

**Medieval Rothley, Leicestershire:
manor, soke and parish**

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Vanessa McLoughlin

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Contents

Acknowledgement

Abstract

List of illustrations

Abbreviations

Introduction	10
1. Rothley manor and soke: a Leicestershire landscape	28
2. Manorial lords of Rothley soke from the thirteenth century	60
3. The tenants of the manor and soke of Rothley under the Templars	75
4. Conflicts and struggles	95
5. Fields, settlements, wastes and woods	122
6. Tenurial and parochial connections: thirteenth-century Rothley in context	154
7. Rothley parish and the possible origins of the soke	209
Conclusions	235
Appendix A: <i>Menton</i>	240
Appendix B: Inquisitions as evidence for peasant wealth	245
Appendix C: Plates: Rothley manor, soke and parish	249
Bibliography	266

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to examine the origins and function of medieval Rothley, Leicestershire, its manorial holdings, its soke and its parish. Later maps and both later and earlier written sources were examined to elucidate these elements and answer the questions posed. Documents from a number of sources have been used, primarily from the Rothley Temple Manuscripts held in the Records Office for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, but also from printed volumes of documents from national archives. Evidence contained within these sources has been used to elucidate some of the anomalies found within the landscape, and to give an indication of the sequence of events which helped to form the fields and townships within the soke. Parochial documents have been used to attempt to establish the origins of Rothley parish, and the nature of the ministry of Rothley church as a Hundredal minster has been postulated and examined. The documentary evidence suggests that Rothley was a parish of some importance in the tenth century, and that this parish may have arisen in association with the formation of the Hundred of Goscote. The settlement of Rothley offers some insights into these postulated origins, and the chapels serve to exemplify the extent of the parochial, manorial and soke jurisdiction. Further evidence of the nature of Rothley soke as a royal jurisdiction are examined through the rights which the tenants negotiated with their superior lords. The special privileges which the tenants of the ancient demesne enjoyed were strengthened by their ability to work co-operatively to achieve favourable outcomes in manorial disputes. These relationships will be examined in the course of the thesis, and conclusions on their significance will be reached.

List of illustrations

Maps

1. The pre-1974 counties of England, Wales and southern Scotland, showing Leicestershire	15
2. The manor and soke of Rothley at the Domesday Survey	16
3. The extent of the parish of Rothley as indicated in the sources	20
4. The dependencies of Rothley which belonged to the soke from the thirteenth century until the Dissolution	29
5. Rothley township at enclosure	32
6. Shoby, Grimston and Saxelby showing Saxelbye Estate	37
7. Detail from the Gaddesby tithe map	43
8. Detail from the Gaddesby tithe map	43
9. Relationship between South Croxton upper lordship and nether lordship	45
10. Outline of enclosure map of Barsby and South Croxton	47
11. Parish of Tilton with Halstead, Marefield and Whatborough	53
12. Skeffington township	55
13. Detail from the enclosure map for Rothley	61
14. Rothley township at enclosure	127
15. Rothley and Mountsorrel Superior	133
16. Detail from the enclosure map for Rothley	134
17. Detail from the Gaddesby tithe map showing settlement	137
18. Detail from the Gaddesby tithe map showing fields to west of settlement	137
19. Gaddesby, South Croxton, Barsby, Ashby Folville and Newbold Folville	142
20. Barsby and South Croxton upper lordship outline of enclosure map	145
21. Detail from Halstead tithe map showing Tilton church	147
22. Detail from Tilton tithe map showing Tilton church	147
23. Parish of Tilton, including Halstead, Marefield and Whatborough	148
24. Skeffington showing parts from extant tithe maps	151
25. Chadwell and Wycomb	151
26. The manor and soke of Rothley at the Domesday Survey	158
27. Deanery of Akeley	159
28. Rothley, Mountsorrel superior and Wanlip	160
29. The parish of Rothley lying within Goscote deanery	161
30. Gaddesby, South Croxton, Barsby, Ashby Folville and Newbold Folville	165
31. Gaddesby township and its relationship with surrounding townships	166
32. Beeby and Keyham	169

33. Shoby, Grimston and Saxelby with Saxelbye Estate	171
34. Wartnaby, Ab Kettleby and Holwell	172
35. Chadwell and Wycomb showing relationship with surrounding townships	175
36. Parish of Tilton, including Halstead, Marefield and Whatborough	176
37. Halstead and the church of Tilton on the Hill	177
38. Detail of settlement of Tilton on the Hill from the tithe map	178
39. Township of Somerby	180
40. Parish of Barrow on Soar within the deanery of Akeley	182
41. Soke dependencies of Barrow on Soar	184
42. Framland Deanery, Leicestershire, from the <i>Matriculus</i>	187
43. Deanery of Framland showing possible extent of the estate based on Melton	188
44. Gartree Deanery, Leicestershire, from the <i>Matriculus</i>	191
45. Soke of Great Bowden, from the Domesday Survey	192
46. Guthlaxton Deanery, Leicestershire, from the <i>Matriculus</i>	196
47. Possible pre-Domesday estate based on Ratby, Groby, Desford, Glenfield, Braunstone, Kirby Muxloe and Markfield	198
48. Sparkenhoe Deanery, Leicestershire, from the <i>Matriculus</i>	200
49. Parish of Market Bosworth	201
50. Putative estate held by Saxi before the Conquest	203
51. Deaneries of Leicestershire from the <i>Matriculus</i> of Hugo of Wells	206
52. Domesday Survey, Wapentakes of Leicestershire c. 1086	207
53. Leicestershire Survey circa 1130	208
54. Plan of the church of St Mary and St John the Baptist, Rothley	221
55. Plans of aligned church groups	223
56. Anglo-Saxon carved stonework in Leicestershire	224
57. Plans of churches within enclosures	227
58. Plan of Rothley	228
59. The settlement of Rothley and the hamlet of Rothley Temple	230

Figures

1. Table of Rothley soke dependencies at Domesday and in the thirteenth century	34
2. Income and outgoings of the Hospitallers in Rothley 1331 and 1372	75
3. Tenants of the soke of Rothley from the thirteenth-century custumal	82
4. Townships and names suggesting occupations	87
5. Tenancies where the female is the principal tenant	88
6. Names of reeves and churchwardens 1245 to c. 1259	93

7. Total payments made by soke tenants in 1331 and 1372	106
8. Number of tenants paying rents and taxes in the soke	107
9. Income and outgoings from the soke and parish	108
10. Domesday soke of Rothley and thirteenth-century parish	162
11. Gaddesby, Barsby and South Croxton and their immediate neighbours	166
12. Joint vill within the sokes of Barrow and Rothley	167
13. Vill in the environs of Keyham	168
14. Grimston and its neighbours	170
15. The hundred of Dalby on the Wolds from the Leicestershire Survey	170
16. Wartnaby and its neighbours	172
17. Chadwell, Wycomb and neighbouring vill	175
18. Fiscal, jurisdictional and ecclesiastical connections between vill in High Leicestershire	180
19. Soke of Barrow with ecclesiastical and jurisdictional connections	183
20. Relationship between tenants in the parish of Prestwold	185
21. <i>Matriculus</i> parish of Birstall held by Hugh de Grandmesnil at Domesday	186
22. Relationship between the lands held with the parish of Barkby	186
23. Melton and its associated vill	190
24. Soke of Great Bowden and associated vill	195
25. Vill associated with Ratby	199
26. Vill associated with Misterton	199
27. A putative pre-Conquest estate at Market Bosworth	202
28. A putative pre-Conquest estate under Saxi	204
29. Lands held by Robert Overton and Robert de Gaddesby	246

Plates

1. St Mary the Virgin and St John the Baptist, Rothley, Leicestershire	250
2. The Rothley cross-shaft, Rothley, Leicestershire	251
3. Church tower and footings, Rothley, Leicestershire	252
4. Norman font in the south chapel, and the nave and chancel looking east, Rothley, Leicestershire	253
5. Rothley brook looking west from the bridge leading to the church in Rothley, Leicestershire	254
6. The chapel at Rothley Temple, now Rothley Court, Rothley, Leicestershire	255
7. Vernacular architecture, Church Street, Rothley, Leicestershire	256
8. Vernacular architecture: Town Green and Anthony Street, Rothley,	

Leicestershire	257
9. Vernacular architecture: Rothley Town, Rothley Leicestershire	258
10. All Saints, Keyham, medieval chapel of Rothley, Leicestershire	259
11. St John the Baptist church, South Croxton, Leicestershire, which made payments to Rothley church	260
12. Main street in South Croxton, Leicestershire, and Court Close in South Croxton, Leicestershire	261
13. St Luke, Gaddesby, medieval chapel of Rothley, Leicestershire	262
14. St Mary's, Chadwell, medieval chapel of Rothley, Leicestershire	263
15. St Michael, Wartnaby, medieval chapel of Rothley, Leicestershire	264
16. St John the Baptist, Grimston, medieval chapel of Rothley, Leicestershire	265

Abbreviations

C.Ch.R.	Calendar of Charter Rolls
C.C.R.	Calendar of Close Rolls
C.P.R.	Calendar of Patent Rolls
DB	Domesday Book (Leicestershire)
ELH	Centre for English Local History, University of Leicester
f.	Folio
G.R.P.	The Great Roll of the Pipe
LRO	Leicestershire Record Office
<i>Matriculus</i>	<i>Rotuli Hugonis de Welles Episcopi Lincolniensis AD MCCIX-MCCXXXV</i>
MSS.	Manuscripts
OS	Ordnance survey
S.M.R.	Sites and monuments record
T.L.A.S.	Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological Society
T.L.A.H.S.	Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society
V.C.H.	Victoria County History

Introduction

In 1882 George Clark gave a paper on the manor and soke of Rothley which he described as ancient demesne, and he saw the soke as a place of safety enfranchised by the king for the holding of a court for tenants who held in socage.¹ The soke at Domesday consisted of twenty-two members which were subordinate to the manor of Rothley, and all members came under its jurisdiction. He believed that the soke was possibly a result of a gradual process of acquisition by some great English family. The soke court was held every three weeks, or more often if necessary, and fines were defined and limited. He examined the custumal of the soke and identified a separate inquisition regarding the church at Rothley with its five attached chapels, which raised a large payment compared with the secular rent. The customs of the manor were brief and included reference to the demesne of the lord king which amounted to two carucates of land, from which the men of Rothley were to carry the corn into the king's barns using their own carts on one day in the year. This complex royal holding reviewed by Clark appears to have consisted of three main elements: a manor, a soke and a parish.

Clark was not the only worker to notice that Rothley was unusual. Paul Vinogradoff, intrigued by this idea of soke, noticed that Rothley was a manor distinct from its surrounding members, and that manor and soke appeared to be separate entities.² He saw sokes generally as comprising of 'free tenantry dispersed sometimes over a very wide area', and noticed that other sokes did the same thing in the

¹ G.T. Clark, 'The customary of the manor and soke of Rothley, in the county of Leicester' *Archaeologia* 47, (1882), pp. 89-130.

² P. Vinogradoff, *Villainage in England: essays in English mediaeval history* (Oxford, 1892), p. 391.

surrounding counties of Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire.³ He saw a manor as 'the economic unit of an estate, and the soke as the jurisdictional union encircling the manor and often consisting of places scattered around it' which was 'one of the important results of the different modes by which lords acquired rights of superiority over their dependants.'⁴ These ideas pointed to the relationship between a manor and its soke, but did not give a full picture of how a soke functioned, nor how such an institution originated.

Maitland recognised Rothley as a midland manor with many members, and compared it with similar manors in Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire.⁵ He saw that although the Domesday vill of Rothley did not appear to be very large, its members were scattered over a wide area within the county of Leicestershire, and the rent from these members was recorded as a single whole.⁶ Maitland believed that the word soke came from the Anglo-Saxon *socn* with a primary meaning of seeking, which may have been connected with the exercise of jurisdiction. Thus *soca* may have been the duty of seeking justice at the lord's court.⁷ This appears to imply that the connections between the soke and the manorial centre at Rothley were those of court jurisdiction and payments of rents, and is a view largely in accord with that of Vinogradoff.

What were the origins of this type of manor with sokeland? Frank Stenton suggested that the great sokes which appeared within the Danelaw of eastern England may have been the result of the planned settlement of an army.⁸ He noted, with interest, that the centres of administration of these sokes were settlements with English names, and where the word 'manor' was used in the Domesday Survey, the one essential feature was a lord's house which would act as the centre of its organisation, with the implication that this was the norm.⁹ The Domesday compilers recognised three classes of tenement: the manor, the berewick and the soke.¹⁰ Maitland saw a soke as 'a piece of land over

³ P. Vinogradoff, *English society in the eleventh century: essays in English mediaeval history* (Oxford, 1908), pp. 135-6.

⁴ Vinogradoff, *English society*, pp. 130-1.

⁵ F.W. Maitland, *Domesday Book and beyond: three essays in the early history of England* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 114. First printed in 1897.

⁶ Domesday Leicestershire f. 230 b, c. Throughout the thesis this will be referred to as DB followed by the folio number.

⁷ Maitland, *Domesday Book and beyond*, p. 84. 'Soke' is often seen in conjunction with 'sake' which Maitland believed came from the Anglo-Saxon *sacu*, similar to the German *Sache* meaning 'matter' or 'cause' such as might be presented in court by a lawyer.

⁸ F. M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1943), 3rd edition, 1971, p. 525.

⁹ Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 481. Stenton recognised that there were exceptions to this, but as these were noted in Domesday, it is likely that these exceptions were not viewed as a normal arrangement.

¹⁰ F. M. Stenton, *Types of manorial structure in the northern Danelaw* (Oxford, 1910), p. 4.

whose inhabitants the lord of the chief manor enjoyed justiciary powers'. Thus the central manor functioned also as the soke centre. Rothley appears to have been just such a manor with detached soke dependencies scattered over a large area of north-eastern and eastern Leicestershire. Many Rothley soke dependencies in Domesday were fully royal sokeland but other villas were only part royal sokeland and part manorial land which came under other lords. This complexity of lordship and tenure raises questions regarding the day-to-day organisation of soke villas and their agriculture and this will be examined in the thesis.

The rights of 'sake and soke' were jurisdictional, and became commonplace in the eleventh century, particularly in the Domesday Book. Roffe found the earliest recorded use of the term 'sake and soke' in a document of AD 956 in which King Eadwy granted the estate of Southwell, Nottinghamshire and its soke to the archbishop of York.¹¹ Roffe went on to describe the particular privileges attached to 'sake and soke' and what this meant for those tenants who lived within its jurisdiction. At Southwell there were records of the privileges enjoyed by the archbishop of York in terms of levies and taxes. While the men of the archbishop were free from the public courts, the bailiff of each manor made suit to the public courts on their behalf. Market rights were transferred to the estate, and the whole was subject to supervision by the king's agents in the shire. Elements of these privileges from the tenth century can be shown to have survived the Conquest.

Thus from 'sake and soke' can be inferred the privileges which were extended to the tenants who were called sokemen. It was these tenants who performed the 'seeking' of justice spoken of by Maitland.¹² They were considered by Vinogradoff as 'free tenantry' living on the sokeland which came under the jurisdiction of the central manor.¹³ The sokeland at Rothley enjoyed a further privilege of being a royal soke, and formed a legal entity known as the 'ancient demesne'. Vinogradoff, taking his information from Bracton, saw the ancient demesne as

'composed of the manors which belonged to the crown at the time of the Conquest. This includes manors which had been given away subsequently, and excludes such as had lapsed to the king after the Conquest by escheat or forfeiture.'¹⁴

¹¹ D. Roffe, 'From thegnage to barony: sake and soke, title, and tenants-in-chief' *Anglo-Norman Studies* 12 (1989), pp. 157-176.

¹² Maitland, *Domesday Book and beyond*, p. 84.

¹³ Vinogradoff, *Villainage in England*, p. 391.

¹⁴ Vinogradoff, *Villainage in England*, p. 89f.

Royal demesne was that property held by the king at any given time.¹⁵ Ancient demesne territory was also royal demesne, but was legally defined as land in the hands of King Edward in 1066, and still in the hands of King William in 1086.¹⁶ By the thirteenth century many peasants living on the sokeland of a royal manor believed that they had the right of redress in the royal courts and the increase in the number of such cases required a legal remedy. Thus was developed the concept of the 'ancient demesne', but a definition was not arrived at until well into the thirteenth century.¹⁷

Land in the king's hands could be held on a temporary or a permanent basis. From his lands the king raised revenues of various kinds. He could farm out land and raise from it a rent from the farmer. He could raise different revenues of service and taxation connected to landholding from his villeins and servants. His private property would be the favourite stopping off point for King John during his itineraries, and royal servants would be despatched ahead of the royal party to prepare for the king's visit.¹⁸ Tenants living on royal demesne alienated by the crown maintained their royal privileges. Hallam traced the development of the concept of ancient demesne and the privileges enjoyed by the tenants, and she identified a fundamental shift in scholarly thinking in the middle of the twentieth century.¹⁹ Tenant privileges were first identified by Bracton in about 1250.²⁰ The legal protection which was afforded the tenants of the royal demesne came about as a result of the willingness of the central courts to supervise and intervene on behalf of the 'villein sokemen'. A gradual legal process then took place whereby disputes concerning the king's demesne were excluded from the common law assizes and the use of a new writ was granted, the 'little writ of right close' which referred to the 'ancient demesne of the king'. A further writ was also granted in the late thirteenth century, that of '*monstraverunt*' which was a formalised petition which could be used by these privileged royal tenants in the royal courts to complain against any increase in rents or services which their manorial lords attempted to levy.

¹⁵ A thorough examination of the nature and extent of royal demesne has been discussed by B.P. Wolffe, *The royal demesne in English history* (London, 1971).

¹⁶ F. Pollock and F.W. Maitland, *The history of English law* (Cambridge, 1923), Vol. I, pp. 383-406.

¹⁷ The concept of ancient demesne is further expanded upon in R.S. Hoyt, *The royal demesne in English constitutional history: 1066-1272* (New York, 1950), p. 200.

¹⁸ Bartlett goes into detail regarding the itineration of the royal court. See R. Bartlett, *England under the Norman and Angevin kings: 1075-1225* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 133-143, particularly p. 141.

¹⁹ E.M. Hallam, *Domesday Book through nine centuries* (PRO, London, 1986), pp. 74-113.

²⁰ S.E. Thorne, ed., *Bracton on the laws and customs of England* (Cambridge, Mass. 1968), Vol. 2, pp. 37-38.

Hallam referred to the work carried out by McIntosh on the manor of Havering in Essex,²¹ and the work of M.A. Barg.²²

The rights and privileges of the tenants of Rothley were laid down by custom, and these were redefined and altered over time. The 'Pains and Orders' issued by the soke court in the sixteenth century gave details of demands and expectations of the tenants, coupled with amercements for failure to comply.²³ They give a picture of tenant farmers and open-field farming and show a particular attention to detail concerning life and work in the fields and pastures of the township. The payments and dues made by tenants were outlined in the rentals and these included the duty of court attendance, that is 'suit of court'. Certain tenements owed 'boon' rents and these were listed separately. Just like the 'Pains and Orders', the rentals give a picture of tenants with land attached to their tenements, paying rents and court service to the manorial lord. The customs of Rothley were recited and amended from time to time, and in 1608 there is still mention of the 'ancient demesne' of two ploughlands which belonged to the owners of the Temple.²⁴ Hallam believed there were many unsolved problems in the understanding of the development of the 'ancient demesne' concept. Indeed its practices at Rothley were noted by Hallam as late as 1901 when an attempt was made by the lord of the manor of Rothley who claimed his right to payment of a customary due for land exchange from an outlying soke dependency.²⁵ The lord lost his case on the grounds that villein custom had long since ceased in Rothley.²⁶ Other cases cited by Hallam demonstrate that the use of Domesday Book, and the belief that the status conferred on both lord and tenants through claims of rights and privileges of ancient demesne continued to be a live issue well into the twentieth century. How did these rights and privileges affect the tenants of the medieval manor and soke of Rothley? Did they use such privileges to their advantage? In this study of medieval Rothley the development of the concept of the ancient demesne will be examined and the effect of its privileges on the tenants of the manor will be explored.

²¹ M.K. McIntosh, 'The privileged villeins of the English ancient demesne' *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 7, (1976), pp. 295-328.

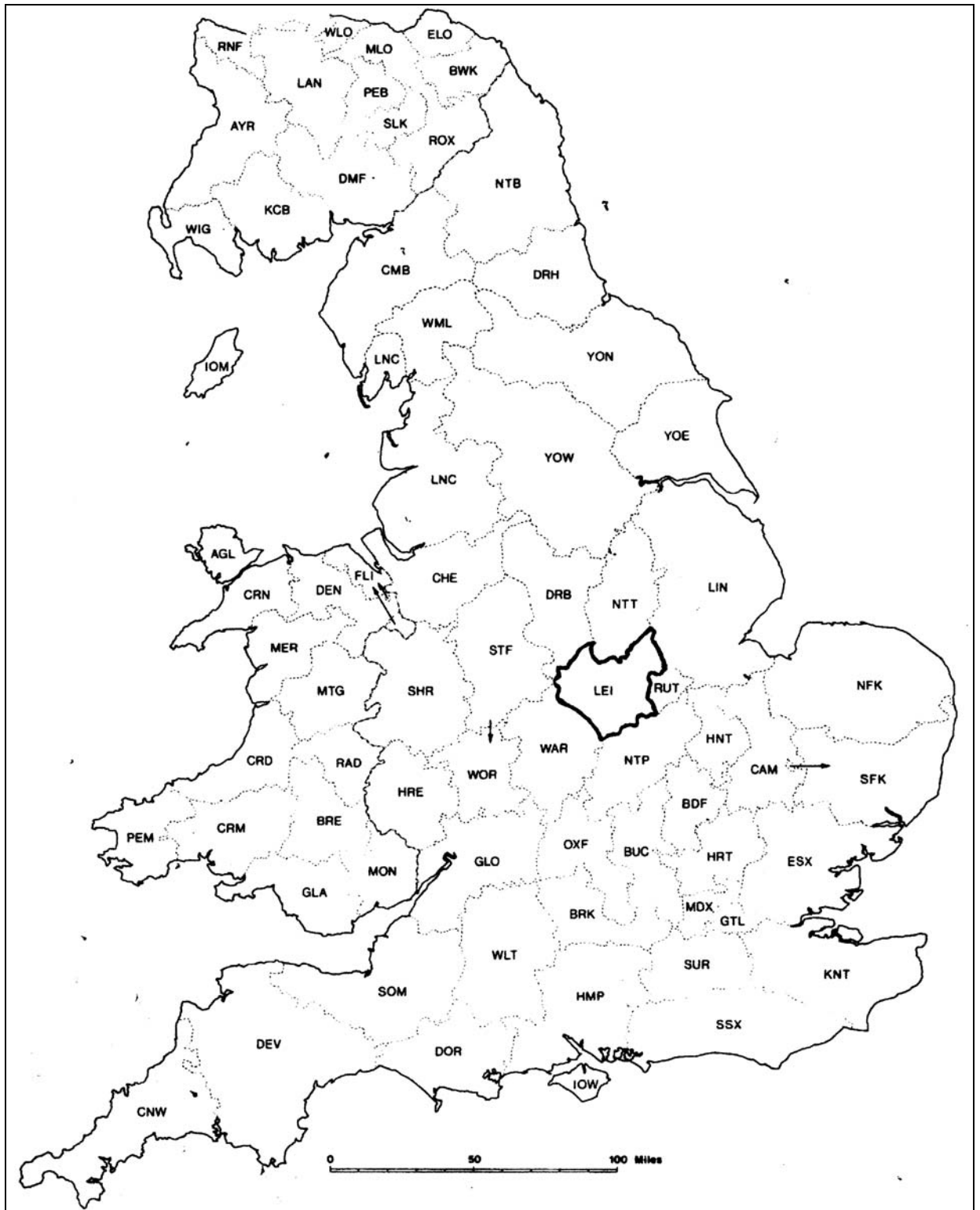
²² M.A. Barg, 'The villeins of the ancient demesne' *Studi in Memoria di Federigo Melis*, Giannini editore, (Rome, 1978), Vol. 1, pp. 213-37.

²³ L.R.O. 4D72/I/1, Pains and orders made at the leet holden at Rothley, 1 Elizabeth 1559.

²⁴ L.R.O. 44'28/962, Rothley Temple MSS, Customs of the soke of Rothley as settled by the inhabitants of 1608. Although the meaning of 'ancient demesne' here appears to have fundamentally changed from its thirteenth-century meaning.

²⁵ Hallam, *Domesday Book*, p. 175.

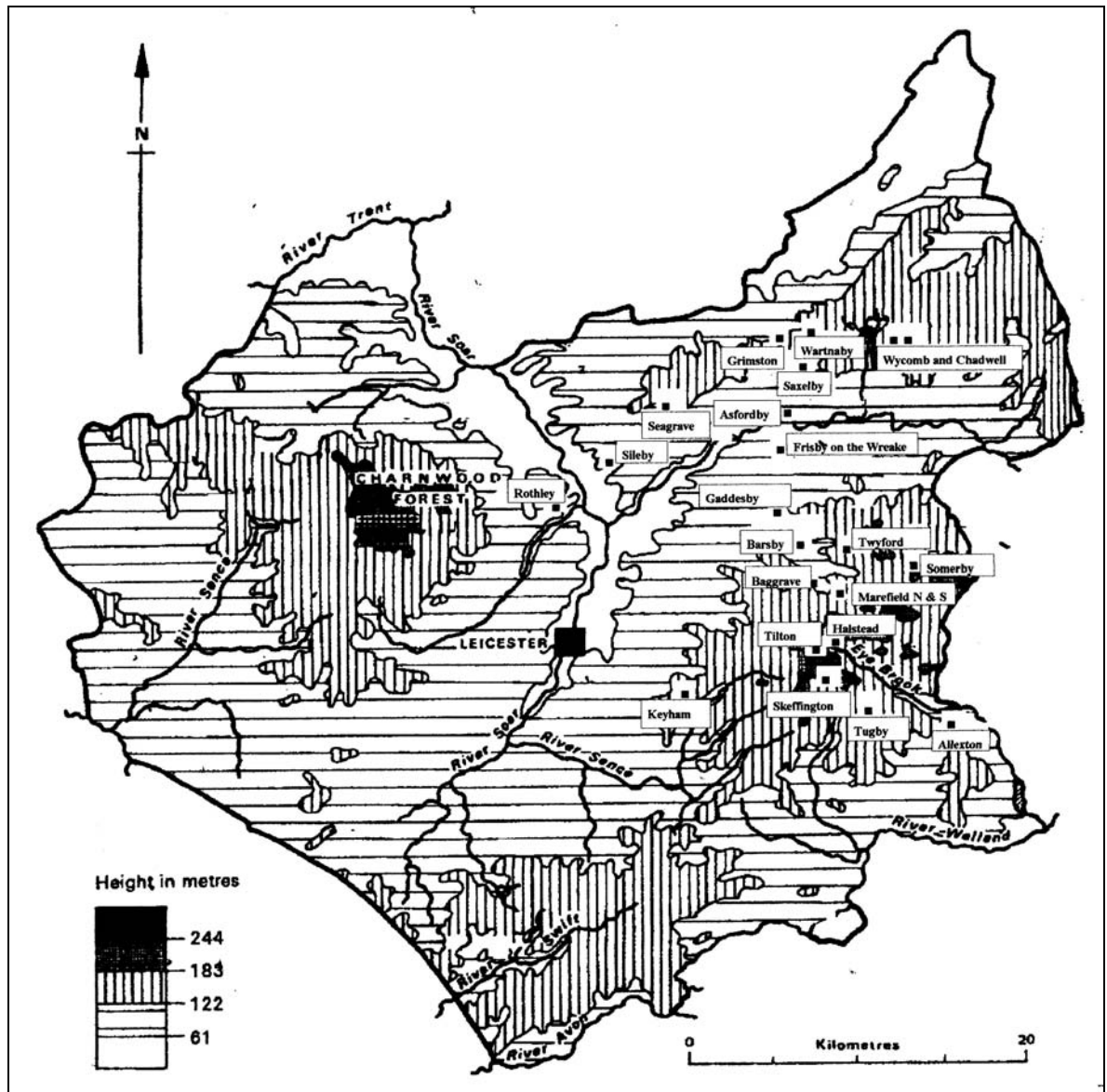
²⁶ Hallam was citing from the Law Reports as cited in *Manual of Legal Citations*, i, *The British Isles* (1959), 1 Ch 842.



Map 1. The pre-1974 counties of England, Wales and southern Scotland, showing Leicestershire

Source: M. Gelling, *Place-names in the landscape* (London, 1984)

The territory of the Domesday soke



Map 2. The manor and soke of Rothley showing townships both fully and part soke at the time of the Domesday Survey

Source: Modified from N. Pye, *Leicester and its region* (Leicester, 1972), p. 60; P. Morgan, ed., *Domesday Book 22 Leicestershire* (Chichester, 1979), f. 230 b, c

The territorial nature of sokes has been discussed for more than a century. Maitland noted the geographical size of Rothley, and referred to it as a manor with twenty-one members.²⁷ Stenton noted Rothley as one of many sokes which had retained much of its Domesday integrity into the thirteenth century.²⁸ Kapelle reviewed the work

²⁷ Maitland, *Domesday Book and beyond*, p. 114.

²⁸ Stenton, *Types of manorial structure*, p. 67f.

on estates which had been carried out by these and other scholars attempting to reach a coherent understanding of estate structure in the northern Danelaw.²⁹ The soke of Rothley and other similar Domesday estates have been termed by some workers as 'multiple estates'. G.R.J. Jones defined features of a multiple estate as

'a territorial entity containing a hierarchy of settlements, settlements which were in part functionally differentiated and whose occupants, supervised by a ministerial aristocracy, owed rents and services for the support of a lord.'³⁰

Some sokes comprised of a number of separate townships or vills which came under the jurisdiction of a head vill or *caput*. Sokes predominated in the north and east of the country and remnants of these sokes, or of their jurisdiction, have survived and can be seen in the landscape and in some of the local customs and by-laws of the vills themselves. Jones' idea of a multi-vill estate was that the various settlement areas could supply all resources needed within the whole estate. The summer grazing could be the responsibility of the upland settlers, and the meadow grazing for winter fodder could be supplied by the settlers in the river valleys. All commodities required by the various vills could be supplied by specialist centres, and redistributed accordingly. From this model, there is no necessity to suppose that all the settlements were contained within a contiguous boundary.

Hooke noted how such an estate might form part of a grant and that composite estates were often 'allotted as a unit to a newly founded minster as if they had some prior existence' in the mid Anglo-Saxon period.³¹ Many such estates appeared to display some economic and administrative cohesion, with boundaries mentioned in grants which were already fixed at the time of the grant. This suggests that for the examples she studied in the west Midlands, such units had an established existence in the late seventh and eighth centuries. Connections with the mother church (or possibly minster) lent weight to an argument for an early connection with the composite estate or soke.

²⁹ W. E. Kapelle, *The Norman conquest of the north: The region and its transformation 1000-1135* (North Carolina, 1979), particularly chapter 3.

³⁰ He used the example of the Book of Iorwerth, which contains law texts from north Wales, and he drew up a table of the major components of a multiple estate. Jones accepted that this example was Welsh and thirteenth century, but he decided that the example must have its roots in a much earlier organisation of the landscape. G.R.J. Jones, 'Multiple estates and early settlement' in P.H. Sawyer, ed., *English Medieval Settlement* (London, 1979), pp. 9-34.

³¹ D. Hooke, 'Pre-Conquest estates in the west Midlands: preliminary thoughts' *Journal of Historical Geography* 8, 3 (1982), pp. 227-244.

Gregson refuted the case for multiple estates proposed by Jones.³² She put forward an historiographical study beginning with Maitland and Vinogradoff in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, and ending with Kapelle in 1979. She identified some basic misconceptions in Jones' argument and urged clarity of definition, method and evaluation of the model, putting forward her own checklist for determining the multiple estate, preferring to use the simpler term of 'estate' to cover the different possibilities. She asked questions regarding the availability of resources within the estate, the social structure of the inhabitants, and sought to use other types of evidence such as place-names and archaeology. Jones contested Gregson's argument, and remained convinced that multiple estates in variant regional forms were to be found in most districts of England as well as Wales.³³

Hadley modified the concept of the multiple estate by giving definitions of the meanings of manor, berewick and sokeland which she examined within the northern Danelaw, thus including the idea of jurisdiction rather than confining ideas to that of an agrarian economy under a single lordship.³⁴ She referred to Stenton's analysis of manorial structure,³⁵ and noted Davis' observation that soke tenure was not an innovation of the Vikings.³⁶ She conceded that some sokes could have been of great antiquity, but that others could have been created in the tenth century within the Danelaw, in order to 'accommodate an increasingly anomalous social group'.³⁷ She saw the tenth century as providing a convincing context for the creation of some of the large sokes to create an estate which would be considered a reward for loyal service.

How closely does Rothley manor and soke meet with the requirements of a multiple estate? Can archaeology or place-name evidence assist in the identification of such an estate within the soke of Rothley? Is it possible to examine the later use of the landscape to determine its earlier functions? This study will attempt to answer some of the questions about the complexities of the manor and soke, and to set it in its regional context.

³² N. Gregson, 'The multiple estate model: some critical questions' *Journal of Historical Geography* 11, 4 (1985), pp. 339-351.

³³ G.R.J. Jones, 'Multiple estates perceived' *Journal of Historical Geography* 11, 4 (1985), pp. 352-363.

³⁴ D.M. Hadley, 'Multiple estates and the origins of the manorial structure of the northern Danelaw' *Journal of Historical Geography* 22, 1 (1996), pp. 3-15.

³⁵ Stenton, *Types of Manorial Structure*, pp. 4-5.

³⁶ R.H.C. Davis, 'East Anglia and the Danelaw' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 5, 5 (1955), pp. 23-39.

³⁷ Hadley, 'Multiple estates' (1996), p. 7.

Rothley manor in the late-medieval period

During the Tudor period the soke of Rothley consisted of Rothley itself and several detached but dependent vills throughout the eastern half of the county of Leicestershire. These vills (or part-vills) were Gaddesby, Barsby, Baggrave, South Croxton, Tilton, South and North Marefield, Somerby, Grimston, Saxelby, Wartnaby, Chadwell (with Wycomb) and Keyham.

Immediately following the Dissolution the manor, along with other assets of the Hospitallers, was sold by the king to Henry Cartwright. The manor house at Rothley Temple was in the occupation of Humphrey Babington, who had leased the property from his older brother Sir John Babington who had been the Preceptor of Rothley.³⁸ Henry Cartwright then sold Rothley to Ambrose Cave, and on his death in 1544 Humphrey bequeathed the remainder of the lease to his son Thomas Babington. Ambrose Cave then sold the freehold to Babington in 1565, together with the advowson, the tithes and other assets in Rothley.³⁹ The Babingtons held Rothley until 1845, and it was under their ownership that much of the current building known as Rothley Court was developed within Rothley Park. To sum up the assets of the soke from the post-Dissolution period they appear to have consisted of the hamlet of Rothley Temple and its appurtenances; the vill of Rothley with the church and appurtenances; various assets rented by the people of the vill; the rents of additional pieces of land known as assarts which were within the parish of Rothley but, in terms of the jurisdiction, outside the soke; and rents from soke dependencies. Rothley was no straightforward manor, nor was the relationship between the manor and its detached dependencies always easy to understand. In the nineteenth century legal battles ensued over rights of jurisdiction and rents payable not only from landed interests but also from the payments of tithe to the manorial lord who was also the rector of the parish.

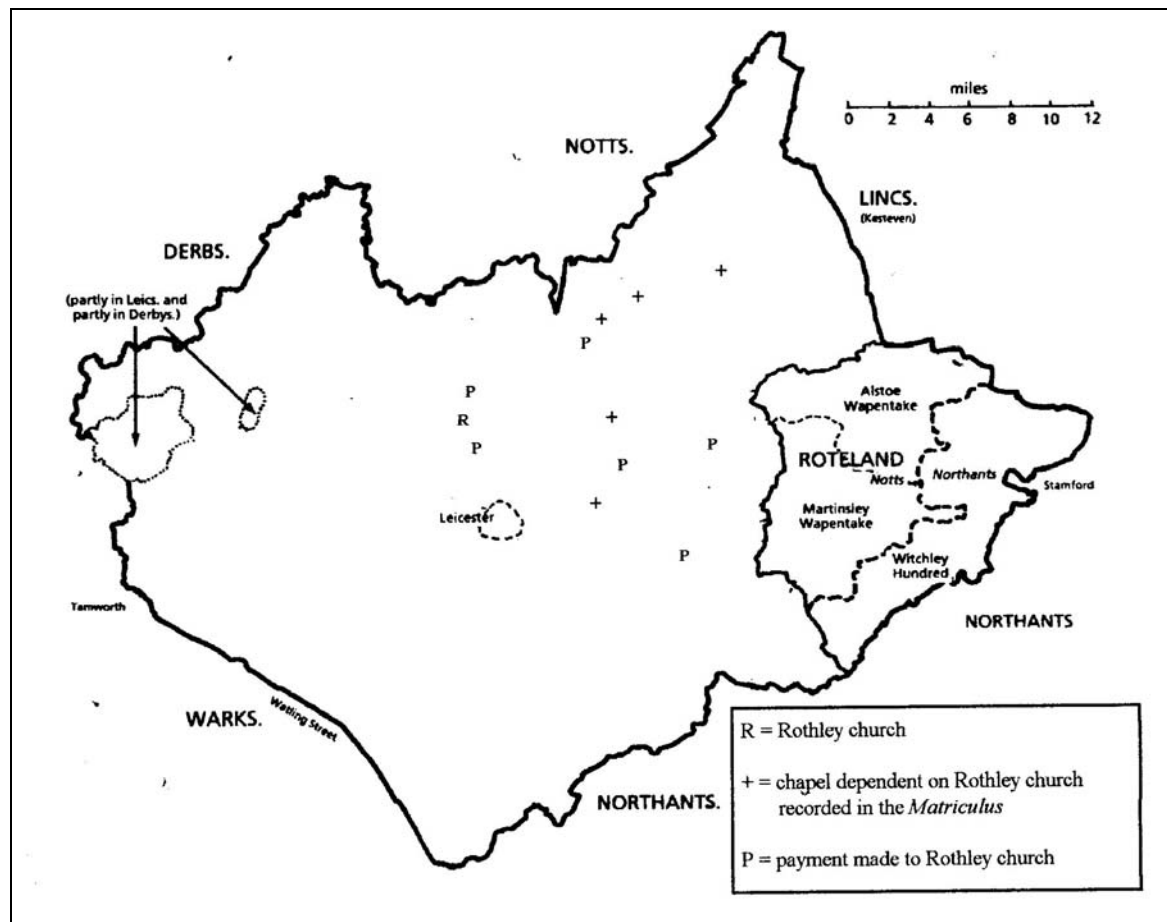
In the sixteenth century the Leicestershire demesne lands of the Hospitallers were attached to three main sites: Rothley, Old Dalby and Heather. While the Hospitallers occupied their demesne at Old Dalby, the other demesne sites were leased out to tenants and a steward was appointed to draw up a rental which was recorded in the minister's accounts.⁴⁰ The lord's demesne lands at Rothley Temple were enclosed in 1526 and this event appears to have stimulated a closer examination of rights and

³⁸ T. H. Fosbrooke, 'Rothley: The preceptory' *T.L.A.S.* 12 (1921-22), p. 11.

³⁹ L.R.O. 44'28/352 Rothley Temple MSS. Copy of conveyance, 17th May, 1565.

privileges within Rothley. From this point on the Temple site appears to have been a distinct and separate hamlet adjoining Rothley. This site lay at some distance from the church and centre of Rothley vill: how did this separation come about, and what can be inferred from such a separation?⁴¹ In creating a distance from the manorial site, the settlement has been centred upon the medieval church. Does this central position of the church give an indication of the possible origin of the settlement?

The development of the parish



Map 3. The extent of the parish of Rothley as indicated in the sources

Sources: W.P.W. Phillimore, ed., *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles Episcopi Lincolnensis AD MCCIX - MCCXXXV*, (Lincoln, 1912), Vol. I, pp. 238-279; L.R.O. DE 2/4 Ma/EN/A/24/1 Barsby and South Croxton enclosure award and map; L.R.O. 4D 72/1/2 Enclosure maps, awards and acts for the soke of Rothley

The parish of Rothley was stated in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* to be in the deanery of Akeley,⁴² but the chapels of Rothley lay topographically in other deaneries in the

⁴⁰ The non-demesne lands were overseen by a bailiff who was also responsible for drawing up a rental.

⁴¹ This distance enabled a separation between lord and tenants only achieved elsewhere by a partial clearance of the tenements which lay at the heart of the community.

⁴² J. Caley, ed., *Valor Ecclesiasticus* (Record Commission, House of Commons, 1821), Vol. IV, p. 177.

eastern half of Leicestershire. These chapels were situated at Gaddesby, Grimston, Wartnaby, Chadwell and Keyham. As a 'peculiar' jurisdiction, Rothley and its parish ran like a 'mini-diocese', and the rector of Rothley held his ecclesiastical court in the mother church where he proved wills and judged cases of parishioners who transgressed ecclesiastical law. A few years after the Dissolution Thomas Babington bought the freehold of Rothley Temple, thus becoming the lord of the manor and rector of the church with its dependent chapels, and as such he was entitled to the great tithe of the parish. His responsibilities were to maintain the fabric of the chancel of the church and chapels and to appoint a vicar to the church of Rothley when the position became vacant through death or the resignation of the incumbent. Thus the rectory and its appurtenances formed a distinct and separate part of Rothley at the Dissolution. The vicar of Rothley appointed and paid for the chaplains and clerks of the chapels of the soke, and for bearing this responsibility he was granted various rights to land known as the glebe, and to other forms of income from the parishioners such as the small tithes (tithes on produce) which were recorded in the glebe terriers of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁴³

The chapels were not the only source of income for the church at Rothley in the Tudor period. Enclosure awards for Grimston, Somerby and Barsby with South Croxton in the eighteenth century give further evidence of earlier payments to Rothley church from the inhabitants living in nearby vills.⁴⁴ Further payments recorded in the thirteenth century had already disappeared from the manorial records of the sixteenth (Map 3).⁴⁵ This evidence suggests that the influence of Rothley church could once have been much greater, and that perhaps later ecclesiastical arrangements and agreements had effected a curtailment. Could this parish have once been much larger, and is it possible to reach an understanding of the original power and influence of Rothley church?

Parish boundaries are sometimes used to delineate large estates. Roffe postulated some pre-Conquest estates in Lincolnshire, and used pre-nineteenth-century parish boundaries to suggest early estate formation.⁴⁶ From this he identified a process which

⁴³ At the time of the Dissolution a chapel of Rothley was recorded in the southern part of Mountsorrel (Mountsorrel Superior), which was to fall into disrepair after the Dissolution and disappeared altogether in the seventeenth century.

⁴⁴ L.R.O. DE 2/4 Ma/EN/A/24/1 Barsby and South Croxton enclosure award and map; L.R.O. 4D 72/1/2 Enclosure maps, awards and acts for the soke of Rothley.

⁴⁵ That is, payments to Rothley from Wanlip and Skeffington.

⁴⁶ D. Roffe, 'Pre-Conquest estates and parish boundaries: A discussion with examples from Lincolnshire' in M.L. Faull, ed., *Studies in late Anglo-Saxon settlement* (Oxford, 1984), pp. 115-122.

could lead to the formation of small parishes arising out of much larger minster parishes which existed previously. Careful evaluation of the evidence enabled him to suggest how divisions of the landscape and township boundaries could have arisen, and to reach a conclusion about whether such divisions were early or late. Similarly Blair regarded the tenth to twelfth centuries as critical in the organisation of the English parochial system.⁴⁷ He argued for a system of *parochiae* which arose in the seventh and eighth centuries as part of royal and episcopal policy, which was gradually superseded by a locally based parish church. He saw this as a shift from complex estates based on royal, ecclesiastical and aristocratic centres, to a system of local manors of a broader thegnly class. He used the term 'proprietary church' to suggest boundaries between private and public churches, that is, between manorial lords' churches and churches controlled by external authority. He saw the growth of local churches serving the needs of the community,

'Simply for convenience, people needed local churches: a lord who could arrange for himself and his tenants to have one might well rest content, whether he or the local minster had paid to build it and whether his priest or the minster's served it.'⁴⁸

The architectural evidence of ecclesiastical buildings gives an indication of patronage and prosperity at particular points in the history of a church and this will be examined. One further piece of architecture of considerable importance is a stone cross-shaft which stands in the grounds of Rothley church to the south of the chancel. Work has been carried out in the past to establish the date of the production of this piece of Anglo-Saxon sculpture, but postulations with regard to its significance have remained inconclusive, and this important monument will be considered in the context of Rothley parish. What evidence is there for the foundation of Rothley church and parish? Could the stone cross-shaft assist in reaching some conclusions about the importance of Rothley as a religious site?

The documentation

In order to carry out this study, a collection of documents known as the Rothley Temple Manuscripts has been heavily drawn upon.⁴⁹ This deposit consists of thousands of documents which illustrate the holdings of the Knights Templar and their successors the Knights Hospitaller both in Leicestershire and in other parts of the country. The documents which pertain to Rothley and its dependent villas before the Dissolution

⁴⁷ J. Blair, 'Introduction: from minster to parish church' in J. Blair, ed., *Minsters and parish churches: The local church in transition 950-1200* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 1-20.

⁴⁸ Blair, 'Introduction: from minster to parish church', p. 8.

⁴⁹ L.R.O. 44'28, Rothley Temple MSS. This collection was deposited by F. Merttens esq. in 1928.

appear in two distinct sections of the collection, the first being charters, leases and other agreements, an Extent of 1331,⁵⁰ an Exemplification of 1377,⁵¹ with other records of important events.⁵² A second section deals with the administration of the manor of Rothley including court rolls, a sixteenth-century copy of a thirteenth-century custumal of the soke,⁵³ and various other agreements made between the manorial lord and his tenants.⁵⁴ More recent documents used from the collection are enclosure awards and maps, and records of a legal dispute in the nineteenth century which illustrated some of the frustrations encountered by the lord of the manor of Rothley in his attempts to exercise authority over the lands which he believed were still attached to that vill.⁵⁵ Some nineteenth-century transcripts and translations of earlier documents can be found in a separate deposit which were used by both the lord and his tenants to support their particular points during the course of the legal altercation which ensued.⁵⁶ In addition, administrative documents which recorded events in the lives of the people of the soke were the Lay Subsidies,⁵⁷ the Hundred Rolls,⁵⁸ the *Matriculus* of Hugh of Wells,⁵⁹ the Leicestershire Survey⁶⁰ and Domesday Book itself. Pre-Domesday documentation is non-existent for the soke, therefore pre-Domesday all inferences regarding the soke must rely on archaeological, architectural and landscape evidence which can be placed in an historical context but are frequently difficult to interpret. Maps have been reproduced from primary and secondary sources, and these are clearly indicated within the text. Some maps have been drawn which demonstrate evidence from a number of map sources, and are thus an interpretation, and have been used to clarify points made within the text.

In the early sixteenth century lordship was exercised within the soke by the lord of Rothley who was the prior of the Hospital of St. John.⁶¹ The preceptor exercised his secular jurisdiction through the three-weekly soke court where he heard manorial cases and received amercements. Land transactions and entries to tenements were a large part

⁵⁰ L.R.O. 44'28/196. Extent made 5 Edward III at Rothley.

⁵¹ L.R.O. 44'28/199. Exemplification, 6th February, 1377.

⁵² L.R.O. 44'28/190 to 356, Rothley Temple MSS.

⁵³ L.R.O. 44'28/867. Copy of the custumal of Rothley, including rental of Rothley Soke.

⁵⁴ L.R.O. 44'28/ 867-1158, Rothley Temple MSS.

⁵⁵ L.R.O. 44'28/1197. Vol. I, AD 1899, Chancery Case: The Plaintiffs Misc. Docs.

⁵⁶ L.R.O. 4D 72/I/1, 2 and 3.

⁵⁷ Leicestershire Architecture Society, *Leicestershire Lay Subsidy Roll 1327* (Leicester, n.d.).

⁵⁸ *County of Leicester, 4 Edward I: Rotuli Extract Com' Leicest No. 3 M. 20. In Domo Capitulari' Westm'. I: Rotuli Hundredorum.*

⁵⁹ W.P.W., Phillimore, ed., *'Rotuli Hugonis de Welles Episcopi Lincolnensis AD MCCIX - MCCXXXV'* (Lincoln, 1912), Vol. 1.

⁶⁰ C.F., Slade, ed., *The Leicestershire survey* (Leicester, 1956).

⁶¹ These were the Knights Hospitaller, a military order living under monastic rules.

of regular court business in the sixteenth century.⁶² The minister's accounts for Rothley give an indication of the number of tenants holding directly from the manorial lord. In 1510 chief rents in Rothley were exacted from 63 tenants, in Keyham from 15 tenants, in Gaddesby 24 tenants, in South Croxton from 12 tenants, in Somerby chief rents were paid by 13 tenants and Barsby 22 tenants.⁶³ Other tenements included in the minister's accounts were to be found in Baggrave, Whatborough, Twyford, Marefield North and South, Queniborough, Wanlip, Birstall, Thurstaston and Scraftoft.⁶⁴ Land attached to these tenements came under the jurisdiction of Rothley court to which the landholder owed suit of service.⁶⁵ By this means the lord identified his own tenants within a vill. The tenants for their part would know to which court they owed their allegiance, rent and service, and this information was thus registered and regulated.⁶⁶ The View of Frankpledge was held twice yearly, once in June and again in October.⁶⁷ Those who did not turn up to the View were fined for non-appearance.⁶⁸ The View was followed by court hearings for petty crimes and breaches of custom committed within the township, and amercements were paid by the miscreants accordingly.

Although the surviving court rolls and other documents of manorial administration are fragmentary in nature, there are small runs of these which give an indication of the manor at particular times in its history. In 1384 there exist three court sessions from October and November of that year;⁶⁹ another short run for the years 1398-99 shows that courts were held at other venues within the soke as well as Rothley;⁷⁰ in 1463 there is a series of 14 consecutive court sessions;⁷¹ in 1477-8 there

⁶² The hand of lordship was extended to transgressors of land customs through the bailiff, who had the right to seize into his hands those lands and tenements which were held under conditions other than those accepted by custom.

⁶³ Grimston is not reckoned with Rothley in 1510, as the responsibility for overseeing this township had shifted to Old Dalby, where the Hospitallers had their headquarters. Saxelby was absent from the account of 1510, as were Chadwell and Wycomb.

⁶⁴ G.F. Farnham, ed., 'The descent of the manor' *T.L.A.S.* 12 (1921-22), p. 73 f.

⁶⁵ J. Nichols, ed., *The history and antiquities of the county of Leicester* (London, 1804), Vol. III, part II, p. 955.

