post-medieval material including pottery, tiles, bricks, etc. It seems to be mainly eighteenth- or nineteenth-century in date and may mark the site of a building of that period, though it could be the result of dumping material from the adjacent farm.

There can be no doubt that the earthworks and pottery indicate the former existence of a sizeable medieval settlement on this site and, despite the later damage and destruction, it is possible to suggest its layout. It probably consisted of a long main street, running north-south with houses lining both sides and with long closes running back behind them. On the west side of this street it is possible to

suggest that there were at least nine and perhaps as many as eleven properties. There could have been a similar number on the east of the street. The overall form of the earthworks points to a planned settlement and the pottery would suggest a date in the twelfth century, although the evidence does not enable us to say whether or not former arable land

was involved. Depopulation probably took place over a long period: indeed the existing five properties show that it is not yet complete. The extensive brick pits must date from a period when the present road had been laid out for they block the original hollow-way and indeed have in places cut right through it.

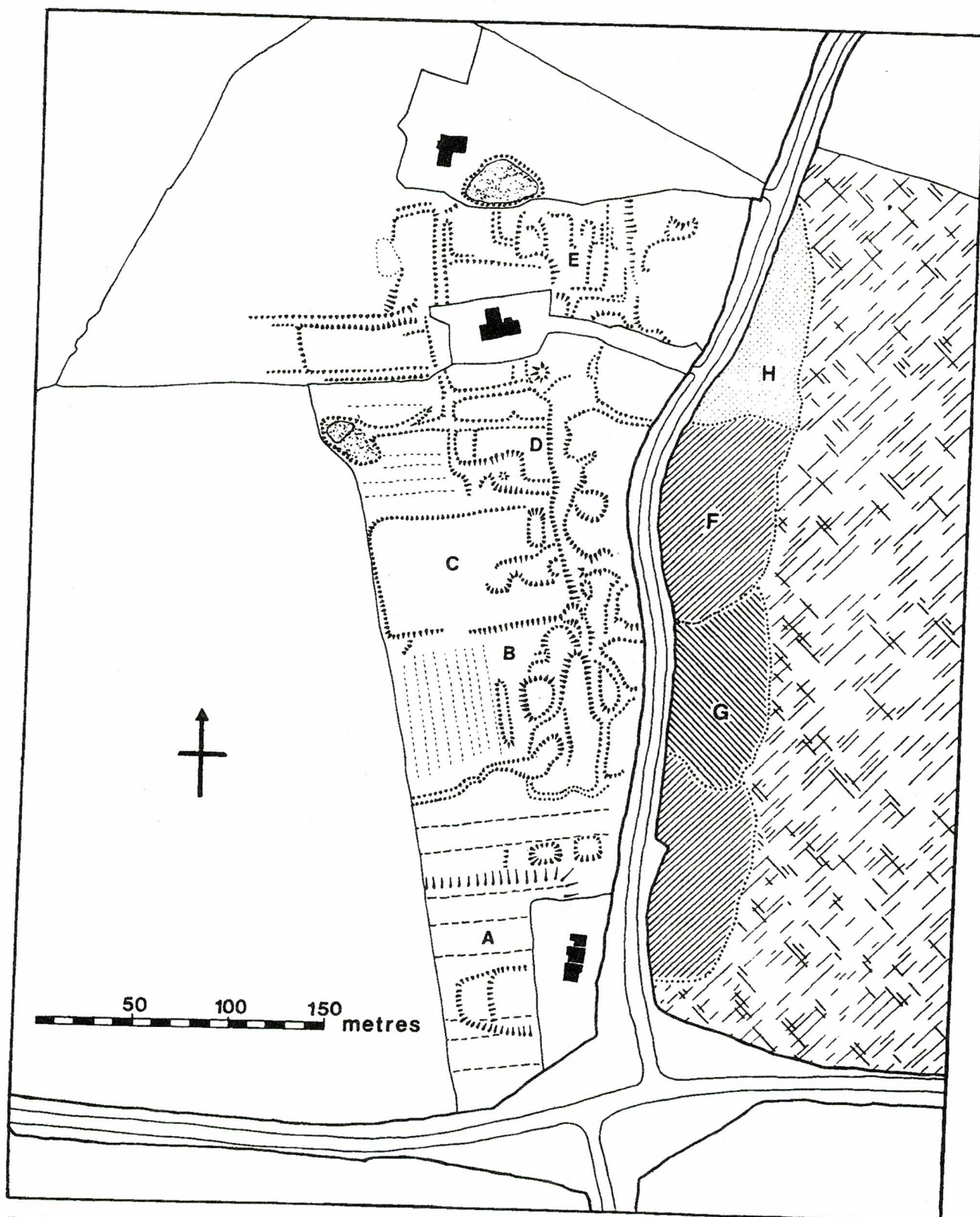


Fig. 10 North End, Bletsoe: plan of the earthworks (with acknowledgements to the Conservation Section, Planning Department, Bedfordshire County Council).

Very few documents mention North End. The main exception is a detailed survey of the whole manor of Bletsoe drawn up for Oliver St John, the lord, in 1624 following the enclosure of the parish, which describes six messuages (one freehold and five held at will or by indenture) together with their associated closes.³⁶ But, as with some of the sites already described, a comparison between Domesday Book and the Hundred Rolls may produce results which are significant.

At Domesday Bletsoe had two almost identical manors, held under Hugh de Beauchamp and the Countess Judith; they had the same hidage (two and a half apiece), the same number of demesne and peasant ploughs, a half share of the same mill, identical woodland, meadow and values, but different pre-Conquest owners. There were also three sokemen, assigned to the Beauchamp manor. But in 1086 both manors were held by the same man, Osbert de Broilg, and thereafter Bletsoe remained a single manor vill.

