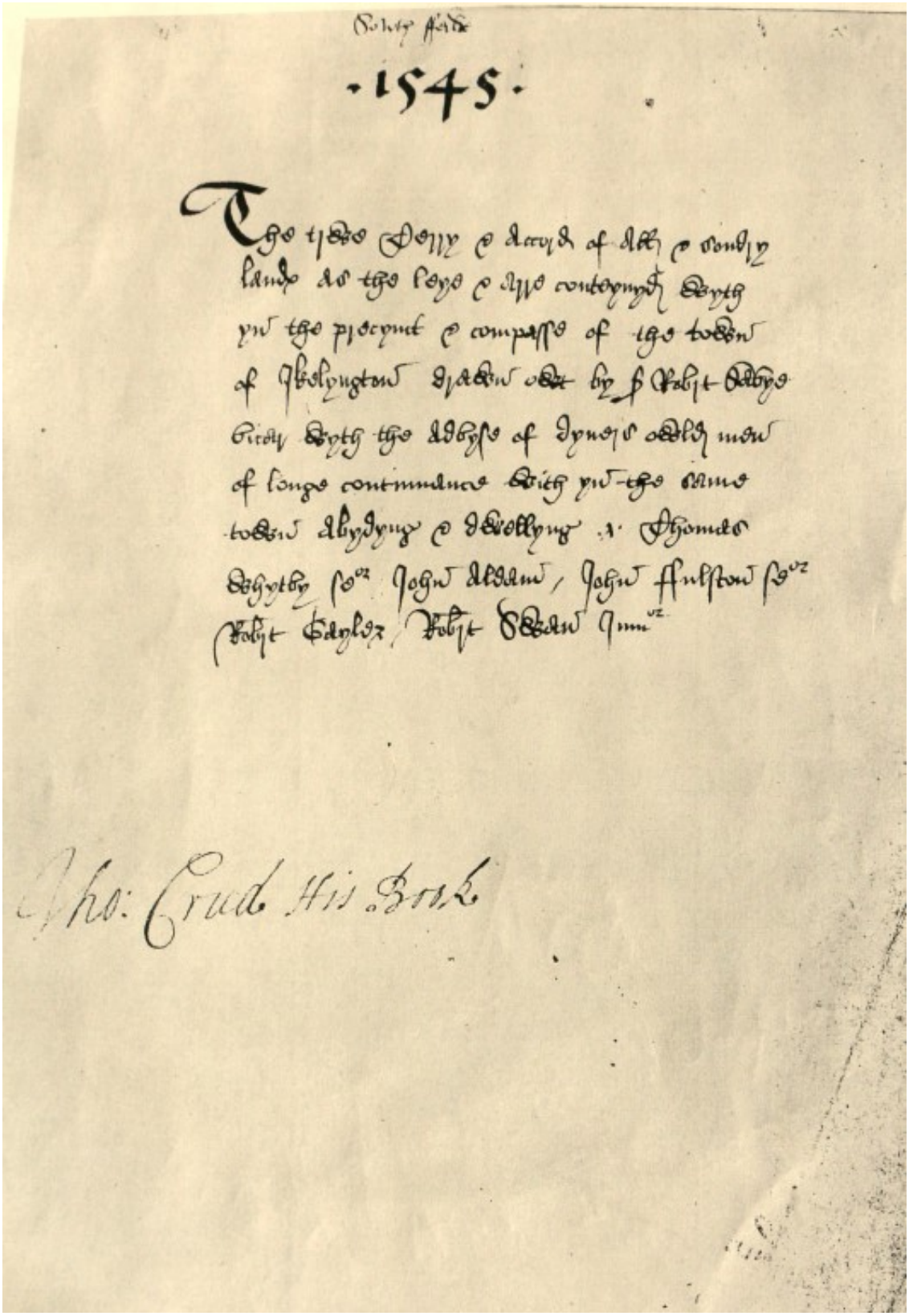
FARMING IN TUDOR ICKLETON

An Introduction to Ickleton's Heath Field Terrier of 1545

"The trewe coppy and accord of all and sundry land as the leys and arre conteynd wyth yn the precynct and compasse of the town of Ikelynton drawn out by I Robert Daveye vicar with the advyse of dyvers owld men of longe continuance and dwelling :- Thomas Whytley se^or^, John Aldam, John Fulston se^or^, Robert Gayler, Robert Swan jun^or.^"

Preface to Ickleton Terriers, 1545

Andrew Shepperd
Ickleton Society, 2015



Title page of 1545 Terrier

This introduction is dedicated to the memory of Sheila Birch (1935 - 2013), a tireless enthusiast in the pursuit of local history and long-time supporter of the Ickleton Society

Background

In 1536, Henry VIII had his famous spat with the papacy. He founded the Church of England, seized all the assets of the Roman Church and took the opportunity to disband the rich and (following Thomas Cromwell's propaganda campaign) increasingly unpopular monasteries.