⁶⁶ According to Nichols, the houses which owed services to Rothley court in the late-seventeenth century were as follows: Rothley 96 houses, Keyham 39 houses, Gaddesby 43 houses that is all but one or two houses, Grimston 31 houses, Saxelby four houses, South Croxton nineteen houses, Wycomb 23 houses, Chadwell six houses, part of Somerby 24 houses, Barsby 40 houses all except two or three houses, Wartnaby 22 houses, and in Mountsorrel 50 houses were in the parish of Rothley, but owed service to Mountsorrel Court.

⁶⁷ L.R.O. 44'28/880. 23rd May, 1520 - 15th June 1533. Court Book for Rothley Manor. L.R.O. 44'28/880. Court Book giving View of Frankpledge. These are two extant examples.

⁶⁸ At the rate of 2d per individual or, in the case of the prior of Ulverscroft, 4d.

⁶⁹ L.R.O. 44'28/869. Court Roll of Rothley Manor, AD 1384-5.

⁷⁰ L.R.O. 44'28/870. Court Roll of Rothley Manor, AD 1398-99.

⁷¹ L.R.O. 44'28/872. Court Roll of Rothley, AD 1463. This roll is bound up with the rolls for 1477-8 and 1478-9.

were 15 consecutive sessions;⁷² and in 1478-9 there were 13 consecutive sessions of the soke court, all held at Rothley.⁷³ These rolls can be compared with the rolls of other manors, and give a comparative view of the soke court processes.

Summary

Rothley manor and soke exhibited many unusual tenurial features in the medieval period. These features are demonstrated by the documentary sources both within the manorial manuscripts and also within the evidence offered by national archives. No extensive study of all these varying elements of Rothley has thus far been undertaken. The survival of so many manorial documents within a single deposit presents an excellent opportunity to explore a variety of issues which can only be glimpsed in most medieval manors. How did these various elements contribute to the unusual nature of this holding within the county? How far were these elements typical of other holdings both within the county and in the wider region?

Rothley manor appears to have been a separate holding from its soke dependencies, and its control over its sokelands appears to be of a jurisdictional nature only. The manorial demesne lands of Rothley were found not only at Rothley Temple but also in a number of soke vill, which had the effect of bringing manorial jurisdiction closer to the tenants. Despite this the tenants appear to have had a great deal of influence in the decision making processes of the vill. The church of Rothley was separated from the manorial demesne, and the focus for the settlement was the church. Tenants within the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of Rothley parish paid their great tithes to the Babingtons as rectors, and their small tithes to the vicar who appointed and provided chaplains for the chapels of the soke. As a 'peculiar' jurisdiction Rothley acted as a 'mini-diocese': parishioners were obliged to have their ecclesiastical misdemeanours judged by the rector in the parish church and their wills were proved there when they died. The manorial lord had control of many of the different assets of the manor, soke and parish of Rothley, and the settlement of Rothley bears many of the marks of the influence of the Babingtons. But the manorial lords did not have everything their own way. The status of 'ancient demesne' would appear to have given advantages to both

⁷² L.R.O. 44'28/872. Court Roll of Rothley, AD 1477-8. This roll is bound up with the rolls for 1463 and 1478-9.

⁷³ L.R.O. 44'28/872. Court Roll of Rothley, AD 1478-9. This roll is bound up with the rolls for 1463 and 1477-8.

tenants and manorial lords, and from time to time both groups took advantage of its legal privileges.

In addressing the different elements of the manor, soke and parish of Rothley questions arise which will need separate chapters in which to explore possible answers. In chapters 1 and 5, the landscape of the soke both in the modern and the medieval periods is considered to assess whether the landscape of Rothley soke gives an indication of varied farming assets which could contribute to the postulation that this was once a multiple or large estate. Chapter 2 will examine the manorial lords of the soke in the later medieval period, the Knights Templar and then the Knights Hospitaller, to determine how far these manorial lords exploited their tenants and the assets of the manor and soke. The tenants themselves contributed to the functioning of the soke and in Chapter 3 the thirteenth-century rental, in particular, will be examined to discover answers to the question: How socially varied were the tenants, and what evidence was there for a well structured and organised society within the soke? In Chapter 4, the struggles experienced by the tenants suggest that they had access to legal expertise and that they kept records of their own. In the course of these struggles they used various laws to support their cases, and they also had access to laws which were attached to the ancient demesne of the king. How far did the tenants of Rothley soke benefit from the advantages of living on ancient demesne land, and how effective were they at resisting their lords? Chapter 6 uses the evidence from Domesday and the *Matriculus* of Hugo of Wells in order to consider the size and nature of Rothley parish, and how typical it was of other large Leicestershire parishes in the thirteenth century. Furthermore the documentary evidence will be used to postulate earlier estates, and consider if such estates can throw light on the origins of the soke and parish of Rothley. Finally, Chapter 7 will explore the question, What was distinctive about Rothley parish, and how does this distinctiveness compare with large parishes elsewhere in the country?

Rothley manor, soke and parish formed a large and complex landscape, and this study sets out to reveal something of Leicestershire not only in the later medieval but also in the pre-Conquest periods. By examining these diverse elements it will begin in the early modern period where documents abound, and the evidence of the landscape can assist. Evidence such as tithe and enclosure awards together with the topographical evidence of soke vills, will enable postulations to be made which will provide the framework for examining the origins of medieval Rothley. Having considered the evidence, it should be possible to reach conclusions regarding the following questions:

1. What were the origins and functions of the manor, soke and parish of Rothley?
2. How did these elements relate to the society, religion and landscape of the region?

Chapter 1

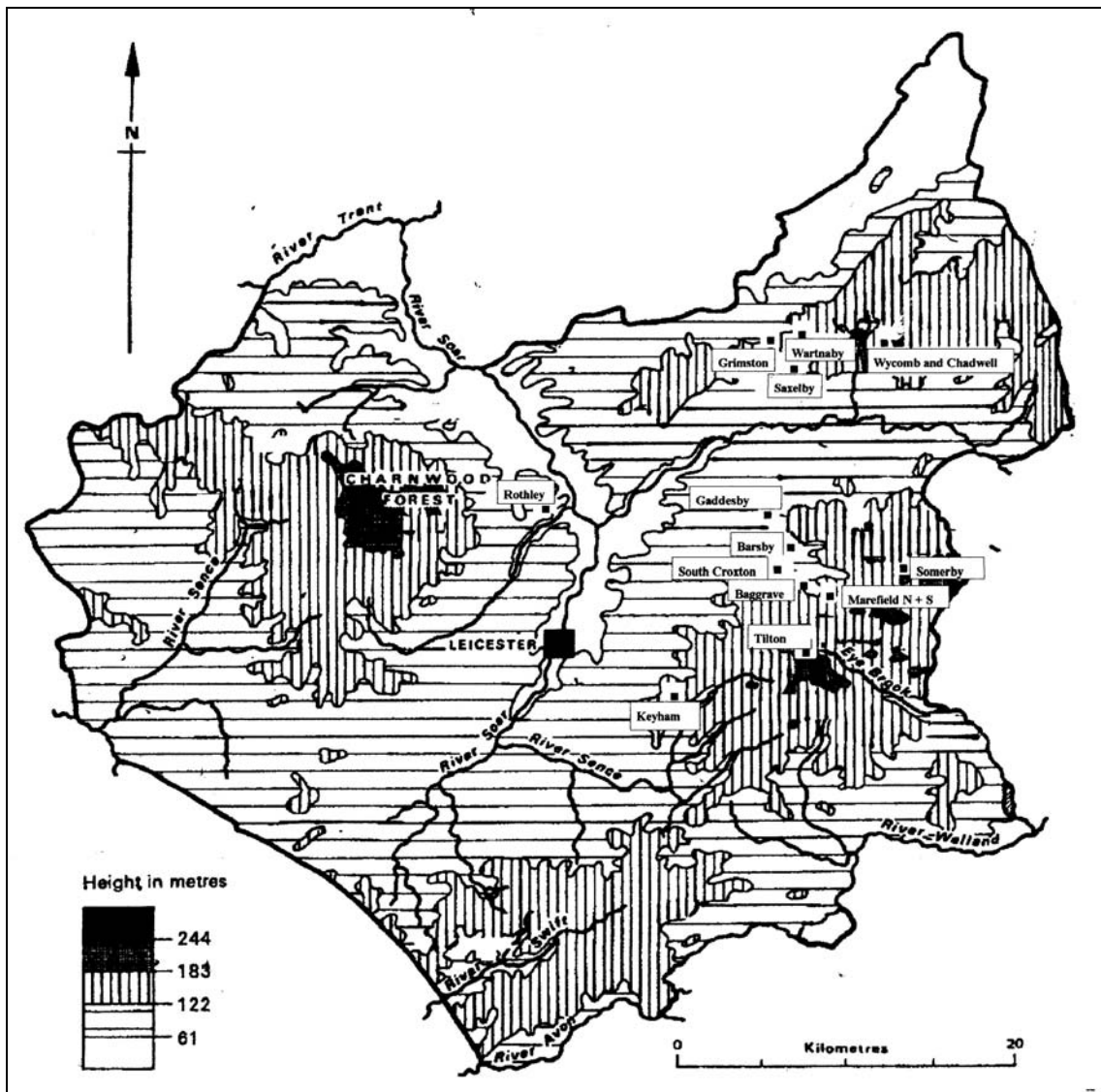
Rothley manor and soke: a Leicestershire landscape

Hoskins once wrote, 'most of England is a thousand years old, and in a walk of a few miles one would touch nearly every century in that long stretch of time.'⁷⁴ While Hoskins was writing of Oxfordshire, he could equally well have been writing about Leicestershire, of which the soke of Rothley covered a considerable part to the east of the county. Parts of the soke have been examined by other writers, particularly those settlements which became deserted. Aerial photography has done much to aid our understanding of earthworks which can be viewed with greater clarity from the air. Furthermore the context of a site and its relationship with neighbouring settlements and economic resources can be better understood. St Joseph was a pioneer of such aerial reconnaissance and he photographed the soke dependency of Marefield in the 1960s, enabling a better understanding of the settlement layout.⁷⁵ Hoskins did not take to the air, but by careful observation on the ground, and a detailed examination of 25-inch Ordnance Survey maps, he was able to describe seven deserted settlement sites from eastern Leicestershire, of which the soke settlement of Baggrave was one.⁷⁶ Beresford systematically described many settlements which were lost through depopulation and

⁷⁴ W.G. Hoskins, *The making of the English landscape* (London, 1955), 2nd impression, 1977, p. 303.

⁷⁵ J.K. St Joseph, 'Air reconnaissance: recent results 11' *Antiquity* (1969).

gave respectability to the subject as an academic enquiry.⁷⁷ However, many medieval settlements were neither lost nor deserted. The Domesday soke of Rothley consisted of twenty-two vills, many of whose settlements survived into the modern period, and retain evidence of their medieval past. Thus an understanding of local topography, spatial relationships between the different elements within a settlement, evidence of existing maps and the context of the settlement within a landscape form the rationale for this chapter.



Map 4. The dependencies of Rothley which belonged to the soke from the thirteenth century until the Dissolution

Sources: Modified from N. Pye, *Leicester and its region* (Leicester, 1972), p. 60; L.R.O. 44'28/867 The custumal of Rothley soke

⁷⁶ W.G. Hoskins, 'Seven deserted village sites in Leicestershire' *T.L.A.H.S.* 32 (1956), pp. 36-51.

⁷⁷ M. Beresford, *The lost villages of England* (Lutterworth, 1954), revised edition 1998.

The modern settlement of Rothley is situated in the Soar valley, about one kilometre to the west of the River Soar in central Leicestershire.⁷⁸ The settlement is bounded on its southern side by Rothley Brook, which is confluent with the River Soar to the east of the settlement fields (Plate 5). The settlement is bifocal with two old centres: the earlier surrounds the church which has the double dedication of St Mary the Virgin and St John the Baptist, and is largely a thirteenth-century building, with both earlier features and later embellishments (Plate 1); the later, more planned centre surrounds a green in the western half of the settlement, and is near Rothley Court, a hotel standing in its own park (Plate 9). The hotel at its core is a medieval building with a thirteenth-century chapel established by the Knights' Templar who were the manorial lords at that time (Plate 6). Much of the house is Tudor with later fabric built by the post-Dissolution manorial lords, the Babingtons. At enclosure Rothley Temple was designated extra-parochial, a common feature for land once held by ecclesiastical institutions. The name of Rothley means 'woodland with clearings'⁷⁹ or 'clearing with a *leah*'⁸⁰ and Gelling noted that few '*ley*' names were earlier than AD 730, and were probably no later than the mid-tenth century. Lying on the south-eastern fringes of Charnwood Forest, the name of the vill appears totally in keeping with its landscape.

Rothley has a thriving and busy modern shopping centre which has grown up around Cross Green which lies to the north west of the church and is separate from both the church and the manorial centre.⁸¹ A further small green to the west of the settlement lies at the end of a street called Woodgate, a name which means 'the road to the wood', and probably refers to Charnwood Forest. '*Charn*', from the pre-English name for a heap of stones, is on higher ground which overlooks the flatter region of the Soar and Trent valleys to the east, north and north west.⁸² The waters which arise in Charnwood Forest feed the many streams which run into these two great rivers.⁸³

⁷⁸ Medieval vernacular architecture survives within the modern settlement. See Plates 7 and 8.

⁷⁹ B. Cox, *A dictionary of Leicestershire and Rutland place-names* in R. Coates, ed., *English Place-Name Society Popular Series 5* (Nottingham, 2005), p. 86.

⁸⁰ Gelling, *Place-names*, pp. 198, 208. Cox, *Place-names*, p. 24.

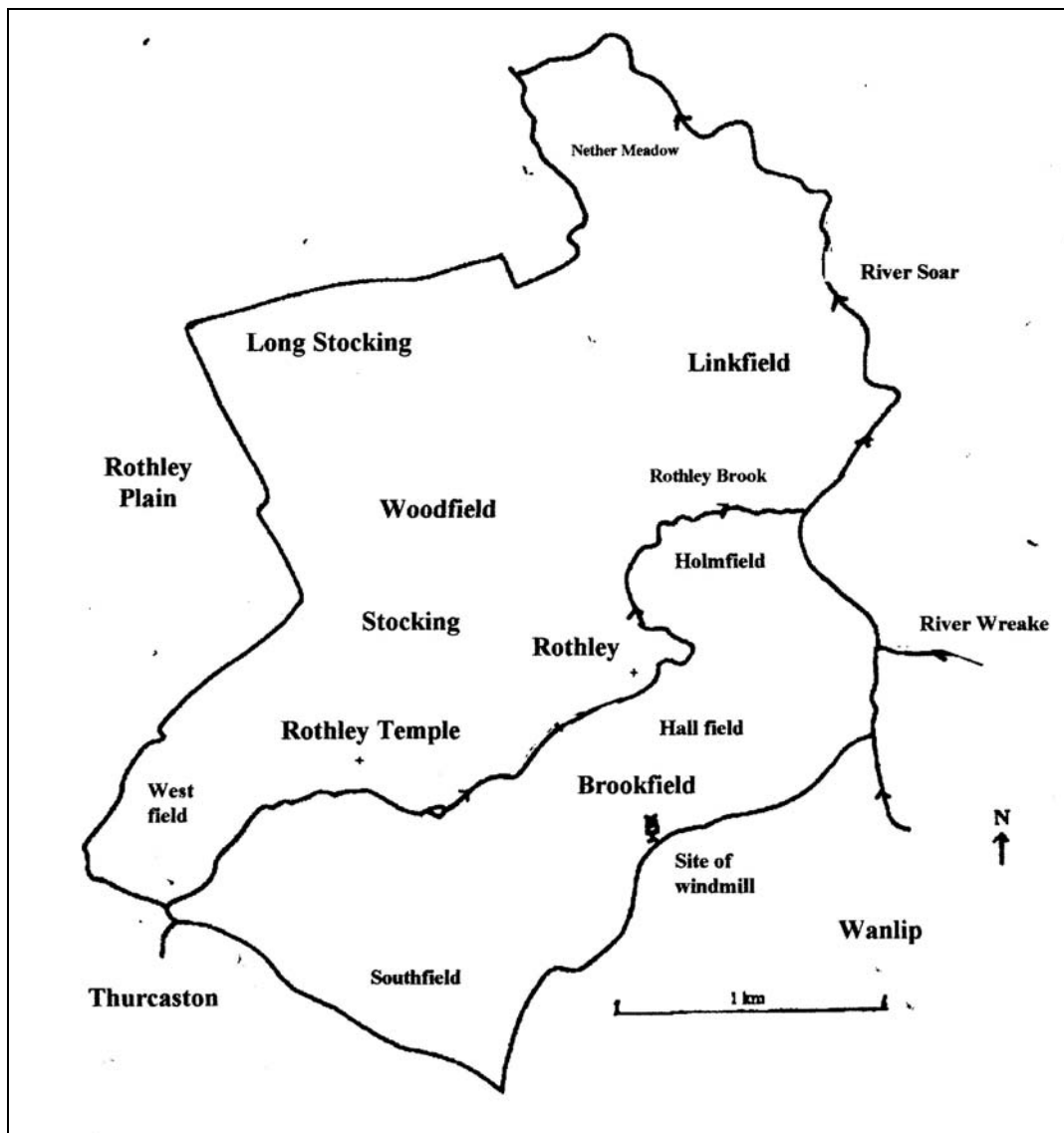
⁸¹ This name cannot be associated with the war memorial because it appears on the First edition nineteenth-century OS map.

⁸² Gelling, *Place-names*, p. 228.

⁸³ The Forest has been the source of granite, stone and slate in more recent times, and in the nineteenth century outcrops of coal were mined commercially, particularly in the north west of the region. Charnwood has given its name to a modern borough which is centred on Loughborough lying about eight kilometres to the north-east of Rothley. Charnwood Forest is now a local tourist attraction for walking and for viewing the surrounding countryside from its high vantage points.

The eighteenth-century enclosure map for Rothley and Rothley Temple delineates a boundary which differs from the later parish (Map 5).⁸⁴ On comparing the modern boundary at Mountsorrel there are further differences with the enclosure map, for a field called Long Stocking which once fell within the parish of Rothley now belongs to Mountsorrel parish. Mountsorrel was a planted town of the twelfth century, created from the wastes of the two townships of Barrow and Rothley, and the new town was established at the foot of the hill on which stood a castle built in the reign of King Stephen. Soon afterwards the castle was destroyed for its part in protecting rebels, but the town continued to thrive. Two chapels were established in the town, to the north (Mountsorrel North) was a chapel appended to the church of Barrow, and in the south of the town (Mountsorrel Superior) there was once a chapel appended to the church of Rothley. These chapels survived until the Dissolution, after which the Rothley chapel fell into disuse and was demolished, although the parishioners of Rothley continued to identify the place where the chapel had once stood. In the nineteenth century the chapel in Mountsorrel North was promoted to a church, a new church was instituted in Mountsorrel South, and the new parish of Mountsorrel was separated from both its mother churches.

⁸⁴ L.R.O. 4D 72/I/2 Enclosure acts, awards and maps.



Map 5. Rothley township at enclosure

Source: L.R.O. Ma/269/1 Survey of Rothley Temple 1780

The enclosure act for Rothley named some of the former open fields such as Holmfield, Brookfield, Linkfield, Woodfield, and South Field.⁸⁵ Further references included the names of furlongs and meadows such as Long Brownsey Furlong, a name possibly derived from the personal name '*Brunoc*' with '*eg*' meaning 'high or dry ground in a marsh'.⁸⁶ As this furlong was situated to the south of the Rothley Brook, it may well have overlooked marshy ground during wet weather. There were also some ancient enclosures, for example 'Hall Field' which lay in the vicinity of the settlement

⁸⁵ L.R.O. 4D 72/1/2 Enclosure acts, awards and maps.

surrounding the church. Such a name could also indicate an association with the manorial demesne, and yet the manorial centre lay at the opposite end of the settlement. Some fields which lay between the River Soar and the Rothley Brook were called Holmfield. '*Holm*' comes from the Old Norse meaning 'raised ground in a marsh' or 'river meadow' and this name was adopted into late Old English.⁸⁷ Holmfield was indeed on raised ground and during high water levels probably looked out on a marsh. 'Linkfield' lay to the north east of the church, and its name implies a steep slope, which is exactly where this field was situated. Its name comes from the Old English '*hlinc*' meaning bank or ledge.⁸⁸ In the Woodfield there was a furlong known as Bierway, which could refer to 'burgh' meaning 'fort', or could perhaps be a reference to ancient earthworks.⁸⁹ Stocking field means 'tree stump field', and this was situated on the edge of the Woodfield.⁹⁰ Woodfield itself could refer to one of the two woods ascribed to Rothley in the Domesday survey. Dyers Close is a possible reference to an enclosure for deer,⁹¹ although the park in which deer would have been grazed in the medieval period was probably to the west of this close, in Rothley Park.⁹² There is a reference to a windmill on Wanlip Sick, and modern fields lying to the south of the settlement also bear that name.⁹³ Two more fields worthy of mention are 'Vicar's meadow' and 'Priest's meadow' which were probably the same fields referred to in the Extent of 1331/2 as East Meadow and Priest Meadow.⁹⁴ The field, meadow and furlong names match the topography within the township of Rothley, and link the references made in charters and documents to places on the ground. The land within Rothley Park has been turned into a golf course, but some meadows and closes still exist. Part of the Woodfield has been built on, but much still remains under the plough. During periods of heavy rainfall the meadows and closes still flood and probably assume much the same marshy character as they did when first named perhaps a thousand years ago.

⁸⁶ Gelling, *Place-names*, pp. 36, 38.

⁸⁷ Gelling, *Place-names*, pp. 50-52.

⁸⁸ Gelling, *Place-names*, p. 163.

⁸⁹ Gelling, *Place-names*, p. 206.

⁹⁰ Gelling, *Place-names*, p. 69.

⁹¹ Gelling, *Place-names*, p. 49.

⁹² The siting of the medieval park which is referred to in a number of documents has never been determined, but clues to its earlier existence still remain around the modern park. The use of the term dyer could also indicate the presence of dyers in the settlement, and close proximity to running water would be a necessary adjunct to this activity.

⁹³ L.R.O. 44'28/867 Rothley Temple MSS, Custumal of Rothley Soke, f. 3. The enclosure award also refers to Windmill Lane which would have led to the windmill on the hill.

⁹⁴ L.R.O. 4D 72/1/1 and L.R.O. 44'28/196 Rothley Temple MSS, Extent made 5 Ed. III at Rothley.

Name of vill	Part of soke at Domesday	Part of soke in 13 th century	Chapel of Rothley	Situation in Leicestershire
Rothley	<i>Caput</i> vill	<i>Caput</i> vill	Mother church	Soar valley
Sileby	√			Soar valley
Seagrave	√			Soar valley
Grimston	√	√	√	Edge of Saltway
Saxelby	√	√		Edge of Saltway
Wartnaby	√	√	√	Edge of Saltway
Wycomb	√	√		Edge of Saltway
Chadwell	√	√	√	Edge of Saltway
Asfordby	√			Wreake Valley
Frisby on the Wreake	√			Wreake Valley
Gaddesby	√	√	√	High Leicestershire
Barsby	√	√		High Leicestershire
Baggrave	√	√		High Leicestershire
Keyham	√	√	√	High Leicestershire
Twyford	√			High Leicestershire
Tilton	√	√		High Leicestershire
Haltead	√			High Leicestershire
Marefield N + S	√	√		High Leicestershire
Somerby	√	√		High Leicestershire
Skeffington	√			High Leicestershire
Tugby	√			High Leicestershire
Allextun	√			High Leicestershire
South Croxton		√		High Leicestershire

Figure 1. Rothley soke dependencies at Domesday and in the thirteenth century

Sources: DB Leicestershire, f. 230 b, c; L.R.O. 44/28/867 Custumal of the soke of Rothley

In the Domesday Survey Rothley was recorded as having twenty-two dependent villis (Map 2).⁹⁵ Geographically these villis lie in distinct regions of Leicestershire: Sileby and Seagrave lie closest to Rothley in the Soar Valley, and were also amongst the earliest of sokelands to be alienated (granted away) in the post-Domesday period. The next group of settlements lay along the edge of an ancient route which is aligned south west and north east, to the north of Rothley and forming the north-western boundary with Seagrave. This route, known as the Saltway, ran along the southern edge of the Wolds, where the soke settlements of Grimston, Saxelby, Wartnaby, Wycomb and Chadwell, and three of Rothley church's daughter chapels lay (Plates 14, 15 and 16). A further two Domesday soke settlements lay in the Wreake Valley at Asfordby and Frisby, but both were alienated from the soke before the arrival of the Templars in the thirteenth century. The next group of settlements lay in High Leicestershire and possessed much land for the grazing of livestock. Here are Gaddesby, Barsby,

⁹⁵ Many writers speak of twenty-one dependencies, probably combining north and south Marefield into one.

Baggrave, Keyham, Twyford, Tilton, Halstead, both Marefields, Somerby, Skeffington and Tugby, with two of the chapels of Rothley church situated at Gaddesby (Plate 13) and Keyham (Plate 10). Not far from Tugby, towards the border with Rutland, lies the settlement of Allextan of which only a small parcel came within the jurisdiction of Rothley at Domesday. Each of these distinct areas will be discussed, with an assessment made of their place in the economy of modern Leicestershire.

The Settlements of the Soar Valley

Sileby and Seagrave lie to the north east of Rothley. The nineteenth-century OS map shows Sileby as a polyfocal settlement along the edges of the road from Cossington to Barrow, in the centre of which lies the medieval church of St Mary. At the crossroads, along the road which travels from Mountsorrel to Seagrave, there was further settlement both here and along a road adjoining the road to Ratcliffe on the Wreake. Cox interpreted the name of Sileby as 'the farmstead or settlement of a man called *Sigulf*' and as such suggests a Scandinavian origin or renaming.⁹⁶ The jurisdiction of this settlement at Domesday was divided between Rothley and Barrow on Soar, but by the early twelfth century the Rothley part of Sileby had been granted away.⁹⁷ The water source for the settlement was a stream rising in the hills above Seagrave to the north east of Sileby, and travelling in a south-westerly direction to meet with the Soar at a point just east of Mountsorrel. In the nineteenth century a railway line passed through the settlement from Leicester to Loughborough, and a station must have given the inhabitants easier access to both towns. Although still supported to a large degree by agriculture, Sileby has more recently developed some light industry. The river Soar, which becomes the Soar Navigation at this point, lies about three kilometres to the west of Sileby and would have acted as a means of communication and transport before the building of good roads.

Seagrave

Seagrave lies to the north east of Sileby, but is still within the Soar Valley. This settlement adjoins the Fosse Way, a Roman road which forms its eastern boundary. At the north-eastern tip of Seagrave township is the junction of two major routes, where the Fosse Way crosses the ancient Saltway. Strategically this would have placed Seagrave

⁹⁶ Cox, *Place-names*, p. 93.

⁹⁷ As evidenced in the Leicestershire Survey *circa* 1130. C.F. Slade, *The Leicestershire survey c. A.D. 1130* (Leicester, 1956), pp. 15 and 24.

in an important trading position. However, it is high up on the edge of the Wolds and very exposed, which is perhaps the reason why no large settlement has developed here. Cox believed the name to have the topographical meaning of 'the grove near the pool'.⁹⁸ A number of springs arise in and around the settlement of Seagrave, which is surrounded by small hills and valleys which could have given it the appearance of a grove. The nineteenth-century settlement had a primary focus around the medieval church of All Saints, and further housing lay along the edge of two roads which led towards the Wolds, along the valleys and between the many small hills on which the settlement lay. Seagrave is primarily dependent on agriculture, and its nearest main route for transport was, and still is, the Roman Fosse Way which lies three kilometres to the east of the settlement. Neither Sileby nor Seagrave have extant tithe or enclosure maps thus limiting the information available for topographical analysis.

Soke settlements on the Saltway: Grimston, Saxelby and Shoby

North east of Seagrave, and along the Saltway, is a series of settlements on the edge of what was once the Wolds on the northern boundary of the county. Names such as Walton on the Wolds, Burton on the Wolds, Wimeswold and Dalby on the Wolds indicate open country and former woodland areas.⁹⁹ Grimston lies on a steeply inclined south-facing slope, just south of the Saltway road. Its name means 'the estate of a man called *Grim*' and is a hybrid form of a Scandinavian name coupled with an Anglo-Saxon settlement '*ton*'.¹⁰⁰ There are a number of springs in the settlement, and the southern extremities of the fields are fed by a brook which flows down from Wartnaby. A glebe terrier for the mid-eighteenth century names three open fields in the township: Brackindale Field, Mill Field and Deepdale Field. The terrier also indicates that there was grazing for livestock in Cow Pasture.¹⁰¹ The church of St John the Baptist (Plate 16) is thirteenth century, and sits on a rise within the settlement with an undated base and lower part of a cross-shaft in the churchyard. Much of the settlement in the late-eighteenth century lay clustered on the southern slope below the church.¹⁰² Grimston

⁹⁸ Cox, *Place-names*, p. 90.

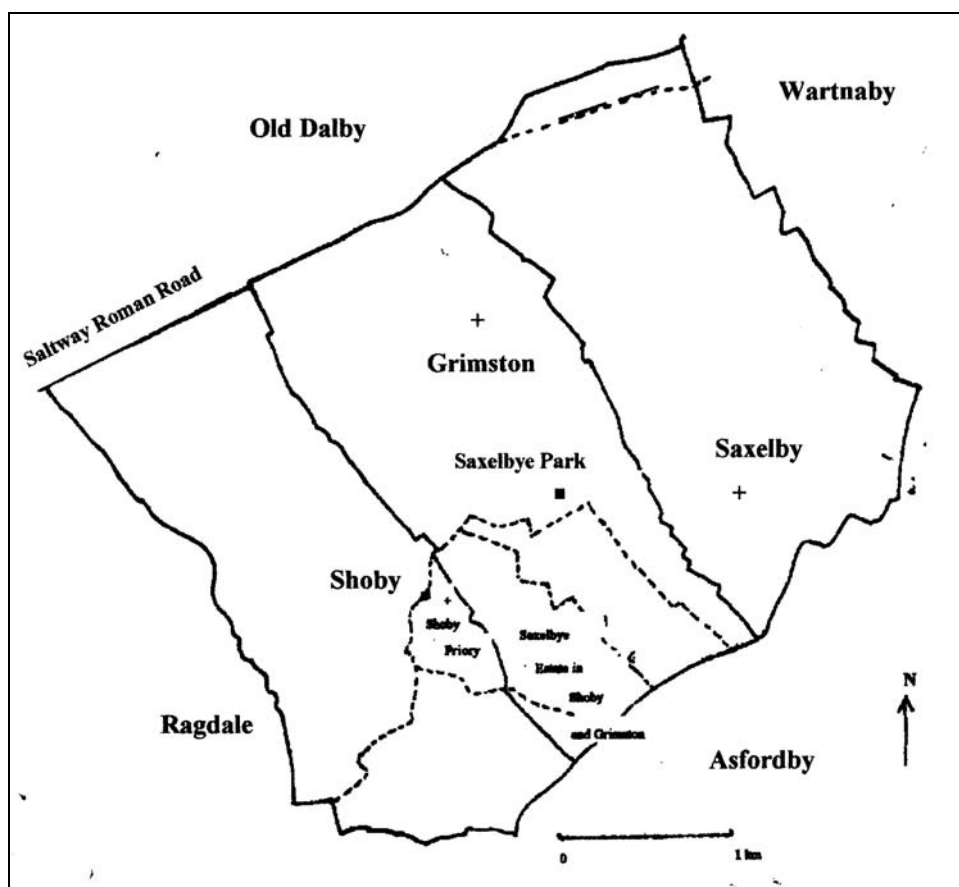
⁹⁹ This use of the name 'wold' or 'wald' is discussed in M. Gelling and A. Cole, *The landscape of place-names* (Stamford, 2000), p. 254. Cox explains that 'wald' means 'a large tract of woodland' and 'wold' means 'an elevated stretch of open country'. See Cox, *Place-names*, p. 160.

¹⁰⁰ Cox, *Place-names*, p. 44.

¹⁰¹ L.R.O. 6D 46/4 Grimston glebe terrier AD 1757. The glebe terrier refers to the 'peculiar and exempt jurisdiction of the manor of Rothley' which court was held in Rothley church. Part of the payment for the glebe was the responsibility of the tenants of Shoby, because it was described as being land in 'ancient demesne'. See also the chapter on the parish of Rothley.

¹⁰² L.R.O. 4D 72/1/2 Enclosure maps, awards and acts for the soke of Rothley.

church, once a chapel of Rothley, was believed to have been cruciform in shape but the north transept is now gone.



**Map 6. Shoby, Grimston and Saxelby
showing Saxelbye Estate**

Source: L.R.O. 4D 72/1/2 Enclosure maps, awards and acts for the soke of Rothley; L.R.O. DE 4686/28/2-5 Map of Saxelbye estate

A small estate exists within the field boundaries of Grimston called Saxelbye Park, but the settlement of Saxelby lies to the south east of Grimston. At Domesday only part of the settlement of Grimston belonged to the soke, but the whole of the township belonged to Rothley parish. Inside the boundary of Grimston fields and crossing over the south-western boundary with Shoby was Saxelbye estate and a map was drawn in 1896 which described the estate as being part of Grimston and Shoby (Map 6).¹⁰³

¹⁰³ DE 4686/28/2-5 Map of Saxelbye estate. The estate was centred upon a farm known as Priory Farm, which lies close to the hamlet of Shoby. The farm, once a grange of Launde Abbey, was procured by that priory in the thirteenth century, but had disappeared by the end of the fourteenth. This relationship appears to illustrate the inter-connection between these settlements and fields which occasionally gives rise to confusion in the documentary evidence. Map 6 shows the divisions on the estate map which suggest a former three field system.

Wartnaby, Ab Kettleby and Holwell

Wartnaby lies about three kilometres to the north east of Grimston, bordering what was once Framland wapentake. The name Wartnaby is probably a combination of an Old English personal name *Waercnoth*, with the Scandinavian ending '*by*'.¹⁰⁴ Ekwall preferred the Old English meaning '*weard-cnotta*' 'watch hill' or Old Scandinavian '*vardknott*' meaning 'hill with a cairn'.¹⁰⁵ The highest point in Wartnaby is north of the settlement fields and beyond the Saltway, and lies at 170 metres above sea level. This point is on the edge of a scarp which plunges more than 70 metres into the valley beyond within a distance of less than one kilometre. It is easy to imagine that the people of Wartnaby might once have used this point as a look out. They could also have placed a cairn upon it as a warning marker for unwary walkers travelling in poor visibility. Both suggestions of the meaning of the name of the settlement give a possible Old English origin with the addition of the Danish '*by*' thus giving a hybrid form. The church of St Michael (Plate 15) at Wartnaby sits at the eastern end of a hamlet consisting of houses clustered about a meeting of trackways which lead west to Grimston, south west to Saxelby, and south to Asfordby. The north lane joins the Saltway which is just under a kilometre away and a further trackway leads from the church to the road for Ab Kettleby. Wartnaby has a number of springs and a brook which feeds a lake, the outlet of which runs on to the settlement of Saxelby and then towards the fields of Grimston.¹⁰⁶

Chadwell and Wycomb

Chadwell and Wycomb were two settlements sharing the same open-field system prior to the enclosure. Chadwell is a topographical name which means 'cold spring' and its Domesday spelling of *Caldwelle* may have been changed in the eighteenth century.¹⁰⁷ Ekwall considers that the correct form of the name should be

¹⁰⁴ Cox, *Place-names*, p. 111.

¹⁰⁵ E. Ekwall, *The concise Oxford dictionary of place-names* (Oxford, 1960), 4th ed., p. 499.

¹⁰⁶ In the eighteenth-century enclosure award the glebe for Wartnaby amounted to 15 acres 2 roods and 4 perches, and the tithes amounted to 11 acres 1 rood and 18 perches. The inappropriate tithes were held by Lord Howe, and amounted to 68 acres and 1 rood.

L.R.O. 4D/72/1/2 Enclosure acts, awards and maps, p. 93f.

¹⁰⁷ Cox, *Place-names*, p. 23.

'Caldwell', as this name was used more frequently in the documents.¹⁰⁸ Wycomb, or more correctly Wykeham, has been identified by Gelling as a possible Romano-British settlement.¹⁰⁹ This is of particular interest because Goadby Marwood, which lies just over one kilometre to the north of Wycomb, was once a Roman town. The '*ham*' names were among the first of the Anglo-Saxon settlement names, and so Wycomb could be one of the two earliest settlements in the soke of Rothley.¹¹⁰ Chadwell and Wycomb, which lay within Framland wapentake, were counted as an island of Goscote wapentake because of their connection with the jurisdiction and parish of the soke and church at Rothley. These settlements lie about one kilometre apart. Wycomb is fed by brooks which arise within the township boundaries, and Chadwell is sited near multiple springs, some of which rise near the main street. The church of St Mary (Plate 14), once a chapel of Rothley, is twelfth-century and has a Norman font.¹¹¹ The settlement of Wycomb consists of a small cluster of houses with a main street and a back lane, and tracks from Wycomb lead to Scalford, Goadby Marwood and Chadwell. The settlement of Chadwell lies to the south east of the church along two streets which end in a track going westwards to Scalford and eastwards to Waltham on the Wolds. The road to the north of the church divides into two: travelling in one direction to Wycomb and in the other to the neighbouring settlement of Goadby Marwood. Chadwell was the most remote of Rothley's chapels and its agricultural significance within the soke may have been its grazing and summer pasture. Its proximity to the Saltway would make it accessible for much of the year by tenants wishing to drive their livestock from settlements lying in the Soar Valley to the west. Domesday placed two mills at Chadwell, and the brook which forms the eastern boundary would readily have powered water mills. The presence of these mills in Domesday suggests that there was a plentiful supply of grain for milling in the district. Chadwell and Wycomb remained within the parish of Rothley after the Dissolution although payments from tenants of both settlements had been granted away for the support of Wyggeston Hospital in Leicester.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Ekwall, *Dictionary of place-names*, p. 94.

¹⁰⁹ M. Gelling, *Place-names in the landscape* (London, 1984), p. 323.

¹¹⁰ Keyham being the second. See below. Such an assertion presupposes that all current settlements retain their original names, which can by no means be certain.

¹¹¹ N. Pevsner, *Leicestershire and Rutland* (Harmondsworth, 1984), 2nd ed., p. 129.

¹¹² A. Hamilton Thompson, ed., *A calendar of charters and other documents belonging to the Hospital of William Wyggeston at Leicester* (Leicester, 1933), especially the chapter on 'Charters and other

Soke settlements in the Wreake Valley: Asfordby and Frisby

Along the banks of the river Wreake there are two Domesday soke settlements - Asfordby and Frisby on the Wreake. At Domesday most of Asfordby came under the jurisdiction of the soke and it had a mill which would have been a valuable asset. Its name is from an Old English personal name '*Aescford's* with the addition of *by*' which is of Scandinavian origin.¹¹³ In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the main street ran east-west with the church of All Saints lying behind the settlement on the south side. The ironstone church is mostly early fourteenth-century and the tower is late-Perpendicular. Three Saxon stones from a cross survive, now inside the church, but probably originally outside. Two of these stones show carved work, one with a figure holding a cross and giving a blessing, the other shows a dragon.¹¹⁴ In the seventeenth century the glebe for Asfordby consisted of different pieces of meadow and a large quantity of land in three open fields.¹¹⁵ Asfordby lies between 65 and 70 metres above sea level on the north side of the river on a south-facing slope, which at its peak rises to 138 metres in the direction of Wartnaby. The coalmines towards its north-eastern boundary were served by a railway line from Nottingham, and a tunnel built under the hill took the line to Melton. Because of its proximity to Melton Mowbray, which lies less than four kilometres away, Asfordby has grown as a commuter settlement and assumed the size of a small town, and industrial units now stand on what was once farmland.¹¹⁶ Its nearest neighbours are Frisby and Kirby Bellars lying about two kilometres away to the south of the river, which can be reached by road across a bridge to the south of Asfordby church. Other approaches to the church and settlement can be made by footpath for which there are two footbridges across the river. The Old Hall in the settlement dates to the Jacobean period, and the Rectory is early nineteenth-century.¹¹⁷

documents: Wycombe and Chadwell', pp. 541-572. Charters numbered 1076 to 1157. These charters bear witness to the lands which subsequently came into the hands of the Hospital.

¹¹³ Cox, *Place-names*, p. 4.

¹¹⁴ Pevsner, *Leicestershire and Rutland*, p. 77.

¹¹⁵ L.R.O. 1D 41/2/15 Asfordby Glebe Terrier AD 1674. Much of the arable is measured in 'lands', so an acreage is difficult to determine. The glebe had 104 lands plus further arable.

¹¹⁶ Asfordby was granted away from the soke by the early twelfth century to the earl of Leicester, who subsequently granted it to Leicester Abbey. The Abbey was later compelled to exchange Asfordby with a large grant of land in Seagrave to the Bishop of Lincoln as part of a peace agreement between the bishop and Robert Fitz Parnell, earl of Leicester. The abbey was compensated by a grant of other lands.

¹¹⁷ Pevsner, *Leicestershire and Rutland*, p. 77.

The settlement of Frisby lies along the southern bank of the river Wreake. In the eighteenth century the settlement lay along one street, at the western end of which was a fork in the road leading to Hoby on the north side of the river, and Rotherby on the south side. Other roads from the settlement led to Kirby Bellars, and indirectly to Asfordby to the north and Gaddesby to the south. In the nineteenth century a railway ran from Melton to Leicester, passing between Frisby and the river. The name of Frisby means the 'by' of the Frisians,¹¹⁸ which refers to a group of peoples from what was once known as Frisia, a coastal area in northern Germany. Frisby lies on a north-facing slope, between 70 and 75 kilometres above sea level. The church of St Thomas of Canterbury lies behind the row of houses which front the east end of the main street. Its dedication suggests a late twelfth- or early thirteenth-century foundation, but the lower stage of the west tower could be of Norman date, which raises the possibility that the church has been re-dedicated.¹¹⁹ The church was developed in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and further modernisation took place in the nineteenth. A stone cross stands at the fork in the main street, but the cross has been moved in recent times from its original site.¹²⁰ The main road from Melton to Queniborough runs along the ridge about 25 metres above the level of the settlement, and many of the fields of Frisby lie to the south beyond this road, on a south-facing slope to meet the boundary with Gaddesby.¹²¹

The settlements of central High Leicestershire

The largest grouping of soke settlements lies in High Leicestershire, and the most important of these settlements was Gaddesby. Its name is from 'Gades' of Scandinavian origin, and *by'*¹²² and the settlement lies on a south-facing slope from which there are views towards Ashby Folville, Barsby and South Croxton, two kilometres east south east, south east, and three kilometres to the south respectively. A number of springs give a water supply to Gaddesby, and the Gaddesby Brook which rises in the hills near Tilton runs through the fields to the south of the settlement. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Gaddesby was a single-street settlement running

¹¹⁸ Cox, *Place-names*, p. 38.

¹¹⁹ Pevsner, *Leicestershire and Rutland*, p. 155. Evidence from the records of Launde Priory show that this church was once dedicated to St Guthlac.

¹²⁰ J. Nichols, ed., *History and antiquities of the county of Leicester* (Leicester, 1800), Vol. III, part 1, p. 261, hereafter *Antiquities*.

¹²¹ A glebe terrier for Frisby accounts for land in three open fields in Frisby, and there is a separate terrier for glebe land which lay in Asfordby, but belonging to the vicarage of Frisby. An additional note at the end of the Frisby glebe terrier also accounts for two houses lying in Melton Mowbray.

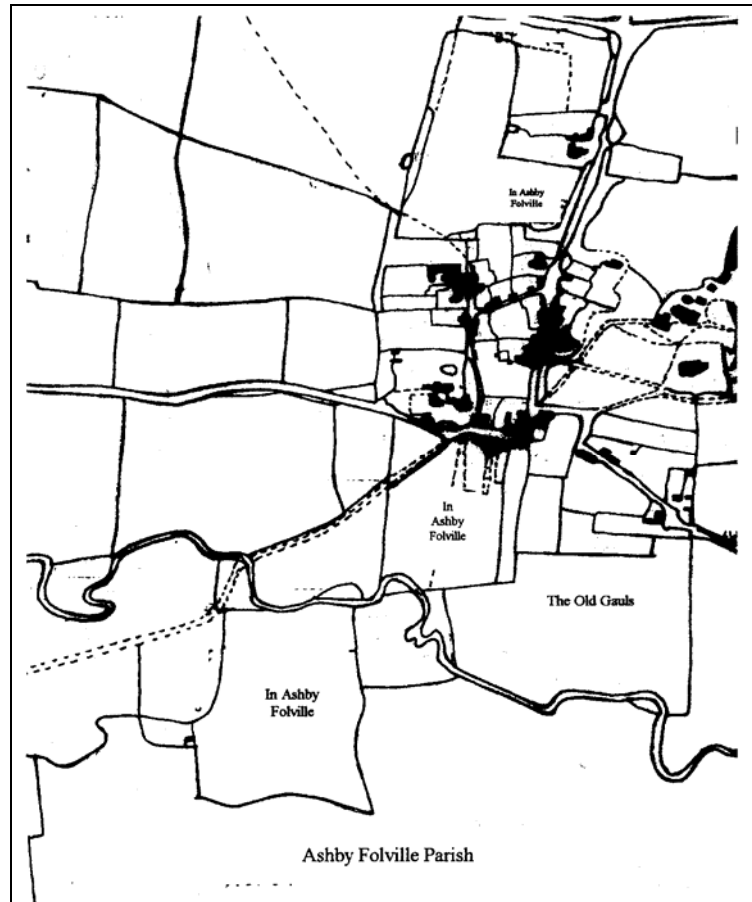
north-south up the hillside. The church lay isolated to the east of the settlement, although there appear to be housing platforms to the south west of the church suggesting that the settlement has either moved or shrunk slightly. On the nineteenth-century map Paske Hall occupies a position close to the north side of the church, and to the east of the settlement. The main settlement appears to have a back lane parallel with, and on the west side of the street. The nineteenth-century tithe map for Gaddesby shows the settlement spreading along the road to Ashby Folville just south of the church.¹²³ The tithe apportionment records pieces of land belonging to Ashby Folville such as a house at the south end of the settlement with a close attached, a toft at the north end of the settlement with no house, and three large fields, one lying next to the road to Rotherby to the north of the settlement, the second lying south of the brook to the south west of the settlement, and the third lying to the west (see Map 7). This suggests that rent and tithes were being paid to Ashby Folville as though lying in this neighbouring settlement, perhaps in recognition of a former relationship between the two settlements. Further small pieces of land to the south of the brook were marked as being in Barsby, South Croxton, and again in Ashby Folville, suggesting a former relationship between them (see Map 8). The church of St Luke was considered by Pevsner to be one of the most beautiful of the Leicestershire village churches, as well as one of the largest (Plate 13).¹²⁴ He dated much of the present church building to the second third of the thirteenth and second third of the fourteenth centuries.¹²⁵ He also identified some Norman work in a fragment no longer *in situ*. In the nineteenth century Gaddesby church still retained its status as a chapel of Rothley, but in a later parochial re-organisation Gaddesby became a single parish with South Croxton and Ashby Folville.

¹²² Cox, *Place-names*, p. 39.

¹²³ L.R.O. DE 76/Ti/112/1 Parish of Gaddesby in Leicestershire.

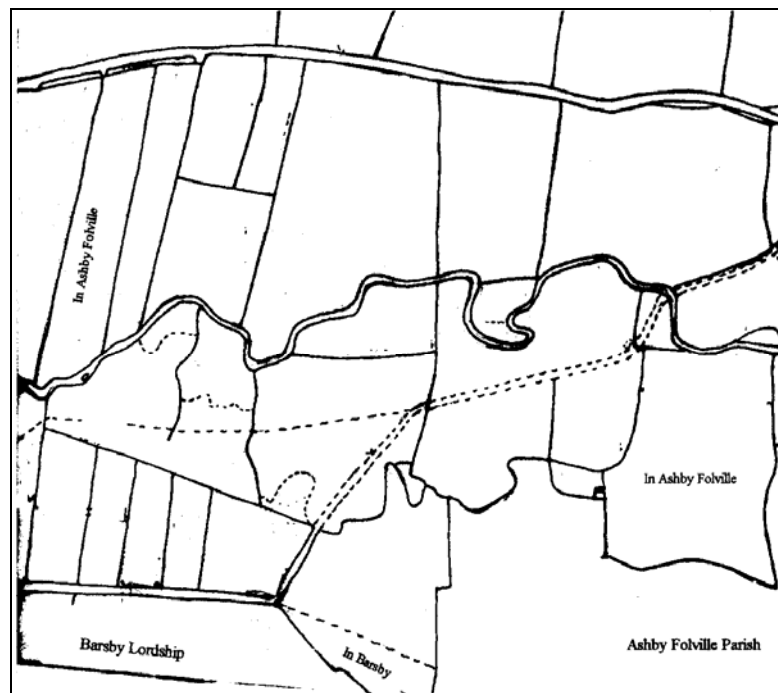
¹²⁴ Pevsner, *Leicestershire and Rutland*, p. 157.

¹²⁵ The south aisle is of particular note, and was probably the result of two chantry foundations. See Appendix B.



Map 7. Detail from the Gaddesby tithe map

Source: L.R.O. DE 76/Ti/112/1 Tithe map of parish of Gaddesby in Leicestershire



Map 8. Detail from the Gaddesby tithe map

Source: L.R.O. DE 76/Ti/112/1 Tithe map of parish of Gaddesby in Leicestershire

Barsby and South Croxton

Barsby and South Croxton lie to the south and south east of Gaddesby. On the eighteenth-century enclosure map the settlement of Barsby and the northern half of the settlement of South Croxton shared a single three-field system (Map 10).¹²⁶ On this map the settlement of Barsby lay within the open fields and had a single street running north-west to south-east, and trackways led from the west end of the settlement to Gaddesby and from the east end to Twyford. The broken line between Barsby and Ashby Folville represents the boundary of the open fields on the enclosure map (Map 9). Although Barsby lay in the parish of Ashby Folville, it continued to have a connection with the peculiar jurisdiction of Rothley parish,¹²⁷ and in the nineteenth century the parish boundary for Ashby followed the route of the new enclosure road between Queniborough and Tilton which then separated the two settlements.¹²⁸ Barsby means the 'by' of the 'child' and is a Danish name suggesting that the settlement was probably developed later than South Croxton.¹²⁹ Barsby lies in an upper valley 110 metres above sea level and is watered by a number of small springs and streams which arise in the slopes around the settlement. It is largely south-facing and the surrounding fields enjoy an open aspect with some south-facing slopes of both arable and grazing land. A further north-south enclosure road cuts Barsby settlement in two, forming a connection between South Croxton and Ashby Folville.¹³⁰

The settlement of South Croxton is a single street settlement lying north-east and south-west down a south-facing slope overlooking the valley through which runs the Queniborough brook (Plate 12). The church of St John the Baptist lies at the top of the hill at a height of 120 metres above sea level (Plate 11). The church is built of ironstone and appears to be entirely early fourteenth-century, with some nineteenth-century windows in the chancel, although the font is of Norman date.¹³¹ The Queniborough brook runs along the 85-metre contour line at the bottom of the settlement street, and there is a steep incline leading up to the church. A few metres north of the church is a

¹²⁶ L.R.O. DE 2/4 Ma/EN/A/24/1 Barsby and South Croxton enclosure award and map.