The Hundred Rolls describe a manor which had undergone certain changes since Domesday. In 1086 the combined ploughs of the villeins and bordars amounted to six, say 24 virgates if they in fact represented ploughlands. In 1279 there were only six and a half villein virgates, but also seventeen and a half free ones, the same overall total but with a distinct alteration in the balance of tenure. The manner in which the various tenancies are described is possibly of significance. After the demesne, villeins, cottagers and church, the free tenants are set out, but in two groups with different introductory phrases. Thus *Johannes habet in liberis tenentibus* (John de Pateshulle, the then lord) is followed by a list of freemen holding altogether 14.6 virgates; we then get another group (3 virgates and 9 acres) preceded by the words *In liberis tenentibus*. Now the number of certain earthwork property divisions along the western side of the road at North End is nine; but the two divisions north of (d) could easily represent a subdivision of an earlier, larger unit, giving eight original properties altogether, seven broad ones and one narrow one at the northern end. This may just conceivably have a relationship with the number of virgates in the first group, with say the properties surveyed by us along the west of the hollow-way having seven and a half virgates assigned to them; just over half the total. What strengthens the possibility that the way in which the free tenants are described has a topographical basis is the fact that the first three names in the second list belong to the 'de Bolno' family. People with this name appear frequently in Bedfordshire records of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (e.g. Fowler 1935 and 1939; Godber 1963), and it may well be that Bolnohoe is in fact an earlier version of the name of the place we now know as Bourne End: it is given as Bone End or Boln End in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century documents and is so shown on Jeffrey's county map of 1765.³⁷ If Bourne End consisted in the thirteenth

century of a group of free tenants, then perhaps North End and maybe also Whitwick Green did so as well. The core of Bletsoe village, which to judge from the Ordnance map exhibits signs of planning on both sides of a green, now infilled, might then have been a settlement of villeins associated with the cultivation of the demesne, although that there were eventually some freemen here with maybe small pieces of land is suggested by a grant of a messuage near the bridge (and therefore possibly close to the river) along with an acre in the fields made to Harrold Priory in 1236 (Fowler 1935, nos 164-5). This free tenement appears in the Hundred Rolls right at the end of the third sub-total.