The writing was on the wall and when, two years later in 1538, the King's commissioners arrived in Ickleton, the prioress and her remaining nuns were sent into retirement, their servants to destitution and the priory, together with much of the remaining Ickleton land which had also been in monastic ownership passed to the Crown.

This presented an opportunity for Henry. In 1485 John Morton, the then bishop of Ely had built a palace at Hatfield, which the king felt would make the ideal home and nursery for his three remaining children – Mary (22), Elizabeth (5) and Edward (1). The Crown wasted little time in doing a deal with the current Bishop, exchanging his newly acquired Ickleton lands for the Bishop's estate at Hatfield. It may well be that the Bishop got the thin end of the deal – but he knew better than to complain and so became Ickleton's major land owner.

Ickleton's Lands

The extent of Ickleton is not clear before the eleventh century, but in 1067 William 1st gave it (together with much other land) to Eustace of Boulogne. The Domesday Book assessed Ickleton at approximately 19½ hides, A hide was actually a measurement of value (and thus taxation potential) rather than acreage, but in Cambridgeshire was reckoned to average 120 acres. This suggests a total of about 2400 acres – approximately similar to today.

In accordance with the best medieval practice, most of this land was divided into common fields. Individual landholders were allotted small strips across these and the entire farming community sowed, reaped and rotated crops in an agreed synchronised fashion. In the 16th century, there were three fields, although later on with improved techniques, the norm became four. In 1545, they were:

- **South Field** – bounded at the north-west end by Coploe Road and Abbey Street, stretching east to the river and south towards Great Chesterford and Strethall.
- **West field** – to the North of Grange Road and running to the parish boundary with Duxford.
- **Heath Field** – roughly between Coploe Road and Grange Road toward Elmdon.

Heath Field (which had become known as Down Field by 1795) did actually embrace an area of “heath” at the top of the hills. This was marginal land which with the farming techniques of the day was unsuited for arable use, but could be used for grazing.

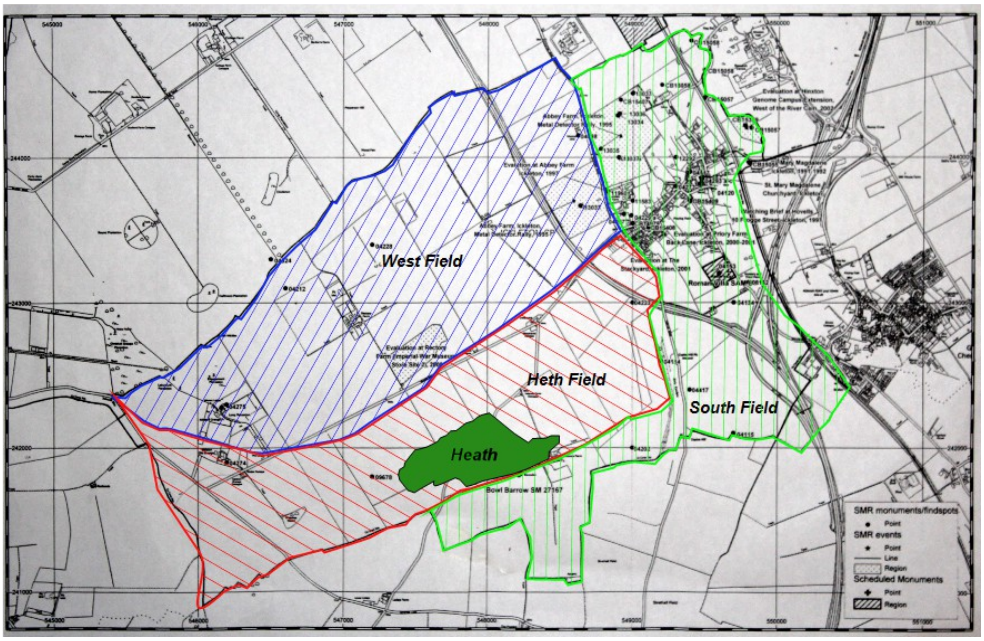


Figure 1: Approximate locations of open fields in 1545

The Open Field System

Unlike today's landscape of hedged and tree fringed fields, the open field countryside would have presented a very different aspect. Almost all was arable and divided into many tiny strip plots. Apart from the odd grass balk, no boundary fences or hedges were used. Plough furrows alone were reckoned to offer a sufficient demarcation.