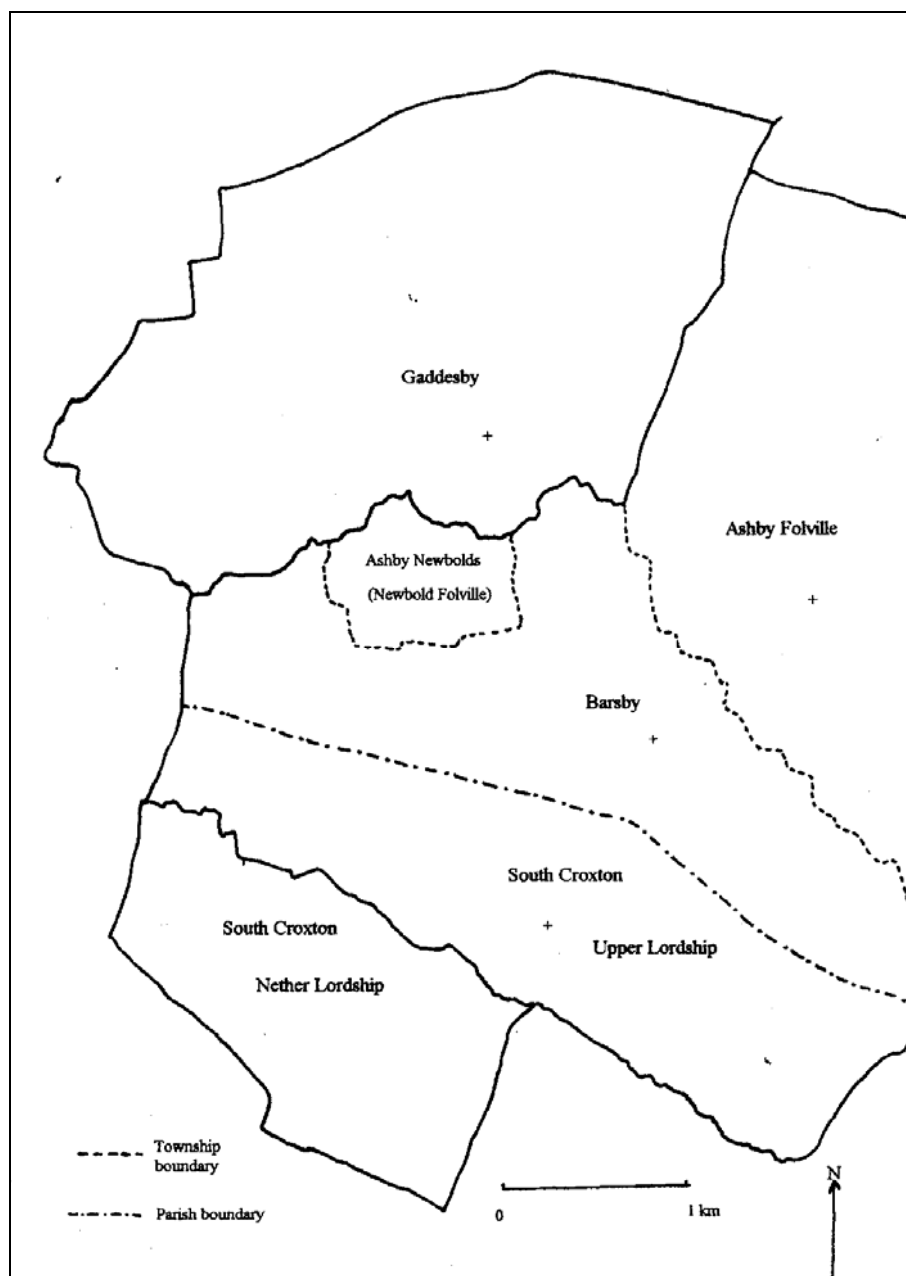
¹²⁷ F.A. Youngs, Jr., *Guide to the local administrative units of England: Northern England* (London, 1991), Vol. II, p. 221.

¹²⁸ This is represented by the broken line running east-west between Barsby and South Croxton on Map 9.

¹²⁹ Cox, *Place-names*, p. 7.

¹³⁰ The effect of the two new enclosure roads was to alter the appearance of the inter-connections between these settlements, and to disguise their former landscape relationships.

moat on slightly higher ground, and nearby is a spring, the source of which may also feed the moat. One unusual feature of this settlement is that a spring arises at the top of a hill, suggesting that the source is from higher ground, and possibly some distance away. The name of Croxton means '*Krokr's tun*',¹³² and the epithet 'South' distinguishes it from another Croxton in the county known as Croxton Kerrial, which lies to the north east beyond Melton Mowbray in Framland wapentake.



Map 9. Relationship between South Croxton upper lordship and nether lordship

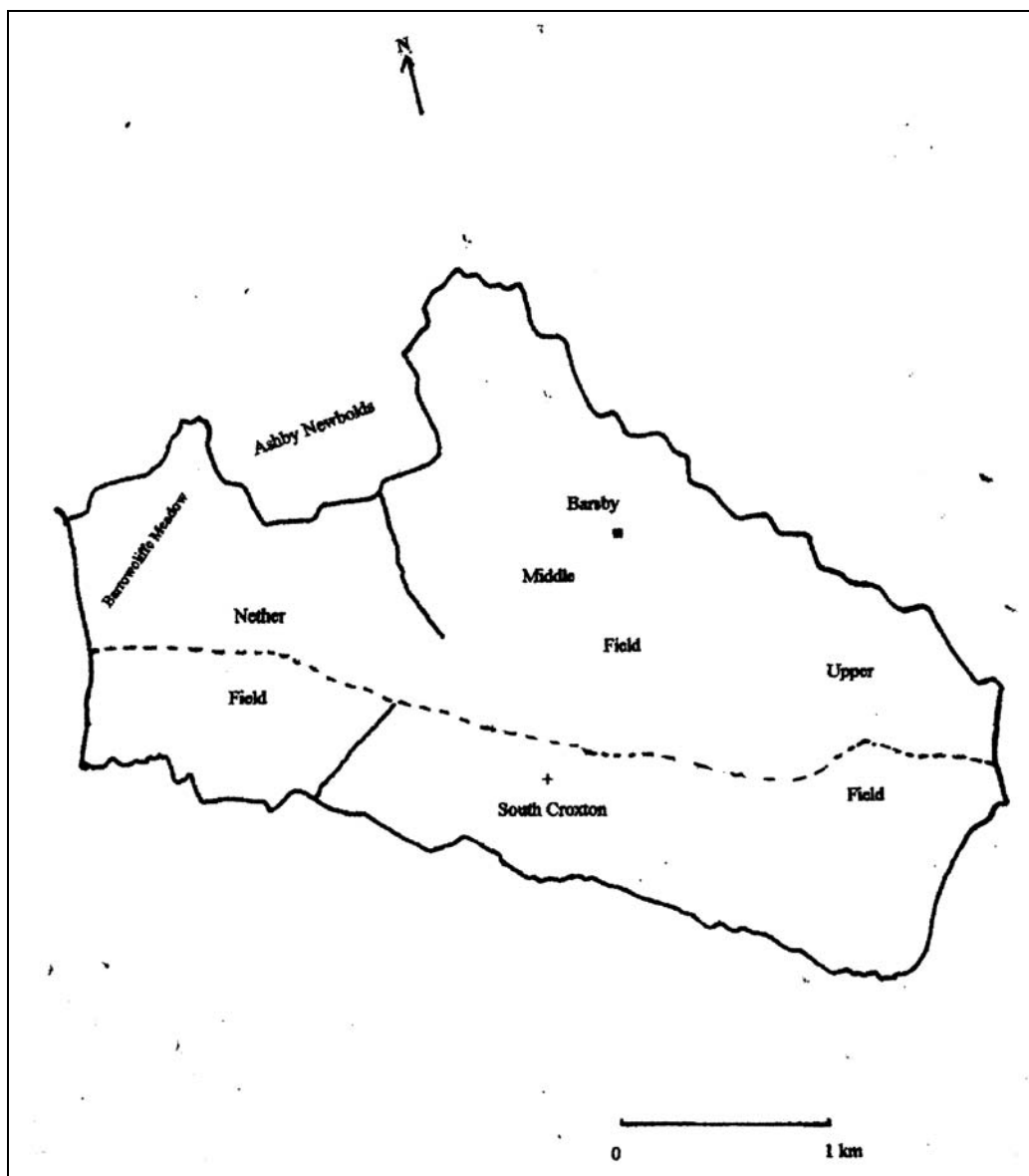
Sources: L.R.O. DE 76/Ti/112/1 Tithe map of parish of Gaddesby in Leicestershire;
L.R.O. Ti/298/1/1/83 South Croxton tithe award 10 June 1844;
L.R.O. DE 2/4 Ma/EN/A/24/1 Barsby and South Croxton enclosure award and map

¹³¹ Pevsner, *Leicestershire and Rutland*, p. 382.

¹³² Cox, *Place-names*, p. 96.

On the enclosure award and map of 1798 the north-western boundary between Gaddesby and Barsby/South Croxton follows the line of the Gaddesby Brook for part of its course, then continues on a line south of the brook. The southern part of South Croxton, known as the Nether Lordship, had been separately enclosed by private agreement earlier in the eighteenth century.¹³³ At enclosure some of the parishioners living in South Croxton upper lordship owed tithes to Rothley church suggesting an ecclesiastical connection between the church at Rothley and that of South Croxton, although there are no earlier references to such a link. Ashby Newbolds (Newbold Folville), the site of a deserted medieval hamlet, once occupied an area outside the north-western boundary of these open fields.

¹³³ A separate map exists for this half of the settlement fields. See L.R.O. Ti/298/1/1/83 South Croxton tithe award, 10 June 1844.



Map 10. The outline of the enclosure map for Barsby and South Croxton

----- line of track depicted on the enclosure map

Source: L.R.O. DE 2/4 Ma/EN/A/24/1 Barsby and South Croxton enclosure award and map

The enclosure map for Barsby and South Croxton is extremely detailed showing the open fields with their furlongs, and superimposed upon this were the later field apportionments.¹³⁴ Three open fields were named Upper, Middle and Nether fields (Map 10), and a number of furlongs, wongs and meadows were identified such as Mill Gate, Mill Furlong, Mill Sick and Far Windmill, and glebe land was named as Church Headland. A trackway crossed the fields from west to east passing within half a kilometre of South Croxton to the north of the church, and a footpath still survives for

¹³⁴ L.R.O. DE 2/4 Ma/EN/A/24/1 Barsby and South Croxton enclosure award and map.

part of this trackway but the rest has largely disappeared. The track stops at a close called Thurn Green which lay adjacent to two further closes both called Thurn Close. According to Gelling, 'thyrne' is a form of 'thorn' and refers to the hawthorn tree,¹³⁵ and perhaps this part of the landscape may have had some significance for the inhabitants of South Croxton for medieval exchanges of land frequently refer to thorn bushes.¹³⁶ The two Thurn Closes abut on to Court Close, a piece of land which sits halfway between the two settlements of Barsby and South Croxton, and was identified in Nichols as the site of a former court house, hence its name (Plate 12).¹³⁷ A trackway continues past South Croxton running in an easterly direction towards the higher ground around Tilton, and it is possible that this track was formerly a drove road for the moving of livestock from the pastures of the Soar Valley to the uplands around Somerby and Tilton during the summer months.¹³⁸ To the east of Barsby and South Croxton is a place on the boundary of the enclosure map identified as Streethill which was named as a 'close of pasture in Lowesby' in a sixteenth-century inquisition.¹³⁹ The nineteenth-century map shows that south of Queniborough brook lay two properties known as The Grange, and South Manor Farm. The North Manor Farm lies to the west of the church at the top of the settlement street, and archaeological excavations carried out at North Manor Farm in 1971 revealed that the site was developed in the early-fourteenth century at about the same time as the church was being developed.¹⁴⁰ Thus South Croxton was an unusual, divided settlement split into a northern and southern half, and each part-settlement was farmed within a separate open-field system.¹⁴¹ The parish was also unusual for the enclosure award records that tithe payments were divided between its own church, the church of Ashby Folville and the church at Rothley.

¹³⁵ Gelling, *Place-names*, p. 221.

¹³⁶ G. F. Farnham, ed., *Leicestershire mediaeval village notes* (Leicester, c. 1928), Vol. VI, p. 295, from the *Calendar of inquisitions post mortem*, Richard Ashby, 115/9, Vol. IV, p. 174. It is not clear if the thorn thicket referred to is the same as existed on the enclosure map, but it possibly had an economic value.

¹³⁷ Nichols, ed., *Antiquities*, Vol. III, part I, p. 263n. There is archaeology in this close which has yet to be investigated.

¹³⁸ The drove road was suggested by Peter Liddle, County Archaeologist.

¹³⁹ Farnham, *Village notes*, Vol. V, p. 4. This name has now been given to a single farm lying to the east of the field boundary. Such a name usually indicates proximity to a Roman road, but no such road has been identified nearby.

¹⁴⁰ T. Pearce, and J.E. Mellor, *Excavations at North Manor Farm, South Croxton, Leicestershire* (Leicestershire, 1986), Archaeological Reports Series no. 11. The construction of the moat was dated to the fifteenth century, and may well have served as a garden feature, rather than being of a defensive nature.

¹⁴¹ It is possible that an understanding of the formation of these field units could throw some light on the development of nucleated settlements in this part of Leicestershire.

Baggrave

Baggrave lies to the south of the Queniborough brook, its north-western boundary is shared with South Croxton, its southern boundary is shared with Hungarton, and its north and north-eastern boundary is shared with Lowesby. It was within the soke of Rothley at Domesday, and was bequeathed to the Templars by the then holder John de Harcourt in the early thirteenth century.¹⁴² Its name is from the Old English and means '*Babba's Grove*' according to Cox.¹⁴³ Baggrave was depopulated in the sixteenth century to make way for Baggrave Hall, which was built by Francis Cave who died in 1584. The chapelry was recorded in the mid thirteenth century as a dependency of Keyham, after which it became a chapel of Hungarton whose advowson was held by Leicester Abbey.¹⁴⁴ By the sixteenth century the chapel of Baggrave pertained to the church of Hungarton, in which parish it still lies.¹⁴⁵ Baggrave is watered by a number of springs as well as the brook, and it lies on a north-east facing slope, and the remains of the settlement form a single street pattern from the top to the bottom of the slope, where the Hall is now situated next to the stream. Hoskins noted Baggrave as one of seven deserted settlements which he described in 1956.¹⁴⁶ In the early sixteenth century, when Leicester Abbey was in possession of the hamlet, some of the land was enclosed and the inhabitants of five farmhouses and two cottages were removed. Hoskins described the site of the settlement as being clearly visible, and lying within the grounds of the park, with the remains of a moated site where once stood a manor house at the southern end of the settlement.

Keyham

Keyham, a chapelry of Rothley and a soke settlement at the time of the Domesday survey, remained within the soke and parish until the early nineteenth century. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the settlement of Keyham formed a rectangle of roads with the church of All Saints in the centre (Plate 10). Its name means '*Caega's ham*' or '*the ham on the key-shaped ridge*',¹⁴⁷ and it was built on a south-facing slope, just below the lee of the ridgeway which runs south-east to Billesdon Coplow,

¹⁴² *Liber Feodorum - Book of Fees commonly called Testa de Neville, Part II, 1242 - 1293* (London, 1923), p. 1280.

¹⁴³ Cox, *Place-names*, p. 6.

¹⁴⁴ *Book of Fees, Part II*, p. 1280.

¹⁴⁵ Farnham, *Village notes*, Vol. V., p. 4.

¹⁴⁶ W.G. Hoskins, 'Seven deserted village sites in Leicestershire' *T.L.A.H.S.* 32 (1956), pp. 36-51.

¹⁴⁷ Cox, *Place-names*, p. 56.

and north-west to Barkby Thorpe. The thirteenth- or fourteenth-century church ¹⁴⁸ is built on a rise within the settlement on the 115-metre contour line, and the stream which waters the settlement runs east-west just south of the settlement below the 90-metre contour. A number of springs arise in the fields surrounding the settlement, and in the nineteenth century a railway line connecting Leicester with Melton ran through the fields to the south of the settlement, with a station situated on the road near Ingarsby, about two kilometres to the south east of Keyham. Keyham Hall or Nether Hall lies to the south west of the settlement, and was described by Pevsner as a building with eighteenth-century brick, some nineteenth-century additions, and evidence of early seventeenth-century work.¹⁴⁹ Keyham was enclosed in 1771, and a detailed enclosure map was drawn by Thomas Pick.¹⁵⁰ An eighteenth-century glebe terrier records the great and small tithes of Keyham belonging to several tenants of the vicar of Rothley, who between them paid him a yearly rent of £50.¹⁵¹ Keyham shares a boundary with the township of Beeby which belonged to Crowland Abbey in the medieval period,¹⁵² and Hungarton, Keyham's neighbour to the east, belonged to Leicester Abbey before the Dissolution. The earthworks of Ingarsby, a deserted medieval settlement, lie to the south east of Keyham, and this was cleared by Leicester Abbey in the fifteenth century to make way for sheep farming.¹⁵³

Twyford

To the north east of Lowesby and east of South Croxton lies Twyford, a part-soke settlement at Domesday, which shared a parish with Thorpe Satchville a settlement not recorded as part of the soke.¹⁵⁴ There were two main routes though Twyford in the eighteenth century, and each crossed the Gaddesby brook perhaps giving rise to its name of 'two fords'.¹⁵⁵ The two tracks which ran from Hungarton in the west and Somerby in the east, both crossed and continued on towards Melton and Gaddesby. This polyfocal settlement lay on both sides of the brook surrounding the church of St Andrew, which Pevsner described as a late twelfth-century building by masons who built the castle hall at Oakham, and who had taken inspiration from William of Sens's

¹⁴⁸ Pevsner, *Leicestershire and Rutland*, p. 187.

¹⁴⁹ Pevsner, *Leicestershire and Rutland*, p. 187.

¹⁵⁰ L.R.O. 44'28/1359 Map of Rothley Temple estates in Keyham, 1771.

¹⁵¹ L.R.O. 6D 46/5a Glebe terrier for Keyham, 1757.

¹⁵² DB f. 231 b.

¹⁵³ Hoskins, 'Seven deserted village sites', pp. 36-51.

¹⁵⁴ In the early thirteenth century the chapel of Thorpe Satchville was dependent upon the church of Twyford. See Phillimore, *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles*, p. 259.

¹⁵⁵ Cox, *Place-names*, p. 107.

choir at Canterbury.¹⁵⁶ The church has some Perpendicular windows, the chancel has eighteenth-century alterations, and there is a thirteenth-century font. The railway which passed through Thorpe Satchville and by-passed Twyford to the east of the settlement in the nineteenth century, was served by a station at Twyford Grange, and the line from Melton divided just south of Twyford to travel towards Leicester and Northamptonshire. Twyford lies in an upland valley on the 100-metre contour line, the hills to the south rising to 162 metres at its boundary with Lowesby, and to the north towards Thorpe Satchville which lies on the 150-metre contour. Thorpe means 'outlying farmstead'¹⁵⁷ and as such is probably a secondary settlement to Twyford, but it appears to enjoy the better aspect on a south facing slope on the hill above Twyford. The nineteenth-century church of Thorpe Satchville dedicated to St Michael was once a chapel dependent on Twyford and the two formed a contiguous parish. A hall stands close to the church at Thorpe, which arrangement more closely resembles that expected in a manorial settlement.

The soke settlements of eastern High Leicestershire

Tilton-on-the-Hill and Halstead

The settlement of Tilton-on-the-Hill lies on the 210-metre contour, and as such is the highest settlement in Leicestershire. Within its boundary to the south east of the settlement is Robin a' Tiptoe Hill which is 222 metres above sea level. Despite its height, a number of springs and brooks rise up in the hills around Tilton and these flow in three directions feeding brooks which run through and near a number of settlements to the west, east and south. The Eye Brook forms the southern boundary of Tilton with Skeffington and rises at the most south-westerly point of Tilton township then runs in a south-easterly direction, continuing out of the county and entering Rutland at the Leicestershire border at Allextion. The settlement of Tilton appears to surround the parish church of St Peter and the manor farm is just south of the church. A moated site lies half a kilometre to the south east of the settlement on the Loddington road. The church shows evidence of fabric from the twelfth century, with much rebuilding and alteration in the late medieval and early Tudor periods. One thirteenth-century monument is a cross-legged knightly effigy of Sir John Digby lying within the nave of the church, and nearby in the south aisle there is an early sixteenth-century monument

¹⁵⁶ Pevsner, *Leicestershire and Rutland*, p. 414.

¹⁵⁷ Cox, *Place-names*, p. 104.

to Sir Everard Digby.¹⁵⁸ Other later monuments sit in the chancel, the font is of Norman date, and there are some remains of an undated cross in the churchyard. The tithe map shows, somewhat surprisingly, that the church stands not in Tilton but within the boundary of the settlement of Halstead which is immediately adjacent to the settlement of Tilton (Map 11).¹⁵⁹ Both Halstead and Tilton lie inter-twined around the church, and Halstead was a chapelry of Tilton. Other chapelries included Marefield South which lies on its north-western boundary, and Whatborough, a deserted settlement which lay to the east of Tilton. Halstead has its own tithe map which clearly depicts the parish church of Tilton within its boundary.¹⁶⁰ Tilton means '*Tila's tun*', Halstead means 'the place or refuge for cattle', and Marefield means 'open country infested by martens or weasels'.¹⁶¹ Variations of meaning can be found in Gelling who interprets Halstead as being from the word '*halh*' meaning 'valley or hollow', which description suits it well.¹⁶² Whatborough is from the Old English word *hwaetebeorg* meaning 'wheat hill' according to Ekwall.¹⁶³ No other medieval chapels or churches still stand within the parish. In the nineteenth century an important railway junction and station was situated at South Marefield to the north of Tilton, and the division in the line resulted in routes to Northamptonshire and Leicester.

¹⁵⁸ Pevsner, *Leicestershire and Rutland*, p. 411.

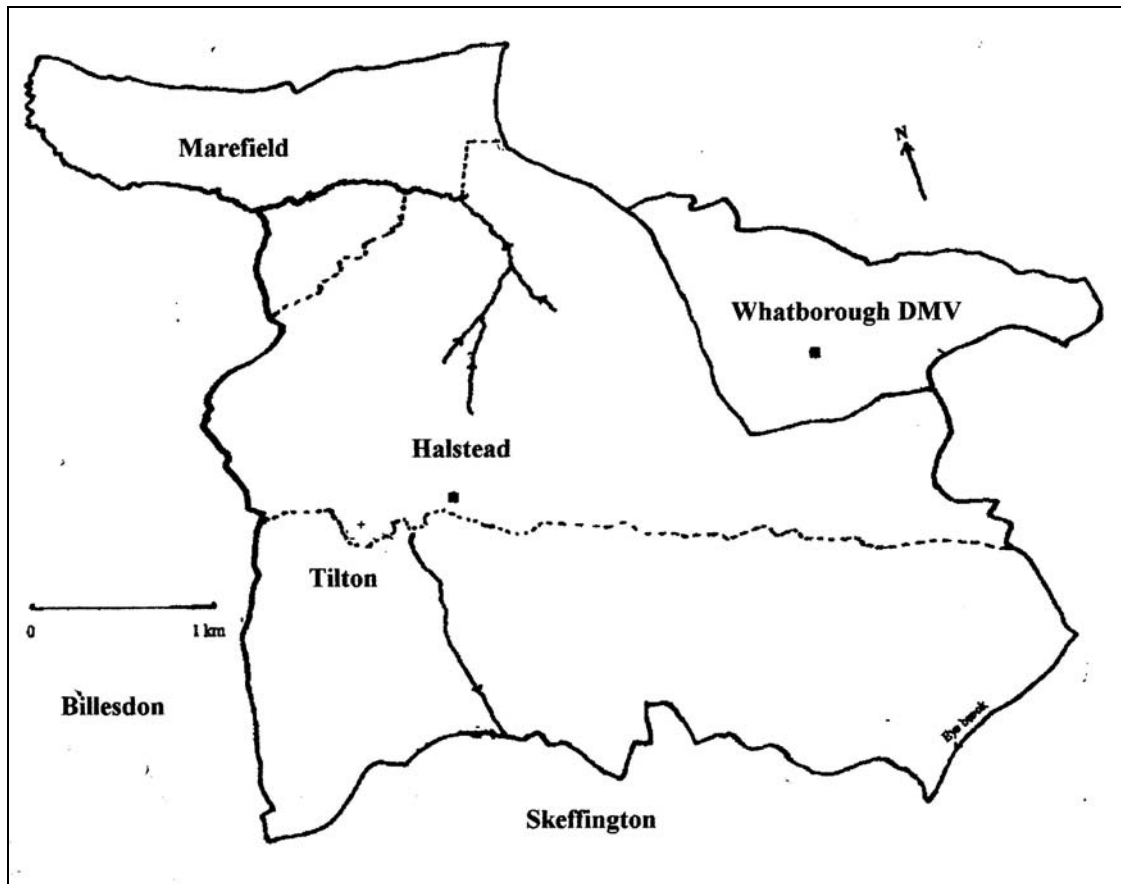
¹⁵⁹ L.R.O. DE 76 Ti/333/1 41/72 Tithe map for Tilton on the Hill, Leicestershire

¹⁶⁰ L.R.O. DE 76 Ti/135/1 41/60 Tithe map of the township of Halstead in the county of Leicester. It is difficult to explain at first glance how such an anomaly can have arisen, and this requires further investigation in order to understand the complexities of the parish and its settlement history.

¹⁶¹ Cox, *Place-names*, pp. 105, 46 and 67 respectively.

¹⁶² Gelling, *Place-names*, p. 100f.

¹⁶³ Ekwall, *Dictionary of English place-names*, p. 511.



Map 11. The parish of Tilton with Halstead, Marefield and Whatborough

Sources: L.R.O. DE 76 Ti/333/1 41/72 Tithe map for Tilton on the Hill, Leicestershire
 L.R.O. DE 76 Ti/135/1 41/60 Tithe map of the township of Halstead in the county of Leicester

North and South Marefield

South Marefield formed a chapelry attached to Tilton church, which suggests that there was a farm or settlement here. North Marefield, also known as Old Marefield, is now the site of a deserted medieval settlement. A tributary to the Gaddesby brook which rises as a spring near Tilton forms the western boundary of North Marefield, which once lay on the 135-metre contour line, on the road between Owston and Lowesby where the modern Manor House Farm lies close to the old settlement site. The fields of South Marefield survived as a separate estate and were enclosed and the estate drawn in 1847.¹⁶⁴ South Marefield was part of the parish of Tilton-on-the-Hill, and North Marefield lay within the parish of Owston, whose church, dedicated to St Andrew, is all that remains of a medieval Augustinian abbey.

Somerby

Somerby, once a part-soke settlement, lies to the east of Twyford and to the north of Marefield and Halstead. It is separated from other former soke settlements by the parish of Owston with Newbold. Although a nucleated settlement, its township fields fan out to two sides of the settlement like two great wings (Map 39, Ch. 6). According to Cox, Somerby means '*Sumarlithi's by*',¹⁶⁵ but Fox prefers the meaning 'summer settlement'.¹⁶⁶ The settlement lies on an upland plateau on the 185-metre contour line and is watered by a number of springs. In the settlement a further spring feeds a stream running northwards towards the deserted settlement of Leesthorpe. The ironstone church of All Saints is thirteenth-century with nineteenth-century modifications, and the font is late thirteenth-century.¹⁶⁷ Somerby Hall Farm lies to the north of the church, and much of the settlement lay along an angular street running east-west in the eighteenth century, with the church centrally placed to the south-eastern side of the road. Somerby was recorded by John Prior as lying in Framland wapentake, with the most north-westerly point of its fields touching both Goscote and Gartree wapentakes to east and west. Framland wapentake lay to north and south, with just a tip of the 'wing' of the fields of Somerby touching a point of land in Little Dalby, which was also in Framland. Domesday placed the soke part of Somerby in Goscote. The odd shape of Somerby's fields suggests that it was created from what remained of the land after other settlement fields had been formed. Its neighbours are Pickwell and Little Dalby to the north, the settlement of Burrough on the Hill to the west, Owston with Newbold to the south, and Knossington to the south-east. A main road now runs to the south east of the settlement into Oakham, a market town approximately 7 kilometres away. The tithe map for 1853 included 12 properties scattered throughout the settlement, which must have been omitted from the general enclosure, which took place in the mid-eighteenth century.¹⁶⁸ The soke of Rothley laid claim to the jurisdiction of 1½ carucates of land in the open fields of Somerby at Domesday, and at the time of enclosure an enquiry of 1761 refers to land still belonging to the soke of Rothley which accounted for one house, four cottages and more than five yardlands with rights of

¹⁶⁴ L.R.O. Ti/213/1 Plan of part of the estate of Thomas Cooper Hincks esq. in Marefield in the parish of Tilton on the Hill, county of Leicester 1847.

¹⁶⁵ Cox, *Place-names*, p. 96. This name can mean summer traveller, a sailor or a Viking. Ekwall states that the personal name means 'summer warrior'. Cf. Ekwall, *Dictionary of place-names*, p. 430.

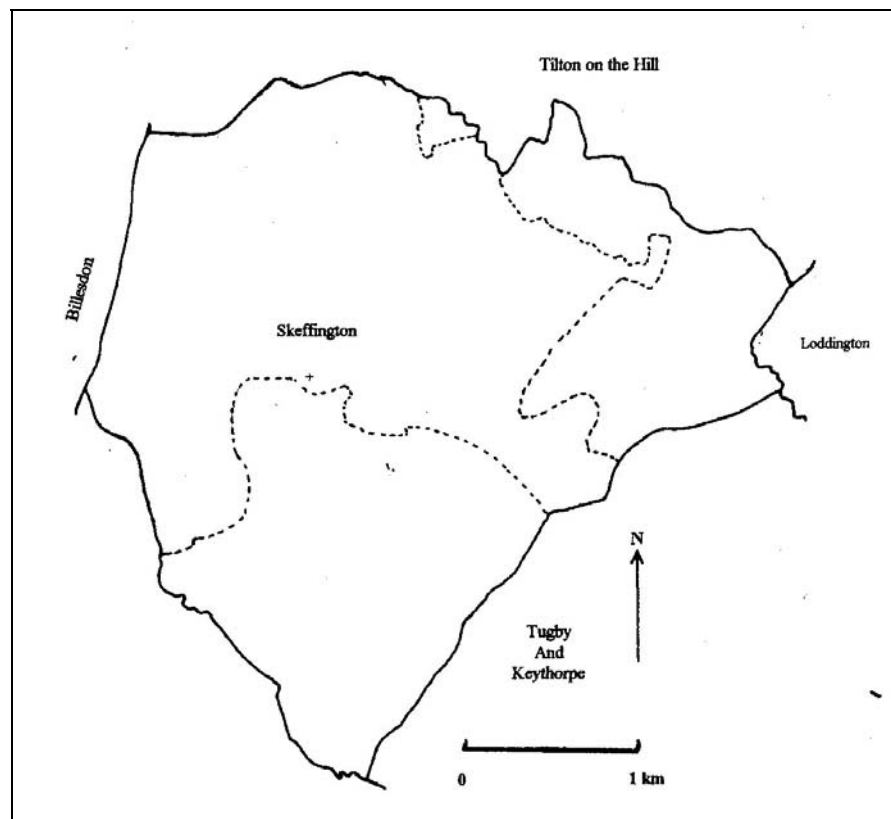
¹⁶⁶ H.S.A. Fox, personal communication.

¹⁶⁷ Pevsner, *Leicestershire and Rutland*, p. 381.

common in the open fields of Somerby for the tenants of Rothley soke.¹⁶⁹ Tithe payments were still being made to the church at Rothley and the documents testify that Rothley tenants in Somerby were still attending the soke court of Rothley in the eighteenth century.

Skeffington

Four kilometres to the south of Tilton lies Skeffington, a settlement which was recorded as being fully soke at Domesday. Cox interprets the name as 'the *tun* of Sceaft's people'.¹⁷⁰ The settlement lies on the 195-metre contour line, just south of the modern A47 road to Peterborough. Skeffington has both an enclosure award and a tithe map which give evidence for the fields and settlement. This evidence suggests that the settlement was divided into at least three parts in the nineteenth century, with the eastern woods of the township and the southern fields being shown on the tithe map (Map 12).¹⁷¹



Map 12. Skeffington township

¹⁶⁸ L.R.O. Ti/297/1 Tithe map for Somerby, 1853. This could indicate an early enclosure of one of the larger landholders in Somerby.

¹⁶⁹ L.R.O. 2D31/358/1-5 Papers concerning Somerby enclosure in 1761 regarding the manor of Rothley. The land accounted for in the inquiry closely matches that accounted for at Domesday.

¹⁷⁰ Cox, *Place-names*, p. 94.

¹⁷¹ L.R.O. Ti/293/1 DE 248 1/83 Tithe map of Skeffington, 1844.

Some fields along the boundary with Tilton, Loddington and Tugby to the north east of the township were included on the tithe map. A large wood to the north east of the settlement lies close to the boundary with Tilton, which is defined by the Eye brook. The church of St Thomas a Becket occupies a central position next to a great hall, and has some early fourteenth-century features, but is largely Perpendicular with extensive restoration work from the mid-nineteenth century.¹⁷² Skeffington Hall appears to have original late-medieval features with continuous phases of later additions and restoration work, and was the residence of the Skeffington family whose history can be traced back to the twelfth century. In the early seventeenth century, an inquisition made after the death of Sir William Skeffington gave an account of his holding in the settlement which showed that land had originated from several sources prior to the Dissolution: the Skeffington family who held land from earl Ferrers; the abbey of Croxton Kerrial; the priory of Launde; and a small amount of pasture land which was privately owned. The Skeffington family also had extensive holdings in neighbouring Billesdon, and property elsewhere in the county.¹⁷³ After the Dissolution there continued to be difficulties within Skeffington parish over certain tithe exempt lands, which possibly related to one or other of the pre-Dissolution monastic holdings.

Tugby

To the south east of Skeffington lies the settlement of Tugby which contains within its parish the nearby settlements of Keythorpe and East Norton. Tugby was within the soke at Domesday, but the other two settlements were not. Cox interprets the name as '*Toki's by*', with Keythorpe meaning '*Keyia's thorp*'.¹⁷⁴ In the nineteenth century the settlement of Tugby lay to the south side of the road which led from Leicester to Uppingham, and the remainder of the settlement lay along two roads which led to Goadby and Keythorpe. The settlement of Keythorpe was cleared during the Tudor period, and the earthworks of the deserted site can still be identified about one kilometre south east of Tugby, near Keythorpe Hall. In the fifteenth century a report indicates that one of the Skeffington family took down and removed his house in Keythorpe and rebuilt the house on a site in Skeffington, continuing to live in this house

¹⁷² Pevsner, *Leicestershire and Rutland*, p. 379. Pevsner speculates that the fifteenth-century part of Skeffington Hall may be that of a house which was dismantled and carried to Skeffington from Keythorpe in the fifteenth century.

¹⁷³ G.F. Farnham, ed., 'The Skeffingtons of Skeffington' *T.L.A.S.* 16 (1929-31), pp. 104-128.

¹⁷⁴ Cox, *Place-names*, pp. 106 and 56.

for a further eleven years at its new location.¹⁷⁵ A new settlement was developed for the convenience of Keythorpe tenants adjacent to the south east of the settlement at Tugby, so that the two appear to be combined as one. The family at Keythorpe Hall, having removed the settlement from its gates, then enclosed the land privately but Keythorpe continued to remain within the parish of Tugby along with the chapel of East Norton. The boundary between the wapentake of Goscote and Gartree lay in the hills to the south of Keythorpe and there is a suggestion from Domesday that some of these hills ascribed to Keythorpe were shared with Hallaton, probably as common pastures, for part of Keythorpe was associated with Hallaton in the Survey.¹⁷⁶ One small piece of woodland still appears on the modern OS map as Hallaton Spinneys, although it lies within the boundary of Keythorpe, suggesting this former connection.¹⁷⁷ The church of Tugby lies on the 175-metre contour line, and the settlement lies on a south-facing slope. Keythorpe Hall lies in a shallow valley to the south-east, and the hills to the south of the settlement rise again to 181 metres at Bassett's Hill Spinney. Two springs arise in Hallaton Spinney, one which runs north and feeds a stream in Keythorpe and Tugby, and the second runs to the south feeding a stream which runs adjacent to the settlement of Hallaton. The area continues today as farming land and the hillsides provide good pasture for livestock, and the Midshires Way follows an ancient track from the south of the county across the hills, first through Tugby then through Somerby and on towards Melton, continuing into the north east of the county as the Jubilee Way.

Allextton

Allextton lies at a distance of about six kilometres to the east of Tugby, and is bounded to the north by the Eye brook which arises in the hills to the south west of Tilton, and across the brook is the county of Rutland. A nineteenth-century tithe map exists for Allextton, and enclosure is believed to have taken place in the late Tudor period.¹⁷⁸ The church of St Peter lies on the 100-metre contour line, and the settlement of Allextton lies a short distance up the hill to the west of the church on a north-facing slope, to the south of which the hills rise to a summit of almost 170 metres. The manor house lies to the west of the settlement and the land surrounding the house includes a moated site. Allextton was recorded as having two manors in the medieval period,

¹⁷⁵ Skillington, 'The Skeffingtons of Skeffington', pp. 74-103.

¹⁷⁶ DB f. 235 c.

¹⁷⁷ OS SP 777985, Explorer 233, Leicester and Hinckley 1:25,000 scale, edition A, revised 1999.

¹⁷⁸ Nichols, ed., *Antiquities*, Vol. III, part I, p. 9.

which were held conjointly by the sixteenth century.¹⁷⁹ Allexton possessed a large woodland within its boundary on the tithe map, and there was a mill marked on the brook, to the north west of the manor house. The settlement lies along a single, irregular street ending in a footpath which enters the fields, and the nearest main route is to the north of the brook adjoining the Leicester to Uppingham road. Three seventeenth-century glebe terriers tell of a stone house and three tofts for the parson,¹⁸⁰ and they also relate the curious instance of 2 acres 3 ½ roods of land belonging to the glebe, which lay in Belton, Rutland, although considered to be in the parish of Allexton, because the brook had changed its course. Other land and tithes of produce were also included in the terriers. Cox derives the meaning of Allexton as 'the farmstead settlement of a man called *Aethellac*' from the O.E. personal name.¹⁸¹ An article on the forests of Leicestershire gives details of a forester living in Allexton who was appointed by the king in the twelfth century,¹⁸² and the forest for which he was responsible covered an area north of the river Welland up to Cold Overton, westwards towards Somerby, Tilton, Skeffington and Rolleston, and eastwards towards the Rutland border.¹⁸³

Summary

The soke of Rothley was comprised of Domesday settlements which covered a large swathe of central, eastern and north-eastern Leicestershire. Most of these settlements have remained rural, and in more recent times many have become living space for commuters working in nearby towns. A few settlements developed into small towns themselves, and the coming of the railways and canals assisted in this process. Some settlements were no longer part of the soke by the early modern period, nor did they retain any recognisable connections with Rothley. Other settlements, whether whole or part-soke, still retained connections in the modern period through payments of tithe, or attendance at the soke court. There were soke settlements held as single units of organisation, perhaps under the sway of a prominent member of their own community, while others were divided between the soke and other manorial lords.

¹⁷⁹ The larger manor was known as the Bakepuz manor, and the smaller known as Hakelut's manor.

¹⁸⁰ L.R.O. 1D41/2/5, 6 and 7 Glebe terriers for Allexton AD 1638, 1674 and 1697.

¹⁸¹ Cox, *Place-names*, p. 2

¹⁸² R.A. McKinley, 'The forests of Leicestershire' *V.C.H. Leicestershire* (London, 1954), Volume II, pp. 265-270.

¹⁸³ The plot of land he occupied was the 3 virgates in Allexton which lay within the soke of Rothley. Much information regarding this forest can be gleaned from G.J. Turner, ed., *Select pleas of the Forest* (London, 1901), pp. 44-46.

Church connections within and between some soke and non-soke settlements had an influence on later parochial arrangements. Settlement patterns, landscape organisation and lordship within the soke settlements were varied and many raise questions regarding their origins. No coherent pattern for settlement, landscape or lordship emerges in the early modern period thus for a fuller understanding of the soke, its function and origins, it will be necessary to delve further into its past.

Chapter 2

Manorial lords of Rothley soke from the thirteenth century

The Templars were a religious order of knights founded in the twelfth century.¹⁸⁴ The event which provoked their formation was the capture of Jerusalem by the forces of the First Crusade in July 1099.¹⁸⁵ During the early part of the twelfth century a group of noble knights banded together to serve Christ in this fight for the Holy Land.¹⁸⁶ They took the three monastic vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, and they were granted as their base a palace by King Baldwin II on the south side of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem once known as the Temple of Solomon.¹⁸⁷ Early observers of the order indicated that despite their unusual beginnings the Templars were genuine, and their poverty real. Their emblem was that of two knights on horseback which emphasised their poverty and their inability to provide all the accoutrements normally associated with a warrior class. The Crusades which gave the Templars their *raison d'être* continued throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Jerusalem fell to the Muslims

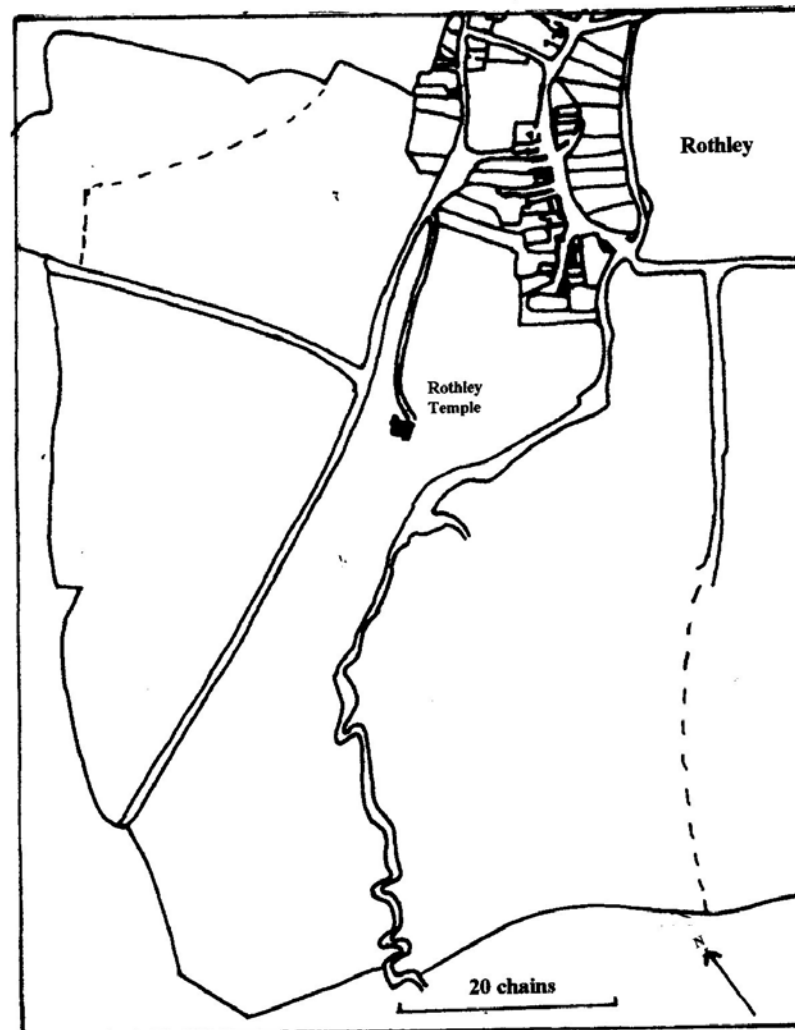
¹⁸⁴ Much of the information which follows regarding the Templars has been gleaned from H. Nicholson, *The Knights Templar: A new history* (Stroud, 2001). Their full title 'Knights of the Order of the Temple of Solomon' reflected the fact that their spiritual base was established at Solomon's Temple, now the Aqsa Mosque, in Jerusalem.

¹⁸⁵ The city of Jerusalem had been in Muslim hands since AD 638, and this re-capture was a cause for celebration within Christendom, if a somewhat short-lived one. Christian pilgrims had been allowed to continue their devotions within Jerusalem during this early Muslim period but in the eleventh century the Seljuq Turks began making such journeys more difficult and dangerous. In 1095, this provoked Pope Urban II to call on western European soldiers to fight for Jerusalem and this became the First Crusade.

¹⁸⁶ The origins of these knights is disputed. They could have been crusaders already in the Holy Land who banded together and took these vows. See Nicholson, *The Knights Templar*, p. 23f.

¹⁸⁷ Their number grew amid controversies even in the twelfth century because although they took the vows made by monks, they did not live in an enclosed order. The Templars viewed their service to God, through defensive warfare, as justified by the preservation of Christian Holy Places.

in 1244 and despite the several Crusades which followed, the last stronghold in the Holy Land at Acre was captured in 1291, thus removing Jerusalem and the rest of the Holy Land from Christian hands. Thus in the mid-thirteenth century the Templars were at the height of their powers in terms of their order. Their goal to arm, train, support and send knights out to the forefront of crusading warfare was supported by the income they received from the estates granted to them.¹⁸⁸ What, then, were the Templars hoping to achieve through their lordship of the soke?



Map 13. Detail from the enclosure map for Rothley showing the plan of the settlement

Source: L.R.O. Ma/269/1 Survey of the township of Rothley and the extra parochial liberty of Rothley Temple 1780

¹⁸⁸ They rose on a tide of religious fervour created by the Church who wished earnestly to see Jerusalem restored to the Christian west, and the Templars were viewed as a means to this end. Any ambiguities of thinking with regard to their taking of monastic vows coupled with the notion of fighting to kill (albeit in defence of sacred places) were swept aside.

The Templars' earliest soke holding was at Baggrave through a bequest of John de Harcourt, a crusading knight, who died while on Crusade.¹⁸⁹ This holding, granted in about 1223, was for 15 virgates and it gave the Templars more than half of the soke land in that township.¹⁹⁰ In 1227 there is a record of a grant of £10 of rent from land in Rothley, which the Templars had also received through John de Harcourt.¹⁹¹ Thus they gained their initial holding, and from that point on it seems they were determined to acquire as much of the soke as possible. In 1231 the king, with the original intention of bequeathing his body to the order for burial, granted the manor of Rothley with the advowson of the church there and included all liberties and free customs possessed by the master and brethren.¹⁹² In 1234 the manor of Rothley was confirmed to the Templars through a directive to the county sheriff, and this confirmation described the 2 carucates of land in demesne, the wood, mill and the assized rents of the tenants.¹⁹³ This grant also referred to the annual work of the men of the township to reap the king's cornfield and to cart the corn to the king's barns. Thus the chief vill of the soke came into the hands of the Templars, giving them a holding within Leicestershire through which they could increase their income.¹⁹⁴

The remainder of the soke took some years for the Templars to acquire. In 1232 lands at Barsby, Gaddesby and South Croxton were added to the initial grant of Rothley,¹⁹⁵ and with these grants came obligations to make payments from the estate to the abbot of Croxton Kerrial for lands in Twyford, Skeffington and Tilton, making the Templars intermediary lords between the abbot of Croxton and the king.¹⁹⁶ In 1237 an additional grant was made to confirm the advowson of the church of Rothley with all its

¹⁸⁹ *Liber Feodorum - The Book of Fees - commonly called Testa de Nevill, AD 1242-1293* (London, 1923), Part II, p. 1280. The entry states that the master of the Temple holds 15 virgates of land in Baggrave and he had entry through John de Harcourt who died in the Holy Land 28 years previously, that is in AD 1223-24.

¹⁹⁰ Baggrave possessed 6 carucates less 3 bovates at Domesday. The grant is also recorded in *The Book of Fees*, Part I, p. 375. This record indicates that the grant was made directly from the king, but it is more likely to be a confirmation of the grant made initially by John de Harcourt, and is thus being ratified by the king. North and south Marefield also appear to be a part of the same grant confirmation.

¹⁹¹ *C.Ch. Rolls, Henry III, 1226-1257* (PRO, London, 1903), Vol. I, p. 51.

¹⁹² *C.Ch. Rolls, Henry III, 1226-1257* (PRO, London, 1903), Vol. I, p. 135. The king's intention at this date was to entrust his body to the Templars for burial and this grant was in the form of a gift on that basis. This grant continued to be confirmed in later years.

¹⁹³ *C.C.R. Henry III, AD 1231-1234* (PRO, London, 1905), p. 514. The tenants were enjoined to continue to carry out this work as though they were doing this for the king himself, just as they had done during the time of Henry the present king's grandfather.

¹⁹⁴ At this early stage a relationship was created between the Templars and the king, and an explanation given of the king's relationship with the men of the vill which was to prove so crucial during the incumbency of their new military overlords.

¹⁹⁵ *C.C.R., Henry III AD 1231-1234* (PRO, London, 1905), p. 19.

other appurtenances, suggesting that the church there had additional property of its own.¹⁹⁷ This confirmation was made by bishop Grosseteste of Lincoln in 1241, and was subsequently reaffirmed by bishop Gravesend in 1278.¹⁹⁸ By 1251 the Book of Fees records that the Templars held land in Leicestershire as tenants-in-chief which included the manor of Rothley and its soke, 12 virgates in North Marefield, 9 virgates in South Marefield, and the 15 virgates of land in Baggrave with its chapel.¹⁹⁹

Once the Templars were installed at Rothley they established a residence about a kilometre to the west of the main settlement.²⁰⁰ Architectural evidence suggests a date of the mid-thirteenth century for much of the remaining chapel and for some of the residential part of the surviving structure (Plate 6). The whole of the building is constructed in local granite, and is roofed using Swithland slate from quarries within a few kilometres.²⁰¹ Close by this structure there are the remains of a Roman villa, suggesting that the vicinity of this site has long been established for farming.²⁰² The small settlement here became known as Rothley Temple, but there is a suggestion that this replaced the earlier name of *Hanechestoft*.²⁰³ The site was also associated with a park, and although the perimeter of this park has not been established, it is likely that the building sits within it, and there is topographical evidence which suggests that part of the original boundary survived on the enclosure map and can arguably be seen in some later field boundaries (Map 13).²⁰⁴ Documentary evidence also exists which refers

¹⁹⁶ C.C.R., *Henry III, AD 1227-1231* (PRO, London, 1902), p. 494. This grant was confirmed on a number of occasions in the following years. The custumal for Rothley will be discussed in depth in chapter 3.

¹⁹⁷ C.C.R., *Henry III, AD 1237-1242* (PRO, London, 1911), p. 6. This grant would have included the dependent chapels, although no specific mention is made of them at this point.

¹⁹⁸ F.N. Davis, ed., *Rotuli Ricardi Gravesend, Episcopi Lincolniensis, AD MCCLVIII-MCCLXXIX* (Lincoln Record Society, 1925), p. 162-164.