All this must be highly speculative, but it may be that the settlement pattern that exists at Bletsoe now is the result of the dissolution of a planned early medieval reorganisation based on type of tenure. All this took place within what was or became one field system: no document suggests that any of the ends had its own independent system, although the relationship between the three soke tenancies of Domesday and the 'ends' of Bletsoe would bear further examination. Most of the grants of land which have survived contain details which would not be inconsistent with a system with fields and furlongs of the Midland type, but that the reality may have been more complicated than that is suggested by a reference in a quitclaim of 1219 to 39 acres 'in a field called Bolnohcroft' (Fowler 1919, no. 234). This does not sound like a field or a furlong on the Midland pattern. The location of the North End settlement may have been determined by a need for access to wood-pasture in the north-eastern corner of the parish, and by the convenience of a more central position within the field system; in which case the Bletsoe earthworks would represent a much more formal and tightly planned version of the Hobbs Green ones, which were perhaps more piecemeal in their origin. An additional factor might have been the field system of the parish. If something on the lines of the Thurleigh system applied, then new free holdings need not have been laid out as an appendage to a presumed original core around the church and manor house, but could have been sited in the most convenient place.

CONCLUSIONS

These four examples of partially abandoned dispersed settlements from three different parts of Bedfordshire all exhibit the same features: a formerly more extensive nature, a twelfth-century beginning and in at least three cases a cleared arable landscape rather than a forested one. All three features, if repeated elsewhere, would have important implications not only for the development of settlement over much of England, but also for the development of the wider landscape. The more extensive nature of this type of settlement than has previously been noted is particularly significant for it involves the whole problem of the

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that this paper has perhaps done a little to improve

the situation.

FOOTNOTES

1. BRO ST uncat 391.
2. A cottage is shown south of Waterfall Farm on an estate map of 1771, BRO Z 133/1.
3. BRO MA 47/2.
4. BRO ABE 1, 1607.
5. BRO X 1/85.
6. BRO L 26/1436 : C 1256.
7. BRO L 26/1442.
8. BRO L 15/1.
9. BRO X 1/85.
10. BRO R Box 1,13; Bun 1,13.
11. BRO WG 2642-2644.
12. BRO Z 133/1.
13. RAF aerial photographs 106 G UK 635, 10 Aug 45, 3005-3013, 4162-4168.
14. BRO L 26/1436.
15. BRO R Box 1/31.
16. BRO L 15/1.
17. BRO L 15/6, 15/33a.
18. BRO C 1277, exchange of 1687.
19. BRO R Box 1/31.
20. BRO Z 133/1.
21. BRO A 47.
22. BRO L 26/1442; MD WG 919.
23. BRO ABE 2.
24. BRO TW 794.
25. BRO A 29.
26. RAF aerial photographs CPE UK 1994 13 Apr 47 1205-1208; 3G TUD UK 118 pt 1 3 Apr 46 6001-6003, 6078-6081.
27. BRO Ma 28. There was however a house on the island of the enclosure north-west of the track in c. 1775.
28. RAF aerial photographs CPE UK 1792 11 Oct 46 3105-3111, 3127-3129, 4106-4108; Cambridge University Committee for Aerial Photography photographs AAV 68, 71.
29. BRO Fac 1, SC 6/6070, account of William Bawne, king's bailiff.
30. BRO DD CH 341, 1560.
31. PRO LR2 258.
32. PRO LR2 208.
33. BRO WI 371.
34. Simon de Lidlington occurs in 1197 and died before 1229/30 (Fowler 1926, p. 252, n 3).
35. BRO SJ 2383.
36. BRO CRT 110/34.
37. eg BRO P 36/3/4; SJ 1534; SJ 2383.

ABBREVIATIONS

BHRS	Bedfordshire Historical Record Society
BRO	Bedfordshire County Record Office
PRO	Public Record Office

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