Field Structure

Each of the three fields consisted of a number of sub-fields known as *furlongs*. In this context, a furlong described an area rather than, as it does nowadays, a length. Each furlong in turn consisted of a series of parallel strips or *lands* probably averaging about one third of an acre each.

At this time, ploughing was normally performed by teams of oxen which moved clockwise round each strip. This turned the soil whilst moving some towards the centre and a little to the end of the furrow. Over time, strips became domed towards the centre and lowered at the edges, creating the familiar ridge and furrow effect. Mounds known as *butts* would also develop at the ends. At the end of each furrow, it was necessary to turn to the other side of the strip. In order to achieve an adequate radius to do so, the team would initially have to be swung slightly to the left and as can be readily seen by looking at any open-field map, this had the secondary effect of making each strip slightly S-shaped.

In Ickleton, some traces of ridge & furrow are still visible at the far end of the recreation ground, whilst the strip lynchets on the west side of Coploe Road near the chalk pit, show the result of the same techniques applied to a sloping hillside. In this case, wide lands were ploughed at right angles to the slope. Over time, the combined effects of annual disturbance, gravity and erosion acted to move soil downhill creating a steep unusable slope between lands, eventually forming the series of terraces which we know today.

Figure 3: Traces of ridge, furrow & butt-ends visible on the recreation ground

Figure 4: Coploe Strip Lynchets pictured in 1927

It may be useful to summarise some of the terms which are frequently encountered both in Terriers and maps of the fields. Thus:

Land – A single strip
Furlong, Shot, Flat, Plat – Sub-field of Lands running parallel
Butt or **Head -** the heap of soil accumulated by ploughing at the end of each strip
Headland – The first land of a furlong where the adjacent furlongs lands run at right angles.
Joint – Furlong boundary where lands meet head on
Balk – Narrow uncultivated land for delineation, often used as right-of-way.
Leys – Cultivable land allowed to grass over (eg: for grazing)
Gore – Triangular shaped land filling in an odd area
Meadow – Permanent pasture lying near a river (none in Heth field though)