¹⁹⁹ *The Book of Fees*, Part II, p. 1280. Baggrave chapel is recorded as having once belonged to the chapel of Keyham as a chapel of Rothley, but in 1251 it was a chapel of Hungarton and of the donation of the abbot of Leicester. On page 1282 of this document Skeffington, a former soke dependency, was recorded under a number of tenants who held directly from the king. For example Robert son of David held 15 virgates in return for a carrying service or serjeanty. Of this land 8 virgates were held in demesne and let out to three sub-tenants. Seven other tenants in Skeffington were named as holding small parcels of land directly from the king. This township presents a number of anomalies which will be explored in another chapter.

²⁰⁰ Why they chose this particular site is unknown. It could be that the site was already used by the king or his representatives as a lodge for hunting in nearby Charnwood. With thanks to Professor H.S.A. Fox for this suggestion.

²⁰¹ T.H. Fosbrooke, 'Rothley: The preceptory' *T.L.A.S.* 12 (1921-22), pp. 1-34.

²⁰² Leicestershire S.M.R. MLE 891 Roman villa with mosaic.

²⁰³ J. Nichols, *The history and antiquities of the county of Leicester* (Leicester, 1815), Vol. I, part II, Appendix, p. 54, (hereafter, *Antiquities*). King Stephen appears to have confirmed rights at Rothley which were granted by the earl of Chester to the abbey of Leicester. These rights included the 2 carucates of king's demesne there called *Hanechestoft*.

²⁰⁴ L.R.O. 4D 72/1/2 Enclosure map and award for Rothley, Leicestershire. A. Squires has walked this area, but can find no evidence for a medieval park.

to the value of underwood of the park.²⁰⁵ The park could perhaps have been a favourite haunt of either the king or his aristocratic tenants in the twelfth or early thirteenth centuries, for the keeping and hunting of deer. A mill and wood were mentioned both at Domesday and in the Templar grant, and there is evidence of a mill site in the vicinity of the Temple, but it is not possible to confirm its date.²⁰⁶ The wood continued to form a valuable part of the Templar demesne lands throughout the medieval period for it is recorded periodically in surveys and accounts.²⁰⁷ The Hundred Rolls show that there had been an increase in the assessed arable of Rothley from five carucates to seven, and that each carucate was worth four marks *per annum*.²⁰⁸ The value of the manorial soke was reckoned to be £35 13s 9d, and that of the church and its parochial assets were reckoned to be '7 score marks *per annum*', or £93 6s 8d. Following the confiscation of Templar property in 1308, inventories were created by the sheriff of Leicester, John de Dene, which give further indications of the Templar assets at Rothley and within the soke.²⁰⁹ In the early fourteenth century the average value of this manor far outweighed the value of Templar manors elsewhere in the country.²¹⁰ In addition there were rents due from the tenants of the manor of Rothley and its dependent hamlets, with expenses to be met by the Templars during their incumbency. Other expenses included the provision of meat and drink to the customary tenants (*custumariorum eiusdem manerii*) of Rothley, and payments to the servants (*famulorum*) of the manor. During the time of sheriff Geoffrey de Segrave, an account was made not just of the manor of Rothley but also its rectory which proved to be three times as valuable as the rents and profits from the manor itself.²¹¹ The Templars became the rectors of the church in the thirteenth century, and were also granted a peculiar jurisdiction within the parish for which an ecclesiastical court would have been held.²¹² It is likely that the church

²⁰⁵ For example: L.R.O. 44'28/196, Extent of the manor and soke of Rothley, AD 1331/2. The park has ridge and furrow within its boundaries suggesting either that much of it was ploughed in the mid-fourteenth century and the park removed, or that the park was created over earlier fields. Either way, this policy was probably reversed in the early sixteenth century when there was a partial early enclosure.

²⁰⁶ It is equally possible that an early mill stood in the vicinity of the church to the east of the manorial demesne, and a later field name suggests the site of such a mill.

²⁰⁷ The accounts for the year 1523 show sale of timber including wood and underwood at Rothley was valued at £10 6s. See G.F. Farnham, ed., 'The descent of the manor: appendix' *T.L.A.S.* 12 (1921-22), p. 86.

²⁰⁸ *County of Leicester, 4 Edward I: Rotuli Extract Com' Leicest No. 3 M. 20. In Domo Capitulari' Westm'. I: Rotuli Hundredorum*, p. 237. 4 marks were worth £2 13s 4d.

²⁰⁹ These come under the Lord Treasurer Remembrancer Rolls, but can be found in translation within documents pertaining to the soke in the Leicestershire Record Office. See L.R.O. 4D 72/I/1, p. 29-33.

²¹⁰ E. Lord, *The Knights Templar in Britain* (London, 2002), p. 133.

²¹¹ £21 7s 4½d was collected from Rothley manor and hamlets while the fruits and sheaves of the rectory and the tithes of the church of Rothley with its four chapels were valued at £69 13s 4d.

²¹² Tradition has it that the court for the parish was held in the north aisle of the church. Such a place could also have served for manorial jurisdiction to have been exercised.

provided the forum for the meeting of both the ecclesiastical and the manorial court.²¹³ The Templars had a chapel on their manorial demesne land and later evidence from a local will suggests that it may have been dedicated to St Wistan.²¹⁴ Here the knights would have carried out their daily devotions under the ministrations of a chaplain.

One of the first tasks which would have befallen the Templars in their newly acquired holding would have been to establish their rights within the manor and its soke, coupled with the rights and obligations of the tenants who lived within their jurisdiction. The manor court was the natural place to exercise their authority, and a survey of the manor probably taking the form of an inquiry placed certain questions before the jurors who would have been required to supply answers. The result of this inquiry was written down in the form of a custumal, a copy of which has survived for Rothley. Internal evidence suggests that the custumal was created in the middle, or shortly after the middle of the thirteenth century.²¹⁵ The custumal gives a picture of a large manor with a central demesne and some smaller, scattered demesne lands, with granges at Gaddesby and Baggrave. There were many 'foreign' payments made to the Templars in the custumal: some were tenants belonging to the soke, but for whom some element of freedom had been granted; others were tenants for whom no previous connection with the soke can be established. The manorial tenants and payments owed were all documented in the rental, and the obligations of service were recorded at the end. The labour service of carting was rendered once a year for which the Templars were obliged to provide a meal to each of the tenants who undertook this duty. Thus the custumal established the rights and obligations of the tenants over whom they exercised authority and control.

The Templars' primary concern before 1291 was in raising money to meet their religious obligations in the middle east, and this was the purpose of the money raised from the manor, soke and parish. There was no community of lay brethren at Rothley Temple, for it was common for only one or two brethren to be in residence in a preceptory. For this task Rothley appears to have been especially well suited, and the profits of jurisdiction were steady.²¹⁶ The buying and selling of land; the settling of

²¹³ Nichols, ed., *Antiquities*, Vol. III, part II, p. 989.

²¹⁴ St Wistan was a prince of the Mercian royal household, murdered in AD 849. This will be further discussed in chapter 7 below.

²¹⁵ The rental and customary will be explored in greater detail in chapter 3.

²¹⁶ These tasks would probably have been undertaken by a steward appointed by the brethren, perhaps a tenant of the township of Rothley who had received some education. Through the steward the Templars would have exercised their authority, and ensured the smooth running of the court and the collection of rents for tenements and amercements from the courts. Rothley township also had a bailiff, known as the

inheritance claims; and the rights of widows and widowers to retain land of their deceased partner; all attracted payments to the lord during court business.²¹⁷ Court rolls do not survive from the time of the Templars at Rothley, but charters of land purchase do survive. Limited though these are in number they demonstrate the private purchases of the tenants and the individual costs which accrued. The soke court was held every three weeks, and the View of Frankpledge twice a year, each attracting payments to swell manorial coffers.

The Templars' income from their holding at Rothley came from three main sources: the income from the demesnes; the revenues from the rectorial rights of the parish; and the rents of the tenants, both within the soke and those counted as 'foreign'. Small parcels of the demesne land of the Templars were scattered throughout the soke, and from these bases they could manage soke affairs.²¹⁸ The demesne attached to Rothley amounted to two carucates (240 acres of arable) plus other appurtenances; at Gaddesby they held one carucate with a grange; at Baggrave they held land with a grange; all these holdings had assets and expenses of their own.²¹⁹ The Templars were granted permission by the crown to establish a market in Rothley to be held on a Monday, which would have formed a part of their demesne profits, and they were also granted a yearly fair to be held for three days at the feast of St Barnabas.²²⁰ The market either proved unprofitable or inconvenient for in 1306 the Templars applied for another grant for a market and fair in the soke hamlet of Gaddesby.²²¹ Neither the market nor the fair in Gaddesby were recorded in the return of the sheriff for 1308, suggesting that it had either failed or not materialised.

As rectors the Templars would have had the responsibility for the upkeep and maintenance of the fabric of the church buildings, in particular the chancels of the church and chapels of the soke. How far did they exercise their duties? Changes to the church during the thirteenth century such as the addition of a south aisle would have

king's bailiff, and it was his responsibility to ensure that all matters which should be brought to the attention of the court were indeed brought forward, so that the jury could pronounce their verdicts and the steward could ensure that the interests of the Templars were protected, and money collected from the tenants from whom it was owed.

²¹⁷ These rights differed slightly within the soke than on many other manors, and these rights will be explored in a later chapter.

²¹⁸ It is likely that court hearings were made at these sites, perhaps also establishing paid servants there.

²¹⁹ L.R.O. 4D 72/I/1, Translation of the extracts from the Templars' rolls: Exchequer L.T.R. Templars' Rolls Repertory 1308 m.7.

²²⁰ *C.Ch. Rolls, 1257-1300* (London, 1906), Vol. II, p. 276.

²²¹ *C.Ch. Rolls, 1300-1326* (London, 1908), Vol. III, p. 71. The Templars experienced a number of difficulties with their soke tenants and it is possible that either these differences were not conducive to the survival of a market and fair within the central settlement, or that the demesne and grange at Gaddesby proved to be a more suitable site for the promotion of trade.

been made by the parishioners, and the alterations to the south side of the chancel at the same date would have been the duty of the Templars.²²² The oldest part of Rothley church pre-dates the Templars, for the fifteenth-century tower contains twelfth-century fabric and stands on an even earlier and wider foundation (Plates 1 and 3).²²³ The chapels appended to Rothley were at Grimston which appears to have much fabric from the thirteenth century; Chadwell is twelfth century with some thirteenth-century alterations; Wartnaby likewise has much thirteenth-century work; Gaddesby contains thirteenth-century work; and the fabric of the church at Keyham may contain some work of the same century, but is largely later (Plates 10, 13, 14, 15 and 16).²²⁴ The Templars would seem to have exercised their duty conscientiously, building, maintaining and upgrading both the church and the chapels in their care.²²⁵

Rents formed a considerable part of the Templars' income in the soke, hence the attention to detail with which the custumal was drawn up in the mid-thirteenth century. Additional income would have arisen from their right to collect tax from the tenants, but this was infrequent for the right of taxation had been retained by the crown.²²⁶ The Templars also purchased land within the soke, perhaps in a bid to increase their holding within the township, but the records of these transactions have not survived. The custumal which they drew up shortly after entering their manor indicates that purchases were made by particular brothers of the order, who were named as brother Stephen of Todmarsh (sometime preceptor), brother John of Ouseflette, and brother John Feversham (preceptor).²²⁷ Brothers Walter Ewenight With and William de Wald (preceptors of Rothley) were also named in the custumal.²²⁸ At the end of the manorial rental there is a further small extent which recorded payments pertaining to the church and chapels of Rothley, followed by the outgoings and payments to various servants and labourers. The parochial extent was originally drawn up in the time when Amed

²²² J. Wallace Watts, 'The church' *T.L.A.S.* 12 (1921-22), pp. 99-120. There appears to have been a chapel on the south side of the church at Rothley which was dedicated to St Katherine. This could have been a chantry chapel, for a number of wealthy tenants from Rothley were buried in this chapel who may have contributed to its formation. See R.N. Swanson, 'Indulgences for prayers for the dead in the diocese of Lincoln in the early fourteenth century' *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 52 (2001), pp. 197-219, at p. 198f.

²²³ The income which the Templars controlled through holding the rectory was considerable, and allowed some of these new architectural modifications to be made.

²²⁴ All references to church fabric have been taken from N. Pevsner, *The buildings of England: Leicestershire and Rutland* (London, 1960), 2nd edition, 1984.

²²⁵ The church and parish will be studied in greater detail in the chapter on Rothley Parish below.

²²⁶ If the Templars wished to tax their tenants they must first apply to the crown and be granted the right beforehand. There are several records of grants made by the crown allowing the Templars to raise tallage from the tenants on the king's demesne lands at Rothley.

²²⁷ L.R.O. 44'28/867 f. 3. Copy of the custumal of Rothley soke.

²²⁸ L.R.O. 44'28/867 f. 19. Copy of the custumal of Rothley soke.

(Amadeus) de Morestell was the master of the Military Temple, and it is this information which helps to date the whole document, for Amadeus was in office in 1259.²²⁹

Thus the Templars as manorial lords made their mark within the soke of Rothley. In May 1291 the Templars suffered the loss of Acre, and by 1307 many leading members of the order had been arrested and charged with heresy.²³⁰ During their trials much of their property was confiscated, including Rothley Temple, its manor and soke. Their time in Rothley was relatively short, little more than 75 years or so, but in that time they created a legacy in the form of a preceptory, modifications to the church of Rothley, and a custumal which opens up the life of the soke to a remarkable degree.²³¹ Their own view of the soke is not recorded, but their confrontational experiences with their tenants were given a full airing in the king's courts during the 1260s and 1270s, as a result of which much can be learned of the developing nature of tenant-landlord relationships in the latter part of the thirteenth century.

After the initial grant of the soke of Rothley to the Templars was made, important legislation was passed by the crown which restricted the grants of land to the church. The Provisions of Westminster in 1259 put in place a set of reforms which were clarified in 1279 by the Statute of Mortmain and following this legislation a royal licence was required before grants to the church could be made.²³² This licence enabled donors to make a grant of land, but such a grant did not automatically include knight's fees, advowsons, or the reversion of dowries unless specified within the grant.²³³ The Statute of Mortmain extended this royal prerogative to the advantage of the crown with the result that the issuing of licences for the alienation of land to the church gave the king much more control over the affairs of the barony. This legislation affected not only the lord of Rothley manor, but also tenants living on sokeland. For example in 1330 a pardon was granted to the abbot and convent of Newminster for having acquired land within Rothley from John son of Duncan of Rothley, which amounted to two messuages, four tofts and 100 acres of land with 6 acres of meadow attached to the premises.²³⁴ This requirement of a licence of the king to soke tenants suggests that the tenants themselves were letting and selling to sub-tenants and charging rents and fines

²²⁹ L.R.O. 44'28/867 f. 15. Also *C.C.R.*, 42 *Henry III*, 1256-1259 (London, 1932), p. 394.

²³⁰ Nicholson, *The Knights Templar*, p. 217.

²³¹ The rental and customary will be examined in chapter 3.

²³² A detailed study of the statute can be found in S. Raban, *Mortmain legislation and the English church 1279-1500* (Cambridge, 1982).

²³³ M. Powicke, *The thirteenth century, 1216-1307* (Oxford, 1962), 2nd ed., p. 325.

²³⁴ *C.P.R.*, 1327-1330 (London, 1891), p. 524.

in excess of those recorded in later court rolls.²³⁵ In 1309 the lands and the rectory of Rothley, which had been removed from the Templars, were still in the king's hands.²³⁶ In 1312 the king made a temporary grant of the manor of Rothley to William de Ferrers which was currently in the hands of the king's yeoman Alexander de Cumpton.²³⁷ This grant cannot have included the church of Rothley with its assets because these are still in the hands of Alexander in 1313, who was obliged to pay £41 6s 8d to the king out of the rectory tithes for that parish.²³⁸ This legal struggle for the acquisition of the rectory was to continue under the Knights Hospitaller.

When the Templars were dissolved by Pope Clement V in 1312, he also pronounced that the lands which they had held should be handed over to the Knights Hospitaller, in order to continue the support of their cause in the Holy Land.²³⁹ This transfer did not take place in England immediately, and it was some years before it came into effect after much pressure from the Hospitallers themselves. From 1327 onwards the Hospitallers took an active part in securing the Templar holding of Rothley, along with the rectory and advowson. Edward II seems to have been determined to maintain his control over the assets of Rothley soke for the duration of his reign.²⁴⁰ The arrival of the new king Edward III may have prompted the Order to lay claim to their expected lands, and there followed a number of pleas to royal courts on behalf of the Knights Hospitaller to this end.²⁴¹

The Knights of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem were, like the Templars, warrior monks whose primary aim was the defence and recapture of lost lands in the middle east. In addition to these warrior activities they also engaged in the protection and care of the poor and pilgrims who visited the Holy Land, particularly Jerusalem.²⁴² They raised money in much the same way as did the Templars, and funds were sent out to maintain castles and other buildings which served them and the pilgrims they

²³⁵ The land here was valued at 39s 4d in the inquisition, and the annual rental was valued at £50. It is unclear why this value should have been so high. This document indicates that there was a substantial land market within Rothley, and perhaps the rest of the soke, which is little documented elsewhere. Further land transactions between tenants will be considered in a later chapter.

²³⁶ *C.P.R., 1307-1313* (London, 1971), p. 100.

²³⁷ *C.P.R., 1307-1313* (London, 1971), p. 514.

²³⁸ *C.P.R., 1307-1313* (London, 1971), p. 523. This would also indicate that the advowson did not belong to the Ferrers family.

²³⁹ M. Barber, *The new knighthood: A history of the Order of the Temple* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 304.

²⁴⁰ M. McKisack, *The fourteenth century: 1307-1399* (Oxford, 1959), p. 292. Edward II had married Isabella of France whose dowry had been provided out of the goods of the Templars.

²⁴¹ Such an appeal has been transcribed from the *Petitions in Parliament of the IV year of King Edward III, held at Westminster after the feast of St Katherine*, and can be found in L.R.O. 4D 72/1/1, p. 229.

²⁴² J. Bronstein, *The Hospitallers and the Holy Land: financing the Latin East, 1187-1274* (Woodbridge, 2005).

protected. Their role in caring for the poor and sick in society became their primary function once Acre had fallen and Jerusalem lost to the west in 1291. Although the Templars were seen by contemporary society as having failed in their purpose of preserving the Holy Land for Christendom,²⁴³ the Hospitallers did not suffer the same fate and consequently were named as the spiritual heirs of their Templar brothers by Pope Clement V. The Hospitallers already held lands in Leicestershire for they were granted the manor of Old Dalby (Dalby-on-the-Wolds) by Robert Bossu, earl of Leicester, during the reign of Henry II.²⁴⁴ They had also been granted the manor of Heather by Ralph de Gresley during the reign of King Henry II.²⁴⁵ Once the Hospitallers had procured Rothley, it was appended to their manors of Dalby and Heather, the Hospitallers choosing as their preceptory the manor of Dalby.

Following their acquisition of the manor and soke at Rothley the Hospitallers carried out an extent or survey in 1331/2.²⁴⁶ This assessment of the lands and assets which belonged to both the secular and the ecclesiastical jurisdiction gives a starting point for the incumbency of the manor. However, the extent appears to have been made more in hope of expectation for there followed many years of wrangling over the rectory of Rothley which amounted to a significant part of the total income. This dispute seems finally to have been resolved some years later when a large pension was granted to a Stephen de Lymbergh, along with two of his brothers and a nephew, as recompense for their removal from the rectory of Rothley.²⁴⁷ A rental of the two preceptories of Rothley and Dalby combined was made in 1372 by the Hospitallers, and from this comparisons with 1331/2 can be made (Figure 2).²⁴⁸ The land and assets held in demesne in each assessment were composed differently and so comparison is difficult.²⁴⁹ If the value of the total demesne assets in 1331/2 arose from the manor house, orchards, dovecote, mills, pastures and meadows, the under wood of the park, the fishing in the Soar and the perquisites of the court, then the total would be £20 18s, a sum little short of the £22 assessed in 1372. The rents from the tenants differ marginally: in Rothley itself there was a slight reduction of rents payable between

²⁴³ Nicholson, *The Knights Templar*, p. 224. The situation in the west was much more complicated, and it was convenient for the king of France to put blame on this religious order.

²⁴⁴ Nichols, ed., *Antiquities*, Vol. III, part I, p. 244.

²⁴⁵ Nichols, ed., *Antiquities*, Vol. IV, part II, p. 633.

²⁴⁶ L.R.O. 44'28/196, Rothley Temple MSS: Extent of the Hospitallers' land at Rothley, in the 5th year of the reign of King Edward III, 1331/2. See Figure 2.

²⁴⁷ L.B. Larking, ed., *The Knights Hospitallers in England being the repost of Prior Philip de Thame to the Grand Master Elyan de Villanova for AD 1338* (Camden Society, London, 1857), p. 177. The difficulties experienced by the Hospitallers in obtaining the rectory will be discussed in chapter 4.

²⁴⁸ The rental is in print in Nichols, ed., *Antiquities*, Vol. III, Part II, p. 952.

²⁴⁹ See Figure 2.

1331/2 and 1372, of the rents from the other 13 hamlets six show a rise in rent, two remain the same, and five show a reduction but the differences were only marginal in most cases. The two dates span the period of the Black Death, and a comparative examination suggests that the Hospitallers were able to maintain the number of tenants within the soke, although it is difficult to ascertain whether these tenants comprised indigenous peasantry or 'foreign' tenants perhaps attracted by the fixed and limited rents attached to the holdings within the soke, coupled with the absence of labour service for soke hamlets.²⁵⁰

The value of the rectory in 1331/2 was assessed at £60, but in 1372, along with five other churches held by the Hospitallers at Stonesby, Melton, Wellsborough, Buckminster and Sewsterne, the rectories were valued at £125 16s. This makes an assessment of the individual value of Rothley rectory difficult, but the outgoings were still the pension of 4 marks to the archdeacon of Leicester and the stipends of two chaplains for Rothley. The total assessment of the secular manor in 1331/2 was £85 1s 2½d before outgoings, likewise in 1372 it was £77 3½d, which was approximately a 10% reduction on the earlier extent. The services provided by the tenants of Rothley which were not assessed in 1331/2 continued to provide a valuable asset in 1372 at £7 6s 8d, limited though those services were. However, the expense of providing the meal for the tenants on the day they fulfilled their service and other expenses of the manorial demesne were not included in either assessment.

It is difficult from these two assessments to decide how the Hospitallers were faring financially with their holding. The income appears to have differed very little, as did their outgoings during the fourteenth century. The Black Death does not appear to have had a marked effect on the income of the soke, nor do there appear to have been dramatic changes in the type of farming carried out. Sub-tenancy agreements and activities were not recorded by the manorial court, and so it is difficult to assess the real impact of plague and pestilence within the soke by using the manorial rentals. The rectory continued to give a good return within the parish, and as rectors the Hospitallers were entitled to the greater tithes of grain, or income *in lieu* from which they were obliged to maintain and refurbish the church and chapels of the parish. The church and chapels within the soke did not undergo any major refurbishments under their care, with the exception of Gaddesby, but these additions to the chapel of St Luke were as a result of local investment rather than improvements by the rector.

²⁵⁰ Labour service and fixed rents will be looked at in more detail in chapter 4.

During the fourteenth century more court rolls survive to give information regarding administration and jurisdiction within the manor. The rolls record the buying and selling of land, and the outcomes of property disputes between tenants who were entitled to use a special writ known as the 'little writ of right close'.²⁵¹ The courts were held every three weeks usually in Rothley, but sometimes at other venues within the soke, and the sums raised from court business gave a steady income.²⁵² Not until the later fifteenth and early sixteenth century did entry fines become high with the increase in the admittance of 'foreign' tenants. The View of Frankpledge was held twice a year at Rothley, and all tenants of the soke were required to be present and they paid an amercement for failure to attend. On death or land sale, the property held by the tenants did not normally pass through the hands of the Hospitallers in the manorial court, for land transactions were enrolled by the heir or purchaser according to custom of the manor, and limited amercements were paid to the court for these privileges.²⁵³

The Hospitallers continued to administer their Rothley soke holding from their Preceptory at Dalby throughout the middle ages, probably leasing out the demesne of Rothley to sub-tenants. In the early sixteenth century other soke assets were farmed out to tenants such as the demesne lands at Baggrave to Leicester Abbey in 1505, and a lease of the lands of North Marefield for an annual payment of 50s, with an additional payment of 13s 4d to compensate the preceptor for customary payments for relief, to be paid on the death or change of the abbot of Owston.²⁵⁴ A generation later both Baggrave and North Marefield were deserted suggesting that either there had been a clearance or a small number of tenants had engrossed the remainder of each settlement. In 1524 the Hospitallers leased out the rectory of Rothley for an annual rent of £12 sterling to Andrew Nowell of Dalby for the term of his life, which relieved the Hospitallers of the trouble of the upkeep of the church and chapels of the parish, and of the expense of supporting two chaplains. This lease would have granted the lessee the great tithes which were due to the rector. In the sixteenth century a bailiff was in office to carry out the duties of the prior of the Hospital, and he was paid a fee for his expenses.²⁵⁵ His

²⁵¹ The use of this writ will be examined more closely in chapter 3.

²⁵² The income from the courts ranged from 8s 3d in October 1384, down to the more usual figures of just a few pence in later court sessions. Given the value placed on court perquisites in the earlier surveys of the manor, it is difficult to believe that the figures recorded are accurate. There must have been some other means of raising revenue which fell within the jurisdiction of the soke court.

²⁵³ Anomalies of inheritance will be explored in chapter 4.

²⁵⁴ Both these leases are cited in Nichols, ed., *Antiquities*, pp. 246f, under the entry for Dalby on the Wolds.

²⁵⁵ In 1502 this was Thomas Barker, in 1510 it was Thomas Pachet, in 1523 there were two bailiffs named Thomas Dylke and Andrew Nowell.

responsibility was to answer to the prior of the Hospital for all assets within the manor and soke of Rothley, the rectory being accounted as a separate item. In the sixteenth century the accounts give much more detail regarding the expenses to be met by the income of the soke, including clothing for the preceptor, and his journey to Rhodes for which he was granted £22 3s 4½d out of the proceeds of the manor.

Several of the Hospitallers were named within the Rothley court documents. In the fifteenth century the seneschals of the Hospitallers were recorded as Robert Bottill in 1463 and John Weston in 1477-9.²⁵⁶ In the sixteenth century Thomas Docwray was the prior in 1520, and Thomas Newport was described as a knight and preceptor of Dalby. In 1525, Thomas Docwray was still prior and Thomas Babington was described as a knight.²⁵⁷ A number of the Babington family were Hospitaller knights in the early sixteenth century, of whom Sir John Babington was commander of Rothley by 1525. In 1526, under Sir John there was an agreement drawn up between himself and the tenants of the manor of Rothley, which has the appearance of a partial enclosure.²⁵⁸ It would seem that this separated the hamlet of Rothley Temple from the settlement of Rothley.

During the middle ages the headquarters of the Hospitallers were on the island of Rhodes, but they were driven out from there in 1522, after which they were granted the island of Malta in 1530 by the Emperor Charles V, where they remained until expelled by Napoleon in 1798. The order was dissolved in England in 1540, and their possessions were placed in the hands of the crown. Over the following twenty years their assets within Rothley and its dependent hamlets were leased out to various individuals, but it was to the Babington family that the manor and soke of Rothley ultimately reverted in the latter half of the sixteenth century. The Babingtons held the manor, soke and rectory for the next 300 years, and it is they who preserved many of the documents which survived the Dissolution.

²⁵⁶ L.R.O. 44'28/872, Rothley Temple MSS: Court Rolls of Rothley, 1463, 1477-8, 1478-79.

²⁵⁷ L.R.O. 44'28/873, Rothley Temple MSS: Court Rolls of Rothley Peculiar, AD 1520, 1525.

²⁵⁸ L.R.O. 44'28/285 Rothley Temple MSS: Agreement between Sir John Babington and the tenants of Rothley, 20th September 1526.

Income	Extent of 1331/2	Rental of 1372
Demesne manor	20s (£1)	£22
2 orchards	Included in demesne	Probably with demesne
Dovecote	6s 8d	Probably with demesne
2 mills	60s (£3)	Probably with demesne
Pastures	20s (£1)	Probably with demesne
Meadows	100s (£5)	Probably with demesne
Arable	480 acres @ 6d per acre (£12)	Omitted
Underwood of park	40d (3s 4d)	Omitted
Fishing in the Soar	8s	Omitted
Court perquisites	£10	Omitted
Rents of Rothley	£7 3s 11 1/2d	£6 9s
Rents of Gaddesby	£6 2s 3 1/2d	£6 11s 5d
Demesne of Gaddesby	66s 8d (£3 6s 8d)	£2
Rents of Baggrave	38s 2 1/2d (£1 18s 2 1/2d)	£2 19s 2 1/2d
Demesne of Baggrave	53s 4d (£2 13s 4d)	Omitted
Rents of Grimston	56s 1/2d (£2 16s 1/2d)	£2 16s
Rents of Saxelby	20s 4d 4 virgates @ 5s 1d per virgate	£1 4d
Rents of Wartnaby	£5 12s 10d	£5 13s 1d
Service of Wartnaby	Pair of gauntlets 1d	Omitted
Demesne of Wartnaby	4d	Omitted
Rents of Chadwell + Wycomb	£4 1s 11d	£4 1s 11d
Rents of Somerby	10s	£1 15s
Rents of Marefield South	46s (£2 6s)	£2 6s 1/2d
Rents of Marefield North	55s 5 1/2d (£2 15s 5 1/2d)	£2 8s 6d
North Marefield 2 free tenants	24s (£1 4s)	Omitted
Rents of Barsby	63s 11 1/2d (£3 3s 11 1/2d)	£3 3d
Demesne of Barsby	10s	Omitted
Rents of Tilton	48s 1/2d (£2 8s 1/2d)	£2 9d
Rents of South Croxton	24s 1d (£1 4s 1d)	£1 4s 1/2d
Rents of Keyham	65s 8d (£3 5s 8d)	£3 4s 5d
Rothley rectory	£60	£125 16s + 5 churches
Foreign rent Melton		17s 8d
Foreign rent Stonesby		£2 6s 8d + 1 lb. pepper + 4 capons
Services of Rothley		£7 6s 8d

Outgoings	1331/2	1372
Abbey of Croxton	22s (£1 2s)	Omitted
Archdeacon of Leicester	53s (£2 13s)	4 marks (£2 13s 4d)
2 chaplains of Rothley	Stipends	£3 3s 6d
Manorial expenses		
Rectory expenses		
Sum total income less outgoings	£128 0d 1d	

Figure 2. The Income and outgoings of the Hospitallers in Rothley

Sources: Nichols, ed., *Antiquities*, Vol. III, Part II, p. 952; L.R.O. 44'28/196 Extent of Temple land at Rothley, 1331/2

Chapter 3

The tenants of the manor and soke of Rothley under the Templars

Manorial structure

Vinogradoff saw the manor as always having the same structure.²⁵⁹ At its head the lord was the person who oversaw two basic groups of tenants, the villeins and the freeholders.²⁶⁰ Similarly he viewed that the land of the manor was divided between these two tenant types, demesne land and 'tributary land'. The demesne land was cultivated by the villeins, although the tenants of the 'tributary land' might also play a part in this cultivation. He saw the township community centred on a manorial court which acted as both a council and a tribunal. Kosminsky was convinced that free holdings could nearly always be distinguished from villein holdings in manorial records.²⁶¹ A freeholding carried no labour dues, or at the very most, only insignificant ones. Other characteristics of free tenure were freedom to leave the manor, and freedom to alienate a holding, hand it on to the heirs, or lease it out. Serf labour required strict manorial discipline. Kosminsky saw differences between groups of peasants as

²⁵⁹ P. Vinogradoff, *Villainage in England* (Oxford, 1892), p. 223.

²⁶⁰ He saw the manorial land divided into two main parts: the lord's demesne land; and the land upon which the villeins lived. He recognised that there is a confusion of the term demesne, for sometimes it refers to the lord's own land which was worked by his villeins, and at other times the lord's demesne also included the land upon which the villeins lived and cultivated for their own use.

²⁶¹ E.A. Kosminsky, *Studies in the agrarian history of England in the thirteenth century* (Oxford, 1956), p. 202.

fundamental to feudal society, and indicative of an economy based on agriculture.²⁶² He observed that most manorial documents placed tenants into one of two categories: villein or free, and usually the tenements they held were either villein or free holdings. Postan believed that however land was initially divided between landlord and tenants the system was ultimately 'bound to evolve to the disadvantage of the tenants in later centuries'.²⁶³

The means whereby a manorial lord established his rights, privileges and obligations, and those of the peasants over whom he had jurisdiction, were laid down in a survey of the manor usually known as a custumal.²⁶⁴ Bailey gives as his example a custumal from the manor of Cockerham from the early fourteenth century. Custumals stated the rents owed by each manorial tenant, and included a list of the customs of the manor and how these would be regulated. The custumal of Rothley appears unusual, for neither the tenants nor their tenements were counted as either free or unfree within the soke.²⁶⁵ Whatever terms the Templars used to separate their tenants, those within the soke were not recorded as villeins and so probably enjoyed some measure of freedom.²⁶⁶ A number of soke tenants in the custumal held land *in dominico* such as Ivo of Rothley who held two virgates, for a payment of 6s and Ralph Clericus in Gaddesby who held half a bovat of land for a payment of 15 $\frac{3}{4}$ d.²⁶⁷ These pieces of land resemble detached demesne, but rents for these properties were little different from the rents paid for other non-demesne land. The customs within the rental cited by Bailey were extensive, but he viewed this as normal for the early fourteenth century. These customs were in marked contrast to the limited customs of Rothley and their regulations more closely resemble a document known later in Rothley as the 'Pains and Orders', which were

²⁶² Kosminsky, *Studies in the agrarian history*, p. 196f. The issue of ancient demesne will be dealt with in chapter 4.

²⁶³ M.M. Postan, *The medieval economy and society* (London, 1972), p. 123.

²⁶⁴ M. Bailey, *The English manor c. 1200 - c. 1500* (Manchester, 2002), p. 61. He cites a custumal from R. Sharpe, ed., 'Two custumals of the manor of Cockerham, 1326 and 1483' *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society*, 64 (1954), pp. 42-7. Custumal of Cockerham (Lancashire), 1326-27. Latin.

²⁶⁵ The rental also records some tenants outside the soke who were classed as 'free servants' or *liberorum serviencium*. Later in the same folio they were included under *libere familie*, suggesting that this was an early interpretation of a particular villein tenure.

²⁶⁶ This position was to be challenged by the Templars a decade or so later, and a resistance was mounted against them by the tenants. See chapter on 'Conflicts and Struggles'.

²⁶⁷ Other examples can be found elsewhere in the soke: Robert Herward a juror of Baggrave, held a toft *in dominico* for 32 $\frac{1}{2}$ d with an increment of 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. William Baldwine of Marefield also held land *in dominico*. Robert son of Geoffrey held land *in dominico*, and so did Clement of Colthorp. Robert son of Hugo held *in dominico* in Wartnaby, and so did Thomas son of Beatrice in Caldwell. Ralph son of Bartholomew and John his brother held half a bovat of land with a toft and 3 roods *in dominico* in Barsby for a payment of 13 $\frac{1}{2}$ d and an increment of 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ d.

overseen by the bailiff of Rothley in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.²⁶⁸ In his review of manorial customals Bailey noted how many manorial lords were increasingly interested in the exploitation of their demesne land.²⁶⁹ This led ultimately to a separate measure of the demesne known as the extent. The manorial demesne at Rothley Temple was worked by paid labour and not villein labour services, and so the measurement of the lord's demesne is relegated to the end of the main body of the customal, under 'stipends of servants'.²⁷⁰

In Cuxham, Oxfordshire, the customal of 1298 began with a description of the size of the demesne land, and followed this with the tenants' services and payments.²⁷¹ The Cuxham holdings of the free tenants with any payments were followed by other dues such as wardship of the heirs and marriage fines.²⁷² Next came the named *nativi*, virgate holders, with their obligations of works and services of fruit, seed and grain, and poultry;²⁷³ then the *coterelli* who held a dwelling with no land, but still owed cash and some labour services at named times during the year. The status of the peasantry at Cuxham can be demonstrated by the services due to the lord, and the payments and works which were owed. Another customal of 1258, a date close to that of the Rothley customal, was written for the tenants and lands at Croxton Kerrial in north-east Leicestershire.²⁷⁴ This was set out in five sections beginning with the manorial lord Nicholas de Kerrial and lady Sara of Knipton, followed by 14 free tenants, one of whom was the abbot of the monastery there. In this customal the peasants (*rusticis*) held land *in dominico* all for money payments; the free cottagers (*cotiaris*) paid in cash; other cottagers held 'at the will' of the lord indicating their servile position but also made cash payments, and finally a section which stated that all tenants paid their dues four times a year.²⁷⁵ Money payments were mentioned for all tenants. The demesnes held by the various tenants-in-chief were quantified, and the whole of the land at Croxton Kerrial

²⁶⁸ L.R.O. 44'28/962 Rothley Temple MSS: Copy of the customs of the soke of Rothley as settled by the inhabitants of 1608. Such an extensive document for customs and their regulation in Rothley in the earlier medieval period may well now be lost.

²⁶⁹ Bailey, *The English manor*, particularly chapter II on 'Manorial extents, surveys and rentals', p. 21f.

²⁷⁰ L.R.O. 44'28/867 Rothley Temple MSS: The customal of Rothley soke, f. 17. This could suggest that the customal at Rothley had fossilised into an unusual form at an early date.

²⁷¹ P.D.A. Harvey, ed., *Manorial records of Cuxham, Oxfordshire, circa 1200-1359* (London, 1976), p. 108.

²⁷² The rents of the tenants of Geoffrey le Bret of Holkham in circa 1293-4 followed the same pattern as at Cuxham, in which tenants were named and their rents written against their names, under the saint's feast at which the rents would be paid. Cf. W. Hassall and J. Beauroy, eds., *Lordship and landscape in Norfolk, 1250-1350: The early records of Holkham* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 77-79.

²⁷³ Some *nativi* owed cash, but their payments in kind had been reduced, thereby suggesting some commutation of the services into cash.

²⁷⁴ A transcript of this rental can be found in J. Nichols, ed., *The history and antiquities of the county of Leicester* (London, 1815), Vol. I, part II, p. 81, hereafter *Antiquities*.

was described as an escheat of the king (*eschaeta domini regis*) and accounted for 24 carucates of land and the value placed upon the whole was £24.²⁷⁶ The advowson in the custumal appears to be attached to the seven carucates and one bovaté which belonged to the abbot. Those churches associated with the abbey of Croxton Kerrial were described in a separate survey.²⁷⁷ Thus the custumal for Croxton Kerrial defines both the various responsibilities of multiple chief tenants towards the crown, and the obligations of the sub-tenants who were attached to land in the township.

The tenants of the manor and soke

Once installed at Rothley, the Templars drew up a custumal of their newly acquired manor and its fourteen remaining soke dependencies at Gaddesby, Barsby, Baggrave, South Croxton, Tilton, South Marefield, North Marefield, Somerby, Grimston, Saxelby, Wartnaby, Chadwell (with Wycomb), and Keyham.²⁷⁸ The custumal gives detailed information regarding the names of the tenants, the size and value of their tenements, and the customs through which their obligations were laid down and their rights protected. From this custumal social and family relationships and their occupations can be deduced. It was usual for a manorial lord to establish his rights to services and rents within a manor and as a response to the enquiry the tenants or their reeves would report and record the size of their tenements, the value of their rents, and services to their lord. The custumal for Rothley soke which is very detailed, is subdivided into five sections: payments from the tenants (both soke and non-soke); payments from the holdings of the church; expenses of the Templars which include the stipends of their own servants and the wages of other workers; the customs and services of the tenants of the soke with brief instructions on how to conduct the soke court; and lastly a glossary.²⁷⁹ The custumal contains *memoranda* situated after the lists of Rothley and Gaddesby payments, and there is a further *memorandum* after the section on the soke court. The glossary is of some 41 words (perhaps used within the soke court) with their explanations. Appended to the end of the custumal is an additional section (probably from the time of the Hospitallers) which refers to knight's fees held of both Dalby and Rothley. The whole document contains 21 folios written in Latin on both

²⁷⁵ A transcript of the rental can be found in Nichols, ed., *Antiquities*, Vol. II, part I, appendix p. 80.

²⁷⁶ This is a round figure which may represent an estimated value rather than an accurate payment.

²⁷⁷ South Croxton was amongst them, of which the abbey at Croxton Kerrial had half the advowson.

²⁷⁸ South Croxton was not recorded as part of the soke at Domesday. See Map 4, chapter 1.

²⁷⁹ L.R.O. 44'28/867 Rothley Temple MSS: The custumal of Rothley soke. The customs begin on f. 18 obverse and continue on the reverse. The holding of the court begins on the reverse of f. 18, a further *memorandum* is written at the end of this which continues on f. 19. The glossary begins on f. 19 obverse

sides, and the sixteenth-century copy appears to be in one neat, legible hand, with the exception of the *addendum*.

The rights in Rothley manor and soke which the Templars were granted by the king in 1234 were outlined in the Close Rolls for that year.²⁸⁰ These rights were reiterated within the custumal and included the two carucates in demesne which must have been cultivated for most of the year using wage labour only.²⁸¹ Paid servants of the Templars may have been drawn from the tenants of the township, and these included a forester, a clerk, and a gardener.²⁸² The land-holding tenants of Rothley township, whether virgaters or lesser landholders, did not perform weekly labour services in return for their tenements, their only obligation being the annual one-day carting service at harvest for which they would be given their food by the lord. Other tenants of the soke dependencies owed money rent only, with one or two exceptions, and no tenants were recorded as holding their tenements 'at the will' of the lord. The services of the tenants to the Templars were thus limited and their rents were fixed.²⁸³

The Rothley custumal surveyed the assets of the Templars which included the obligations of the tenants in cash, labour or goods. The status of the tenants and their relative wealth have to be inferred from land holding and services. Beginning with the vill of Rothley, the names of three approved jurors of the township were followed by the tenants arranged in an order which gives some clues to their probable social standing. The first tenant, Stephen of Rothley, was distinguished in the custumal for both 'holding and defending' (*tenet et defendit*) his two virgates of land.²⁸⁴ There were twenty-eight entries under Rothley for virgate or part-virgate holders, the virgate being

and continues on the reverse of the folio and on to f. 20 obverse. F. 21 obverse contains a list of knights fees held under Dalby and Rothley, and could be from the time of the Hospitallers.

²⁸⁰ C.C.R. *Henry III, 1231-1234* (London, 1905), p. 514. The Templars were granted two carucates of land held in the king's demesne, plus the assized rents of the tenants, which were worth 118s (£5 18s). They were also granted rights in a wood, a mill, and the produce from a cornfield which the men of Rothley were to gather in and transport the grain to the king's barn once a year, and the cost of a meal for the men was born by the king himself. The men of Rothley who did this work were the customary tenants. King Henry II is stated to have received 22s from the assarts, which were also held by the men of Rothley. These were all granted to the Templars with full seisin (rights), which had formerly been enjoyed by the king.

²⁸¹ L.R.O. 44'28/867 Rothley Temple MSS: The custumal of Rothley soke, f. 17.

²⁸² The word used is *gardinarius*.

²⁸³ L.R.O. 44'28/867 Rothley Temple MSS: The custumal of Rothley soke, f. 18. The customs of the soke were confined to a small section at the end of the rental.

²⁸⁴ This right was granted in about 1200 to all whose tenure was free, and the holder could sell or grant the land without seigniorial interference. See M. Bailey, *The English manor*, p. 28. Stephen of Rothley must therefore have been an individual of some importance. His name (or at least the property connected with his name) was to recur throughout the Rothley Temple documents for the next three hundred years.

measured at thirty-six acres.²⁸⁵ The most usual rent for a virgate was 3s *per annum*, and there followed a list of twenty-one tenants who held one or two tofts each.²⁸⁶ Rents for these properties varied from 8d to 2s 5d *per annum*.²⁸⁷ Only two messuages (houses) without land were included in the Rothley custumal, one belonging to William son of Umfridi for a rent of 8d, and another to John Carpenter for a rent of 3s 6d.²⁸⁸ A short list of small holders paid between ¼d and 3s. These tenants in Rothley give an impression of a three-tier society of landholders, toft holders (cottagers) and small holders.²⁸⁹ For Rothley there were 84 entries in the custumal, and if all these entries indicated heads of families, this would suggest Rothley was well-populated. Twenty-eight peasants held thirty-one virgates, whereas Domesday accounts for twenty-nine villeins within the vill, indicating little change in the number of virgate tenants in the thirteenth-century custumal.²⁹⁰ Gaddesby records four jurors holding land or tenements whose rents ranged from 3s 5d up to 13s 5¾d, following whom there was a short list of six individuals whose payment was a few pence, but they owed no increment.²⁹¹ Three tenants who owed cocks as their rent were at the head of the Barsby custumal, an unusual place for the lowliest of tenants.²⁹² Most tenements in Barsby were small, although there were some virgate holders, and all but two of the tenants held a toft, making twenty-eight tenants with a dwelling plot. Most of the remaining vills followed

²⁸⁵ This was the measurement given for the virgate in a rental of AD 1534. This made the 3s payment for the virgate worth 1d per acre. See L.R.O. 44'28/887 Rothley Temple MSS: Account roll AD 1533-34.

²⁸⁶ For all those who held their toft(s) *pro*, no other land is mentioned, with two exceptions. This would suggest that these were the cottagers.

²⁸⁷ The inconsistencies continued, for then five tenants had property (*tenet*) another *pro*, two more *tenent*, followed by twenty-five *pro*. The property held *tenet* attracted a higher rent payment than is generally paid for the land held *pro*, but not exclusively so.

²⁸⁸ Indeed, his name suggests his occupation. *Memoranda* following the Rothley list of tenants show that some pieces of land had been purchased by previous preceptors at Rothley Temple. L.R.O. 44'28/867 Rothley Temple MSS: The custumal of Rothley soke, f. 3. These preceptors were named as John de Ouseflette, Stephen de Todmershe and John Feversham.

²⁸⁹ It is possible that the tofts were held by peasants who acted as labourers for the landholders.

²⁹⁰ This quantity of land creates a challenge in terms of the total land under the plough, and counted within the township fields. If the Domesday count of five carucates is taken at face value, and a carucate can be reckoned as being four virgates, then clearly there is a large discrepancy. The reference to the five carucates for Rothley in Domesday can be found in Domesday Book f. 230b.

²⁹¹ The rental for Gaddesby ends with one tenant whose his rent was 2s 6 ½d for 14 acres of land, with no incremental payment being made.

²⁹² These peasants were paying in kind, rather than cash, and no land or dwelling was ascribed to them. It is difficult to determine how they were incorporated into the social fabric of the township. They would probably have been poor, and possibly dependent upon other peasants for their livelihoods. If this was so, then this rental is unlike other rentals which generally begin with the most important people, and end with the poorest. There is no suggestion within the rental that these tenants owed any labour services to the overlord.

a similar pattern beginning with the jurors, with the exceptions of Saxelby²⁹³ and Chadwell.²⁹⁴

The custumal records that most soke tenants paid an addition to their rent of between 8 and 25 % twice yearly on 8th September and 25th March.²⁹⁵ Rothley made a single payment on the feast of St John the Baptist, amounting to £1 13s 4d (perhaps a valuation on their annual services). Thus the rents and occasional services in kind were dealt with by the custumal and summed up at the end.

Soke Vill	Virgate holders	Bovate holders	Toft holders	Other	Messuage holders	Assart holders	<i>In dominico</i>	Annual payment for vill	Increments
Rothley	28	8	21	13	2	12	1	£7 9s 1/2d	£1 13s 4d
Gaddesby	16	25	4	7			1	£3 10s	£1 2s 2 3/4d
Barsby	4	24		1			1	£3 5s 4 1/4d + 3 cocks	9s 8 1/4d
Baggrave	10	16		3			1	£3 5s 5 1/2d	11s 4 3/4d
South Croxton	1	6						£1 0s 7d	3s 6 1/4d
Tilton	5	4					1	£1 13s 9d	3s 10d
Marefield South	6	11					1	£2 0s 3 1/2d	6s 9d
Somerby	2	12		1			1	£1 10s 11 1/2d	5s 2 3/4d
Marefield North	3	2		10 part carucates + 1 other				£2 16s 10d + 1 lb. pepper	8s 9 1/4d
Grimston	2 + 1 glebe	16					1	£2 8s 11 1/2d	8s 3 1/2d
Saxelby	1	7		3				18s 2d + 1 lb. cumin	3s
Wartnaby	6 + 1 glebe	18	1	1 carucate + 4 others			1	£4 16s 8 1/2d + pair white gloves	18s 9d
Chadwell + Wycomb	4 + 1 glebe	5		20 in acres + 2 no land			1	£3 11s 1d	12s 1d
Keyham	25 + 18 acres glebe	4		2				£3 10s 1d	12s 3/4d
Non-soke Vill									
<i>Menton</i>	2	1	20	1	1 + 1 <i>domum</i>			£5 10s 10 1/2d + 1 lb. pepper	2 x increments

Figure 3. Tenants of the soke of Rothley from the thirteenth-century custumal

Source: L.R.O. 44'28/867 Copy of the custumal of Rothley, including rental of Rothley soke, undated

²⁹³ This part-soke vill effectively comes under Grimston.

²⁹⁴ This was assessed with Wycomb.

²⁹⁵ The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Annunciation.

From Figure 3 it can be seen that Rothley vill had the highest total number of rent paying tenants, with Gaddesby coming second. However the profile of land holding for the two vills was distinctly different. In Rothley there were 28 virgate (or part-virgate) holders with only 8 bovate (or part-bovate) holders. In Gaddesby the reverse is found with 25 bovate holders and 16 virgate holders. Only one other vill demonstrated a preponderance of virgate holders over bovate holders and that was at Keyham. However, the measurement of virgates in Keyham was somewhat different in that most virgate holders had only fractions of a virgate within their tenements. The increments paid by agreement with the Templars for a release from specified services are also of interest. There is only one payment for Rothley for the whole vill and this amounted to 2 ½ marks or £1 13s 4d. This compares with a total incremental payment from Gaddesby of 22s 2 ¾d or £1 2s 2 ¾d. Figure 3 shows the tenements held under the Templars for which there was an incremental payment, as indicated in the custumal for the soke. In most instances the number of tenants paying increments exceeded the number of tenements.²⁹⁶ Of the tenements recorded, only a proportion were virgates, or part virgates,²⁹⁷ thus increments were paid by tenants whether or not they were virgate holders. Indeed some increments were paid by tenants who were reckoned as holding no land but tofts only.²⁹⁸

Other types of service were being made by the tenants of the detached soke dependencies, and these were noted in the custumal. For example in Marefield Adam Feber made a payment of 1s and gave 1 lb. pepper; in Saxelby Henry Molendarius made no money payment but gave 1 lb. cumin;²⁹⁹ in Wartnaby Herbert Seagrave made a payment of 15 ¼d, and gave a pair of white gloves at Easter.³⁰⁰ Kosminsky believed that such payments as pepper and cumin made by freeholders in the Hundred Rolls were more like money rents for the produce presented as payment had first to be bought.³⁰¹ The same could also be said for such services in the customary. Similar payments existed throughout Leicestershire, and many appear in the *Inquisitions post mortem* for individuals who owed service to a manorial lord, for example Hugh Bussye paid a rent

²⁹⁶ This suggests some sharing of the services.