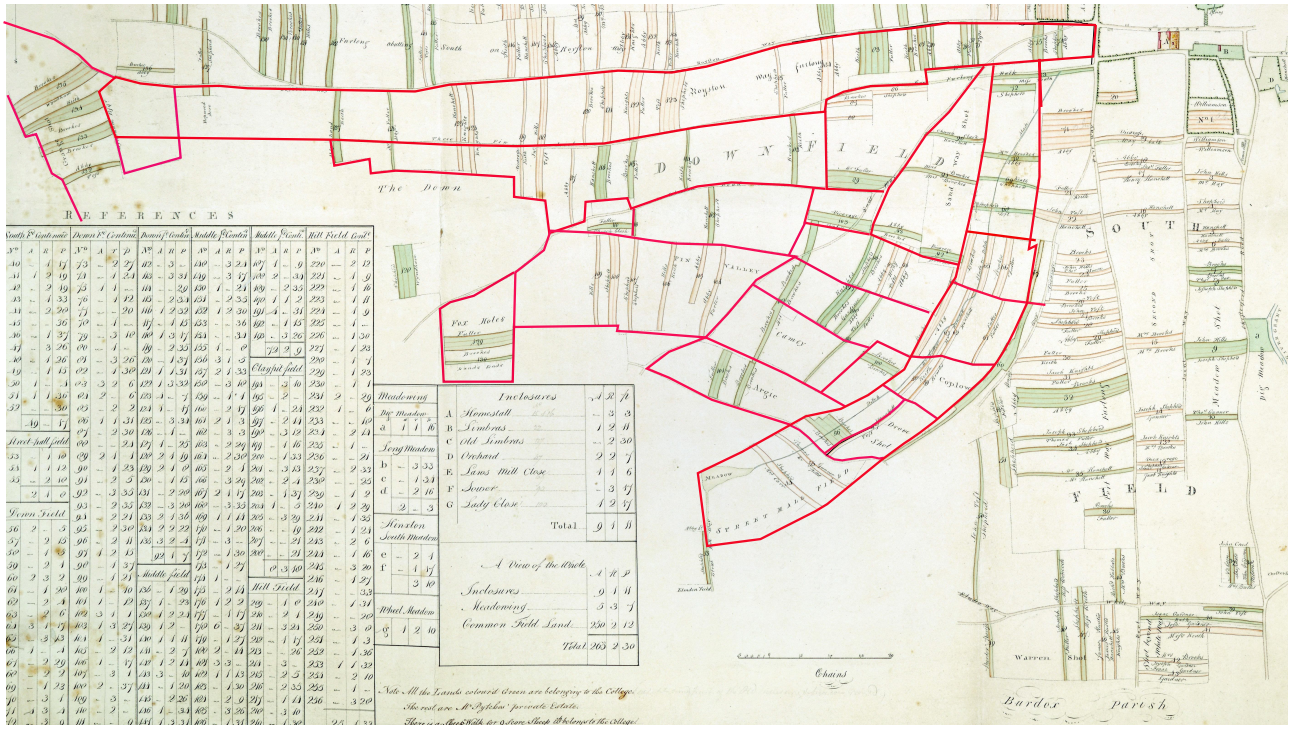


Figure 2: Furlongs in West Field - 1795 map

Individual lands were allotted to individual holders across all three fields. The basic unit of entitlement was known as a *virgate* which could vary between 14 and 40 acres. It had originally represented the holding required by a single peasant. By 1545, some virgates seem to have become divided amongst smaller landholders, whilst the larger players might possess two or more. No individual virgate could have adjacent strips and as the system of allocation was random. the distribution of good and poor land between individuals was inherently fair.

The Farming Year

Given the physical layout of the fields, it was essential that operations be carried out properly and to a set plan. The choice of crops also had to be determined in a coordinated manner. Failure of an individual to do so could result in sanctions.

The three fields were mainly devoted to arable crops which had to be planted in a rotating pattern, e.g:
Year 1: Cereals – wheat, barley, rye, etc.
Year2: Legumes - pease, beans, etc.
Year3: Fallow - used for common grazing, which also manured the land.

In the spring, following ploughing and harrowing, seed was sown by broadcasting. A strip would be covered in two passes – one side at a time and once sown, the land was harrowed to cover the seed. In the sixteenth century, the quantities sown were probably less than half what would be regarded as normal today. The fallow lands were frequently ploughed soon after the beginning of May by "casting the tilth" down from the ridge to the furrow – i.e. ploughing in an anti-clockwise direction. Later in the summer, "ridging up" was done at least twice for each "casting"

At harvest time, cereal and legumes would be scythed down by hand, initially left to dry in handfuls and then stacked up in sheaves or cocks to complete the process. Once dry they would be stored inside for winter threshing. By today's standards, the return on crops was poor indeed. Analysis of manorial accounts suggests that cereal would yield between two point five and six times the quantity sown. A figure of three times is considered by agronomists to be the minimum to sustain human life and a typical figure today might exceed fortyfold.

In a hedgeless environment, livestock had to be confined to allocated grazing lands through the ministrations of cowherds, swineherds and shepherds, presumably being folded or placed in a close overnight. In the autumn this process could potentially be extended to previously planted fields once the harvest had taken place. The number of animals that could be kept was regulated. It is not known what the rules were in Ickleton, but in an example from Northamptonshire in 1231, each virgate was permitted four beasts (oxen, cows, etc.); four pigs and twenty one sheep.

Figure 3 - Mouldboard plough with Ox team. Could plough c. One acre per day

Roadways

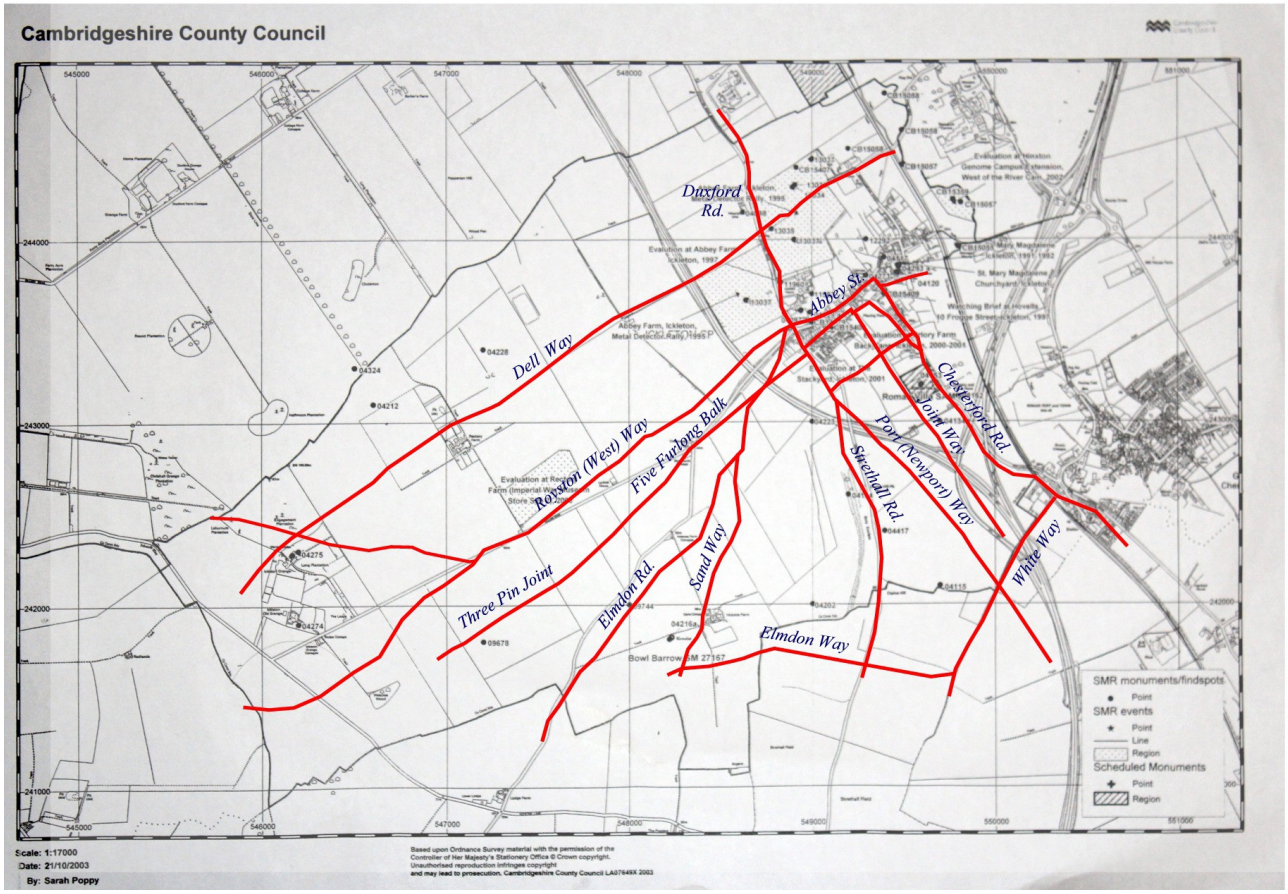


Figure 5: Open Field Tracks superimposed on Modern Map

Access to Ickleton's fields was by a long-established gridwork of tracks, some of which corresponded to cross-country routes whilst others had evolved specifically for access purposes. The remains of a number of these can still be identified today. Some significant roads were:

- **Royston Way** – one of the ancient lines of the Icknield Way approximating to the modern Grange Road. It runs west from Abbey Street then to the Parish boundary, beyond Ickleton Grange.
- **Dell Way** – also an old Icknield Way route and parallel with Royston Way. It enters the village at the Hinxton Road river crossing, continues up the green lane behind the cemetery, crosses Duxford Road and is identifiable as it passes through Rectory Farm en route to the western parish boundary.
- **Whiteway** (still so-called) – part of the Roman road which led from Chesterford to join Ermine Street at Braughing. Running from the nearby Roman fortress of Great Chesterford, it enters the parish close to Chesterford station and then runs South East as a green lane towards Strethall
- **Portway** (short for Newport Way) ran from the Abbey Street / Coploe Road junction to the parish boundary near Chesterford station – little is now visible..