²⁹⁷ The figures for these tenements are in brackets in Figure 3. In Marefield north 10 tenements were measured in carucates, or parts thereof. One group of tenants in Wartnaby held a carucate of land between them.

²⁹⁸ This suggests that part of the service originally attached to land was retained by tenants who had alienated land to other tenants.

²⁹⁹ L.R.O. 44'28/867 Rothley Temple MSS: The custumal of Rothley soke, f. 11.

³⁰⁰ Perhaps such a gift had once been a service given to the king or other noble overlord from the dependent vills of the soke.

of 26s 8d and 1 lb. cumin to William de Bosco of Evington in 1308 and John de Kyrkeby of Kirby Bellars owed a rent of one sparrow hawk, one rose flower and a money rent in 1290.³⁰²

The last entry in the custumal was for *Menton*.³⁰³ This vill was not recorded as part of the soke, and it occupied a separate position within the custumal. The tenants of *Menton* generally owed higher rents for their tenements than the tenants of Rothley. For example William Sclewill held a virgate and one toft for a payment of 14s 6d; Robert Horn held two tofts with only one acre of land, but he paid 5s; Allan of Rothley held a virgate of land, but had a half share in a toft for which he paid 11s. Three of the tenants were described as 'free' suggesting that the other tenants were not and these were Benedict Forester, Emmota, and John Clericus whose payments were in line with other payments in *Menton* namely 2s 6d and 5s respectively. Richard Horn held the only messuage for which he paid half a mark (6s 8d) and an entry fine of 20s. Three brothers made a payment of a 1 lb. pepper, but no reason was stated although they held neither land nor dwelling. The payment of increments was mentioned only twice, the first paid by Geoffrey Goion who held a toft for 6s, and an incremental payment made by William of Saxelby for holding a toft for 2s 6d, the increment was to be paid to brother Stephan de Todmersh one of the Templars. *Menton* was a settlement outside the soke with a distinctly different pattern of holdings from villis in the soke. Land appears to have been at a premium and tofts abounded suggesting that this settlement could have been a town, or part of one.³⁰⁴

At the end of the custumal is a separate section containing the customs of the soke. The first custom referred to the bailiff of the lord king who was to appoint a reeve from among the tenants of Rothley and the other soke villis.³⁰⁵ Further customs stated that the land within the soke was partible between children of a sokeman after his death. If all were sons, then the sons inherited equally, if all daughters, likewise, but not between sons and daughters. In this case the sons inherited at the expense of the daughters. However, before such inheritance took place the widow could hold the

³⁰¹ Kosminsky, *Studies in the agrarian history*, p. 154. The presence of such payments could suggest that some of the peasants of the soke were more free than others.

³⁰² G.F. Farnham, ed., *Leicestershire medieval village notes* (Leicester, c. 1928), Vol. 2, p. 224f., and Vol. 3, p. 111, respectively.

³⁰³ L.R.O. 44'28/867 Rothley Temple MSS: The custumal of Rothley soke, f. 15.

³⁰⁴ Other evidence within the entry for *Menton* points to this being a small suburb of the town of Melton. See appendix A.

³⁰⁵ There was one exception, that of Stephen of Rothley. Could this exemption be related to the privilege granted by Henry II for one of the Templar tenants to be free from all royal exactions? For further details

whole property during her lifetime unless she remarried in which case she could keep a third and the sons or daughters would inherit the remaining two thirds.³⁰⁶ If land was given or sold to another within the soke then this was permitted, but not to another person from outside the soke. The donation and *seisin* was to be witnessed in full court with payments of 4d to the bailiff, 2d to his clerk and to the first reeve (i.e. of Rothley), and 1d to any other reeve present at the exchange which would be granted through the licence of the bailiff.³⁰⁷ Later court rolls indicate that the payment of entry fines was set at nil for those who belonged to the soke, and those payments limited by custom were awarded to the bailiff and reeve.³⁰⁸ Entry fines for those who did not belong to the soke could be more akin to entry fines elsewhere.

Finally in the customary came the services: the men of Rothley were to carry the corn of the demesne of the lord king beyond the water from the old demesne (that is the 2 carucates of land) to the granary of the lord king when summoned by the bailiff, and the men would be provided with a meal on that day. Furthermore, custom stipulated that the soke court would be held by the bailiff every three weeks or monthly, or more frequently if summoned by the king's writ, within the soke. The men of Rothley performed a light carting service for the lord once a year, and the final service demanded from the tenants of the soke was that of court attendance. The incremental payment made by named tenants of the soke dependencies thus suggests a commutation of the annual carting still demanded from the men of Rothley.³⁰⁹ In the customary the tenants of the soke (*aliquis de soka*) were empowered to elect their own bailiff, and successful complaints brought before the courts would attract amercements restricted to half a mark, but if the complaint failed then no amercement was to be imposed. There were no references to payments of *merchet*, tallage, *chevage* or *heriot*, or other services

on this, and other Templar privileges, see H. Nicholson, *The Knights Templar: A new history* (Stroud, 2001), p. 172.

³⁰⁶ This contrasted with the usual feudal dower, which granted the widow the right to hold a third of her former husband's property while she remained single. On death, remarriage, or entering a convent, the dower returned to the overlord.

³⁰⁷ These customs suggest, and later practice bears testimony, that the overlord had no jurisdiction over land exchanges within the soke.

³⁰⁸ For example, in the court roll for 12th October 1384 an entry fine of 3s was made by John de Wykynggston for half an acre of land in Rothley which he had bought from Nicholas Magson. At the same court session, John Stevenson made a fine of 2d for an acre of land, but he gave nothing to the lord for entry, because he was *secretus*. L.R.O. 44'28/869, Rothley Temple MSS: Court Rolls AD 1384-5. In these later rolls, entry fines imposed on newcomers to the soke were made to the overlord, and these more accurately reflected the payments usually made by peasants. Indeed, it was necessary for the new tenant to be recognised by the lord concerning the tenancy of the land, so that the previous soke tenant did not remain liable to the customary payment attached to the holding.

³⁰⁹ This commutation will be examined in chapter 4.

which were the frequent lot of villeinage, but there is one record of a payment of relief for Peter Neville of Allextun.³¹⁰

Tenant surnames, occupations and responsibilities

Surnames gradually became established in the thirteenth century but were not ubiquitous amongst the Rothley tenantry. Some surnames suggest origins of some of the 400 tenants recorded in the custumal, but many could have held land in more than one vill, and as surnames were not yet fixed this is difficult to ascertain.³¹¹ For example, William of Sapcote and Ivo Brun of Mountsorrel lived in Rothley; William of Keyham, Richard of Baggrave and Matilda of Frisby all lived in Gaddesby. Tenants assumed positions of responsibility within the vills: for example all those called '*prepositus*' (reeve) were also jurors.³¹² Some tenements were attached to individuals but others to groups such as the men of Mountsorrel who jointly held a single tenement in Rothley.³¹³ Three tenants, probably sisters, named as Petronilla, Agnes and Julianna in Keyham, held a tenement jointly and made a single payment for it.³¹⁴ Other groups were named but the relationships not stated such as Roger son of Peter, and Walter and Ralph who lived in Wartnaby.³¹⁵ Some tenants had no distinguishing surname, such as widow Matilda in Somerby, Hereward in Marefield North, Alan in Baggrave, Milo in Marefield South, and Mathew in Wartnaby. Perhaps tenants with no surname in one vill held land in another vill using a surname.³¹⁶ Some surnames suggest origins outside the soke: for example John of Cossington and Richard of Glen lived in Barsby; William of Erburg and Richard of Lond' (London?) lived in Baggrave; Walter of Melton lived in Wartnaby, and William of Oakham lived in Caldwell. Some individuals may have

³¹⁰ L.R.O. 44'28/867 Rothley Temple MSS: The custumal of Rothley soke, f. 15.

³¹¹ For example Richard of Baggrave held land in Gaddesby, but was this the same Richard as Richard de Doma, Richard Oseber, Richard de Lond', Richard Carpenter, Richard Clericus, all of whom held land in Baggrave, or was it an entirely different Richard? L.R.O. 44'28/867 Rothley Temple MSS: The custumal of Rothley soke, ff. 3 - 5.

³¹² Such were in Baggrave, Tilton, Marefield and Somerby, and there were those nominated *clericus* (clerk) in Rothley, Gaddesby, (twice), Barsby, Baggrave, Marefield, (three times) Wartnaby, (four times), Chadwell (five times) and Keyham (twice) suggesting men of some education, and the ability to write.

³¹³ In South Croxton, Nicholas de Croxton made a payment on his own behalf and that of his *socii* (associates). Likewise Richard son of Salomon and his associates made a payment in South Croxton. In Grimston, Matilda Lomb made two separate payments for different holdings. While it is possible that these are mother and daughter, or two cousins, they could also be one and the same person.

³¹⁴ There were also groups of brothers who held a joint tenement such as Nigel son of Thomas with his two brothers in Rothley; and Geoffrey, Walter and Henry, brothers, in Gaddesby.

³¹⁵ L.R.O. 44'28/867 Rothley Temple MSS: The custumal of Rothley soke f. 12.

³¹⁶ Nor were tenements confined to local families, for in some townships monks held land such as the abbot of Garendon in Chadwell and the prior of Launde in Tilton. These were perhaps pious bequests made by small landholders anxious to secure their position in the afterlife. Indeed it is highly possible that many bequests to the church could have followed individuals from their own communities who had entered the church.

moved into soke vill through intermarriage or property purchase, but continued to be distinguished by the name of the town or vill from which they hailed.

There are names in the custumal which suggest occupations either as part of the name or as an adjunct to it (Figure 4). For example Walkelin Carpenter in Rothley, Simon Miller, William Forrester, William Clericus also in Rothley, and Robert Molendinarius in Gaddesby.³¹⁷ Figure 4 gives examples of these names:

Vill	Tenant name
Rothley	Walkelin Carpenter Simon Miller Thomas Clerke Ivo Capellanus William Clericus John Carpenter Ralph Bercario (Shepherd)
Gaddesby	Ralph Clericus William Clericus Geoffrey Decanus Robert Molendarius Simon Piscator
Barsby	Richard Clericus Herbert Capellanus
Baggrave	Richard Carpenter Richard Clericus Henricus Prepositus Walter Molendarius de Waraunt
Tilton	Henry Prepositus
Marefield south	Hugo Prepositus Gilbert Clericus
Somerby	Simon Prepositus Alicia la Carter
Marefield north	Geoffrey Clericus Geoffrey Capellanus Adam Feber
Grimston	Geoffrey Prepositus Richard Forester
Saxelby	Thomas Molendarius Henry Molendarius
Wartnaby	Thomas Clericus Nicholas Clericus Geoffrey Clericus William Faber Wife of William Clericus Thomas Clericus
Chadwell	John Clericus Geoffrey Clericus Alice widow of William Capellani William Clericus
Keyham	Roger Clericus John Chaplain Geoffrey Faucon (Falconer?)

Figure 4. Townships and names suggesting occupations

Source: L.R.O. 44'28/867 Copy of the custumal of Rothley, including rental of Rothley soke, undated

³¹⁷ L.R.O. 44'28/867 Rothley Temple MSS: The custumal of Rothley soke, ff. 1, 2 and f. 5 respectively.

Rothley had two carpenters, a necessary occupation in a settlement with 84 tenements, each with a building attached which could require the services of a carpenter on a regular basis. Many tenants within the soke would have been engaged in agriculture either directly or indirectly and there is little within Rothley to suggest the emergence of a town economy in the thirteenth century.³¹⁸

Women in Rothley soke

Bennet, in her study of the women of Brigstock, Northamptonshire, believed that 'the history of women in the medieval English countryside is a story of ambivalencies and contradictions'.³¹⁹ Her study examined the manor of Brigstock, where she noted that while social rank shaped the public lives of men, it was poverty which influenced the opportunities of women, particularly those who were of lower status, by encouraging them to seek employment outside the household.³²⁰ Women were generally subject to men, whether fathers, brothers or husbands, although wives would have conjugal rights over a portion of their husband's property once they were widows, and such rights were not related to status.³²¹ How do these views compare with the women of Rothley? Female tenants appeared in the custumal, although not in great numbers: for example in Baggrave there was Emma daughter of Andrew, and Alicia la Carter lived in Somerby.³²² Some were identified as widows, for example Matilda in Marefield South, Agnes in Somerby, Christine in Grimston, Hawisia and Juliana in Keyham.³²³

³¹⁸ Indeed this is true even today for the townships which remained part of the thirteenth century soke.

³¹⁹ J. Bennet, *Women in the medieval English countryside - gender and household in Brigstock before the plague* (Oxford, 1987), p. 198.

³²⁰ Bennet, *Women*, p. 183f.

³²¹ Bennet, *Women*, p. 186.

³²² L.R.O. 44'28/867 Rothley Temple MSS: The custumal of Rothley soke, ff. 8 and 9.

Vill	Female tenants as proportion of all tenants	Percentage of female tenants
Rothley	7 in 87	7 ½%
Gaddesby	4 in 52	7 ½%
Barsby	0 in 33	0%
Baggrave	1 in 29	3 ½%
South Croxton	0 in 7	0%
Tilton	1 in 10	10%
Marefield south	2 in 19	11%
Somerby	4 in 16	25%
Marefield north	0 in 18	0%
Grimston	1 in 20	5%
Saxelby	0 in 11	0%
Wartnaby	1 in 33	3%
Chadwell	3 in 33	9%
Keyham	4 in 33	12%

Figure 5. Tenancies where the female is the principal tenant

Source: L.R.O. 44'28/867 Copy of the custumal of Rothley, including rental of Rothley soke, undated

For the soke as a whole, principal female tenants amounted to about 7¼ % of total number of tenants (Figure 5). The customary stated that females could only inherit when they had no brother, for in the case of a surviving brother, he would inherit the whole estate, or brothers would share it between them at the expense of their sisters.³²⁴ However, eventually daughters, in the absence of sons, must have inherited and once mothers, could have come to other private arrangements for their own daughters. Once the heiresses became wives, if they married a man of the soke, they maintained favourable widow's rights over their husband's property, so any other land they held in their own right might well have been passed on to their daughters. As the average number of female-only holdings amounted to just over 7% of the soke, it is surprising that Barsby and Marefield had no such tenements, where you would expect at least one female tenant. This suggests the possibility that some local rules applied which effectively excluded the women from inheriting.³²⁵

The *memoranda* in the custumal: property held privately by the Templars

³²³ L.R.O. 44'28/867 Rothley Temple MSS: The custumal of Rothley soke, ff. 9, 10 and 13.

³²⁴ L.R.O. 44'28/867 Rothley Temple MSS: The custumal of Rothley soke, f. 18.

³²⁵ Although, if both South and North Marefield were put together, then 2 out of 37 tenants were women, and this figure, though small, would bring Marefield more closely into line with other soke settlements.

The *memoranda* within the custumal give an indication of land purchases and exchanges which were made between tenants and brothers of the Templar order. These purchases give a clearer picture of the holdings and the obligations of rent and service which were expected of the tenantry. Following the Rothley rents there were five *memoranda* containing details of private purchases of land, and one of these is in French.³²⁶ Three of the *memoranda* refer to brother John Ouseflette,³²⁷ and the fourth tells of an exchange of land over which there was some doubt.³²⁸ A further *memorandum* follows in French relating how Stephen de Todmershe came to hold 2½ acres of arable land in the fields of Rothley.³²⁹ The last *memorandum* in this section records a sub-tenancy agreement between the preceptor brother John Feversham and William de Burton, for 2½ acres of arable land for a term of nine years.

Similar *memoranda* appear at the end of the entry for Gaddesby. In the first *memorandum* Simon *Piscator* gave 6d for an authorisation and release by order of brother D. Thurville, master of the Temple and was therefore *infra*.³³⁰ A second lengthy *memorandum* tells of payments due from a tenement formerly granted to Leicester Abbey, which the master of the Templars now wished to reclaim.³³¹ The *memoranda* are difficult to place into a framework of land holding within the soke, but they

³²⁶ L.R.O. 44'28/867 Rothley Temple MSS: The custumal of Rothley soke, f. 3. This includes a list of the previous owners of the property, to clarify whose hands it had passed through.

³²⁷ This brother is said to have purchased land from Stephen Lomb of Rothley. This land had once been held by Stephen son of Thomas in the Willows and his brothers, perhaps as sub-tenants. The third of these *memoranda* refers to a toft which had once belonged to Reginald son of Reginald, which Stephen had taken from John Ouseflette. How these *memoranda* relate to the general rental is unclear.

³²⁸ In the time of Stephen de Todmershe, sometime preceptor of the Rothley Temple, Thomas *Clericus* and Alicia his wife had taken a messuage with appurtenances in Rothley. They held it for the term of their lives, and the messuage had, at one time, belonged to William de Bredeshale, preceptor, making annual payments to the Temple at Rothley. This suggests a private arrangement with the Templars, and might involve land which was part of the demesne, for the payments were to be made directly to the overlords. There was no mention of a purchase price or agreement, but it was usual for church authorities to accept gifts of land separated from services, which often remained with the donors.

³²⁹ The purchase seems very convoluted, but appears to refer to a rood of land below the windmill towards Wanlip Syk, an area to the south of the settlement. The significance of this land transfer is that it names individuals of the soke who have parted with land in the town fields (not manorial demesne). One family noted in the rental for Rothley and in other soke townships is the Knott family. It is still not clear from the entry whether the purchase of this land gave soke title or was held through a sub-tenancy to the Knott family.

³³⁰ The entry appears to suggest that Simon has granted land to brother Thurville, and Simon is willing to vouch for the exchange, and for this warrant received a payment of 6d, a modest sum although not unusual. By this exchange the Templar brother presumably became a sokeman.

³³¹ The messuage in question had appurtenances and an oven (perhaps the couple were the local bakers). The Templars were keen to restore title to the chief claimant, who was the heir Richard of Gaddesby. Richard, in his turn, granted by charter the rents from that property to the Templars. Like the *memoranda* which follow the Rothley township rental, those of Gaddesby ratified the tenures of the Templar brothers, and particularly that of the preceptor of the Temple in Rothley. No further *memoranda* follow the entries for other townships within the soke.

probably reflect purchases made by the Templars within soke territory.³³² It is possible that the Templars by entering into purchases made within the soke were then able to sub-let their tenements at higher rents. Inserted after the instructions for the holding of court, the custumal records further land transactions one of which shows that the preceptor William de Wald has sub-let a tenement to eight tenants, three of whom were named Nailler, Wawer (weaver?) and Carpenter suggesting that the preceptor was providing accommodation for workmen while they worked at the preceptory.³³³

Other land, assets and payments recorded in the custumal

Glebeland

Glebeland was included with church holdings in those villis where there was a chapel of Rothley parish, namely Grimston, Wartnaby, Chadwell and Keyham, although at Rothley and Gaddesby glebe was not recorded.³³⁴ Land belonging to the church appears thus: at Grimston there was a virgate and 3 acres; at Wartnaby there was a virgate and a toft with appurtenances; at Chadwell there was a toft and 40 acres of land and at Keyham there were 18 acres and a rood of land attached to the chapel. However, no payments were expected from these tenements.

The survey of the parish

As rectors of the parish of Rothley church and its dependent chapelries the Templars carried out a separate survey of church income and tithes within the custumal, which followed the *redditus forinseci*.³³⁵ Values were placed on the church and chapels at Rothley, Keyham, Wartnaby, Grimston, Chadwell and Gaddesby, and these were in marks at 14 marks (£9 6s 8d) for Gaddesby, 26 marks for Rothley (£17 6s 8d) and 10 marks each (£6 13s 8d) for the other four. From this income the Templars were bound to maintain the chancels of the church and chapels.³³⁶

The *redditus forinseci*

'Foreign' tenants who paid rent to the Templars but did not owe service to Rothley court were named in the *redditus forinseci*. Some tenants lived in villis which

³³² Nicholson, *The Knights Templar*, p. 181 ff. The Templars were keen to make money where they could, and the purchase of land which could then be sub-let might have made financial sense.

³³³ L.R.O. 44'28/867 Rothley Temple MSS: The custumal of Rothley soke, f. 18 reverse.

³³⁴ This may reflect the difficulty which the Templars were still experiencing in obtaining the rectory of the church of Rothley. See chapter 4.

³³⁵ L.R.O. 44'28/867 Rothley Temple MSS: The custumal of Rothley soke, f. 15. These will be examined in more detail in chapter 7.

³³⁶ For further details regarding the parish of Rothley soke see chapter 7.

were once attached to the soke such as Peter Nevill who held a tenement in Allextun,³³⁷ whose rent was fixed and so were his death duties.³³⁸ These 'foreign' payments varied in value from 7 marks for a windmill, to 6d from Ralph Makebred. 13d was paid by Ralph de Folville an exceptionally small sum perhaps for land lying in Gaddesby,³³⁹ and such payments suggest tenements which were at one time in the soke. Another tenement was at *Ottokes Hawe* where Adam de Essebern had a mill and was paying a foreign rent to the Templars of 7 marks (£4 13s 4d) which was a considerable sum.³⁴⁰ At Twyford Robert de Martivals made a payment of 26s 8d for a tenement,³⁴¹ and Peter son of Roger paid rent for his tenement in Glen.³⁴² Two virgate tenants appearing under foreign rents were William of the Temple and William Bercario (Shepherd), the first paying 5s and the second 13d, but the location of their land was not recorded. The vill of Walton owed 2s per year, and Geoffrey the Stabler owed 18d for a toft in Leicester. Henry Cornelatch owed 12d, and William Blundo 12s. All the 'foreign' rents were stated to be of the bailiwick of Rothley.³⁴³

Outgoings of the Templars

The expenses of the Templars included the stipends of the demesne servants for Rothley, *Menton* and Gaddesby. Their wages were 2s 6d for most servants with the exception of the clerk who was paid 3s 6d, and the chaplain who was paid 10s. Other servants who worked on the land were paid between 2s and 2s 6d each. Various other expenses were payable at Easter: the free servants (*stipendium liberorum*

³³⁷ A very small part of Allextun had once belonged to the soke, and had become alienated to the family of Neville. They continued to have a connection to the soke through this payment, although they were now free from the obligation of suit of court. Peter Neville owed a rent of 3s and was to pay 1 mark as a relief payment at his death.

³³⁸ Another *memorandum* in this section acted as a reminder that 22s were owed to the abbot of Croxton for the assarts of Mountsorrel and Rothley.

³³⁹ The Folville family held Ashby Folville, which was closely associated with Gaddesby and Barsby. Gaddesby contained a plot of land at the drawing up of the tithe map, which was designated as land in Ashby Folville.

³⁴⁰ It is difficult to identify *Ottokes Hawe*, nor can anything be said about its relationship with the soke of Rothley. Other places in Leicestershire had the name of Hawe namely Haliwell Hawe and Alderman's Hawe. It is possible that they were the equivalent of 'hays' which were small clearings in woodland or waste where deer or other managed animals could be tended. These could be formed out of triangles of land where the boundaries of townships met.

³⁴¹ At the time of the great survey, Twyford was partly within the soke, and partly held by a manorial lord Robert of Bucy, from Hugh de Grandmesnil. Domesday Book f. 230 c. and f. 232 c. respectively. When Rothley and its soke was granted to the Templars, Twyford was no longer a dependency. However, a tenement belonging to Robert de Martivals still retained a link with the former overlord. Were there any other remaining vestiges of Twyford's former connections? Nichols tells us that in 1290, Ralph Pipard appealed to king Edward I, on the grounds of *regales libertates*, royal privileges which were due to him through his connection with Twyford, and its former connection with the crown. Although Twyford was no longer a royal soke dependency, it had carried with it some royal privileges.

³⁴² This could be either Great Glen, or Glenfield.

³⁴³ This suggests that they had been removed from the soke and now had a direct relationship with the manorial demesne, through the payment of money rent.

serviencium)³⁴⁴ received a total of 41s, various other workers and servants were paid a total of 44s 6d, and smiths at Gaddesby and *Menton* were paid 3s 6d and 8s respectively. A payment of 22s was made to the monks of Croxton (Kerrial). Stipends throw some light on the servants of the Templars such as the chaplain, the forester, the clerk, the gardener, the two boys (servants) of the preceptor, the fisherman, the gatherer of barley and corn, the servants of *Menton*, the cook and the kitchen boy, the servants of Gaddesby, the keeper of the barn, and the gatekeeper. Other expenditure was enumerated in the custumal including the custody of the animals in the forest (probably Charnwood). The total expenses amounted to £23 13s 6d and £23 12s 6d, paid half yearly. Some of the private workforce of the Templars may have lived on the demesne, others may have been from the families of tenants living in Rothley.

Dating the Custumal

The extent of the church and chapels of Rothley records that the survey had been carried out when the Master Amed Morestall was in office.³⁴⁵ The Close roll confirms that Amadeus Morestall was in office in the year 1259, although it is difficult to ascertain how long before or after this date his office continued. Thus the custumal for the soke could have been written at any time between the arrival of the Templars in 1231, and that date. Other internal and external evidence limits the possible date of the custumal. An exemplification of 1377 which was obtained on behalf of the tenants of Rothley recites a case dating back to 1245.³⁴⁶ In this document the names of several jurors of Rothley soke were recorded. These names can be compared with the custumal and with the extent for the parish (Figure 6).

³⁴⁴ This is a curious term for servants were not usually described as 'free'. The more usual term would be *liberi tenentes*, free tenants.

³⁴⁵ Cf. *C.C.R. 42 Henry III, 1256-1259* (PRO, London, 1932), p. 394. L.R.O. 44'28/867 Rothley Temple MSS: The custumal of Rothley soke, f. 15 reverse.

³⁴⁶ *C.P.R. Edward III 1374-1377* (PRO, London, 1916), p. 425. This case will be examined in detail in chapter 4.

Name of vill	Reeve in 1245	Churchwarden in circa 1259	Tenants and reeves in custumal
Rothley	Not represented	Stephen Page Stanhard de la More Richard son of Nigel Richard Cotton	Stephen Page (tenant) Richard son of Nigel (tenant)
South Croxton	Milo de Croxton		Milo de Croxton (tenant)
Gaddesby	Walter son of Swayn	Richard son of Emma Henry son of Reginald	Walter Sueyn (reeve)
Barsby	Robert the Reeve		Robert Payn (reeve)
Baggrave	Robert Hareward		Robert Herward (reeve)
Keyham	William Saber	Roger Thok Simon of Keyham	Simon of Keyham (reeve) Roger of Keyham (reeve)
Tilton	Henry the reeve		Henry Prepositus (reeve)
Marefield (south)	Hugh the reeve		Hugh Prepositus (reeve)
(Marefield) (north)	Walter Sewar		Walter Seward (tenant)
Somerby	William the reeve		William de Hascolf (reeve)
Chadwell	Robert son of Henry	William son of Henry Hugh son of Reginald	Robert son of Henry (tenant) William son of Henry
Wartnaby	Gilbert son of Mathew	Thomas son of Ralph Roger his brother	Thomas Clerk and Roger his brother (tenants)
Grimston	Geoffrey the reeve	Geoffrey Pun Mathew Lobyn	Geoffrey prepositus (reeve) Geoffrey Pigun (tenant) Mathew Lomb (tenant)
(Saxelby)	Ralph de Fraunceys		Ralph Fraunces de Saxelby (tenant)

Figure 6. Names of reeves and churchwardens 1245 to c. 1259

Sources: L.R.O. 44'28/867 Copy of the custumal of Rothley, including rental of Rothley soke, undated; *C.P.R. Edward III 1374-1377* (PRO, London, 1916), p. 425

There is sufficient correlation between the three sets of evidence to show that the custumal could be contemporary. The custumal is probably no later than 1259 and cannot be earlier than 1245 due to the nature of the court case and its outcome which determined that increments should be paid by the tenants of the soke dependencies in exchange for labour service.

Summary

The custumal of Rothley does not begin with the manorial demesne, which is relegated to a later position, but it begins with Rothley and its tenants. The order of tenants within the Rothley document is unlike that in other rentals or manorial surveys. The five part custumal begins with the names and holdings of the soke and non-soke

tenants; then there are payments of the church and chapels; next the expenses and outgoings of the Templars; then customary services of the soke tenants, with the conducting of the soke court; and finally a glossary of terminology. It is unlike the later rental and extents which were recorded for the manor and soke. At Cuxham, demesne land occupied the prime position followed by the free tenants and their payments. At Croxton Kerrial the land belonging to the manorial lord came first, then the free tenants, followed by the tenants who were deemed to hold land *in dominico* on the lord's demesne, then the cottagers who held at the 'will of the lord'. The custumal of Rothley soke is extensive, for it covered lands both within the soke, and 'foreign' lands outside the soke but within the bailiwick, which owed payments to their manorial lords, the Templars. It appears more like a manual for the administration of the manor, soke and parish than a simple rental or survey. From such a document others could come: a more concise rental, or a reference for use in the court sessions. The custumal of Rothley may well have been used as a working document, for the *memoranda* contained within it have the appearance of additions which may have been included within the text at different times. What was lacking from the custumal were the details concerning the administration of the farming customs within the manor, but these survive in written form from a much later date. Later rentals and surveys were much more concise, but this early custumal appears to have maintained a significance within the soke, and some tenements continued to be attached to the names of tenants who had been identified in the thirteenth century.

Chapter 4

Conflicts and Struggles

Maitland believed that 'the king was the best of landlords' and that his tenants received 'a more regular justice than that which the villeins of other lords could hope for'.³⁴⁷ He believed that by the thirteenth century this led to a proliferation of sokemen on the ancient demesne who sought the additional privileges that this form of tenure afforded, and that their status was at the very least that of 'villein sokemen'. Stenton appeared to arrive at a different conclusion in his study of manor, berewick and sokeland when he attempted to define the different types of tenants who lived upon these lands.³⁴⁸ Within the Danelaw he noted that although much sokeland held both sokemen and villeins, there were some portions of sokeland which did not appear to have any sokemen, and concluded that this signified a depression in the status of the peasantry since the Conquest. Vinogradoff was not convinced that it was possible to define the different social groups in the Domesday survey and so he was reluctant to come to any conclusions about the meanings of the different classes of tenant recorded in the eleventh century.³⁴⁹ More recently, Faith has noted that classification of the peasantry continued to exercise the minds of the law courts in the later twelfth and thirteenth centuries. She saw that villeinage was defined not by the performance of labour services but by the terms under which it was performed, that is, if the labour

³⁴⁷ F.W. Maitland, *Domesday Book and beyond: three essays in the early history of England* (Cambridge 1897), new edition 1987, p. 65.

³⁴⁸ F.M. Stenton, *Types of manorial structure in the northern Danelaw* (Oxford, 1910), particularly pp. 17f.

service was not fixed it was deemed by the court to constitute a servile status.³⁵⁰ Dyer noted that by the thirteenth century the term 'villein' which once meant simply 'villager' had come to mean 'an unfree tenant, holding by servile tenure'.³⁵¹ Titow saw freedom and unfreedom from two different perspectives: personal and tenurial.³⁵² By personal unfreedom, he referred to peasants who were obliged through their birth to ask a lord's permission to leave the manor, marry their daughters off, or send their sons to be clerks, which implied that the lord had a personal hold on him and his family. Tenurial unfreedom came from the holding on which a peasant lived, for which the peasant holder was obliged to serve on the manorial demesne for a given number of days per week, and to carry out other duties and obligations which were defined and recorded by custom of the manor. By the thirteenth century many tenurial and personal obligations had been commuted in favour of money payments which carried with them an appearance of freedom. But the *liberi* (free peasants) or *villani* and *nativi* (unfree peasants) could hold villein or non-villein land, and hence their status and obligations could appear confused. This led, in the thirteenth century, to a more legal defining of the degrees of freedom and unfreedom, partly to determine the rights of peasants to use, or be excluded from, the king's courts.

There appears to have been a gradual metamorphosis of the meaning and status attached to villeins, sokemen, and villein sokemen between the eleventh and the thirteenth centuries, rendering the status recorded in Domesday Book difficult to reconcile with the tenure given in the thirteenth century. Land held in socage came under different rules from land held in villeinage. Many tenants held property under socage tenure in the thirteenth century, and Pollock and Maitland identified four types of such tenure: the first type owed a nominal rent such as a rose, with no other services attached; the second type was one in which a luxury gift was paid to the overlord on an annual basis such as a sparrow hawk, a pair of gloves, or a pair of gilt spurs; a third type identified tenants who were asked to do a certain and fixed amount of agricultural labour such as some ploughing or reaping; and lastly there was the manor where a number of tenants lived who were jointly bound to pay dues in money or kind, and to ensure that a fixed quantity of agricultural service was carried out for their overlord.³⁵³

³⁴⁹ P. Vinogradoff, *English society in the eleventh century* (Oxford, 1908), p. 331.

³⁵⁰ R. Faith, *The English peasantry and the growth of lordship* (London, 1997), p. 261.

³⁵¹ C. Dyer, *Making a living in the middle ages: The people of Britain 850-1520* (Yale, 2002), p. 140.

³⁵² J.Z. Titow, *English rural society, 1200 - 1350* (London, 1969), p. 56.

³⁵³ F. Pollock and F.W. Maitland, *The history of English law before the time of Edward I* (Cambridge, 1923), Vol. I, pp. 292-295.

Vinogradoff noted the anomalous position of those tenants who lived on the ancient demesne of the crown, stating that for peasants to plead ancient demesne status was tantamount to pleading villeinage.³⁵⁴ But he also noted that the tenure enjoyed by many living on ancient demesne was a customary tenure which allowed conveyance by use of a charter which rendered the land freehold, and destroyed its ancient demesne condition.³⁵⁵ Barg saw this treatment of the question of ancient demesne status as 'neither clear, nor consistent'.³⁵⁶ He also questioned how far the institution of ancient demesne served to protect the position of peasants who lived upon its soil, and proceeded to look for examples of ancient demesne territory, and to examine how the tenants living upon it fared in reality when testing their status in the courts. He concluded that in most circumstances where tenants were living on land which was classed as ancient demesne they became as defenceless as other villeins once their land was alienated from the crown. McIntosh looked at groups of villeins living on ancient demesne land and focussing on their legal position, she saw them acting in some ways like freeholders because they used writs in the courts to maintain their privileges.³⁵⁷ Taking as her example the manor of Havering in Essex, she studied the use of the 'little writ of right close', and saw it as a modified version of the regular writ of right used by villeins in manors of non-ancient demesne status. The king's manor was seen as a franchise isolated from the surrounding hundred and shire, and the privileged tenants living there were free from toll in all markets and custom-houses.³⁵⁸

Hoyt made a special study of the royal and ancient demesne lands. He noticed that once royal land was let out to farm or otherwise alienated, the tenants of the former royal demesne maintained their privileged access to the king's courts. Gradually the concept of the ancient demesne took hold within the legal system which enabled these privileged tenants to claim the right of 'ancient demesne' of the crown.³⁵⁹ Thus the tenants living on ancient demesne continued to have a privileged relationship with the king even though it consisted of lands which were no longer in the king's hands by the thirteenth century. It was a convenient way of allowing the king to draw dues from lands which had once been in his custody, but over which he no longer had any real

³⁵⁴ P. Vinogradoff, *Villainage in England* (Oxford, 1892), p. 95.

³⁵⁵ Vinogradoff, *Villainage*, p. 113.

³⁵⁶ M.A. Barg, 'The villeins of the "ancient demesne"' *Studi in Memoria di Federigo Melis i* (1978), pp. 213-237.

³⁵⁷ M.K. McIntosh, 'The privileged villeins of the English ancient demesne' *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance studies* (London, 1976), Vol. 7, pp. 295-328.

³⁵⁸ Vinogradoff, *Villainage*, p. 92 and nn. 1-6.

³⁵⁹ R.S. Hoyt, *The royal demesne in English constitutional history: 1066-1272* (New York, 1950).

control. The king could tax or tallage the men on his royal and demesne estates as a customary right, although this payment was arbitrary, and was often recorded and collected by the sheriff. Tallage not only applied to rural royal demesnes, but also royal boroughs, ancient demesne royal manors and escheats. Hoyt traced the use of the term *antiquum dominicum* in the Close Rolls, through writs of tallage of the king's demesne lands. He discovered that in the last decade of Henry III's reign this phrase was common, and by the 1250s it was used along with other similar phrases apparently to mean much the same thing. He was convinced that legal protection of villeins living on the royal demesne grew as a result of their access to the king's courts, and that this had its origins in the reforms of Henry II, which were developed during the reigns of his sons and grandson.³⁶⁰ By the mid-thirteenth century taxation shifted increasingly onto movable property, and there was an attempt to move taxation of the boroughs and royal demesnes in the same direction.³⁶¹ Tenants of royal demesnes and boroughs had to pay this tax along with everyone else. The tenants of the royal demesne had no direct representation in parliament but Wolffe did not believe that tenants living on ancient demesne soil felt themselves disadvantaged in any way, for the tenants themselves did not appear to have sought representation.³⁶²

The initial grant of the soke in 1231, by charter from the king to the Templars included all liberties and free customs (*cum omnibus libertatibus et liberis consuetudinibus*) of the king's part of the manor there (*totam illam partem quam habuit in manerio de Roel'*) with the advowson of the church of that manor and other appurtenances.³⁶³ With light services and limited rents, the peasants of Rothley soke would appear to have been extremely fortunate. The royal grant did not include the right to tax the Rothley tenants 'at will', but later documents show that tallage was demanded by the crown on several occasions in the thirteenth century.³⁶⁴ The king would often make a gift of the taxes raised as an additional grant to the Templars as

³⁶⁰ Hoyt, *The royal demesne*, p. 200.

³⁶¹ B.P. Wolffe, *The royal demesne in English history* (Oxford, 1971), p. 27.

³⁶² Royal demesne was considered to be represented by the knights of the shire by 1316. Cf. R.S. Hoyt, 'Royal demesne, Parliamentary taxation, and the realm, 1294-1322' *Speculum: A Journal of Mediaeval Studies* (1948), pp. 58-69.

³⁶³ *C.Ch.R., Henry III, AD 1226-1257* (London, 1903), Vol. I, p. 135. Clarification of this grant was made in 1234, outlining exactly the 'king's part of the manor' there namely: the two carucates of land in demesne, the 118s of assized (fixed and limited) rents, a wood, a mill, and the services of the township for one day a year to reap the king's cornfield and carry the corn to his barns.

³⁶⁴ Tallage demands were made during the incumbency of the Templars in 1234, 1235, 1238, 1241, 1245, 1249, 1251/2, 1255, 1260, 1268 and 1304.

holders of the manor.³⁶⁵ Such a grant was made by the crown in 1261 to the Templar brother Amadeus,³⁶⁶ and again in 1268.³⁶⁷ In 1305 the king's cities, boroughs and demesnes were taxed and the recipients of the tax were named.³⁶⁸ In that year the master of the Templars once more received a grant of the tax from the manor of Rothley, and the precedent for him to receive the king's tax from Rothley was thus established.

How did the development of the legal concept of 'ancient demesne' affect Rothley soke? A land dispute case brought before the assizes by local tenants in 1284 suggests one problem which arose and how it was ultimately resolved. The case, which hinged upon the rights of the tenants and the rights of the manorial lords, the Templars, was presented before the justices in eyre at Leicester and involved three tenants from the soke vill of Wartnaby, a settlement lying in the eastern half of the county.³⁶⁹ The three tenants, Ralph Fitz-Roger, Ralph of Wartnaby and Robert Fitzhugh, were summoned to establish whether the land dispute case should be heard in this court or elsewhere.³⁷⁰ The attorney for the master of the Templars was also in attendance and he defended the right of the master to hear the case in his own court of Rothley, demanding that the 'little writ of right close' be used to settle the dispute, because the land in question came within the soke of Rothley which was ancient demesne of the lord king.³⁷¹ The tenants, however, believed themselves to be free from service at the soke court. A further tenant by the name of William Diggeby appeared to speak on behalf of the whole of Rothley soke.³⁷² A jury, which consisted of knights and elders of the county of Leicestershire,

³⁶⁵ The master of the Templars frequently received this tax which was collected in Rothley soke, and in 1255 when brother Rocellino was master, he made a successful application to receive the king's tallage. *C.C.R. Henry III, 1254-56* (PRO, London, 1931), p. 83

³⁶⁶ *C.C.R. Henry III, 1259-61* (PRO, London, 1934), p. 389

³⁶⁷ *C.C.R. Henry III, 1264-68* (PRO, London, 1937), p. 483. In each case Rothley soke was described as *antiquum dominicum*, or ancient demesne of the king.

³⁶⁸ *C.C.R. Edward I, 1302-1307* (PRO, London, 1908), pp. 250-253.

³⁶⁹ This assize was enrolled on the De Banco Rolls, for the 13th year of the reign of King Edward I, Roll. 34 d. Easter term. It can be found in translation amongst miscellaneous documents pertaining to Rothley soke in the Leicestershire Record Office. L.R.O. 4D 72/I/1, pp. 20 - 24. Farnham also translated this case, and this can be found in G. Farnham, 'The descent of the manor' *T.L.A.S.* 12 (1921-1922), pp. 35 - 95.

³⁷⁰ Ralph Fitz-Roger presented to the assizes against Ralph of Wartnaby and Robert, because he believed that Ralph of Wartnaby held half a messuage and a bovate of land in Wartnaby which was rightly Fitz-Roger's, and that Robert held a fourth part of a bovate with appurtenances in Wartnaby, which he also believed were rightly his.

³⁷¹ The 'little writ of right close' was a means whereby peasants living on the ancient demesne of the king could appeal to a higher court to complain about the unjust removal of their land. If successful the court then addressed the writ to the bailiff of the soke court to carry out an investigation and supply a remedy.

³⁷² The Digby family was long established within the soke of Rothley in the settlement of Tilton on the Hill, where they also occupied the position of lord of the manor in a non-soke part of the township. Many of their number appeared as attorneys at law, and were well versed in court process. Their monuments can be seen in the church there, dating from the thirteenth and the sixteenth centuries.

was summoned to assess the complexities of the case. They examined the results of previous cases, one in 1272 and another from 1245.³⁷³ They discovered that incorporated within the record of 1272 was the result of a case from 1269 in which the soke tenants were refusing to pay a tax demanded of them by brother Imbert, master of the Templars.³⁷⁴ In examining the rights of the soke tenants to refuse this tallage payment, the previous ruling of 1245 between the tenants of the dependent townships and the then preceptor Robert of Saunford was also examined. Within this 1245 ruling the tenants claimed that all works, tallages and villein customs had been commuted for an additional payment save suit of service to the soke court and the View of Frankpledge which they would continue to observe. In 1272 brother Guy de Foresta had acknowledged and agreed with the ruling of 1245 that the men should be quit of the tallages and villein customs, and two brothers through their attorneys had witnessed this agreement.³⁷⁵ The dispute of 1284 ostensibly hinged on the right of the tenants to refuse to perform jury service at the soke court and this action had caused serious delays in local justice.³⁷⁶ Not only did some soke tenants believe themselves to be free from service at the soke court, but they also believed themselves to be of free status and not socage status.³⁷⁷ The soke tenant William Diggeby was present to represent the views of the soke at the assize court.³⁷⁸

Thus by 1284 an urgent remedy was required to reinstate an appropriate soke court system and provide a forum for soke property disputes to be resolved. At this date the status of ancient demesne land and the rights attached to it were still being worked out. The master of the Templars in 1284 should have known something of ancient

³⁷³ The hearing of 1272 had been heard in the king's court between Guy de Foresta, the master of the Templars, and the free tenants.

³⁷⁴ To enable the hearing of 1272 to go ahead, the hearing of 1269 must have been successful for the tenants. In this case, the king would instigate the second hearing with a writ of *monstraverunt*, in which the claim would be that the tenants had demonstrated that their rights had been infringed against the customs of a manor of the lord king, or 'ancient demesne' manor, and a further hearing would be required to bring about a resolution.

³⁷⁵ Namely brothers Ralph de Wrymegrave and Roger de Athlo.

³⁷⁶ This muddle appears remarkable; if the tenants believed themselves released from suit of service to the soke court, to which court did they take their grievances in the intervening period? Everyone owed suit of service to some court or another, and it appears highly unlikely that the peasants had avoided this duty for some time. If they believed themselves to be released from payment of tallage, who had paid the tallage granted by the king to the Templars in 1255, 1261 and 1268?

³⁷⁷ Is it possible that the tenants of Wartnaby who lived some miles distant from Rothley had failed in their duties? Could the bailiff of Rothley have failed in his duties to summon the tenants to the soke court?

³⁷⁸ It could well be that William Diggeby was the king's bailiff in the soke court at that time, although he was not identified as such. In Great Bowden, another royal soke in Leicestershire, the bailiff appeared at the assizes in 1297 to protest against Thomas of Harborough who had taken a case to the king's court. The bailiff claimed that Thomas was a sokeman of ancient demesne and held '*de bassa tenura*' of the

demesne status through his repeated application to the king to receive the tallage from the ancient demesne when the king taxed his tenants. Hoyt expounded this idea of the growth of the concept of the king's demesne as

'an entity from which the common law assizes are excluded, and when this point is reached the little writ of right close and the "ancient" demesne of the king on which it runs begin to appear in the documents.'³⁷⁹

The assize jury decided not to judge the case but to return it to its proper forum. The Templars wished to have their regular courts re-instated and for rights of ancient demesne to be upheld. As a result the soke tenants were ordered to comply and to facilitate this order the men were compelled to send twice as many jurors from each of the outlying soke villis as had been sent previously.³⁸⁰ It was in the interest of the assize court to ensure that a soke court did not fail in its duties and thus its ruling was calculated to restore sufficient jurymen to the court of the Templars to enable justice to be served. As Hoyt stated,

'The royal courts would not entertain an assize concerning villein lands, even lands of the king's villeins. What distinguished villeins of the royal demesne from all other villeins was that the itinerant or other royal justices were willing to intervene to see justice done in a manor of the royal demesne, just as they might be directed by the government to hold an inquest concerning a tenant's right to hold a tenement of a royal manor.'³⁸¹

The soke court reinstated, the assize jury was able to withdraw from the case. By restoring the soke court the master of the Templars had confirmed (and the assizes agreed with) the nature of the soke of Rothley as ancient demesne of the crown. The Templars retained their right to receive tallage but the right to demand it remained at the will of the king.³⁸²

Is it possible to detect the development of the soke tenants' ability to exercise their rights as tenants of the king before the entry of the Templars at Rothley? Tenants living on the sokeland of the king were just as likely to enter into property disputes as any other medieval tenant, and one such case from the early thirteenth century involved

manor, and as such he should return to that court for judgement. For further details see G. F. Farnham, ed., *Leicestershire medieval village notes* (Leicester, c. 1928), Vol. 6, p. 223.

³⁷⁹ Hoyt, *The royal demesne*, p. 197.

³⁸⁰ The assize court was not the instrument for dispensing justice that should have been sought through the manor court. However, soke tenants were concerned that the court, which should have dispensed such justice, was temporarily unable to function for lack of jurors.

³⁸¹ Hoyt, *The royal demesne*, p. 198.

³⁸² This case may well indicate a stage in the transition within the king's courts in which the 'little writ of right close' came to be fully exercised in the soke court of Rothley.

land in the soke dependency of Chadwell which lay within the hundred of Framland. Domesday recorded two mills for this vill, and these mills were later recorded in the Rothley custumal.³⁸³ During the reign of King John, in the year 1201, an inquisition in the *Curia Regis* Roll records that the earl of Leicester allegedly removed two carucates of land in Chadwell and broke the mill pond thus disrupting the water course to the detriment of the miller who lived there.³⁸⁴ As this involved a potential loss of income directly or indirectly to the crown, a jury of knights was summoned to judge between the earl and the king to make enquiries regarding the rights of each. The jury believed that the earl's father had once been seized of land in Chadwell, but had been disseised of it in the time of King Henry II.³⁸⁵ The earl denied ever having any rights to land within Chadwell, but insisted that the miller of Chadwell had made his millpond in the neighbouring township of Waltham over which the earl had jurisdiction. The said miller, described as a sokeman, should have paid a rent of 8d per year for the privilege of having his millpond there. Failure to pay his rent to the earl of Leicester had led the earl to break the pond to the detriment of the miller. During the reign of King John's father, a dispute had arisen between King Henry II and the earl of Leicester which had resulted in the earl leaving England for many years.³⁸⁶ On his return the earl visited his manor of Waltham in Leicestershire and discovered that the men of Chadwell and Wycomb had bought land in Waltham without his permission. Perhaps they had bought the land on which the pond stood and this would lead to the belief that the sokeman held the land legitimately. Schofield pointed out that land which was held freely in the late twelfth century could be recovered through the king's court. That this sokeman of Rothley brought this case successfully to such a court indicates the relative freedom of both the sokeman and his tenure in the early thirteenth century.³⁸⁷

³⁸³ L.R.O. 44'28/867 Rothley Temple MSS: The custumal of Rothley Soke, f. 13.

³⁸⁴ L.R.O. 5D33/184 Farnham Bequest. This earl Robert, died in 1204. His father, another Robert, had died in 1190. His father before him, another Robert had died in 1168. This limits the case to 1168-1190, if the correct earl has been identified. To place this within the reign of Henry II, the incidents related must have taken place between 1168 and 1189. This action could have brought a miller to financial ruin, and have caused great inconvenience to the local peasantry who would have relied upon the services which the miller provided.

³⁸⁵ This was possibly an attempt to deny the right of the earl to lay claim to the miller's pond.

³⁸⁶ Nichols, *Antiquities*, Vol. II, Part I, p. 380.