Access tracks also evolved names based on local features, including such evocative examples as Three Pin Joint; Five Furlong Balk; Joint Way; Sand Way and Vicarage Way

Figure 6: Dell Way at Hinxton Rd.

Figure 7: Dell Way at Duxford Rd.

Figure 8: Course of old Royston Way as hedge to north of Grange Rd.

Figure 9: The Heath. High ground by Elmdon Rd.

The Clare College Map

This geometric landscape, largely unencumbered by trees and hedges was Ickleton's backdrop for the best part of a thousand years, until following the 1810 parliamentary enclosure act it was swept away almost overnight.

We are fortunate then that in 1795, the fellows of Clare College became concerned about a lack of clarity between the college's holdings at Ickleton and those of John and Mary Pytches. The Pytches had been Clare's sometime tenants and were substantial farmers in their own right. It was decided that a new terrier was required. In order to inject a bit of science into the process, ??? was commissioned to produce a map of the village and its fields on which the separate holdings could be registered once and for all.

The work was duly carried out and a settlement reached with the Pytches - and so it is that we have a means of identifying many of the features listed in the terrier. Just 15 years before the enclosures, the layout ws probably little altered since the time of the Bishop's 1545 terrier and indeed the Saxon kings.

The 1545 Survey

Following the Bishop of Ely's surprise appearance on the Ickleton scene, things seem to have moved with some deliberation, for it was not until 1545, some 7 years after the deal had been done with Henry, that the Vicar, Robert Davey received an instruction from his employer that all land within the Parish be surveyed and inventories produced to establish what the see now possessed..

Davey carried out the survey, producing a separate terrier for each of the three common fields (a terrier in this sense being simply – and perhaps a little disappointingly, just an inventory of land). As he states in his introduction (at the top of this document), He did this with the help of some local expertise, but seems to have done at least some of the work himself. The reverent gentleman's progress around the fields accompanied by his dyvers owld men probably made a welcome diversion from coping with the new-fangled C of E liturgy!

In 2010, Sheila Birch of Ickleton took upon herself the onerous process of transcribing the terrier for Heath Field into readable English. As a glance at the original will demonstrate, this was no mean feat, early 16th century handwriting does differ pretty markedly from that of the 21st!

The Terrier is mostly quite formulaic. Most technical terms relate to the open field system itself although the text is spiced here and there by the odd Latin formula or archaism. The following terms perhaps merit further explanation.

Term	Definition
Balk (Balke)	Uncultivated land between strips
Butt	Heap of soil accumulated at the end of a land
Di	Half (short for Latin Dimidiam)
Furlong (Forlong/Folong)	220 yards. Also used to describe a collection of adjacent strips, which were (sometimes at least, 200 yards long)
Headland (Hedlond)	Uncultivated land at end of strips allowing space to turn a plough.
Imprimis / In primis	Fractured Latin – 'In the first place' / 'Initially'
Joint	Uneveness from ploughing at the end-to-end junction of two strips
Leys	Land left unploughed for grazing
Rood (Roode)	A quarter of an acre (2 roods = di acre)
Stulp (Stulpe/Stolpe)	Literally a boundary post. 'Stolpe Peece' – Prob boundary balk
Shotte, Flatte, Platte	All seem to describe a collection of adjacent strips

Navigating the route

Handy reference points such as "... and there a balke & a busshe in the middes of the balke." are of limited value after 470 years, however the 1795 map dating from 250 years after the terrier, shows the general layout of the Feudal field system. Using this, it is possible to make a reasonable guess as to the route taken.

What the Terrier reveals

At the time of the Norman conquest, land was generally granted by the crown, usually to powerful supporters or family. Generally some or all of this was in turn sub-let to create a pyramid of 'ownership'. At the bottom level, this would be achieved either by simple rental or by 'Copyhold' from a manor to establish a lifetime title but with no right to pass it on as an inheritance. By 1545, this simplistic system had been eroded, so that in some cases, freehold could actually be owned by Manors and individuals. For the purpose of understanding the Terrier, we have therefore considered only the stated land-holder.

An analysis of the Heath Field Terrier shows that a total of about 860 acres were divided into 712 separate parcels. These varied in size from a half-rood to (very exceptionally) 46 acres. Ignoring the few exceptions, the average size of a holding was about 1 acre.

There were 37 separate land-holders, whose holdings varied in size from one rood to over 300 acres.

The following summarizes how the land was shared out:

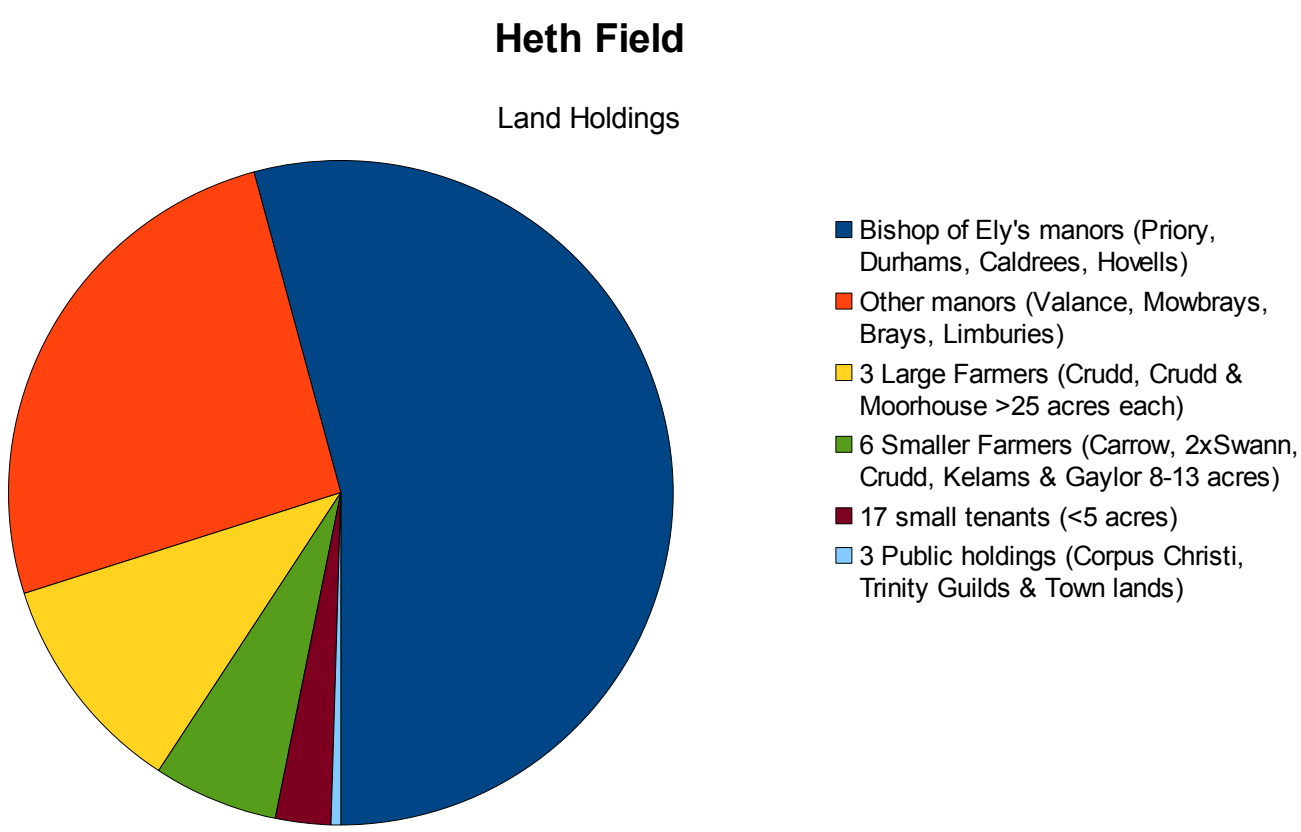


Figure 10: Land Holdings

Almost 80% was held by the eight manors of Priories, Hovells, Caldrees, Durhams, Limburies, Brays, Valance and Mowbrays. The first four of these had all belonged to various religious houses at the time of the reformation and had thus ended up in the possession of the Bishop of Ely. Durhams had belonged to West Dereham abbey in Norfolk, Hovells to Tilty (near Great Dunmow) & Caldrees to Calder abbey in Cumbria. Priories had belonged to the Benedictine Ickleton Priory since 1279. It represented the nuns' main source of income and with 714 acres in 1536 was substantially the largest holding in the village. It is always referred to in the Terrier as the *"cheefe manor of the Bishop"* .