³⁸⁷ P.R. Schofield, *Peasant and community in medieval England 1200 -1500* (Basingstoke, 2003), p. 13. Some solution (perhaps unsatisfactory) between the earl and the sokeman must have been reached. As a result, the sokemen then refused to pay the agreed rent to the earl for the privilege of using the pond. The ensuing *fracas* led the sokeman to bring a complaint to the courts against the earl and his actions. No outcome of this case is recorded, but it has several features worth noting. Firstly, the miller of Chadwell was recorded as being a sokeman - there are few medieval references to the peasantry of Rothley soke which use this term. Secondly, the miller had presented his case at the court of the king, through recognitors, one of whom was surnamed Digby, a name which later appears in the Rothley custumal. Lastly, no objection was raised about the sokeman's right to present a writ within the king's court, nor of

Corporate action

Legal action was undertaken by many soke tenants in the late fourteenth century. At this time many manorial lords were anxious to maintain high levels of rent and other exactions in the face of a population depleted by the Black Death. In 1377 the tenants of Rothley soke obtained an exemplification of their rights and privileges which had been established some one hundred and thirty years earlier.³⁸⁸ An exemplification was a record which gave a fair copy of another document (or more than one document) and enabled the instigator to use the information copied out to their advantage. Such actions were costly but there are many instances of groups of peasants who were prepared to raise the cash corporately in order to secure such documentation. Faith noticed that there were frequent applications for exemplifications from the Domesday Book in the year 1377, and saw this action as the result of a 'great rumour' which took place amongst groups of peasants in Berkshire and other southern counties.³⁸⁹ These peasants, along with others in forty villages from the south of England, had acquired an exemplification coupled with a registration of certain findings in the Patent Rolls to establish the status of their land as ancient demesne. Their purpose, it would seem, was to use this status to resist an increase in services and rents being demanded by their manorial lords, and so determined were they that some peasants used armed force against the lords' agents.³⁹⁰ Most of these exemplifications were copies from the Domesday Book. Bracton determined that ancient demesne was land which had belonged to King Edward the Confessor on the day that he was 'alive and dead', and which still belonged to King William the Conqueror at the time of the Domesday survey.³⁹¹ Joy, in her extensive study of socage status and tenure went to great pains to analyse the meanings of the different terms used in the medieval law books, concerning ancient demesne and the various terms used to describe the people who lived upon this soil.³⁹² She acknowledged that the crown gradually alienated many of its estates in the

summoning the earl to answer to the grievance. Whatever the validity of the claim, it does appear remarkable that a peasant of relatively low status could summon an earl (or at least his attorney) to answer to a charge brought against him in a court of law.

³⁸⁸ L.R.O. 44'28/199 Rothley Temple MSS: A copy of an exemplification. Also in print in *C.P.R.*, 51 *Edward III, 1374-1377* (London, 1916), Vol. XVI, p. 425.

³⁸⁹ R. Faith, 'The "great rumour" of 1377 and peasant ideology' *The English rising of 1381* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 43-73.

³⁹⁰ Faith 'The "great rumour"', p. 45. If successful in their legal actions, the peasants would win other advantages: by establishing that they were living on ancient demesne of the crown they would be exempt from the hundred courts, and would only pay tallage when the king taxed his other demesne lands.

³⁹¹ S.E. Thorne, ed., *Bracton on the laws and customs of England* (London, 1977), Vol. III.

³⁹² C.A. Joy, *Sokeright* (Leeds, 1975), unpublished Ph.D., p. 336.

twelfth century, but asserted that the king ceased to have any interest in the lands that were granted prior to Henry II. She also maintained that the 'ancient demesne' of the crown' only became an identifiable entity in the thirteenth century.³⁹³ Thus a definition of ancient demesne only appeared during the thirteenth century when much of the land which had once belonged to the crown had been for the most part granted away, but the king retained his right to tax the tenants who occupied that land.

Barg examined this whole concept of ancient demesne lands, and the rights of the peasants who lived upon them. He believed that to use the argument for ancient demesne status the law was heavily weighed against the tenants and successes were rare, for the status of the land on which a tenant lived did not automatically confer that status on the tenant himself. Barg recognised that some confusion had arisen through the use of the various terms for the demesne of the king. From the entries in Domesday Book to the Hundred Rolls of 1279 many lands were called king's demesne but were not necessarily 'ancient demesne'. Most peasants attempting to limit services and taxes by means of an exemplification were unsuccessful, but they believed they had the right to do this and so were determined to try.³⁹⁴

The soke tenants of Rothley knew that they lived on land which carried the status of ancient demesne. So what were they trying to prove? The information sought by the tenants of Rothley soke in their exemplification came not from Domesday but from a thirteenth-century court ruling from the court case of 1284.³⁹⁵ This ruling established that thirteen named reeves from 1245 had secured an agreement that the dependent vills of Rothley soke would pay an increment of 3s per carucate of land *in lieu* of all works, tallages and other villein customs excepting only the view of Frankpledge, and they would continue attending the soke court when summoned by the

³⁹³ Joy realised that Vinogradoff had not recognised the late understanding of 'ancient demesne'. She pointed out that even Bracton in his mid-thirteenth-century law book had identified 'ancient demesne socage' as something which pertained immediately after the Conquest and not before.

³⁹⁴ Barg further demonstrated the vulnerability of tenants who lived on 'ancient demesne' by recalling that the manor of Cunton which had once been the king's was granted to Theobald Englechevill. The sokemen who lived upon it held the land for payment of rents only. Despite this, Theobald removed the sokemen, plundered it, and made the land part of his demesne. If the king had removed his hand from his demesne lands in this manor, he had no further interest in them or the people upon them and the tenants were just as vulnerable as peasants elsewhere. This 'removal of the king's hand' perhaps refers to the king's relinquishing his right to tax his demesne peasants. This action, once taken, would sever the last vestige of interest which the king had in his demesne land or his peasants. The tenants of the soke of Rothley continued to be taxed by the king throughout the thirteenth century thereby demonstrating that the king had not 'removed his hand' from his ancient demesne at Rothley. The Templars themselves acknowledged this relationship and profited from it by receiving the taxes raised by the king's commissioners. See also M.A. Barg, 'The villeins of the ancient demesne' *Studi in Memoria di Federigo Melis i* (Giannini editore, 1978), pp. 213-237.

king's writ of right and when a robber was to be indicted there by the court. The tenants of Rothley vill were to continue carrying out all other villein customs and suits as formerly.³⁹⁶ Thus the potential for ambiguity of the status of the tenants living on the ancient demesne had been avoided through application of a legal ruling reached in the mid-thirteenth century. If in 1245 the tenants of Rothley soke had established better conditions than those generally experienced by tenants living elsewhere on the ancient demesne, why did they need to re-establish this position in 1377? The fourteenth century witnessed many dramatic changes which were to affect the whole of the population of England for generations to come.³⁹⁷ The severe weather conditions in the early years of that century had left many people to die of starvation and disease, and the Black Death had a severe impact on the population of the whole country resulting in a rapid response by the king and his government who hoped to avert economic disaster and chaos. One response of government was the introduction of the Statute of Labourers.³⁹⁸ This was calculated to counteract the demand for higher wages by a depleted workforce and was vigorously enforced in some manors. Higher wages could perhaps be demanded by those who survived plague, whose services were in short supply.³⁹⁹ Manorial lords were made agents of the crown through the administration of royal justice. Lords, now able to enforce the law of the land, were eager to impose the Statute of Labourers, and as a result of this additional power, they were able to use a more oppressive force against their tenants. Lords expecting the same labour services received before the Black Death often forced tenants to enter empty tenements and perform labour services against their will and they also attempted to prevent their villeins moving elsewhere in the search for better wages.

Is there any evidence that the tenants of Rothley soke were being exploited by their manorial lords, the Hospitallers, in the late fourteenth century? To examine this question, evidence will be taken from the Extent of 1331/2 and a rental of 1372.⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁵ See above.

³⁹⁶ This may well have suited the tenants of the outlying soke villis. The tenants of Rothley might not have been equally sanguine.

³⁹⁷ Population estimates for the fourteenth century can be found in J. Hatcher, *Plague, population and the English economy 1348-1530* (Basingstoke, 1977).

³⁹⁸ See R.C. Palmer, *English law in the age of the Black Death, 1348-1381: A transformation of governance and law* (North Carolina, 1993). Palmer explores the effects of the Black Death on the process of government, and resulting changes in the law and the judiciary.

³⁹⁹ Hatcher was able to demonstrate that wages of craftsmen fell during this period. See J. Hatcher, *Plague, population and the English economy 1348-1530* (Basingstoke, 1977), p. 71.

⁴⁰⁰ The rental of 1372 can be found in Nichols, ed., *Antiquities*, Vol. III, part II, p. 952.

Name of vill	Total payment by soke tenants in 1331/2	Total payment by soke tenants in 1372	% of total payment made by soke tenants in 1331/2	% of total payment made by soke tenants in 1372
Rothley*	£9 2s ½d ⁴⁰¹	£6 9s 0d	18.9%	14.2%
Grimston*	£2 16s ½d	£2 16s 0d	5.8%	6.2%
Gaddesby*	£6 2s 3½d	£6 11s 5d	12.7%	14.4%
South Croxton*	£1 4s 1d	£1 4s 0 ½d	2.5%	2.6%
Tilton*	£2 8s ½d	£2 0s 9d	5.0%	4.5%
Wartnaby*	£5 12s 10d	£5 13s 1d	11.7%	12.4%
Barsby*	£3 13s 11½d	£3 0s 3d	7.7%	6.6%
Keyham	£3 5s 8d	£3 4s 5d	6.8%	7.0%
Chadwell* with Wycomb*	£4 1s 11d	£4 1s 11d	8.5%	9.0%
Baggrave*	£1 18s 2½d	£2 19s 2½d	4.0%	6.5%
Saxilby	£1 4d	£1 0s 4d	2.1%	2.2%
Somerby	10s	£1 15s 0s	1.0%	3.8%
Marefield south	£2 6s	£2 6s 0½d	4.8%	5.1%
Marefield north*	£3 19s 5½d	£2 8s 6d	8.2%	5.3%
Total	£48 4s 6½d	£45 9s 11½d		

Figure 7. Total payments made by soke tenants in 1331/2 and 1372

* These tenants were described as *libere tenentium* in 1331/2

Sources: Nichols, ed., *Antiquities*, Vol. III, part II, p. 952; L.R.O. 44'28/196 Extent of Temple land at Rothley, 1331/2

The rental for the soke drawn up by the Hospitallers in 1372 included payments made by the dependent soke vill. Figure 7 compares these payments with those surveyed in the extent of 1331/2. By comparing these two surveys it can be seen that the payments demanded from the tenants of each soke vill varied very little over this period.

However, this does not take account of the population of each vill and it is possible that there was a depletion in the population, but that the same rents were expected from each vill as a whole. Such demands for payments could perhaps give rise to a feeling of grievance if tenants were reduced in number and were less able to raise the required cash. To discover the numbers of tenants living in the vill, the poll taxes were examined. The poll tax for 1379 named 80 tenants in Rothley who paid their 4d tax

⁴⁰¹ £7 3s 10½d was paid by the *libere tenentium* and 30s was paid by the *cotagiorum*. L.R.O. 44'28/196 Rothley Temple MSS: Extent made at Rothley, 1331/2.

with the exception of one tenant, William Herle, who paid 6s 8d.⁴⁰² The total collected was £1 13s 4d. Wives paid jointly with their husbands. The number of tenants in Rothley in the 1379 poll tax returns differed little from the mid-thirteenth-century rental where 84 tenants were recorded. By contrast, in 1377 the number of people taxed in Rothley was 188, and the total collection was £3 2s 8d suggesting that the tax was collected in a very different way, and it would appear that many people were caught up in the tax collection who were subsequently omitted in 1379. The numbers taxed in 1379 were similar to those making soke payments in *circa* 1259 suggesting that the burden of the tax levied in 1379 fell upon land holding tenants of the soke, and not their servants or paid employees. It is unfortunate that only a handful of soke villis belonged fully to the soke, thus preventing a thorough comparison with the tax levies of 1379. However, a small table might be useful to illustrate the possibility of population change.

Soke vill	Number of tenants in <i>circa</i> 1259	Number of taxpaying tenants in 1379
Rothley	84	81
Keyham	31	30
Gaddesby*	52	67
Baggrave	29	25
Barsby	29	39

Figure 8. Number of tenants paying rents and taxes in the soke

* a small part of Gaddesby was non-soke

Sources: C.C. Fenwick, ed., *The Poll taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381. Part 1: Bedfordshire to Lincolnshire* (Oxford, 1998), Leicestershire 1379: Goscote Hundred, Rothley, p. 552; L.R.O. 44'28/867 Copy of the custumal of Rothley, including rental of Rothley soke, undated

With this limited data it is possible to speculate that the population of the soke had altered very little. If this is so, then why were the tenants of 1377 so keen to establish the ruling of 1245 by use of an exemplification? The income and outgoings of the soke between c.1259 and 1372 can be demonstrated from the rental and surveys of the soke thus:

⁴⁰² C.C. Fenwick, ed., *The Poll taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381. Part 1: Bedfordshire to Lincolnshire* (Oxford, 1998), Leicestershire 1379: Goscote Hundred, Rothley, p. 552.

	<i>Circa 1259</i>	1331/2	1372
Income from soke tenants	£65 9s 1d	£48 4s 6½d	£45 9s 11½d
Income from parish	£30 13s 4d	£60	£33 19s
Outgoings from soke	£23 12s 6d	Not specified	Combined with Dalby
Outgoings from parish	Included in total outgoings	£2 13s 4d + stipends of chaplains	£19 0s 4d

Figure 9. Income and outgoings from the soke and parish

Sources: L.R.O. 44'28/867 Copy of the custumal of Rothley, including rental of Rothley soke, undated; L.R.O. 44'28/196 Extent of Temple land at Rothley, 1331/2; Nichols, ed., *Antiquities*, Vol. III, part II, p. 952

From the results in Figure 9 it would appear that by 1372 the income of the manorial lords of the soke was greatly reduced compared with that in the thirteenth century custumal. The income from the parish on the other hand had almost doubled between *c.*1259 and 1331/2, but had reduced dramatically by 1372. Tithes were raised through a number of means: there were the money payments which would be affected by the number of people who paid; the payments from agriculture and husbandry which could fluctuate in value according to the market; and the separate offerings made at various times of the year. In spite of the steep rise in their value between 1259 and 1331/2, there was a reduction in value by 1372 to a level similar to that in *c.*1259. The outgoings from the soke and parish are difficult to determine because in each case the calculations were made very differently and so cannot be compared. Income from the soke would appear to have been static, but if the population of the soke was diminishing then the income from the rectory must also have suffered proportionately. Although the tenements appear to be fully occupied (as far as can be ascertained on the small sample of soke villis available), the number of people supported by those tenements appears to have decreased.

Could the sokemen have been experiencing difficulties finding sub-tenants for their soke tenements? This could result in their being forced to reduce their own rents in order to attract new tenants, thereby reducing their own profits and their ability to make payments to the Hospitallers. Alternatively, if the number of soke tenants were reduced, it is possible that there would be no surplus labour available to work on the demesnes, or if there were, that these demesne workers could have gone to better paid employment elsewhere. The Hospitallers could either have sought to introduce services from soke tenants in order to resolve such a labour shortage, or attempted to increase

the incremental payment agreed in 1245.⁴⁰³ The prime motive for an exemplification of the ruling of 1245 could therefore have been to re-establish a right to pay fixed rents and perform limited court services. Having obtained such a ruling the tenants would have been in a position to do this, but by so doing the sokemen of Rothley distanced themselves from the majority of other ancient demesne claimants.⁴⁰⁴

Peasant uprising at Wartnaby

In remarking on advowsons, Moorman stated that 'there was a tendency, in the minds of patrons.... to regard a benefice much more as an estate than as a spiritual responsibility'.⁴⁰⁵ He was remarking on the manner in which the 'living' attached to a church might be granted like a piece of land, and the ability to make this grant known as the advowson was much sought after. The rectory of the church at Rothley provided a valuable asset, one which the Hospitallers fully expected to acquire when they were granted the manor and soke of Rothley. But although the manor and soke came into their hands in the early fourteenth century, the acquisition of the advowson proved to be more difficult.

When the Hospitallers were granted Rothley they were already in possession of a manor in Old Dalby, or Dalby-on-the-Wolds. This manor lay about 4 kilometres to the north west of Wartnaby, on the other side of the Saltway road. According to Farnham, in the mid-fourteenth century the Hospitallers obtained a licence to make an exchange of land to acquire the adjoining manor in Old Dalby, so that the whole of the township came under their control.⁴⁰⁶ The Hospitallers decided to make their manor at Dalby the administrative centre for their Leicestershire estates, and this had the effect of placing the peasants of Wartnaby in close proximity with their manorial lords where previously they had been at a distance of about 20 kilometres from Rothley. A number of issues

⁴⁰³ This payment was levied at the rate of 3s per carucate. It is possible that the township remained responsible for payment of the whole amount, regardless of the number of tenements which were occupied and worked.

⁴⁰⁴ These rights were rooted in their status as villein sokemen, living on the ancient demesne of the crown. In several court records Rothley was described as land which had once been royal, or former demesne of the king. In the C.C.R., Rothley and its bailiwick were described as '*fuerunt antequam rex villam de Roel*', and '*de ballio regis in Roel*', and the king granted to the Templars '*illam partem quam habuit in manerio de Roel*'. The status of their land was not in doubt, but this did not automatically confer privileged status to them as individuals. Of the many cases cited by Faith and Barg, the courts found overwhelmingly against the villeins who sought to establish their personal status, even when it could be shown that the land on which they held their land was former ancient demesne of the crown.

⁴⁰⁵ J.R.H. Moorman, *Church life in England in the thirteenth century* (Cambridge, 1946), p. 5f.

⁴⁰⁶ G. Farnham, 'The descent of the manor' *T.L.A.S.* 12 (1921-22), p. 48f. The king's licence was obtained in 1352.

appear to have brought the peasants of Wartnaby and their new lords into conflict in the latter half of the fourteenth century.

The peasant uprising in the summer of 1381 was to prove a turning point for many in the south of England. It would seem that the town of Leicester escaped from the 'worst excesses of the summer of 1381'.⁴⁰⁷ However, in August 1381, the parson of the church of Ab Kettleby in Leicestershire led a group of armed soke tenants from Wartnaby against the brothers of the Knights Hospitaller, in order to vent their frustration over unresolved grievances.⁴⁰⁸ To understand something of the background to this clash, it is necessary to go back to the beginning of the fourteenth century and examine the issues surrounding the right of presentation of the vicar of Rothley church. Although the original grant of the rectory of Rothley and its chapels had been made to the Templars in 1241, the power of exercising the right of presentation had been delayed in the thirteenth century.⁴⁰⁹ When the soke was removed from the Templars and placed into the hands of the sheriff in 1308, the rectory also became forfeit to the crown, thus beginning another long process of transfer.⁴¹⁰ In September 1308 the king presented William de Hillum to the vicarage of Rothley,⁴¹¹ and in the following year, William de Tavistock was presented to the vicarage.⁴¹² The advowson was granted for a time to William de Ferrers in 1312.⁴¹³ In 1315, another clerk was presented to the church at Rothley called Henry de Chestreton.⁴¹⁴ The rectory seems then to have come into the hands of the Knights Hospitaller against the will of the king who consequently recovered his right of presentation.

⁴⁰⁷ R.B. Dobson, ed., *The peasants' revolt of 1381* (London, 1983), 2nd ed., pp. 277-8. The fear of a rebellion so alarmed the people of Leicester that they heard and believed a rumour that rebels from London had reached Market Harborough, from where they intended to make their way north to Leicester. The dreaded rebels did not appear, but the keeper of the duke's wardrobe believing the castle a likely target in the town, decided to remove any valuables from the castle and send them by cart for safe keeping to Leicester Abbey. The abbot was equally afraid that the rebels might storm the abbey and turned the cart away, sending it back to the castle where the valuables were left in the churchyard of St Mary's next to the castle grounds.

⁴⁰⁸ *C.C.R., Richard II, 1381-1385* (London, 1920), Vol. II, p. 3.

⁴⁰⁹ This will be examined in more detail in the chapter on Rothley Parish.

⁴¹⁰ L.R.O. 4D 72/I/1. This is a translation of the Exchequer L.T.R. Templars' rolls for 1308. This forfeit also included the Templar demesnes at Baggrave, Gaddesby, Stonesby and Melton (Mowbray) in Leicestershire, and Walshale in Warwickshire.

⁴¹¹ *C.P.R., Edward II, 1307-1313* (London, 1971), Part I, p. 93. This signifies also that the peculiar jurisdiction of Rothley has reverted to the bishop.

⁴¹² *C.P.R., Edward II, 1307-1313* (London, 1971), p. 100. Two clergymen were appointed to serve at the same time in Rothley soke.

⁴¹³ *C.P.R., Edward II, 1307-1313* (London, 1971), p. 514.

⁴¹⁴ *Calendar of Chancery Warrants, 1244-1326* (London, 1927), p. 420. This rapid turnover of vicars appears surprising in view of the fact that this had been made into a perpetual vicarage by the bishop in 1241.

In 1315, Robert the parson of Ab Kettleby made a claim that the chapel of Wartnaby was annexed to the church of Ab Kettleby, and as a result he withheld the chapel by force.⁴¹⁵ An enquiry into the incident was demanded by the king, so that a remedy could be found, but as no solution is recorded, it would seem that the position was not resolved. Although the Hospitallers sought to lay hold of the lands which had belonged to the Templars, the rectory of the church of Rothley was not automatically a part of this grant. In 1328 the Knights Hospitaller obtained an exemplification of the letters patent for the year 1276 confirming that the advowson of Rothley had been granted to the Knights Templar.⁴¹⁶ In 1329 the prior of the Hospitallers agreed that the right of presentation of the vicar belonged to the king,⁴¹⁷ and in 1337 the king had still not resolved the advowson predicament,⁴¹⁸ in fact the king granted the advowson in April of that year to Henry de Ferrers.⁴¹⁹ In the following year the dispute still continued.⁴²⁰ An extent of the manor and soke of Rothley made by the Hospitallers in 1331/2 suggests that they believed they held the rectory of the church and chapels of Rothley, for the manor was charged with finding two chaplains to celebrate divine service. However in a rental of 1338 there is an indication that a large pension was paid by the Hospitallers as compensation for the removal of the rectory from Stephen de Lymbergh.⁴²¹ The Hospitallers had certainly obtained the rectory by 1372, for a further rental indicated as such.⁴²² Thus by 1381 the Hospitallers had been involved in a protracted struggle laying hold of the rights of the rectory of Rothley church and of the income it attracted.

The power to appoint a vicar brought with it financial rewards, for the rectory attracted an income which equalled and often exceeded the income from the jurisdiction of the manor and soke of Rothley. It was a valuable asset, and although the vicar instituted in the parish of Rothley would have appointed chaplains in the chapels attached to his church, the chaplain of Ab Kettleby also believed that he had a claim on the neighbouring chapel of Wartnaby. The right of a vicar to appoint a chaplain for a

⁴¹⁵ *Calendar of Chancery Warrants, 1244-1326* (London, 1927), p. 420. August 2nd, 1315.

⁴¹⁶ *C.P.R., II Edward III, 1327-1330* (London, 1891), p. 340.

⁴¹⁷ *C.P.R., Edward III, 1327-1330* (London, 1891), p. 387.

⁴¹⁸ *C.C.R., Edward III, 1337-1339* (London, 1972), p. 191.

⁴¹⁹ *C.Ch.R., II Edward III, 1327-1341* (London, 1912), p. 399.

⁴²⁰ *C.C.R., Edward III, 1337-1339* (London, 1972), p. 292.

⁴²¹ L.R.O. 44'28/196 Rothley Temple MSS: Extent made at Rothley, 1331/2. The 1338 rental can be found in L.B. Harding, ed., *The Knights Hospitallers in England being the report of Prior Philip de Thame to the Grand Master Elyan de Villanova for AD 1338* (Camden Society, London, 1857).

chapel within his parish should have been clear cut. Why did the vicar of Ab Kettleby believe that Wartnaby, or part of it, belonged to his parish? Evidence from the nineteenth century shows that there were assarts at Wartnaby situated in the wolds to the north east of the settlement.⁴²³ These assarts were closely allied with similar assarts for Ab Kettleby and Holwell, all of which lay in north east Leicestershire. Wartnaby Wolds was thus not part of the jurisdiction of Rothley soke, but it would have attracted tithes for the support of the local church. Which church would this have been? It is highly possible that the church to which tithes were paid was that of Ab Kettleby, which lay in closer proximity to these assarts. Whatever the facts of the case, the chaplain of Ab Kettleby believed that some of the residents of Wartnaby came within his parochial jurisdiction. The same pressures which had been brought to bear on the soke tenants who sought an exemplification, namely the shortage of tenants, could also have brought about a reduction of tithes, and hence of income for all priests. Given the sensitive balance of the relationship between Hospitallers and the tenants of the soke, the chaplain of Ab Kettleby had no difficulty in raising support for his cause. In 1381, the men of Wartnaby assembled and went armed against the king's peace to threaten the brethren of the Knights Hospitaller. This violent assembly resulted in a threat of physical attack on the brethren at their holding in nearby Old Dalby, after which the tenants of Wartnaby received an edict from the king's courts which threatened arrest and confiscation of their arms. Confirmation that the Hospitallers had held the manor and advowson of Rothley and of Wartnaby, and the other chapels with the profits therefrom, was given to the courts. The parson who led the affray and encouraged the peasants to take away and consume the tithes was named as William de Swepston of the church of Ab Kettleby.⁴²⁴ The king sent an order to the mayor, bailiffs and commonality of Leicester ordering them not to allow such unlawful assemblies,⁴²⁵ and a similar order was sent out simultaneously to all sheriffs, bailiffs, ministers and other lieges.⁴²⁶ This incident took place just a few weeks following the rising of the rebels from Essex and Kent in London, and the authorities were still feeling extremely nervous about the

⁴²² Nichols, ed., *Antiquities*, Vol. III part II, p. 952. This struggle indicates that the manor and the rectory were separate entities, and this apparently unusual situation will be discussed in the chapter on Rothley parish.

⁴²³ L.R.O. 4D 72/I/2 Map 2, Lands on the Wolds in the townships of Holwell, Wartnaby and Kettleby, 1827. This map shows that Wartnaby, Holwell and Ab Kettleby created assarts into the wolds to the north east of Wartnaby, and these assarts were piecemeal and about the size of a single farmstead each. The assart for Wartnaby was known as Wartnaby Wolds, and was deemed to be outside the soke of Rothley.

⁴²⁴ C.C.R. *Richard II, 1381-1385* (London, 1920), Vol. II, p. 3.

⁴²⁵ C.C.R. *Richard II, 1381-1385* (London, 1920), Vol. II, p. 5.

⁴²⁶ C.C.R. *Richard II, 1381-1385* (London, 1920), Vol. II, p. 5.

possibility of similar risings elsewhere.⁴²⁷ In Wartnaby, the payment of the tithe had been the focus of the dispute between the soke tenants and the Hospitallers, encouraged by a clergyman who nurtured a long held belief that he had been deprived of income from a chapel which had never been his.

Court processes in Rothley soke

McKintosh noted that villeins living on ancient demesne of the crown appeared to enjoy certain privileges.⁴²⁸ She took as her study the royal manor of Havering in Essex, and examined the rights of the villeins in the thirteenth century. She noted that they had the use of 'the little writ of right', and also the use of another writ called *monstraverunt*.⁴²⁹ DeWindt examined a similar group of tenants in the manor of King's Ripton in Huntingdonshire who appeared to have been defeated in the royal courts when they exercised the writ of *monstraverunt*.⁴³⁰ Here, the tenants took their manorial lord, the abbot of Ramsey, to court to protest that he was demanding services other than those which custom demanded.⁴³¹ The jury heard the case and confirmed that they owed *merchet* and labour services which were listed in detail, and that this had been so in the time of King Henry II.⁴³² Some of the tenants had claimed that they had rendered other customs in the time of King Cnut, had paid fixed rents, and had only given tax when the king taxed his manors.⁴³³ This appeal to custom was also used by the men of Stoughton in Leicestershire in the late thirteenth century, where a case examined by Hilton demonstrated the tensions which arose between Leicester Abbey as manorial lord and the villeins on the estate, whose services were required to farm the demesne which appeared to the tenants to be over and above those which were laid down by custom.⁴³⁴ The ability of tenants to prove what was the custom of the manor, and to establish which of those customs they ought to perform, was called into question. During the

⁴²⁷ Resentment, triggered by the Poll Tax which had been levied in 1379, left many peasants feeling strongly aggrieved with levies placed upon them by their overlords. For information on the poll taxes for Leicestershire see C.C. Fenwick, ed., *The Poll taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381. Part 1: Bedfordshire to Lincolnshire* (Oxford, 1998).

⁴²⁸ M.K. McIntosh, 'The privileged villeins of the English ancient demesne' *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 7, (1976), pp. 295-328.

⁴²⁹ These privileges were also examined in Vinogradoff, *Villainage in England*, Chapter III, 'Ancient demesne'.

⁴³⁰ A. DeWindt, 'Peasant power structure in fourteenth-century King's Ripton' *Medieval Studies* 38 (1976), pp. 236-267.

⁴³¹ This case is recorded in F. Maitland, ed. *Select pleas in manorial and other seignorial courts* (Selden Society, 1888), Vol. 1, pp. 99-106.

⁴³² Maitland, *Select pleas*, p. 101.

⁴³³ Maitland, *Select pleas*, p. 100.

⁴³⁴ R.H. Hilton, *The economic development of some Leicestershire estates in the 14th and 15th centuries* (Oxford, 1947), p. 73f.

hearing in the king's court the tenants claimed that they were 'free sokemen' who gave fixed payments for their tenements, made suit of court every three weeks, made a twice yearly appearance at the abbot's court, but were otherwise free of all services. At a second hearing some of the tenants admitted their villein status and the sheriff was ordered to ensure the future performance of the services which their status demanded.⁴³⁵

This right to challenge a lord who increased customs and services was provided with a new remedy in the late thirteenth century for the tenants living on ancient demesne of the crown. The name of the writ addressed to the king when the initial complaint was raised came from the use of the words *monstravit* or *monstraverunt* as part of the opening formula.⁴³⁶ Thus the significance of successfully claiming ancient demesne status gave access to two writs of valuable importance in the later medieval period: the 'little writ of right close' which enabled tenants to resolve land disputes quickly; and the *monstraverunt* which prevented lords from increasing labour services. However, it was noted by Barg that proving the status of land as ancient demesne did not automatically confer that status on the tenant himself, and this led to many peasants in the fourteenth century claiming such status, but failing to establish their rights to its privileges.⁴³⁷ When the tenants of Rothley applied to the courts for an exemplification they chose not to claim the privilege of ancient demesne, but resorted instead to a legal ruling established in the mid-thirteenth century, and questions were not raised with regard to the personal status of the tenants making the claim⁴³⁸

There is evidence that the tenants themselves used terms by which they distinguished their status within the soke courts, and these terms denoted those tenants who held such privileges, and those who did not. In a post-Dissolution View of Frankpledge with Court Baron held at Rothley in 1579, some questions were put to the jury which could shed light on the pre-Dissolution question of status.⁴³⁹ The questions hinged on those people who presented at court to register land acquired through inheritance or purchase within the township of Rothley or its soke. The jury explained the groups of people to be found within the soke thus: *extrinsecus* or *forensis* meant those born outside the soke, or (interestingly) those born inside the soke of unfree parents; *liberi indigenorum* or free natives were those born of free natives, and were

⁴³⁵ A translation of these hearings can be found in Farnham, ed., *Village notes*, Vol. IV, pp. 152-154.

⁴³⁶ Vinogradoff, *Villainage*, p. 102.

⁴³⁷ M.A. Barg, 'The villeins of the ancient demesne', p. 321.

⁴³⁸ See above.

⁴³⁹ L.R.O. 44'28/893 Rothley Temple MSS: View of Frankpledge with Court Baron, f. 126.

entitled from their birth to inherit or purchase land within the soke without question regarding status, and without payment of an entry fine to the lord. The *forensis* or *extrinsecus* did not hold land by hereditary rights, but had first to agree a fine with the lord, the land to be purchased having first been examined by the *homagium* or jury before such a purchase could be made, and before enrolment in the court rolls. These marks of status recognised by the jury, which determined the status of the peasantry within the manor and soke, can be compared with the customs contained within the custumal. Here it was stated that anyone of the soke could sell to another of the soke (*alicui infra sokam*) but not to an outsider (*extra sokam*), and the grant was to be made in court where the fees were paid by the vendor only, and the transaction was made by the bailiff's licence (*per licentiam ballivi*), who was described as the king's bailiff (*ballivus domini regis*). What becomes apparent from the written customs from the thirteenth century and the responses of the jury in the sixteenth, is that it was not landholding alone which determined rights and obligations, but these rights had to be coupled with status. Barg's observations regarding tenants of the ancient demesne who failed to link their personal status with the status of the land on which they lived appears to be born out by the customs and the practice within the soke of Rothley.

During the later recording of the exchange of land in the soke court specific terms identified the tenant who was entering the tenement. If he or she had been born within the soke they were known as *secretus*, 'insider' or 'hidden', and the fine payable to the lord was set at zero.⁴⁴⁰ If not born within the soke, or they had not inherited the tenement, then they were declared to be *forensicus* or *extraneus*, a 'foreigner', and the entry fine was set by the lord of the manor.⁴⁴¹ Set fees due to the court officials were laid down by custom.⁴⁴² Court rolls of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries record such transactions involving property exchanges where soke men and women were referred to as *secretus*, and the payment to the lord was nothing. In such cases the fees paid to the

⁴⁴⁰ Examples can be found in the fourteenth-century court rolls for Rothley. L.R.O. 44'28/870, Rothley Temple MSS: Court roll 15th Jan. 1399. William Bagworth made a fine with the lord for a messuage and 6 acres of land, but he gave nothing to the lord for a fine for entry because he was *secretus* (insider or inman). There are many such examples throughout the court rolls which include sokelands other than those in Rothley.

⁴⁴¹ L.R.O. 44'28/870 Rothley Temple MSS: Court Roll 15th Jan. 1399. John Loveday made a fine with the lord for entry into lands and tenements bought from William Bagworth, and he gave the lord an entry fine of 3s 4d because he was *extraneus* (a stranger).

⁴⁴² This system appears to have been acceptable to all parties, as there were no disputes with regard to the payments made, or lack thereof. The real money to be made, however, was between the tenants in their private dealings with each other. If the figures cited within their charters can be taken at face value, then the buying and selling of token amounts of land appear to have been worth a lot of money. There must have been a pecuniary advantage to the purchaser.

court were 2d for each exchange, regardless of the amount of land involved.⁴⁴³ Only when a payment was made by a tenant living on the manorial demesne of the Hospitallers, was the property granted at the will of the lord, coupled with an entry fine.⁴⁴⁴

Disputes in the court rolls between soke tenants were rare, which suggests that either the soke tenants were not generally litigious or that some other means had been devised for settling disputes outside the court process. The entries within the court rolls were probably summaries of the court cases heard, and judgements reached. Writs for land disputes were attached to the edge of the court rolls. One such writ was attached for the year 1384,⁴⁴⁵ with three further writs of right appended to the court rolls for the years 1398-9.⁴⁴⁶ How were the various claims regarding land resolved? In the absence of records during the fourteenth century it is difficult to answer this question. However, a case in 1469 may suggest how such cases were resolved. In that year a jury of twelve men gathered to judge on the case of Sir William Ivett, a parson of Woodford, Northamptonshire, who held land, meadow and pasture in the township of Rothley, and who died *seised* of the same.⁴⁴⁷ The question to which they sought an answer was did Sir William bequeath his lands in Rothley to the vicar of Rothley, Sir John Derby? The jury decided that the bequest had been fraudulently made, and that the land should descend to the next of kin, but how were the next heirs to be decided upon? A pedigree written in the same year gives us the answer.⁴⁴⁸ The property which had belonged to Sir William Ivett (Ivett was his paternal grandmother's Christian name) descended by hereditary right to Richard Mylner of Rothley and his heirs, and the pedigree was carefully drawn up to prove his case. A comparison of the people who appeared in the pedigree can be made from extant documents in the Rothley Temple collection, and a line of descent can be traced from John Magson, great-grandfather of Sir William Ivett, vicar of Woodford, through the male line to Richard Mylner. The Mylners (or Millers) had been in Rothley for many generations, and had married into the Magson family.

⁴⁴³ L.R.O. 44'28/869 Rothley Temple MSS: Court roll, AD 1384; 44'28/870 Court rolls, AD 1398-9; 44'28/871 Court roll, AD 1443; 44'28/872/i/ii/iii Court rolls, AD 1463-4, AD 1477-8, AD 1478-9; 44'28/873 Court rolls, AD 1520, AD 1525; 44'28/880 Court Book AD 1520 - 1533. Later court books are also available.

⁴⁴⁴ L.R.O. 44'28/869 Rothley Temple MSS: Court roll, AD 1384. John Flesshever of Marefield North entered the tenement which had been held from the lord by his father, at the court of Rothley held at Barsby on 23rd November 1384. In this case the entry fine was 6s 8d.

⁴⁴⁵ This was the equivalent of the 'little writ of right close', a form of redress granted to tenants living on the ancient demesne of the king.

⁴⁴⁶ These were concerned with claims on dwellings, ploughland, meadow, pasture and rent, the typical concerns of peasants farmers in the late fourteenth century.

⁴⁴⁷ L.R.O. 44'28/247 Rothley Temple MSS: Copy of enquiry, 8 Edward IV.

Richard Mylner then married Agnes Magson, great-granddaughter of John Magson, who was a distant cousin of William Ivett, and his nearest surviving relative through the male line.⁴⁴⁹ The use of pedigrees must have been a frequent and useful means of establishing family and inheritance rights within the soke, and these would probably be verified by a soke jury before being accepted. Manorial lords were usually willing to abide by the custom of the manor with regard to inheritance customs, and the ability to prove the right of inheriting family property by means of a written document must have been an advantage. What is remarkable in the Magson case is that the jury of Rothley was so actively involved in examining suspect claims to establish rights of inheritance that they were prepared to travel into a neighbouring county to prove their case.

Early enclosure in Rothley

Thirsk noted that in 1517 the first enclosure commission was appointed and its enquiries concerned enclosure and imparking.⁴⁵⁰ There was a growing belief in the early Tudor period that enclosed land was more efficiently cultivated than land farmed in common, and the aim of enclosure was to increase productivity and profitability of land. Private enclosing and engrossing had taken place from the fourteenth century, and legislation had been passed in an attempt to arrest depopulation of settlements, which resulted in the conversion of arable to pasture.⁴⁵¹ A series of proclamations in the first half of the sixteenth century spoke out against engrossing which led to depopulation.⁴⁵² Early enclosure appeared to be gathering pace in the early sixteenth century, and Rothley was no exception.

In 1526 a dispute arose between the freeholders of Rothley and Sir John Babington, Knight of the commandery of Dalby and Rothley, and a team of arbiters assembled to facilitate an agreement over the enclosure of the manorial demesne lands of Rothley Temple.⁴⁵³ The arbiters present were Sir John Digby, Sir John Villiers and Sir William Skeffington.⁴⁵⁴ There were two further arbiters Richard Clerk and Hugh

⁴⁴⁸ L.R.O. 44'28/245 Rothley Temple MSS: Copy of a pedigree AD 1469.

⁴⁴⁹ There are a number of documents which support the findings of the pedigree, and establish the various relationships, for example: L.R.O. 44'28 Rothley Temple MSS: Court rolls, 44'28/229 AD 1452; 44'28/250 AD 1474; 44'28/252 AD 1476; 44'28/255 AD 1480.

⁴⁵⁰ J. Thirsk, *The rural economy of England* (London, 1984), p. 72.

⁴⁵¹ Thirsk, *Rural economy*, p. 72. Thirsk refers to a general statute passed under Henry VII in 1489.

⁴⁵² Thirsk, *Rural economy*, p. 74. These proclamations were in 1514 and 1528, and were followed by an Act in 1533.

⁴⁵³ L.R.O. 44'28/285 Rothley Temple MSS: Award of the arbitrators in a dispute between Sir John Babington and the freeholders of Rothley.

⁴⁵⁴ All of whom had relatives in Leicestershire, and one was connected with a former soke vill, and the third was related to a family still residing in the soke. The Villiers family resided in Brooksby, in the

Clerk. Why were so many arbiters assembled to address a manorial issue? What were the potential pitfalls for the lord and his freeholders if the deal failed? Did they arrive at an agreement which could withstand the test of time?⁴⁵⁵

The demesne lands attached to Rothley Temple were of two types: the land that was granted to the Templars by the king in 1231; and the additional arable in the fields of Rothley which the Templars had bought from the tenants by private agreements.⁴⁵⁶ The park at Rothley Temple appears to have been ploughed out possibly by tenants placed on the demesne by the Hospitallers in the fourteenth or fifteenth century. This breaking of the ground of the park may have given all the tenants of Rothley access to different parts of the demesne for folding and keeping their animals during fallow periods. By the sixteenth century the Hospitallers no doubt wished to improve their income from their demesnes and may have decided that an enclosure would be more profitable and easier to manage.⁴⁵⁷ The agreement of 1526 was in five parts and consisted of the following: firstly, the commander and freeholders were to hold their lands separately but the escheat lands of the Hospitallers (possibly those private purchases of the Templars) were to remain within the common fields of Rothley and the Hospitallers would place their own tenants in them; secondly, the lord's right to boon work was to be commuted; thirdly, the right of fishing in the Rothley Brook was to be retained by the tenants, saving the great waters (possibly the River Soar) which would remain with the lord; fourthly, access to all parts of the common fields would be determined by the presiding counsel Digby, Villiers and Skeffington, with any cost to be born by the lord; lastly, the agreement was to be binding on the successors of both the freeholders and the lord. From this agreement it can be inferred that the Hospitallers were in some way restricted in their negotiations with the tenants of Rothley. An element of compromise by the Hospitallers, it would seem, was more likely to lead to a satisfactory conclusion.

This agreement would probably bring about significant changes in Rothley, one of which was the end of customary labour service. This would result in the tenants of

Wreake Valley; the Skeffingtons were from Skeffington, a soke vill at Domesday; and the Digbys resided in Tilton on the Hill, still part of the soke at this time.

⁴⁵⁵ The whole tenet of this document suggests that the tenants of Rothley had the upper hand - why else would there be such an array of legal expertise?

⁴⁵⁶ These were recorded in the thirteenth-century rental. It does not appear that any further land was acquired by the Templars or the Hospitallers in this way.

⁴⁵⁷ In 1522 the Hospitallers had been driven out of their headquarters on the Mediterranean island of Rhodes, and there could have been a pressing need to establish a new headquarters elsewhere, and such a venture would cost money.

Rothley becoming like other tenants of the soke in that services owed would be suit of court and an incremental payment in *lieu* of boon works, and a rental drawn up in 1534 duly records this additional payment.⁴⁵⁸ This rental records 40 boon payments of between 1d and 3s with the total of boons valued at £1 2s 5½d.⁴⁵⁹ The rental total was £6 13s 7¾d, and with the boon payments, the total income from Rothley tenants was £7 16s 1¼d.⁴⁶⁰ Most of the rents included land only, very few referred to houses, but the additional payment required of the tenants was for their copyhold house only and not for their land.⁴⁶¹

The agreement preserved the right of fishing for the tenants, and a previous rental of Thomas Patchett in 1510 recorded that this right was charged at 10s *per annum* which represented only a small increase over the previous 200 years.⁴⁶² The fish would have been a valuable commodity during lent and when meat was unavailable.⁴⁶³ In 1608 this right was permitted from Sisely Croft to the river Soar.⁴⁶⁴ The demesne lands which were separated from the tenant lands included meadow and other grazing such as fallow which would result in a depletion of the hay and pasture available to the livestock of the inhabitants. The 'ancient cottiers' held no lands of their own but they had been allowed to use the commons to pasture their horses, sheep and cows, and this change would have affected their rights.⁴⁶⁵ Once the Hospitaller lands were separated from the land of the vill, they would remove the right of common from the villagers within those lands, and

⁴⁵⁸ L.R.O. 4D 72/1/1; and L.R.O. 44'28/887 Rothley Temple MSS. Sir William Kingston, Knight, the first freeholder for Rothley, had two holdings: the first of 84 acres with a house which was Stephen of Rothley's land and owed a rent of 14s; and the second holding of 24 acres for 4s. Both holdings were reckoned as copyhold, and both owed suit of court. A further 26 acres of land which had once belonged to Stephen of Rothley was held by William Dunham. Thomas Patchett held 4 houses and 86 acres of land for a rent of 24s 9d. Most other rents which were recorded for land were at the rate of 2d per acre, with holdings measured in acres. The lands which had belonged to Stephen of Rothley do not appear under the boon works, but Thomas Patchett owed a boon payment of 3s for his holding.

⁴⁵⁹ The 40 boons contrasts with the 29 villeins of the Domesday book, but it is possible that it is the same housing plots which attracted the labour services.

⁴⁶⁰ The income from the tenants had scarcely changed since the fourteenth century.

⁴⁶¹ This may explain why there are few houses recorded in the thirteenth-century rental. It was the house to which the customary field work was attached and not the land holding, for which they paid rent. It is possible that the records for those who held a house were kept separately. As it was the bailiff's duty to ensure that the customary service was fulfilled, it could have been his duty to maintain such a record.

⁴⁶² Fishing in the brook had also been recorded in the extent of 1331/2 and valued at 8s.

⁴⁶³ The Rothley Brook is still clear and deep, and fish can be seen in abundance.

⁴⁶⁴ L.R.O. 44'28/962 Rothley Temple MSS: Customs of Rothley AD 1608. In 1608 customs were included which must have been already ancient for they describe that the inhabitants of Rothley were to keep their livestock in common with that of the Templars for the land which they had all shared throughout the year. The loss of the additional fallow should have met with a loss of livestock which needed to share the fallow. Sisley (or Cicely) Croft Leys was described as being in the Southfield, along with Brookfield (furlong) and Thorniwong. These lay to the south of the settlement and the brook. There is now a bridge across the brook between Brookfield and the modern Rothley Court Hotel golf course.

⁴⁶⁵ The thirteenth-century rental gives an indication that there were cottagers in the vill, but it is not until 1608 that there is explicit reference to how they fit into the economy of the vill.

the Hospitallers lost rights of common within the open fields of Rothley. Further Hospitaller lands, called escheat lands, remained within the common fields of the township, and Sir John Babington agreed that these should be let out to tenants, perhaps to retain the integrity of the remaining common fields, and these lands would keep their attached rights of common within the open fields.⁴⁶⁶

The tenants of Rothley were faced by an array of legal expertise, but it is likely that the lawyers were chosen for their local knowledge and their ability to strike the right notes with the indigenous population. This agreement was reached with immediate effect save the formality of going to the chapter of the Hospitallers. It was to be the last struggle between the ecclesiastical overlords and the tenants of the soke, for within little more than twelve years the Hospitallers would be dissolved by an edict from the crown along with other monasteries throughout England.

Summary

The king retained an interest in Rothley in the thirteenth century by maintaining his right to tax the tenants of his 'ancient demesne'. As a result, the manor and soke of Rothley illustrate the developing legal nature of 'ancient' royal demesne. The tenants who lived within the manor and soke had their rights and privileges of status and tenure encapsulated within the custumal, and these rights survived in a modified form after the Dissolution. The tenants of Rothley soke did not use the status of their land to maintain privileges, but chose instead to use royal courts to uphold favourable negotiated rights. The advowson of Rothley was in royal hands during part of the fourteenth century, and although this led to some confusion over the rights of the chapels which were appended to the church, these rights were ultimately resolved and upheld. Soke tenants maintained pedigrees in order to establish rights of inheritance within the soke when examined by the soke jury. The tenants of the manor of Rothley negotiated new rights in the early sixteenth century when a partial enclosure was undertaken by the Hospitallers, thereby bringing their villein services to an end, and placing them on an equal footing with other tenants of the soke.

The development of these rights between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries demonstrate an increasing legal awareness by the peasantry of the soke. Furthermore,

⁴⁶⁶ These escheat lands were probably the lands which had been privately held by the Templars, which became forfeit to the crown in 1308. These lands were described in the thirteenth-century rental and customary of Rothley.

the willingness and ability of the tenants to exercise these new rights suggest both an individual and a corporate management of the financial resources of the sokemen to promote favourable outcomes in their struggles with their manorial lords.

Chapter 5

Fields, settlements, wastes and woods

The agrarian organisation of Rothley and its soke during the medieval period can be gleaned from documentary sources such as Domesday Book, the thirteenth-century custumal, extents from the fourteenth century, and even later in the Tudor custom of commoning for Rothley. These give information regarding the arable, wastes and woods of the soke at a particular moment in time. Depending on the detail, extents can also give information regarding orchards, fishing, warrens and dovecotes, all of which indicate the dietary habits of the wealthy. Further inferences can be made from other types of document such as inquisitions which may offer clues to agrarian activity such as the animals kept in the fields, and the crops stored in the barns. Local customs of commoning and land measurement tend to be later, but can also be useful for examining the methods of common agriculture and husbandry. From modern, large-scale maps it is possible to identify features referred to hundreds of years earlier. Using a combination of these documents, and others found in printed sources, it is possible to come to some conclusions about the agrarian economy of the soke of Rothley in the later medieval period.

Documents are not without their problems: Kosminsky pointed out the difficulties of using extents and inquisitions, for many can be seen to be inaccurate in

certain details.⁴⁶⁷ For example he noted that demesne acres were often assessed at below the real figures, and that the estimate of demesne revenues could be also be 'unreal'. The money rents of the tenants were often an average assessment and court revenues were also often under-assessed. Nevertheless, such inquisitions and extents provide useful information which can be used to assess the type of husbandry in which an estate was engaged at any particular point in time.

Vinogradoff gave an outline of the agrarian arrangements which pertained in the medieval period.⁴⁶⁸ He pointed out the necessity for the township to share the waste and the commons. The waste consisted of woods, moors and pastures which became more restricted with the growth of population. Woods and pastures would have been regulated according to the common which was attached to the tenant's holding. These holdings would have been attached to a quantity of arable and must have included pastureland and other common rights. Assarts, or portions of common land which were turned into arable or enclosed as private pasture, restricted the rights of others to use the land and could lead to friction. Meadows were often used for the cutting of hay during the summer months, and the grazing of animals in the meadow was usually prohibited until Lammas day (1st August). Vinogradoff reminded us of the intermingling of the strips of arable in the open fields of the township, which after the harvest would then be given over to common pasture as part of the agrarian practice within the open fields. He identified different types of cultivation: the three-field system, with winter seed wheat, spring seed barley or oats, and fallow; the two-field system which alternated between crops and pasture; the occasional cultivation of temporary patches of land while the rest remained pasture; or 'cultivation in closes with special manuring and a more complex rotation of crops'.⁴⁶⁹

Dyer saw that the usual practice on demesne estates of the thirteenth century was mixed farming, and there were often four different types of corn grown, and livestock would often comprise horses, cattle, sheep, pigs and poultry.⁴⁷⁰ Crops such as peas, beans and vetches would also be grown not only as animal feed, but also as a means of adding nitrogen to the soil. Dyer gives figures for the labourers of the monks of Crowland at their Northamptonshire manor of Wellingborough, stating that in the 1290s they employed 8 ploughmen, 2 carters, 3 shepherds, a dairymaid and a cowherd, along

⁴⁶⁷ E.A. Kosminsky, *Studies in the agrarian history of England in the thirteenth century* (Oxford, 1956), p. 57.

⁴⁶⁸ P. Vinogradoff, *The growth of the manor* (London, 1932), 2nd ed., p. 165f.

⁴⁶⁹ Vinogradoff, *The growth of the manor*, p. 182.

⁴⁷⁰ C. Dyer, *Making a living in the middle ages: The people of Britain 850-1520* (Yale, 2003), p. 133.

with some other part-time servants, these workers provided about half the labour required to cultivate the 300 acre demesne farm.