The Crudd Family

One of the more interesting revelations from the terrier is the identification of significant yeomen farmers in the village and of these, the splendidly named Crudd family were foremost. In 1545 John Crudde "at the church gate" would have had a total holding over the three fields of perhaps 100 acres and John Crudde "by the bushe" maybe 80. Richard Crudd senior had 40, and Richard Crudd junior, about 5. Fifteen years later in 1559, the Church register notes the death of "John Crud at the Rose", whilst the title sheet of the Terrier (reproduced above) bears the inscription "Tho: Crud His Book". This is in a more modern hand and may relate to a Thomas Crudd who was born 100 years later in 1646.

The Cruddes may have come into the village from Hinxton. They were a large and prosperous family at this time and two years after the Terrier was completed, a John Crud bought Mowbrays manor. The existing building of Mowbrays beside the church has been dated to the mid-16th century, so it is perhaps a reasonable guess that this was the house referred to as *at the Church Gate*, very possibly built by John himself. A John Cruddе had already purchased some of the manorial lands two years previously – so probably that was him too. If we are in the guessing game, did his brother or cousin John Crudd at the Bush later retire to run the Rose pub? - or maybe the Bush was simply renamed!

The Crudd family held Mowbrays manor until 1714 when it passed to the Hanchetts and in 1789 following the marriage of Susanna Hanchett to the vicar Zachary Brookes, to the Brookes family. At her death in 1810, Susanna owned 280 acres and four years later at enclosure, the Brookes family were awarded 160 acres. In 1819 the entire estate was sold by the Brookes to Clare Hall who still possess it today.

Other land-holders

Another major player was a Mr. Moorhouse who had more than 90 acres. As we have found no other mention of the family elsewhere, it may be that he was an absentee who had perhaps inherited his Ickleton lands. Four or five members of the Swann family accounted for a further 75 acres, whilst Messrs Carrow (40 acres), Kelams (30) and Gaylor (25) could be counted as small farmers. A further 10 individuals had holdings of between one and seven acres – not enough to live from alone, but perhaps contributing directly to their family's subsistence, or providing a modest supplementary income. It is interesting to note that there are in addition, public holdings - Five acres of "Town Lands" were probably originally bequeathed to the village for charitable purposes, whilst a further five acres were split between two church guilds - Trinity and Corpus Christi.

The common aim of church guilds was to arrange prayers in their mother church – particularly for the souls of deceased members. Often lights and altars were erected, and occasionally the services of a priest to conduct masses. Both of the Ickleton guilds had existed before the reformation and there are records of the Trinity guild at least back to the early fourteenth century. It had an altar in the church in 1510, and owned £7 worth of goods in 1524. The Corpus Christi guild had a light in the church in 1520, and goods in 1524 worth £3. Oddly, in 1553 18 acres of guild land was sold by the Crown, and in 1572 a further two small parcels. Seemingly comprising more than appeared to exist in 1545! The guildhall in Ickleton, sold as concealed land in 1571, was bought in 1575 by John Paxton of Great Chesterford.

The full list of Heth Field landholders is given below:

Holder	Acreage
Abbey Manor (Bishop of Ely)	308
Manor of Valance	100
Manor of Limburys	68
Manor of Durhams	67
Manor of Hovells	55
Manor of Brays	40
John Crudd at the Churchgate	35
Manor of Caldrees	34
Mr Moorhouse	32
John Crudd at the Bush	27
Mr Carrow	13
Manor of Mowbrays	12
Robert Swan Sr.	11
John Swan Newton	11
Richard Crudd Sr.	10
Kelams land	10
Richard Gaylor	8
Robert Swan Jr.	4
Unknown	4
Richard Crudd	3
Thomas Dalygood	2
Town land	2
Trinity Guild	2
Richard Crudd Jr.	2
John Francis	1
Mr Candish	1
William Reed	1
William Rose	1
Catmere	1
Farant	1
John Adam	1
John Swan Sr.	1
Robert Swan Jr. (rented from Hovells)	1
Stephen Bennett	1
Thomas Swan	1
Corpus Christi Guild	<1
Joan Aldam	<1

Figure 11: Heth Field land holdings in 1545

Sources

- Transcription of 1545 Heth Field terrier - Sheila Birch, 2010
- Victoria County History – Cambridgeshire.
- Medieval Fields - David Hall, 1982. Shire Publications Ltd

Many thanks to Rita Sullivan who extracted holdings details from the transcribed document and provided kind guidance on reading the Terrier.