Hilton pointed out that the 'sustenance of the farmer and his family was the main objective' of medieval production, and that the land of Leicestershire, although not of the best quality, was for the most part very good.⁴⁷¹ He described the soil as boulder clay overlaying the lias to the east of the River Soar, and in some parts, the high water table made the land prone to flooding. The agricultural land of the river valleys of the Soar and the Wreake were of great importance, for on their banks were considerable deposits of alluvium, with older deposits on the gravel terraces. The east of the county contained many small streams which flowed either westwards and southwards to the Soar or the Wreake, or southwards towards the River Welland, all of which provided essential access to drinking water. Thus the background to farming in Leicestershire is one of reasonable good quality land coupled with good water sources.

A number of Rothley soke dependencies shared their land and resources with one or more manorial lords at Domesday, but it is likely that much of the arable and other resources were organised on a local basis, and that the strips of arable were intermingled in the open fields. This suggests that the unit of farming administration was the township rather than the manorial lord, and evidence for this will be examined below. The arable at Domesday was measured in carucates and bovates, and the number of ploughs was given as a separate value. Rothley had 2 ploughs in lordship and the villeins shared 6 ploughs. Throughout the remainder of the soke there was a total of 82 ploughs. Meadow was valued for 17 sokelands and measured in acres for all but one (Seagrave) where it was in furlongs. Woodland featured prominently at Domesday for the soke, particularly to the east of Rothley, on higher ground. It was variously measured in furlongs and acres, although the demesne woodland for Rothley itself was measured in leagues.⁴⁷² Rothley had two woodlands, one for the king's use and the other for the use of the villeins. Four soke vills had woodland: Tugby, Skeffington, Halstead and Tilton.⁴⁷³ Working mills at Domesday give an indication of the ability to harness the power of the water sources within the vill, and Rothley had a mill valued at 4s, Skeffington mill was 12d, and two mills at Chadwell and Wycomb were valued at 2s between them. Asfordby had two mills valued at 8s, and Frisby held

⁴⁷¹ R.H. Hilton, 'Medieval agrarian history' *V.C.H. Leicestershire* (London, 1954), Vol. II, pp. 145-198.

⁴⁷² DB f. 230 b.

⁴⁷³ DB f. 230 c.

a part-mill valued at 2s. Thus were the agrarian assets of the soke recorded in the Domesday survey.

By the thirteenth century, many Domesday sokelands had become alienated from the soke. Most of the lands which remained within the soke under the Templars also formed part of the parish, but this correlation was not absolute. The majority of sokelands which were granted away from the soke by the crown before the grant to the Templars was of lands which, by and large, did not belong to the parish of Rothley.⁴⁷⁴ Between 1231 and 1308 the Templars held demesnes at Rothley Temple, Gaddesby and Baggrave for which there were separate accounts. Documents for the soke dependencies of Barsby and part of South Croxton, are well represented within the Rothley Temple Manuscripts. Other documents can be used to elucidate the agrarian practice in other townships such as Tilton, Skeffington, Chadwell and Wycomb. Through the examples of these townships it will be possible to view the medieval agrarian assets of the soke over a large area of central and eastern Leicestershire.

Rothley

Rothley township included the land known later as Rothley Temple, and as a royal holding it was assessed at 5 carucates at Domesday, with the land being divided between the king, a priest, 29 villeins and 18 smallholders. This division of land and assets was probably significant. The customary and rental indicated that fragments of demesne of the Templars were scattered throughout the soke, and it is therefore possible that the 2 carucates assessed for Rothley were distributed in a number of places, with perhaps only a half of this assessment in the *caput vill*. From the extent drawn up in 1331/2 it can be seen that there were 400 acres belonging to the non-demesne land in Rothley, and therefore the Domesday estimates for the township appear to have been an under-assessment.⁴⁷⁵

The settlement of Rothley is watered by the Rothley Brook which was substantial enough to power a mill and support a fishing industry in the medieval period (Plate 5). Arable farming dominated Rothley, and the custumal shows that there were thirty-one virgate holders in the vill, and seven holders of bovates. A number of tenants held roods and acres, and other tenants held tofts or crofts. There are few references to fields in the custumal, although Stephen of Rothley was identified as holding land called *le Breche*, and other arable was recorded by size (but not name or location)

⁴⁷⁴ This correlation will be examined in more detail in chapter 7.

⁴⁷⁵ L.R.O. 44'28/196 Rothley Temple MSS: extent of the Hospitallers 1331/2.

within the arable fields. Field and furlong names exist in charters of land exchange such as *Brechfurlong*,⁴⁷⁶ the *Coppesdebosck*, *Holdegore*, *Hemwodefurlong*, *Le Haln*, the *Rodys*,⁴⁷⁷ and *Wethul*.⁴⁷⁸ By the fourteenth century some parcels of land can be ascribed to particular open fields in the township. For example, the South Field was first mentioned in a document of 1392,⁴⁷⁹ and other names of fields appear in the fifteenth century, namely Woodfield, Oldfield, Hallfield and Linkfield, all of which can be identified from the enclosure award for Rothley some 350 years later (Map 14).⁴⁸⁰ In the early sixteenth century there was a partial enclosure, which appears to have encompassed much of what was called the West Field in the eighteenth century. Thus it would seem that the township of Rothley farmed an open-field system comprising at least four fields, which by the time of Parliamentary enclosure were called Southfield, Brookfield, Woodfield, and Linkfield. In the thirteenth century the people of the township identified their strips in the fields by their furlong names only, and it is possible that crop rotation was determined on the same basis.⁴⁸¹ The earliest references to meadow were Westman Meadow, *Menedemere* and *Gyldenedolys* all measured by the rood.⁴⁸² Occasionally very small quantities of land were being exchanged within the vill but in no documents were animals mentioned, it was land alone that was recorded by the various tenants.

⁴⁷⁶ L.R.O. 44'28/190 Rothley Temple MSS: gift, 13th century.

⁴⁷⁷ These four come from L.R.O. 44'28/192 Rothley Temple MSS: gift, 13th century.

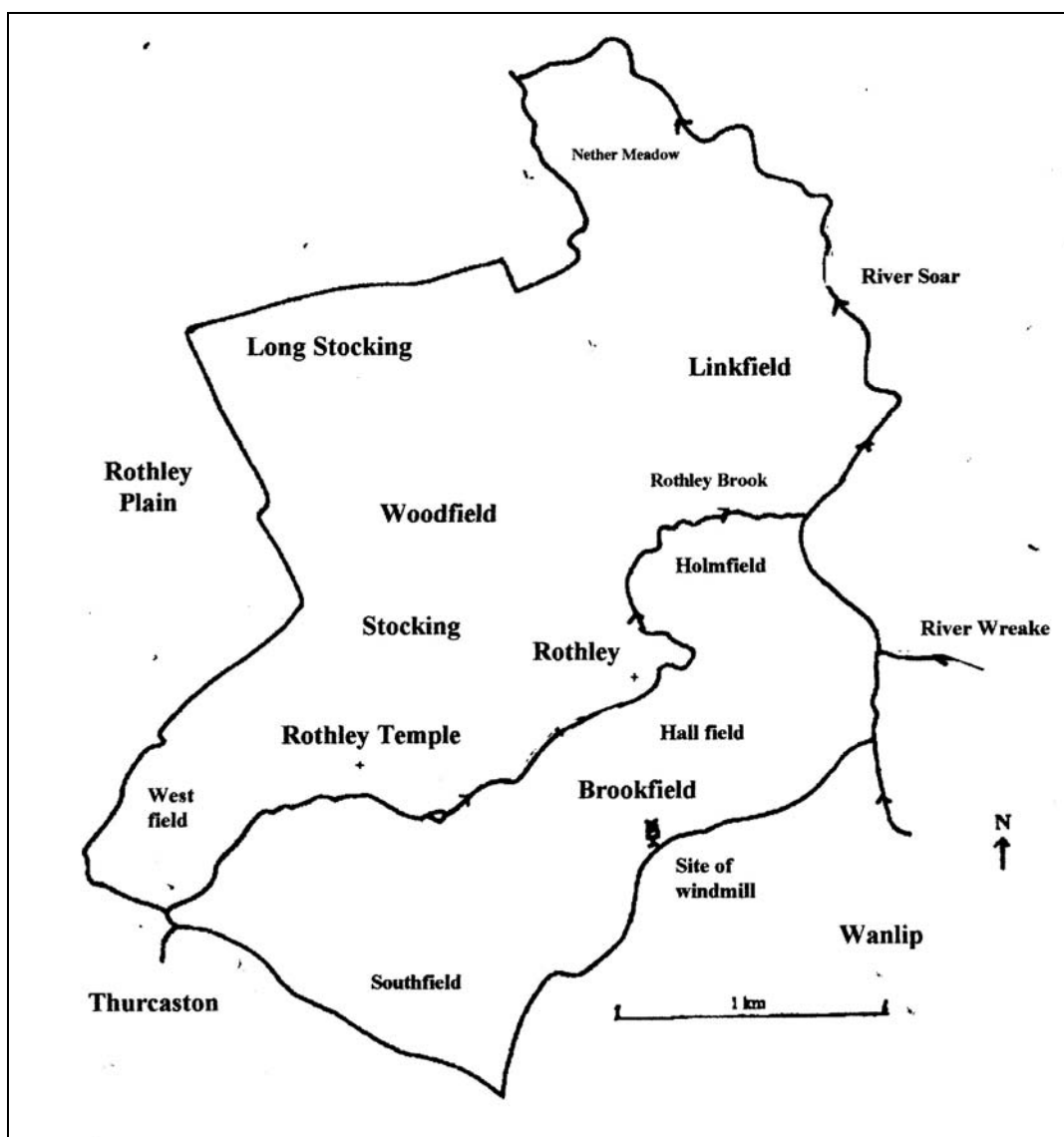
⁴⁷⁸ This last from L.R.O. 44'28/193 Rothley Temple MSS: feoffment, 13th century. This is the earliest reference to a sub-letting of land in the township of Rothley. Whether sold or sub-let, only small amounts of land were exchanged. The services attached to the land, which were not specified, were to be fulfilled by this tenant.

⁴⁷⁹ L.R.O. 44'28/201 Rothley Temple MSS: gift of land.

⁴⁸⁰ L.R.O. 4D 72/1/2 Enclosure maps, awards and acts for the soke of Rothley. The earliest documented evidence for the open-field system in Rothley is the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries.

⁴⁸¹ This more flexible means of cropping is discussed by R.H. Hilton, 'Medieval agrarian history' *V.C.H. Leicestershire* (London, 1954), Vol. II, pp. 145-198.

⁴⁸² L.R.O. 44'28/190 Rothley Temple MSS: gift, 13th century, and 44'28/192 Rothley Temple MSS: gift, 13th century.



Map 14. Rothley township at enclosure

Sources: L.R.O. 44'28/190 Rothley Temple MSS: gift, 13th century; L.R.O. 44'28/192 Rothley Temple MSS: gift, 13th century; L.R.O. 44'28/193 Rothley Temple MSS: feoffment, 13th century; L.R.O. 44'28/201 Rothley Temple MSS: gift of land; L.R.O. 4D 72/1/2 Enclosure maps, awards and acts for the soke of Rothley

Evidence for assarts can be found in the Pipe rolls of the early thirteenth century, when the men of Rothley and Mountsorrel obtained a licence to assart land which lay between the two settlements.⁴⁸³ The assarting or clearing of woodland and waste became a feature of life in the countryside in the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Bolton described in some detail the effects of assarting in this country during that period.⁴⁸⁴ The Pipe rolls state that the men of Rothley and the men of Mountsorrel paid

⁴⁸³ S. Smith, ed., *G.R.P. 7th year of the reign of King John, Michaelmas, 1205* (London, 1941), p. 34.

⁴⁸⁴ J.L. Bolton, *The medieval English economy 1150-1500* (London, 1980), pp. 82-86.

forty marks for permission to assart the woods between Langcliffe and the road which stretched from Rothley to Mountsorrel. The men of Mountsorrel had half the assarts, and the men of Rothley the other half.⁴⁸⁵ By 1230 it would seem that the everyday running of the township of Rothley was in the hands of the men themselves, for a charter roll of that year stipulated that the men of Rothley could hold the town with the demesne wood and the mill at fee farm.⁴⁸⁶ For this they paid £10 by the hands of the sheriff. They were also allowed to have the assarts in the town, previously held of the King, now worth 22s. Assarts were commonly held for rent payment only, and this was part of their attraction. The following year, the King granted away the 22s rent to the abbot of Croxton (Kerrial), along with the rent of the assarts of the men of Mountsorrel, which by now amounted to 20s.⁴⁸⁷ This grant was confirmed in 1232⁴⁸⁸ and 1235.⁴⁸⁹

Subsequent payments to the abbot of Croxton for the assarts in Rothley continued to be made by the sokemen, but the administrative responsibility for these fell to the Templars. A reference to this payment is made in the custumal and appears under the heading *redditus forinseci*.⁴⁹⁰ The abbot of Croxton was to receive the rents from the assarts of Mountsorrel, granted before the coming of the Templars to Rothley. After the suppression of the Templars, the Hospitallers were granted Rothley and its member villis, and the extent of the assets of Rothley, drawn up in 1331/2, recorded the obligation to pay rent of 22s to the abbot of Croxton.⁴⁹¹ This payment of 22s made a post-Dissolution appearance in a copy of a bargain and sale in 1540. From the document we learn that the earl of Rutland had purchased the land which had once belonged to the monastery at Croxton in Rothley, and he was now selling this land to a consortium of four men from Rothley, along with land which had belonged to the monastery at Garendon.⁴⁹² In 1542 Humphrey Babington paid rent of 22s to this same group of men for the land called Newstocking on the Long Stocking, which land had originally belonged to the abbey of Croxton.⁴⁹³ The enclosure award for Rothley was granted and executed in 1780.⁴⁹⁴ From a careful study of the award, it is possible to identify three distinct areas which were once woodland: an open field called the Woodfield; another called the Stocking; and a third called Long Stocking (Map 14).

⁴⁸⁵ Smith, ed., *G.R.P. 7 King John*, p. 34.

⁴⁸⁶ *C.C.R., Henry III 1226-1257* (London, 1903), Vol. I, p. 112, 1 Feb. 1230.

⁴⁸⁷ *C.C.R., Henry III 1226-1257*, p. 131, 21 April 1231.

⁴⁸⁸ *C.C.R., Henry III 1231-1234* (London, 1905), p. 200.

⁴⁸⁹ *C.C.R. Henry III 1226-1257*, p. 211, 8th August 1235.

⁴⁹⁰ L.R.O. 44'28/867, Rothley Temple MSS: Custumal of Rothley soke, f. 15a.

⁴⁹¹ L.R.O. 44'28/196, Rothley Temple MSS: extent made in 5 Ed. III at Rothley.

⁴⁹² L.R.O. 44'28/304, Rothley Temple MSS: gift, 20th July 1540.

⁴⁹³ L.R.O. 44'28/310, Rothley Temple MSS: gift, 26th April, 1542.

According to Field, Stocking is a name that refers to recently cleared tree stumps.⁴⁹⁵ All three areas of land lay adjacent to each other, north of the settlement of Rothley. Long Stocking lay outside the modern parish, but was included in the enclosure award for Rothley, and lay furthest from the settlement, next to Mountsorrel.⁴⁹⁶ This land which lay in the modern parish of Mountsorrel, would appear to have been that for which the men of Rothley sought the king's permission to assart in the early thirteenth century.

The types of crop grown in Rothley on the two carucates of demesne were recorded in accounts drawn up in 1308 and 1309 by the sheriff following the confiscation of Templar lands.⁴⁹⁷ The Templars' granary (probably at the Temple site) contained wheat, rye, drage,⁴⁹⁸ beans, peas and oats, and in the grange at Rothley was stored some mixed grain. In the granaries of Gaddesby and Baggrave there were wheat, peas and drage. The types of crop grown suggest a three or four year rotation of grain, legumes and fallow.⁴⁹⁹ Work on the demesne lands was carried out by paid labourers, and their wages had also been recorded in the custumal.⁵⁰⁰ The accounts recorded 24 oxen in the stalls at the Temple site, enough to pull between 3 and 6 ploughs, and each ox was valued at 8s. There were 5 horses for the plough each worth 3s, and 5 carthorses were housed in the cart shed along with 2 carts and a wagon. No ploughs were detailed for Rothley, but at Gaddesby there were two ploughs with all the equipment, with four oxen to draw them, and at Baggrave there were four oxen for one plough. The figures for the 1309 extent make it difficult to interpret how the ploughs and plough teams fitted into the picture of arable farming. There is no evidence that the Templars hired out the plough teams, and yet there do appear to be more oxen at the Temple site in Rothley than were necessary to draw ploughs for the one carucate which was in the demesne at that site. It is possible that the oxen at the Temple were part of their animal

⁴⁹⁴ L.R.O. 4D 72/I/1 Documents of the manor and soke.

⁴⁹⁵ J. Field, *English field names* (Newton Abbot, 1972).

⁴⁹⁶ It was 'extra-parochial' because the rents had belonged to the abbey of Croxton Kerrial before the Dissolution.

⁴⁹⁷ L.R.O. 4D 72/I/1 Documents of the manor and soke. This is from a translation of extracts from the L.T.R. Templars' rolls repertory 1308 m.7. A translation of the account for 1309 can be found in T.H. Fosbrooke, 'Rothley: The preceptory' *T.L.A.S.* 12 (Leicester, 1921-22), p. 32ff.

⁴⁹⁸ A mixture of barley and oats.

⁴⁹⁹ By the early seventeenth century, a remarkably similar picture is drawn for us in the customs of the manor, in which there is evidence of three main crops grown in Rothley: wheat, peas or oats, along with a third of the land lying fallow. L.R.O. 44'28/962 Rothley Temple MSS: Customs of the soke of Rothley as settled by the inhabitants of 1608. However, this document purports to re-iterate the customs as they had been in the thirteenth century, so there may be some confusion of memory here.

⁵⁰⁰ L.R.O. 44'28/867 Rothley Temple MSS. As part of their *alter familia* the Templars provided two carters, six plough teams, and six ploughmen for their land in Rothley, at costs of 5s for the carters, 15s for the plough teams, and 12s for the ploughmen.

husbandry, and that oxen were raised for sale on the open market, or perhaps the Templars maintained custody of the plough beasts of the sokemen. A combined team of oxen and draught horses was usual for the thirteenth century, although Hallam suggests that the more usual combination was of six oxen and two horses in the east midlands.⁵⁰¹

Animal husbandry formed an important part of the economy of the vill. The sheriff's accounts tell of the demesne stock, which included one bull, 11 cows, 3 steers, 6 yearling steers, 4 calves, 145 ewes with 123 lambs, 65 hogs, 2 boars, 4 sows, 3 porkers, 34 hoggets,⁵⁰² 12 sucking pigs, 5 geese and 5 ducks. For riding or pulling carts there were 5 horses and a mule.⁵⁰³ Such stock required hay and pasture, and this would have been supplied through meadow, pasturage and stubble feeding. Such references to animals were absent from the custumal of the mid-thirteenth century in which there were accounts for the expenses of estate workers who would have tended the animals. For example, the chief shepherd in the mid-thirteenth century had wages of 2s 6d, the cowherd 2s, the swineherd 2s,⁵⁰⁴ and the worker who had custody of the animals in the forest was paid 2s 6d. Pasturage for hogs, boars and hoggets would have been available in the woods of Rothley, and pasture rights may have been available in Charnwood. Further evidence of possible pastureland can be ascertained from the extent for 1331/2 in which several pastures were recorded worth 20s each.⁵⁰⁵ There were three meadows named as East Meadow, Priest Meadow and other unmeasured parcels of meadow which were worth a total of 100s a year.⁵⁰⁶ The park for Rothley, the location of which is now uncertain, provided underwood for the township worth 40d a year, and probably also provided pannage for the pigs which is not enumerated.⁵⁰⁷ Further indications of animal husbandry can be gained from a custumal made by the Hospitallers in the year 1372 which stated that the 5 carucates of land in the manor of Rothley were capable of supporting 24 cows, 100 cattle, and 60 pigs with their piglets.⁵⁰⁸ No sheep were mentioned, but perhaps they were grazed on the stubble and fallow, or on Rothley Plain

⁵⁰¹ H.E. Hallam, ed., *The agrarian history of England and Wales 1042-1350* (Cambridge, 1988), Vol. II, p. 337.

⁵⁰² Hoggets are yearling sheep.

⁵⁰³ These were in addition to the plough horses and oxen mentioned above.

⁵⁰⁴ In the rental this appears as *portario*, not *porcario*. I have taken this to be a transcription error from the original rental, as there is very little to distinguish a 't' from a 'c' in the script.

⁵⁰⁵ L.R.O. 44/28/196 Rothley Temple MSS: Extent of the Hospitallers 1331/2.

⁵⁰⁶ These named meadows can be identified in the Rothley enclosure award of the late eighteenth century. See L.R.O. 4D 72/1/2 Enclosure maps, awards and acts for the soke of Rothley, including Rothley (1781/2), Wartnaby (1764), Keyham (1771/2), Chadwell with Wycomb (1777/8), Barsby with South Croxton 1794/8), and Somerby (1761/5).

⁵⁰⁷ A. Squires has assisted in the attempt to identify the park, thus far without success.

⁵⁰⁸ A transcript can be found in Nichols, ed., *Antiquities*, Vol. III, part II, p. 972.

(Map 15).⁵⁰⁹ The numbers of cattle were so great by the late fourteenth century as to suggest that they had become of particular importance within Rothley manor by this time.

Other economic assets within Rothley were fisheries, mills and woodland. The rights of fishing were granted to the tenants of the town for which they paid an annual rent of 8s in 1331/2. Fishing was often associated with effective water management and with the running of a water mill. The water of Rothley Brook rises to the west in the hills of Charnwood above Rothley, and additional tributaries increase the water flow considerably. The channel along which the water runs has been improved, but such improvements may have existed during the medieval period, controlling the flow of water as it approached the mill site, which was probably to the east of the settlement in the vicinity of the church.⁵¹⁰ Coupled with water management, the application of hurdles and fishing nets would have formed an effective fishery. In the area of the Temple the waters of Rothley Brook are channelled to give different pools of water which, if hurdled, could have acted as stew ponds. This access to fish would have formed an important part of their market economy, for fresh fish could easily have been transported the short distance to their own short-lived market or to the nearby town of Mountsorrel.⁵¹¹ Later evidence shows that the fishing rights for the tenants of the town extended as far as the river Soar into which the Rothley Brook flows to the east of the settlement.⁵¹² The mill in Rothley was first recorded in the Domesday Book when it was worth 4s. On confirming the grant of Rothley and its soke to the Templars in 1234 the king specified that the grant included a mill in that town.⁵¹³ A mill appears in the mid-thirteenth-century custumal both in the *memoranda* and under the foreign rents, where it was held for a rent of 5 marks.⁵¹⁴ By the time of the extent of 1331/2 there were two mills for Rothley, one water mill and one windmill which together were worth 60s (£3), suggesting that the real return for the mills had decreased over the intervening years.

⁵⁰⁹ This land was part of Charnwood Forest, and was enclosed along with the remainder of the forest in the early nineteenth century.

⁵¹⁰ A field in this vicinity is named Mill Field on the W.I. Field name survey. L.R.O. Field name survey for Rothley no. 269 (1967-69).

⁵¹¹ *C.Ch.R., 12 Edward I, 1257-1300* (London, 1906), Vol. II, p. 276. The grant was made in 1284. This market was replaced by the market at Gaddesby in 1306, following a separate grant made in that year. *C.Ch.R., 34 Edward, 1300-1326* (London, 1908), Vol. III, p. 71.

⁵¹² The only restriction placed on the tenants was that the overlords had a right to their 'great waters', a reference which could perhaps refer to the waters which were adjacent to the Temple site itself, or to the river Soar, as is suggested in some seventeenth-century documents. There was demesne land on both sides of the river Soar near Cossington Bridge.

⁵¹³ *C.C.R. Henry III, 1231-1234* (London, 1905), p. 514.

The lord's woodland in Rothley at the time of the Domesday Survey was assessed at 1 league in length and ½ league in width, whereas the woodland of the villeins measured 4 furlongs by 3 furlongs.⁵¹⁵ No woodland was recorded in the thirteenth-century custumal, although in the extent made in 1309, £20 was received for timber sold from the manor of Rothley which suggests that this crop was being harvested for profit. In 1331/2 woodland is not recorded but the underwood of the park was given a value of 40d. Underwood was used as fuel for burning or hurdle making and was a by-product of park clearance where deer were being tended.⁵¹⁶ The Templars had two orchards within their home farm valued at 20s per annum, along with a dovecote valued at 6s 8d which completed the assets of the home demesne at Rothley Temple.⁵¹⁷ Further woodland was not recorded for Rothley which would suggest a complete woodland clearance before the Hospitallers entered the manor in the early fourteenth century. However, in the rental of 1372 expenses including a payment of 6s 8d for the custody of the woods and the land in the demesne suggest that woodland was still being managed.⁵¹⁸ In the early sixteenth century an account included the sale of timber within Rothley manor valued at £10 6s, just over half the sum raised by the sale of timber 200 years earlier.⁵¹⁹ One of the open fields named Woodfield in the fifteenth century suggests that a wood once stood to the north of the settlement and names of furlongs in this field were *le Breche*, New Stocking and Stocking all of which are redolent of recently cleared woodland (Map 15). Thus the settlement of Rothley might once have been bordered by the woodland to the north and west, with the brook to the south, and the river Soar with its flood plain to the east.

The assarts to the north of Rothley were situated between that township and Mountsorrel, a town planted in the twelfth century on the boundaries of both Barrow and Rothley to serve the newly built castle there. Parish connections confirmed this joint association for Mountsorrel Superior was a daughter chapel of Rothley church and

⁵¹⁴ L.R.O. 44'28/867 Rothley Temple MSS: Custumal of Rothley, ff. 3 & 15. Five marks amounted to £3 6s 8d. The windmill is described as being on *Anlep Myk*, probably Wanlip Syk. A field was named in the eighteenth century enclosure award as Wanlip Sick Furlong, and it was approached by Windmill Lane.

⁵¹⁵ DB f. 230 b. Rothley Plain could have been the lord's woodland. H.S.A. Fox, personal communication.

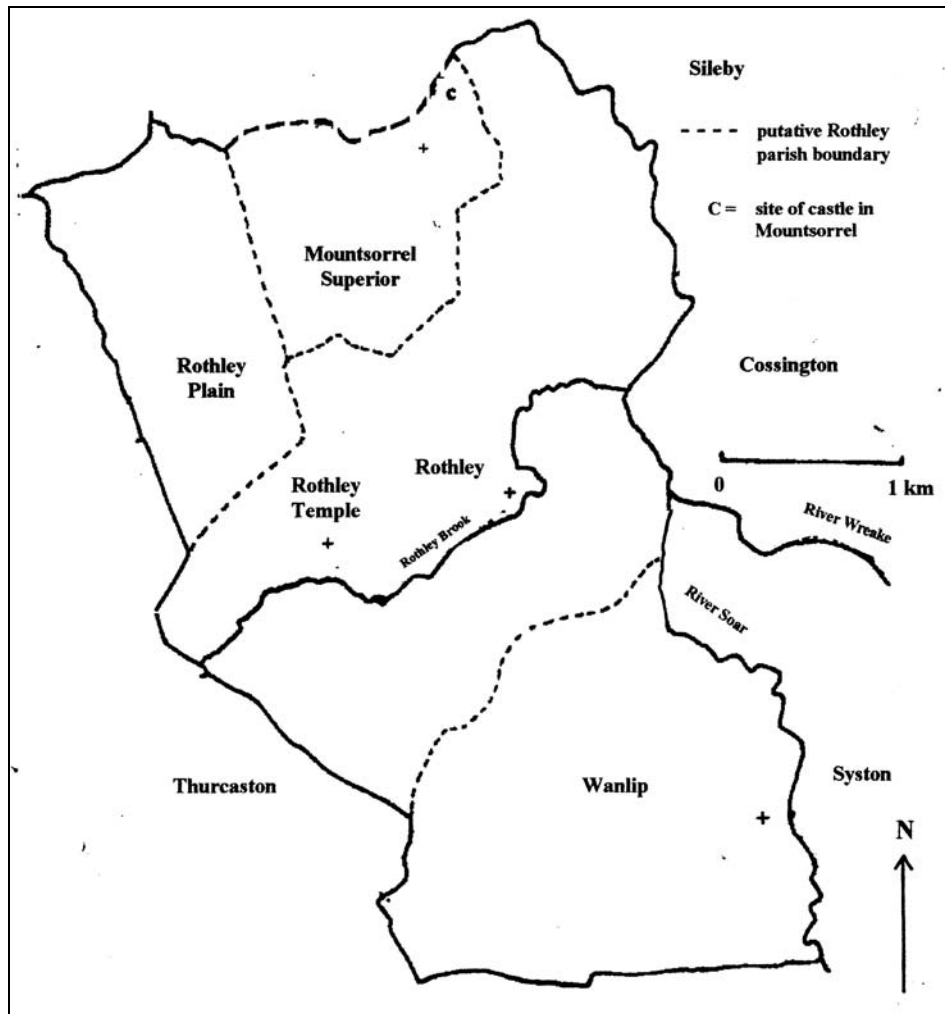
⁵¹⁶ It is possible that this park was the estate which surrounded the immediate dwelling of the Templars.

⁵¹⁷ L.R.O. 44'28/196 Rothley Temple MSS: Extent of Rothley Temple made for the Hospitallers 1331/2.

⁵¹⁸ Rental of Commandery of the Knights Hospitallers, 1372, in J. Nichols, ed., *Antiquities*, Vol. III, part II, p. 972.

⁵¹⁹ G. F. Farnham, ed., 'Extracts from the Rothley manor court rolls' in *T.L.A.S.* 12 (Leicester, 1921-22), p. 86.

the chapel of Mountsorrel North was a daughter of Barrow.⁵²⁰ A market established at Rothley at the end of the thirteenth century lasted for only two decades, its failure possibly brought about by its close proximity to the town at Mountsorrel.⁵²¹

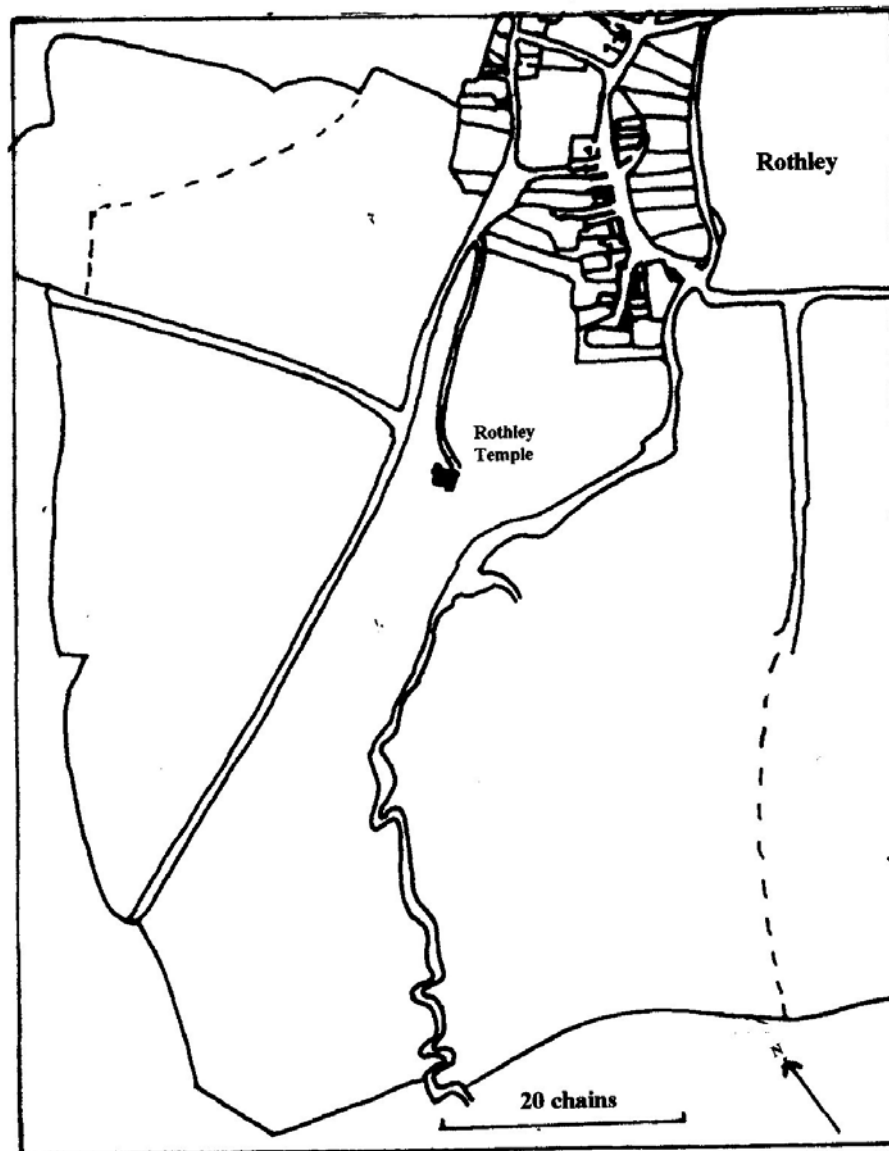


Map 15. Rothley and Mountsorrel Superior

Sources: F.A. Youngs, Jr., *Guide to the local administrative units of England: Northern England* (London, 1991), Vol. II, pp. 233, 235; W.P.W. Phillimore, ed., *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles Episcopi Lincolniensis AD MCCIX - MCCXXXV* (Lincoln, 1912), Vol. I, p. 253

⁵²⁰ The men of Mountsorrel Superior continued as tenants in the township of Rothley, for they appear as group tenants for a parcel of land in the thirteenth-century rental and customary. This example serves to demonstrate how later parochial connections can represent earlier relationships.

⁵²¹ The joint activities of the men of Rothley and Mountsorrel have been related above. Parochial arrangements within the soke will be examined in chapter 7.



Map 16. Detail from the enclosure map for Rothley showing the plan of the settlement

Source: L.R.O. 4D 72/1/2 Enclosure maps, awards and acts for the soke of Rothley

The settlement of Rothley was polyfocal, comprising an irregular settlement around the church to the east end, and a later planned settlement around the Town Green to the west, and within a short distance of Rothley Temple. A number of imposing late medieval timber-framed farmhouses stand round the Town Green (Plate 9). In the nineteenth century the courthouse for the soke tenants stood to the north of the older part of the settlement on the triangular Cross Green, the north road from which leads to Mountsorrel.

Gaddesby

Gaddesby appears in the thirteenth-century Rothley custumal; in the extents drawn up for the sheriff in 1308/9; and again in the extent written for the Hospitallers in 1331/2. The custumal shows tenants holding virgates, bovates, parts of these, and acres. The Templars held a demesne in Gaddesby, and the recorded expenses were 2s 6d for the free servants, 2s 6d for the servant in charge of the grange there, and 2s 6d for the porter. There was a shepherd for the demesne flock, and costs were attached to the keeping of the ploughs for the tenants of Gaddesby, as at Rothley.⁵²² The wages of the ploughmen were 2s, and a smith for the maintenance of the farming equipment was paid 3s 6d. Just as at Rothley, Gaddesby appears to be a rural settlement, the greater part of which came under the jurisdiction of the Templars. The tenants of Gaddesby paid rents for arable land which they farmed, and for the ploughs which they used to assist in this process. Meadow for the plough beasts may have been limited, for Gaddesby appears to have arable which required up to twelve plough teams. The fourteenth-century account records not only two ploughmen and two drivers who were employed for the manor, but also two ploughs with all the equipment, four oxen valued at 8s each and five horses worth 2s 6d each to draw the ploughs and pull the carts which were valued at 3s and a second at 12d. Crops in the granary for both Gaddesby and Baggrave were wheat, peas and drage.⁵²³

Other agrarian assets in Gaddesby can be gleaned from the inquisitions *ad quod damnum* which record rents and services owed from different parcels of land.⁵²⁴ Robert de Overton of Gaddesby held land, meadow and a messuage from the Hospitallers in 1323, which he was proposing to grant to the church for the establishment of a chantry in the church of Gaddesby.⁵²⁵ This inquisition suggests that much sub-letting was undertaken by some tenants in Gaddesby who held as intermediaries of the

⁵²² L.R.O. 44'28/867 Rothley Temple MSS: Custumal of Rothley, f. 17.

⁵²³ It can be difficult to separate the assets of the two townships of Gaddesby and Baggrave, because both had demesne lands belonging to the Templars.

⁵²⁴ G.F. Farnham, ed., 'Notes on the manor' *T.L.A.S.* 13 (Leicester, 1923-4), p. 266-7. These give two examples of tenants who held land from various different overlords in Gaddesby, demonstrating that tenants were not exclusive to any one particular lord.

⁵²⁵ After the grant he would still have a holding of land and tenements in Gaddesby and Barsby held from the Hospitallers, and also land and tenements held from John de Folville the lord of the neighbouring township of Ashby Folville, which would be sufficient for Robert de Overton to fulfil his public duties on juries and assizes. This picture of a wealthy tenant owing public service was repeated in the same year when Robert de Gaddesby likewise wished to grant land and a messuage to the church for the setting up of a second chantry in the church at Gaddesby. Robert de Gaddesby also held other land and tenements in Gaddesby and Baggrave held of the Hospitallers, and more land and rent held from John de Chevercourt.

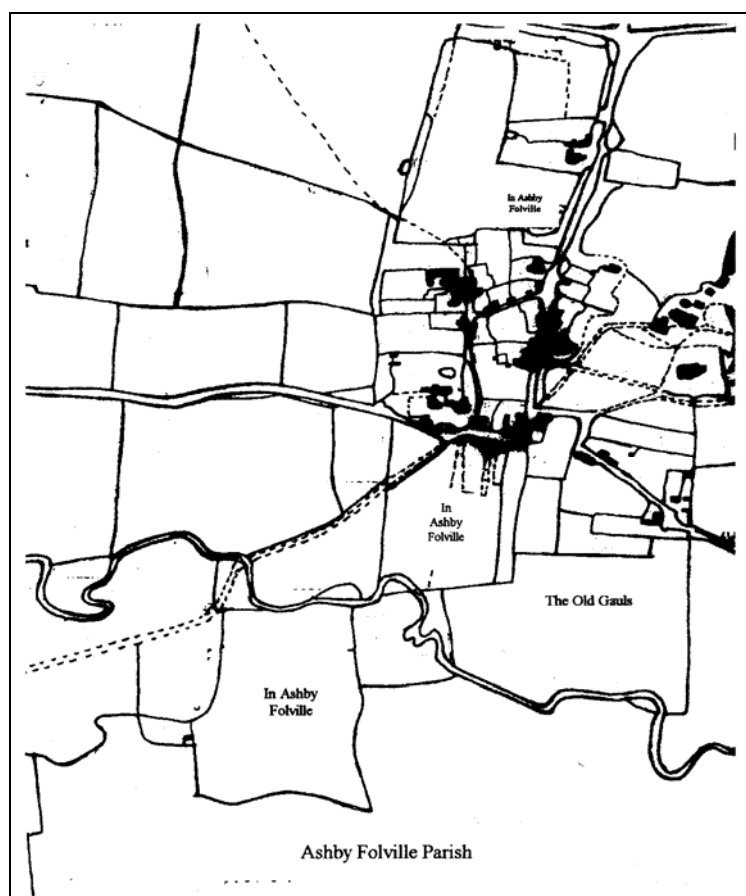
Hospitallers.⁵²⁶ It is possible that in Gaddesby the peasants who had daily responsibility for the farm work were *de facto* tenants of the sokemen.⁵²⁷ Evidence for open fields in Gaddesby is unclear for no enclosure act or map exists for Gaddesby. However a tithe map from the nineteenth century indicates an intricate interlocking of the resources of the township with the adjacent townships of Ashby Folville, Barsby and South Croxton and within Gaddesby two properties at each end of the settlement were described as being 'in Ashby Folville' (Maps 17 and 18). A piece of meadow south of the brook is similarly described and additional meadow land on the south side of the brook, and further to the east is described as being 'in Barsby' and 'in South Croxton'.⁵²⁸ It may be that this meadowland once formed part of an agreement for the inter-commoning of sheep prior to enclosure.⁵²⁹

⁵²⁶ See Appendix B.

⁵²⁷ The question must arise as to whether multiple lordship had any effect, positive or otherwise, on the organisation and running of the township of Gaddesby. As can be seen from the above examples, not only could a number of overlords be involved in a single land transaction, but also the holdings of a single tenant could lie in a number of townships.

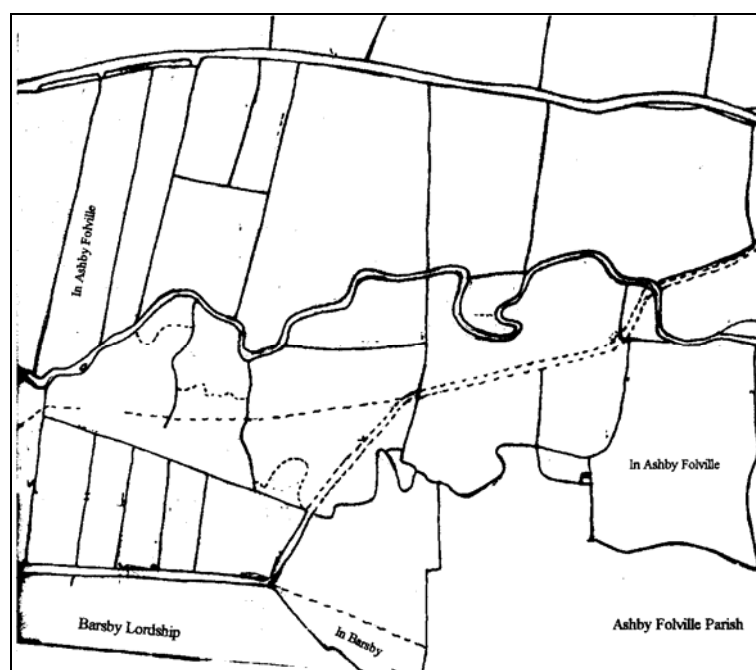
⁵²⁸ This odd ascription is difficult to explain, for some of the land so described physically lay next to the fields of the township in which it was purportedly situated. In that case, why include such land on a map of the adjacent township? After enclosure, agreements must have been drawn up to reconcile the various interests in the surrounding land, particularly shared meadow land which lay adjacent to a stream.

⁵²⁹ Such agreements were not unknown, and could lead to differences of opinion. In the fourteenth century there were clashes between the villagers of Quorn, Leicestershire, and the free tenants of Mountsorrel when they failed to agree over inter-commoning pastures which they shared. See L.R.O. Farnham Bequest MSS: 5D33/189.



Map 17. Detail from the Gaddesby tithe map showing settlement

Source: L.R.O. DE 76/Ti/112/1 Tithe map of parish of Gaddesby in Leicestershire



Map 18. Detail from the Gaddesby tithe map showing fields to west of settlement

Source: L.R.O. DE 76/Ti/112/1 Tithe map of parish of Gaddesby in Leicestershire

Ashby Folville, a non-soke vill, was closely allied with Gaddesby and lies about 2 kilometres to the east. At the time of Domesday it was largely in the hands of Countess Judith, and descended through her to King David of Scotland, earl of Huntingdon, and afterwards came to the Folville family who became under-tenants to the earl of Huntingdon. In 1310, following the forfeiture of the manor by Robert the Bruce, an extent was drawn up.⁵³⁰ The extent accounted for 80 acres of arable in the lord's demesne, with 8 virgates held in villeinage and 5 virgates held by 3 free tenants. One of the free tenants named in the extent, Richard de Marnham, was reckoned to hold 2 virgates of land. He bore the same name as the holder of land in Gaddesby which was recorded as belonging to Ashby, and he was distrained to appear at the manor court of Ashby in 1292.⁵³¹ Thus Ashby Folville controlled parcels of land which lay in the fields of its neighbours. Parochial links confirmed these interconnections, for South Croxton had an *ecclesia* in the thirteenth century which had a connection with Ashby church.⁵³² The church of South Croxton owed a payment at enclosure to the church at Rothley *in lieu* of tithes, demonstrating perhaps an even earlier parochial attachment to the church at Rothley (Map 19).⁵³³

⁵³⁰ L.R.O. Farnham Bequest MSS: 5D33/181. The extent was taken on the 19th June, 3 Edward II, 1310, File 14-22. The assets in the extent which belonged to Ashby are enumerated in cash terms, with only a windmill being cited having a value of 6s 8d. There is no indication of how many animals the land should support.

⁵³¹ G.F. Farnham, ed., 'Notes on the manor' *T.L.A.S.* 13 (Leicester, 1923-4), p. 272. From a *De Banco* roll 92, Hilary, 20 Edward I, 1292, m. 18, Leyc. It is possible that the two other free tenants had their land in the place known as Newbold.

⁵³² W.P.W. Phillimore, ed., *Rotuli Hugoni de Welles Episcopi Lincolniensis AD MCCIX-MCCXXXV* (Lincoln, 1912), Vol. I, p. 256, hereafter *Matriculus*. This connection was hotly disputed and there was a reconciliation of the various claims made in the early thirteenth century.

⁵³³ Phillimore, ed., *Matriculus*, Vol. I, p. 258. In the *Matriculus* Ashby Folville is described as having a daughter chapel at Barsby. Some tenants in Barsby must have paid tithes to the church at Ashby Folville in recognition of the chapel in Barsby which was appended to that church. This anomaly could explain why the chapel at Barsby did not thrive, and disappears from the documents in the sixteenth century.

Barsby and South Croxton⁵³⁴

The documents which incorporate both Barsby and South Croxton are many, and in the late thirteenth century final concords reveal a pattern of mixed landholding consisting of arable, woodland and meadow. These contain agreements made with tenants who held separate closes, and shared their pasture rights with other tenants.⁵³⁵ In a further record for 1301 oxen, cattle and calves were confiscated in South Croxton by the prioress of St Michael in Stamford, in an attempt to force her tenant in that vill to pay rent for which he had been in arrears for five years.⁵³⁶ Horses as well as oxen appear in a document of the first quarter of the fourteenth century in South Croxton, when they were impounded for non-payment of rents.⁵³⁷ By 1347 a windmill, held in South Croxton and Barsby by the Somerville family, was subsequently sold to William Jamvill of Walton.⁵³⁸ The poll tax of 1377 gives a list of names indicative of a farming community such as Adam Threschere, Thomas Scheperd, Richard Milner, and Robert Sweyn all of which suggest activities associated with arable cultivation and animal husbandry.⁵³⁹

In 1341, a final concord records two messuages with a mill and 70 acres of land in Barsby and South Croxton.⁵⁴⁰ Among the tenants in the poll tax list for 1377 is a William Gissyng and his wife, and it is possibly one of their descendants who, in the late sixteenth century, drew up a terrier which shows clearly that the arable surrounding the settlement of Barsby was interspersed with land lying around the settlement of

⁵³⁴ The difficulty of understanding the holdings in Barsby and South Croxton arise from the arrangement of the open-field husbandry which was practised there. The Nether Lordship of South Croxton had one set of open fields which lay to the south of the Queniborough Brook, and the Upper Lordship of South Croxton shared a common set of open fields with those of the vill of Barsby. The two open-field systems ignored the parish boundaries which existed at the time. The parish of South Croxton covered the Nether Lordship and part of the Upper Lordship of South Croxton. Part of the Upper Lordship of South Croxton came within the parish of Rothley. Barsby lay in the parish of Ashby Folville. Most of the tenants of the Upper Lordship, and most of the tenants of Barsby came under the soke jurisdiction of Rothley court. This interlacing of jurisdictions presents complications in the understanding of the documentary evidence, but once the relative enclosure and tithe maps are examined, a reconciliation of the documentary evidence can take place.

⁵³⁵ G.F. Farnham, ed., *Leicestershire mediaeval village notes* (Leicester, c. 1928), Vol. VI, p. 294.

⁵³⁶ Farnham, ed., *Village notes*, Vol. VI, p. 295. It is probable that this part of South Croxton was one of the other two holdings recorded in the Domesday Book. The jury removed the prioress for acting outside her jurisdiction.

⁵³⁷ Farnham, ed., *Village notes*, Vol. VI, p. 297.

⁵³⁸ Farnham, ed., *Village notes*, Vol. VI, p. 300. This is the earliest mention of a tenement held jointly by both settlements within the (possibly later) township boundary.

⁵³⁹ Farnham, ed., *Village notes*, Vol. VI, p. 300.

⁵⁴⁰ Farnham, ed., *Village notes*, Vol. VI, p. 55.

South Croxton.⁵⁴¹ In the sixteenth century the rolls of Rothley court also reflect this arrangement of land holding around Barsby and South Croxton, thus demonstrating the co-operation and asset sharing undertaken by the two settlements, for they record lands, tenements, closes, meadows, pasture and commons.⁵⁴² Penalties were invoked by the court for those villagers who failed to scour the lane, plant and maintain hedges, and make a common pinfold for straying beasts. The court limited to forty the number of sheep permitted to be folded on each yardland during the winter months. Penalties were also served against those breaking the assize of ale and the assize of bread, both of which give evidence for brewing and baking.

Crops grown in South Croxton were reported by Hoskins in his examination of the Leicestershire farmer in the sixteenth century. He identified one farmer in the township who appeared to be of above average wealth.⁵⁴³ This farmer, John Palmer, left evidence of a substantial farmhouse with a buttery, hall, chamber and kitchen in 1515. His livestock consisted of eighty sheep and thirteen cattle, and he had a total of 36 sown acres, with further arable, and about 25 acres of pasture. 16 of his sown acres were peas, and the remaining 20 were of wheat and barley.

That Barsby and the Upper End of South Croxton were farmed as a single agrarian unit is clearly shown by the enclosure map. There were two separate settlement areas, that of Barsby lying to the north east of the field system, and South Croxton was a single settlement which appears to have incorporated three different elements: the Upper End, the Nether End (which appears on a separate tithe map) and a smaller, additional settlement to the west of the main settlement, which could, perhaps, be the area occupied by resettled peasants from the Ashby Newbolds deserted site.⁵⁴⁴ The map shows the area at enclosure (Map 19). One enclosure road which cut these township fields in two halves and separated the settlements is shown running east-west through the centre of this landscape. It now forms the modern parish boundary between the two settlements, thus confusing the modern historian who may mistakenly believe that this boundary is ancient. The boundary between the fields of Barsby and Ashby Folville on the enclosure map are stepped in an arrangement suggestive of a division along the furlong boundaries between the two sets of open fields, possibly made after

⁵⁴¹ L.R.O. 44'28/923 Rothley Temple MSS: Terrier for John Gyessinge, AD 1583. This landscape anomaly was sufficiently unusual for the antiquarian John Nichols to comment upon it. See J.F. Nichols, ed., *Antiquities*, Vol. III, Part I, p. 35.

⁵⁴² L.R.O. 44'28/893 Rothley Temple MSS: Court book for Rothley manor court, 11th May 1554 to 26th April 1587. Many of the entries also include a reference to land in Newbold (Folville).

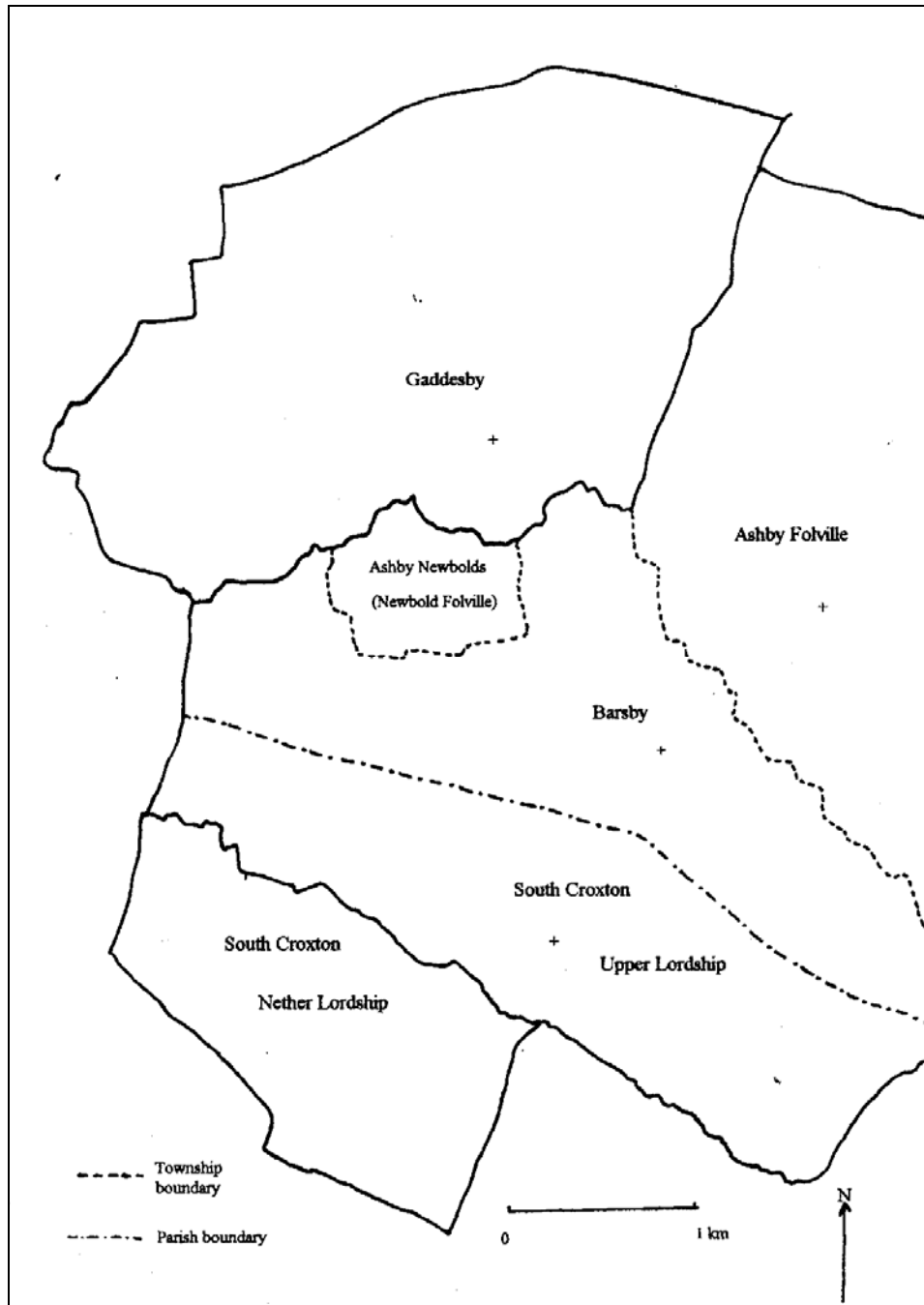
⁵⁴³ W.G. Hoskins, 'The Leicestershire farmer in the sixteenth century' *T.L.A.S.* 22 (1944-45), p. 55.

⁵⁴⁴ The Ashby Newbolds site was named but not included on the enclosure map.

the creation of the arable between the two settlements. Such a division could be late thus accounting for the continuation of many shared assets which persisted between the two settlements.

Such close links between the townships of Gaddesby, Ashby Folville, Barsby and South Croxton suggest a late fragmentation of what may have once been a much larger estate, centred on the royal vill of Gaddesby. Later parochial arrangements serve to reinforce this impression.⁵⁴⁵ Within the context of agrarian organisation in which the focus of the activities was the township and the peasant cultivators, it is possible to suggest corporate managing of resources across and between elements of this landscape.

⁵⁴⁵ These will be examined in Chapter 7.



Map 19. Gaddesby, South Croxton, Barsby, Ashby Folville and Newbold Folville⁵⁴⁶

Sources: L.R.O. DE 76/Ti/112/1 Tithe map of parish of Gaddesby in Leicestershire; L.R.O. DE 2/4 Ma/EN/A/24/1 Barsby and South Croxton enclosure award and map; L.R.O. Ti/298/1/1/83 South Croxton tithe award, 10 June 1844

⁵⁴⁶ Barsby and the Upper Lordship of South Croxton shared the same set of open fields. Ashby Newbolds was outside this open field unit. The Nether End of South Croxton has a separate set of open fields. The dotted line separating the vill of Barsby and South Croxton is the line taken by the later enclosure road, and this was adopted in the nineteenth century as the parish boundary between the two vill.

Hall, in his investigation of township structures in Northamptonshire observed the complexity of township structures, once the boundaries of the settlements were taken into consideration.⁵⁴⁷ He gave the examples of East Haddon and Hardingstone, apparently single, nucleated settlements which proved to be double settlements lying adjacent to each other, and each half having an independent field system. He also found other evidence of a smaller, otherwise lost estate which had been absorbed. He carried out a special study of Watford in Northamptonshire and through meticulous fieldwork carried out over a single winter he discovered three medieval settlements identifiable through earthworks: Watford, Murcott and Silworth. A careful search of all documentary evidence was also undertaken to draw together the evidence of the fieldwork and his conclusions were as follows: Silworth was a separate township which was enclosed early, but the open-field boundary is still discernible in the landscape; Murcott was enclosed at the same time as Watford, but the division between the townships was indicated on the enclosure map of 1771; Murcott lay partly in the parish of Watford, and partly in the parish of Long Buckby, another neighbouring settlement; the parish of Watford consisted of three settlements, each with its own independent field-system. It was open to conjecture whether Murcott and Silworth were dependent hamlets which had split away from Watford at a date after its own foundation or whether they had been two independent hamlets which had been taken over administratively by Watford.

This examination of a study in Northamptonshire elucidates some of the complexities of township boundaries which are studied in conjunction with documentary evidence. The boundary, manorial and parochial relationships which exist between Gaddesby, Ashby Folville, Ashby Newbolds, Barsby and South Croxton mirror many of the features of the townships studied by Hall. These features in a territorial unit in Northamptonshire led Hall to believe,

'A township, that is a working field system independent of its neighbours, is likely to be the oldest unity in the landscape, predating the parish and possibly even predating the settlement site'⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴⁷ D. Hall, 'Field systems and township structure' in M. Aston, D. Austin, C. Dyer, eds., *The rural settlements of medieval England* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 191-205.

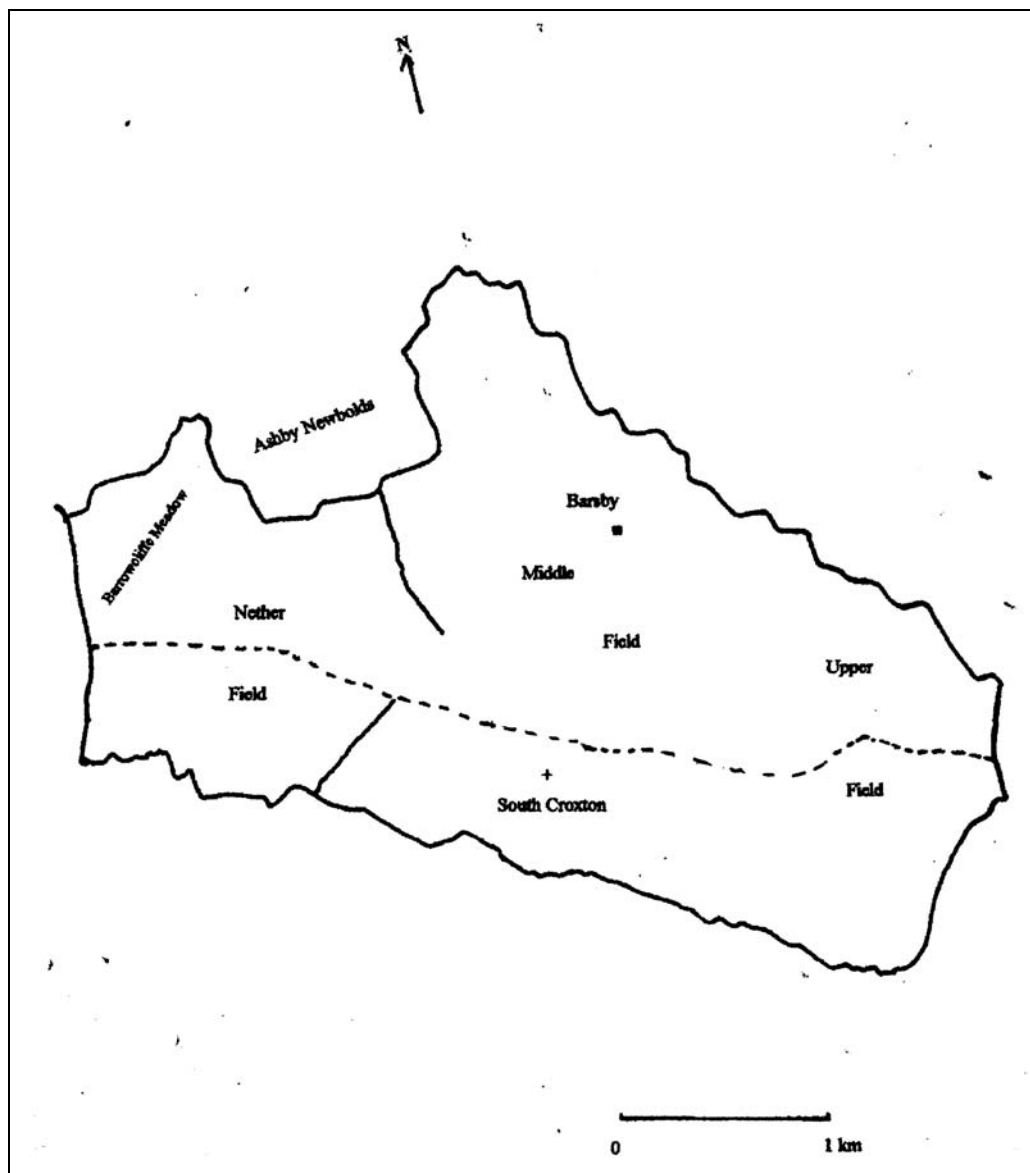
⁵⁴⁸ Hall, 'Field systems', p. 191.

Where does this place the complex landscape lying in the vicinity of Gaddesby, Barsby and South Croxton? The land between Gaddesby and Barsby shows elements of inter-commoning with Ashby, Barsby and South Croxton, and these areas may well predate the open-field system, created perhaps in the hundred years prior to the Conquest. The existence of tenements within Gaddesby which belonged administratively to Ashby Folville may be the result of a reconciliation of administrative claims from a time when the two townships shared a common identity. Whether this was before or after the creation of open-field systems for each township is open to interpretation. The two independent field systems for South Croxton present more of a problem, especially when both halves constituted elements of the same parish. However, the apparent imposition of the parish of Rothley can only easily be reconciled by the suggestion that this was a primary claim upon the northern half of the settlement and that the church of South Croxton became a later claim upon the tithes of the parishioners.⁵⁴⁹

Such a complexity of interlocking resources could suggest the former existence of a large estate. Jones saw the first essential feature of such a 'multiple estate' as the bond of the hamlets which were dependent on the central vill, alongside the obligations of their tenants. He examined a number of large estates from the medieval period, and noted that both fission and fusion had an impact within these estates over time.⁵⁵⁰ It is possible that this landscape surrounding Gaddesby, Ashby Folville, Barsby and South Croxton was once a sub-estate dependent on Rothley, and that subsequent fission and fusion created a set of relationships which left their mark not only on the agrarian organisation, but also on the administrative and parochial boundaries.

⁵⁴⁹ This will be dealt with in greater detail in chapter 7.

⁵⁵⁰ G.R.J. Jones, 'Multiple estates and early settlement' *English Medieval Settlement* (1979), pp. 9-34.



**Map 20. Barsby and South Croxton upper lordship
outline of enclosure map**

Source: L.R.O. DE 2/4 Ma/EN/A/24/1 Barsby and South Croxton enclosure award and map

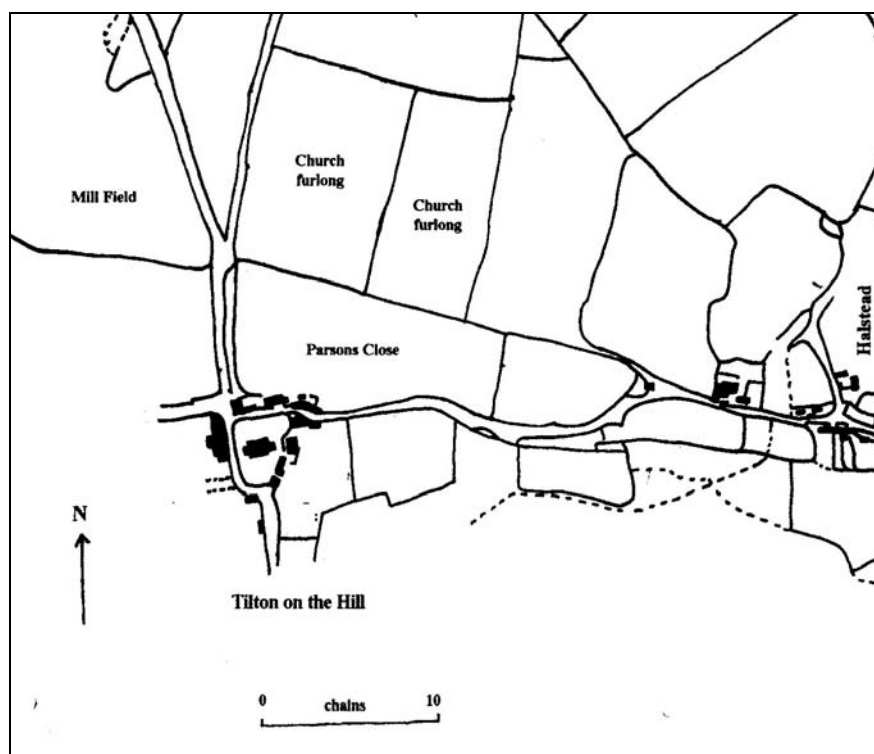
The woodland and springs of high Leicestershire: Tilton and its landscape

Tilton, at 210 metres above sea level, is the highest village in Leicestershire, and the settlement comprises Tilton and Halstead which on the tithe maps appear as interlocking settlements around the church (Maps 21 and 22). Other townships within the parish of Tilton were Whatborough (lying to the east of Halstead and now deserted) and South Marefield (lying to the north west of Halstead and reduced to a single farmstead) (Map 23). The southern boundary to Tilton fields is shared with that of Skeffington, a soke vill which in its turn shares a boundary with the soke vill of Tugby (Map 24).⁵⁵¹ The Eye Brook, arising in the hills west of Tilton, forms the boundary with its southern neighbour, then flows east towards Allextun, crossing the county boundary and continuing its course in Rutland. A large stretch of woodland to the east of Tilton and Skeffington lies within the parish of Owston. Domesday records that Tilton had arable land, meadow and woodland. Halstead was a soke settlement with land, meadow and woodland, and it was this latter commodity which characterised these vills at the time of the Domesday survey. This area of Leicestershire bordered on to the forest of Leicestershire and Rutland, and it could have provided a suitable environment for the raising of hawks and for giving cover for animals of the hunt.

Like South Croxton, there are two distinct settlements at Tilton. Also like South Croxton, the advowson was attached to land in the opposite half of the settlement from that occupied by the church, and each settlement had independent open-field systems. Unlike South Croxton, each half of the settlement was identified by a different name. Halstead had been fully soke at Domesday, but by the thirteenth century the land had been granted to the nearby priory of Launde. The advowson of the church at Tilton was also granted to Launde, and thus the church with its land came to be included with the land which was appended to that priory. This adjustment in the boundary may have taken place post-Domesday, although this is not inevitable.⁵⁵²

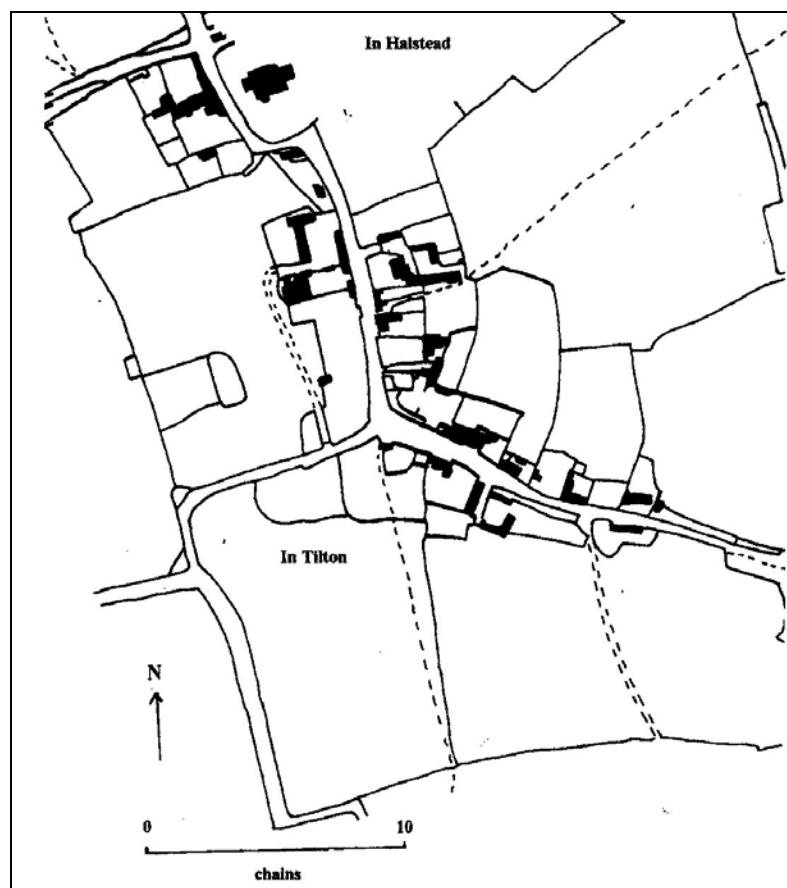
⁵⁵¹ Both Skeffington and Tugby were alienated from the soke in the twelfth century.

⁵⁵² The reasons for this will be explored in greater detail in chapter 7.



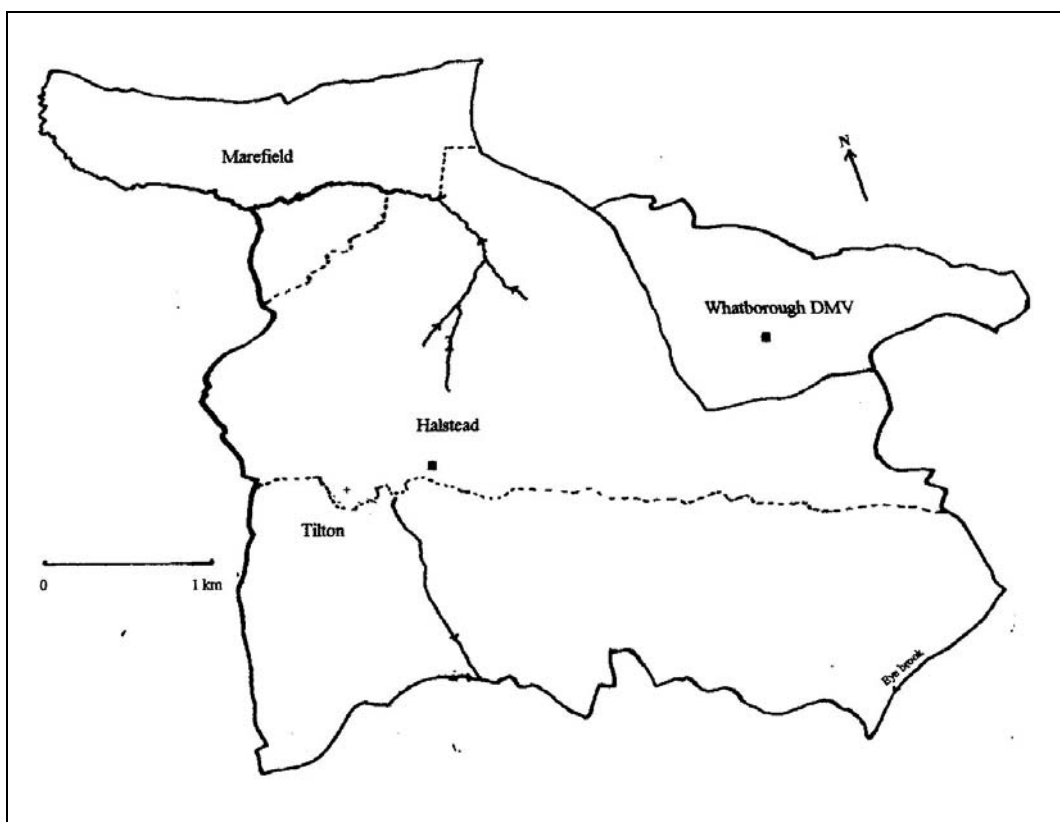
Map 21. Detail from Halstead, tithe map showing Tilton church

Source: L.R.O. DE 76 Ti/135/1 41/60 Tithe map of the township of Halstead in the county of Leicester



Map 22. Detail from Tilton tithe map showing Tilton church

Source: L.R.O. DE 76 Ti/333/1 41/72 Tithe map for Tilton on the Hill, Leicestershire



Map 23. Parish of Tilton, including Halstead, Marefield and Whatborough

Sources: L.R.O. DE 76 Ti/333/1 41/72 Tithe map for Tilton on the Hill, Leicestershire; L.R.O. DE 76 Ti/135/1 41/60 Tithe map of the township of Halstead in the county of Leicester; L.R.O. Ti/213/1 South Marefield map drawn for Thomas Cooper Hincks; L.R.O. Pre-1832 ancient parishes, institute of heraldic and genealogical studies (Canterbury, 1978)

Skeffington

By 1130, part of Skeffington and the whole of Tugby were held by Norman de Verdon, but despite this considerable estate, the family was not resident in either vill (Map 24).⁵⁵³ In the early thirteenth century, some tenants in Skeffington sub-let arable land, a mill and a house to the prior of Launde, who paid them an annual rent of 7 marks.⁵⁵⁴ The abbot of Croxton Kerrial also held some land from William de Hugeford, who in turn held this land from the de Verdens by service of one hawk yearly, a costly

⁵⁵³ This was recorded in the Leicestershire Survey of circa 1130. See C.F. Slade, ed., *The Leicestershire survey* (Leicester, 1956). The de Verdon family was a founder of Croxden Abbey in Staffordshire in the late twelfth century, and as a consequence they gave land in Tugby to that abbey. The main family, the Skeffingtons, were tenants of the de Verdens throughout the medieval period and they also served the king in the form of a *petit serjeanty*.

⁵⁵⁴ G.F. Farnham, ed., 'Appendix: The Skeffingtons of Skeffington' *T.L.A.S.* 16 (1929-31), p. 106.

item, and one which signified that the giver was of some substance.⁵⁵⁵ It also suggests that hawk rearing could have been a means of raising income in this part of the county.

Skeffington records the use of plough beasts and the pasturing of animals, particularly cattle, permeates the documents. When the abbot of Croxton Kerrial was granted a number of parcels of land in that vill, the grants were recorded in their registers.⁵⁵⁶ Among these grants there was a thirteenth-century *mensuratio* or measurement of the number of animals which could be supported by a virgate of land.⁵⁵⁷ This calculation gives a strong sense of the type of husbandry deployed in this part of the county, for a virgate was reckoned to sustain 4 oxen, 2 *averia* (draught animals possibly horses), 2 cows with calves, 30 sheep with their lambs, one sow with young, 5 geese with a gander and their young, which could be pastured on the fallow up to the feast of St Martin.⁵⁵⁸ From this it is possible to infer a rotation of managed fields, and is an indication of open-field farming for which co-operation was one of the key elements.

Further evidence of animal husbandry can be found in the documents, in which the Skeffingtons appear as wealthy tenants in the township.⁵⁵⁹ In 1280 Geoffrey de Skeffington seized 16 steers belonging to the abbot and there were further seizures of cows and oxen.⁵⁶⁰ When the abbot refused to pay the tithes which he owed for his tenement in Skeffington this led to friction with the parson. Two people died in the ensuing *fracas* as the men attempted to remove the crop from the fields in Skeffington to take them to the abbot's grange at Croxton Kerrial.⁵⁶¹ Relationships were often far from cordial particularly when the abbot of Croxton enclosed about 80 acres of the moor in Skeffington preventing the prior of Launde from having his common of pasture there following the harvest, which deprivation left the prior with insufficient pasture of

⁵⁵⁵ Farnham, ed., *Village notes*, Vol. V, p. 132. Also Farnham, ed., 'Appendix: The Skeffingtons of Skeffington', p. 107.

⁵⁵⁶ These registers are transcribed in Nichols, ed., *Antiquities*, Vol. II, part I, appendix p. 77f.

⁵⁵⁷ Nichols, ed., *Antiquities*, Vol. II, part I, appendix p. 87. This document is dated 1258.

⁵⁵⁸ This account can be compared with similar ones made for the abbot of Croxton Kerrial at Waltham, and Hose, in Framland Wapentake. In Hose one virgate of land could sustain four oxen, two horses, thirty sheep, one male pig and two sows, eight geese and two ganders, with their young, up to the feast of St Martin. In Waltham a virgate could sustain four head of cattle, forty-five sheep, one sow with young, one male pig, four geese with one gander per year. Cf. Nichols, ed., *Antiquities*, Vol. II, part I, appendix pp. 87, 89 and 98.

⁵⁵⁹ This family behaves like an intermediary lord of part of the manor, with the result that their interactions with the abbot of Croxton were fraught for much of the time.

⁵⁶⁰ Farnham, ed., 'Appendix: The Skeffingtons of Skeffington', p. 108. Such actions would have been the norm for a lord of the manor attempting to extract rents which were owing.

⁵⁶¹ *Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous (Chancery)* (PRO, London, 1916), p. 599. It is clear from other documents that the Skeffingtons maintained control within the township, for Robert the parson sought permission from John de Skeffington to have common of pasture in the township in 1287. In print in Farnham, ed., 'Appendix: The Skeffingtons of Skeffington' p. 110.

his own.⁵⁶² Mixed tenant holdings of land, meadow and wood continue to be recorded in Skeffington in the fourteenth century, but following the Black Death further tensions began to appear. For example an inquisition *ad quod damnum* in 1356 records that Thomas de Skeffington granted houses and land in the vill to Ernald and Katherine de Skeffington, and although the houses were valued at 12d, the lands could not be valued because they had been left uncultivated, perhaps through a shortage of labour due to the Black Death.⁵⁶³

Fishing was part of the economy in Skeffington, and it is possible that this was combined with water management connected to the mill recorded both at Domesday and at various times throughout the medieval period.⁵⁶⁴ The location of the medieval mill is uncertain, but there are sites which could have sustained such an enterprise. A number of springs rise in Skeffington, and there are streams which border the fields both to the north and to the south west which could have watered a leet and powered a mill.⁵⁶⁵ At the time of the Dissolution an inquisition into the assets of Thomas Skeffington indicate the extent of the property held by that family within the township. The arable alone amounted to 1000 acres, and there were 13 messuages from the settlement, 6 of which were held of the fee of lord Ferrers, and 7 were held of the now dissolved abbey of Croxton Kerrial.⁵⁶⁶ No mention was made of the woodland at this date, but a later inquisition of the Skeffington possessions made in 1600 shows that 58 acres of woodland still existed in the township.⁵⁶⁷

⁵⁶² Farnham, ed., 'Appendix: The Skeffingtons of Skeffington', p. 115. This early enclosure gives details which are of interest. Besides a fence, it would appear that some of the boundary was created using trees or bushes, for the abbot claimed that these had been torn up by the roots. Agreements of common of pasture were regulated by the local court, but this case had been taken to the king's court, probably because the manor court had been unable to resolve it. How this would have affected the livelihoods of the local tenants is not recorded.

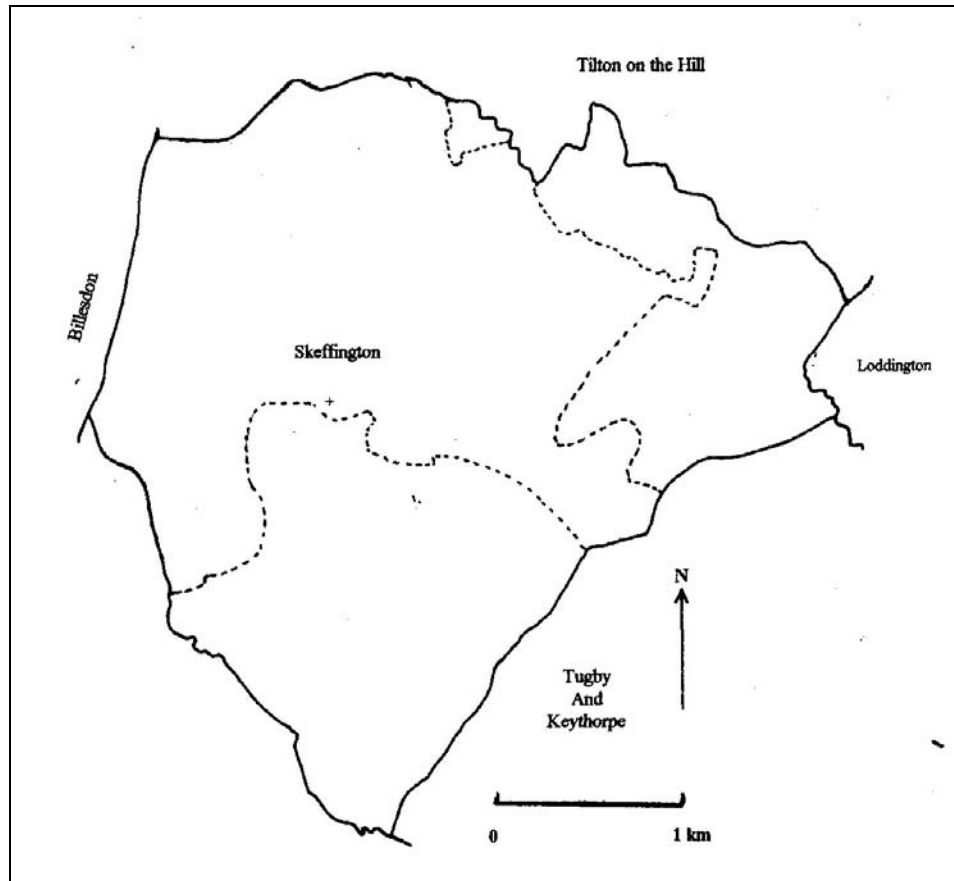
⁵⁶³ Farnham, ed., 'Appendix: The Skeffingtons of Skeffington', p. 119. *Inquisition ad quod damnum*. File 317/14. AD 1356.

⁵⁶⁴ Farnham, ed., 'Appendix: The Skeffingtons of Skeffington', p. 121. These fishing rights appear to be shared with a tenant of Rolleston, in which case, the most likely spot for the fishing would have been in the stream which separates Skeffington and Rolleston.

⁵⁶⁵ Later documents record a close of pasture in the township known as 'Fishpool Yard', which may give a clue of the whereabouts of this activity. Cf. Farnham, ed., 'Appendix: The Skeffingtons of Skeffington', p. 125. Cf. *Inquisitions post mortem*, William Skeffington, kt. File 289/90. Taken at Leicester on 5 Jan., 3 James I, 1606.

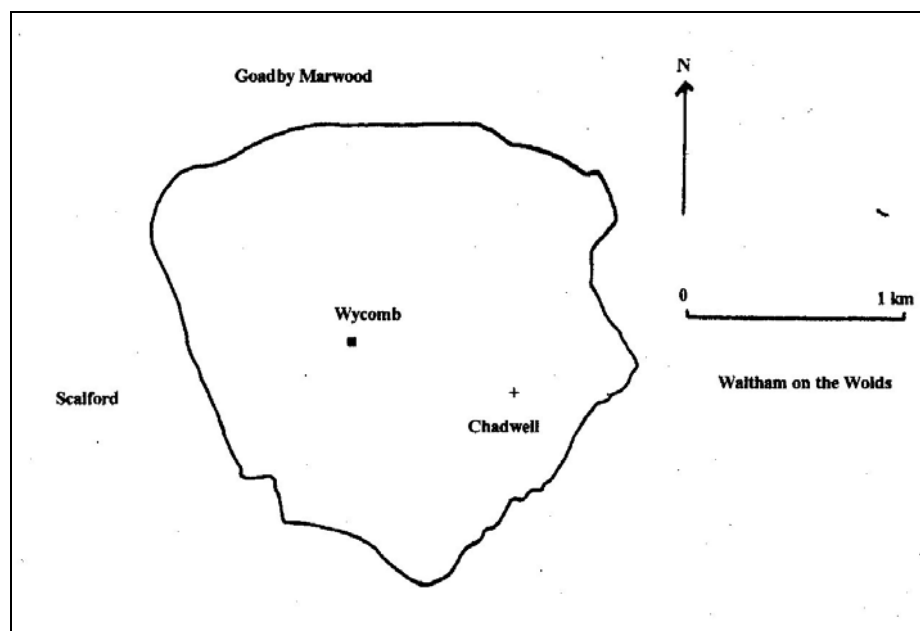
⁵⁶⁶ Cf. G. Farnham, ed., 'Appendix: The Skeffingtons of Skeffington', p. 123. *Inquisition p.m.* Thomas Skeffington, of Skeffington.

⁵⁶⁷ The possibility remains that the pasture which was reckoned in the earlier inquisition included some woodland, because of its value for the pasturing of pigs.



Map 24. Skeffington showing parts from extant tithe maps

Source: L.R.O. Ti/293/1 DE 248 1/83 Tithe map of Skeffington 1844



Map 25. Chadwell and Wycomb

Source: L.R.O. First edition OS map 6-inch series XIII

Chadwell and Wycomb

Chadwell and Wycomb lie to the north east of Melton Mowbray and the enclosure award for these two settlements indicates that they once shared a common open-field system (Map 25).⁵⁶⁸ The main settlement would appear to have been at Wycomb, with the church of Chadwell serving both communities, but standing in a much smaller settlement one kilometre to the south east. At Domesday this twin township was reckoned to be 4 carucates of arable, but the chief asset was two mills. Several water courses spring up in the vicinity of the settlement of Chadwell thus it is likely that both mills occupied this part of the township. The joint open-field system can be seen in a thirteenth-century charter in which Gilbert, son of Hugh le Hopere, sub-tenant to Robert son of Henry of Caldwell, was granted land which specifies two open fields, South Field and North Field.⁵⁶⁹ Further records reveal a grant of land made to the monks of Garendon abbey outside Wycomb for quarrying, and the local tenants were given permission to use the quarry on condition that they did not sell any of the stone.⁵⁷⁰ To the north of Wycomb lies the settlement of Goadby Marwood, a known Roman town, and Gelling has identified Wycomb, or more correctly *Wykeham*, as a possible Romano-British settlement.⁵⁷¹ Fox has suggested that Chadwell and Wycomb might have become associated with the soke of Rothley through transhumance and seasonal settlement before the creation of open-field systems.⁵⁷²

Summary

Throughout the soke there is evidence for open-field farming in the medieval period. Types of crops grown both in the valley of the Soar and on the uplands of High Leicestershire have been recorded. There is evidence for some tenants having large holdings, perhaps sub-letting to lesser tenants. Animal husbandry was varied, and there

⁵⁶⁸ L.R.O. 4D 72/1/2 Enclosure maps and awards for lands in the soke of Rothley.

⁵⁶⁹ There were 23 selions of land in the South Field, and 22 selions in the North Field. A translation of this document can be found in the L.R.O. Farnham Bequest MSS: 5D/184. Several names mentioned within the grant can be matched with names in the Rothley rental and customary.

⁵⁷⁰ The Farnham Bequest contains a copy of this and many others. The evidence for the stone quarry can be found in the Belvoir charters, Vol. IV, p. 7. For further details see L.R.O. Farnham Bequest MSS: 5D/184. It has always been something of a puzzle why Chadwell and Wycomb remained as part of the soke, even after it became stranded like an island in the middle of the Framland Wapentake. Perhaps the presence of the two mills and the stone quarry were of particular economic value in the middle ages.

⁵⁷¹ M. Gelling, *Place-names in the landscape* (London, 1984), p. 323.

is evidence for the regulation and control of types and numbers of animals within the settlements.

At Rothley there were grazing rights and access to woodland which the tenants shared with the southern half of Mountsorrel, and this connection was underpinned by a close parochial relationship. Similarly, Gaddesby, Barsby and South Croxton shared many assets with Ashby Folville: the land between them was inter-linked and the boundaries showed elements of overlap suggesting possible inter-commoning of livestock, and untidy divisions of arable. There was a complicated arrangement of two conjoined settlements each with its own open-field system, and an open-field system which was shared by two separate settlements. Parochial ties were also in evidence between some of these villis and the church at Rothley. The overlapping of shared interests suggests that this landscape was once a sub-estate dependent on Rothley, and that subsequent fission and fusion created a set of relationships which left their mark not only on the agrarian organisation, but also on the administrative and parochial boundaries. Tilton lay at the heart of a large parish which included Halstead, Whatborough and South Marefield, but the settlement showed an unusual arrangement between two adjacent settlements. Skeffington, although no longer part of the soke under the Templars, demonstrated a complex arrangement of sub-tenancies within the township which suggest that the township was divided into three or four large sub-units which nevertheless continued to be controlled from a single, nucleated settlement. Chadwell and Wycomb, the furthest removed of the soke settlements from Rothley, shared a single open-field system, and possessed mills and a stone quarry which would have been a positive asset to the soke economy. Strong links and effective co-operation appear to have maintained these inter-dependent systems, but some early moves to enclose led to disagreements over pasture rights. Despite this, many villis, both within and outside the soke, continued to share common land and left behind both landscape and documentary evidence of their agrarian relationships and communal organisation.

⁵⁷² H.S.A. Fox, personal communication. Fox has written about this topic in 'Introduction: Transhumance and seasonal settlement' H.S.A. Fox, ed., *Seasonal Settlement* (Leicester, 1996), Vaughan Paper No. 39, pp. 1-23.

Chapter 6

Tenurial and parochial connections:

thirteenth-century Rothley in context

Hooke, in her study of the west Midlands, discovered that 'estates comprising of a number of parish units may be reconstructed but appear to have been carved out of larger territorial divisions'.⁵⁷³ She noted from documentary evidence that 'nodal areas' near rivers were often linked to areas of secondary activity in more heavily wooded countryside. This gave connections between 'complementary regions'. She believed that larger administrative units from earlier in the Anglo-Saxon period became fragmented by the mid-Anglo-Saxon, and that units of parish or sub-parish size were beginning to emerge. Where these units were well established they could influence later ecclesiastical parishes, but in the secondary areas subdivision often occurred at a later date, with some areas remaining undeveloped. She further noticed that the initial focus of such activity was often found at a royal vill which 'maintained rights not only over their immediate territories but over these more distant lands'.⁵⁷⁴ However, she recognised that the Anglo-Saxon period was a time of

'both estate amalgamation and fragmentation. On the one hand, some estate centres continued to serve as the foci of hundred divisions, their minster

⁵⁷³ D. Hooke, 'Pre-Conquest estates in the west midlands: preliminary thoughts' *Journal of Historical Geography*, 8, 3 (1982), pp. 227-244.

⁵⁷⁴ D. Hooke, 'Early medieval estate and settlement patterns: The documentary evidence' in M. Aston, D. Austin, C. Dyer, eds., *The rural settlements of medieval England* (1989), pp. 9-30.

churches served surrounding districts or *parochiae*, and some were to acquire additional prominence as fortified burghs and as market centres.⁵⁷⁵

Hooke undertook further study of the parish in the late Anglo-Saxon period in which she saw that parishes were often formed from several townships, many parishes appearing to have been formed from pre-existing units of land. Extant charter evidence for the west Midlands enabled her to identify boundaries and to reconstruct former estate units, some of which were later used as parish boundaries. Hooke appears to suggest a process of fission of larger land units into smaller townships which were subsequently fused into larger estates, and these links were expressed through parochial connections. Williamson also, in his examination of 'relict landscapes' of East Anglia, argued for the existence of land units from which parishes could have developed and accepted the possibility of re-use of pre-existing boundaries for these units by the church to mark the boundary of the parish.⁵⁷⁶ He did not see the necessity for many of these boundaries to be ancient, but his analysis was largely in accord with the findings of both Hooke and Hadley.

Hadley considered that the system of soke organisation in northern Danelaw could be of 'considerable antiquity'.⁵⁷⁷ She believed there was circumstantial evidence to suggest that many Domesday sokes could have originated before the tenth century. Many important royal or ecclesiastical villas with 'substantial appurtenant territories' were known to have existed before the Viking settlements, and Hadley gave a number of examples including Breedon on the Hill in Leicestershire, the site of a Mercian royal monastery which had been granted 31 *manentes* of land at Repton, Derbyshire, in the seventh century.⁵⁷⁸ She also noticed that

'many of the larger Domesday sokes of the region, including those known to be of tenth-century origin, are mirrored by the parochial geography; that is to say, outlying members of the soke are commonly located within the parish of the church which sat at the centre of the soke. Some parishes appear to have remained intact even when parts of the parish had been granted away as separate estates.'⁵⁷⁹

She gave some Derbyshire examples of estates which belonged to other parishes which were the subject of mid-tenth-century charters, but were all known from later sources to belong to the parish of churches sited elsewhere. She saw a consistent pattern of correlation emerging between territorial organisation and parochial geography, in spite

⁵⁷⁵ Hooke, 'Early medieval estate and settlement patterns', p. 14.

⁵⁷⁶ T. Williamson, 'Parish boundaries and early fields: continuity and discontinuity' *Journal of Historical Geography*, 12, 3 (1986), pp. 241-248.

⁵⁷⁷ D.M. Hadley, *The northern Danelaw: Its social structure, c. 800-1100* (London, 2000), p. 109.

⁵⁷⁸ Hadley, *Northern Danelaw*, p. 122.

of the paucity of pre-Conquest documentary evidence in Derbyshire.⁵⁸⁰ Using the evidence of extant Anglo-Saxon charters she tested the hypothesis of a correlation between such units of organisation, and confirmed that this appeared to be the case.

Both Hadley and Hooke used a combination of Anglo-Saxon charters and territorial or parochial boundary evidence, some of which was of a later date. This process of early fission, and later limited fusion can also be tested within the soke of Rothley. In spite of the absence of early charter evidence for Leicestershire, it is possible to examine the tenurial evidence offered by Domesday and correlate the information with that of parochial connections recorded in the early thirteenth century. Through this method an examination of the hypothesis of earlier fusion can be made, although it may be more difficult to reconstruct earlier estates from which such fused elements originally arose.

Roffe made a particular study of the soke of Bowden in Leicestershire. Bowden was the *caput* centre of a large soke and Roffe considered that the parochial connections within the soke indicated a primary fee, which 'often escaped the process of fragmentation'.⁵⁸¹ He believed that,

'although the formation of parishes could be a complex process which transcended mere economic and tributary relationships, parochial structure is often a guide to the constitution of early manors'.⁵⁸²

He saw that it was possible to postulate larger and earlier groupings, with patterns of inter-commoning linked to other resources such as woodland which pointed to larger units. He sounded a note of caution over the assumption that all later land units must be the result of continuous earlier fission from larger estates, for such a question had not been tested within Leicestershire. Roffe noted that the institutions of soke and wapentake were essentially unrelated. The wapentake as a system was part of the shire and therefore independent of estate structure, and he pointed out that at Rothley the soke and the wapentake courts were entirely separate, citing Stenton as his source.⁵⁸³ He appears to suggest that although parochial and secular relationships are important as an aid to understanding possible earlier estates, it is also essential to remember how later

⁵⁷⁹ Hadley, *Northern Danelaw*, p. 131.

⁵⁸⁰ Hadley, *Northern Danelaw*, p. 133.

⁵⁸¹ D. Roffe, 'Great Bowden and its soke' in J. Bourne, ed., *Anglo-Saxon landscapes in the east midlands* (1996), pp. 107-120.

⁵⁸² Roffe, 'Great Bowden', p. 109.

⁵⁸³ Roffe, 'Great Bowden', p. 110, n. 17. Cf. F.M. Stenton, *Types of manorial structure in the northern Danelaw* (Oxford, 1910), p. 44.

connections of jurisdiction within the county as a whole could have an impact on the development of a land unit.

Rothley manor and soke appeared to combine elements of jurisdiction regarded as essential to a large (or multiple) estate with a large parish which covered much of north-eastern Leicestershire. What was distinctive about Rothley parish and how far does this distinctiveness compare with large parishes elsewhere? Does this lead to any conclusions with regard to the origins of the parish? In this chapter comparisons will be made with other parishes identified in the thirteenth century within Leicestershire coupled with jurisdiction suggested by Domesday.⁵⁸⁴ The parochial connections will be made using the *Matriculus* of Hugo of Wells.⁵⁸⁵ However, some parochial and territorial links do not become apparent until the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries, and where this occurs reference will be made to the relevant documentation. Interlocking areas of manorial jurisdiction will be tabulated within, or at the end of, the chapter. All maps used in this section will be based on the pre-1832 Leicestershire deaneries and parishes.⁵⁸⁶ Each church or chapel recorded in the *Matriculus* will be denoted by a point on the relevant map.

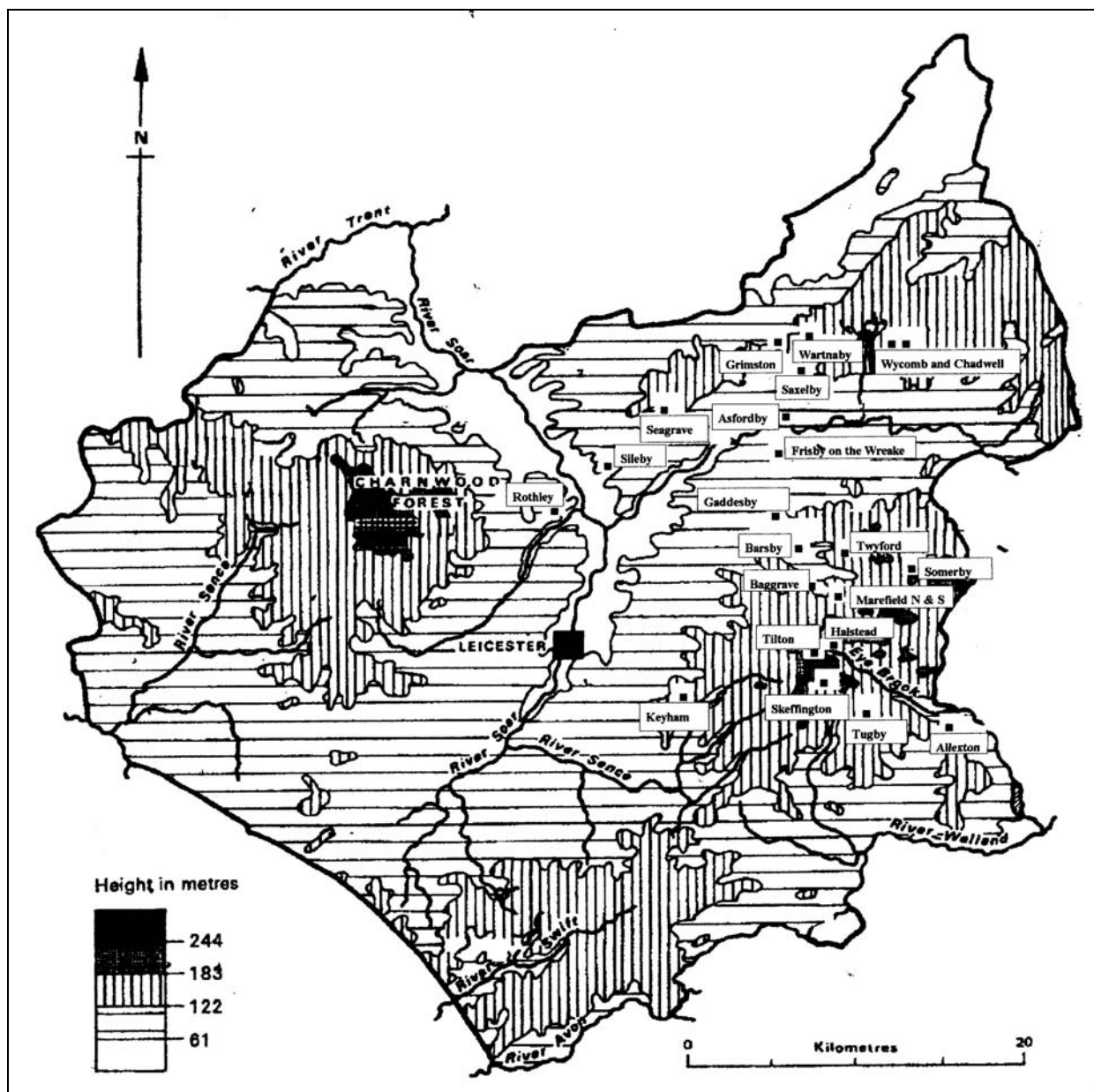
The *Matriculus* of Hugo of Wells

The *Matriculus* of Hugo of Wells was drawn up in the early thirteenth century and reflects the establishment and growth of the parochial system in Leicestershire during the preceding century, and may reflect elements of the ecclesiastical system pertaining at the time of the Domesday survey. The *Matriculus* lists most Leicestershire churches with their daughter chapels, and includes payments and obligations of each. Deaneries were a territorial arrangement of parishes within the county from the twelfth century, and these were Akeley, Goscote, Framland, Gartree, Guthlaxton and Sparkenhoe (Map 51).⁵⁸⁷

⁵⁸⁴ The edition of the Survey used is P. Morgan, ed., *Domesday Book: 22 Leicestershire* (Chichester, 1979). Individual references will use the abbreviation DB, and give the folio number and section.

⁵⁸⁵ The *Matriculus* is used as a short-hand title for the section on Leicestershire which can be found in W.P.W. Phillimore, ed., *Rotuli Hugonis de Wells Episcopi Lincolnensis AD MCCIX - MCCXXXV* (Lincoln, 1912), Vol. I, hereafter *Matriculus*. The entry for Leicestershire can be found on pages 238 to 279, and is entitled *Incipit Matriculus Domini H. Episcopi Lincoln'*.

⁵⁸⁶ The maps show the outlines of townships with dots to represent the number of churches or chapels within that boundary. A dashed line between the townships indicates a parochial connection between the two.



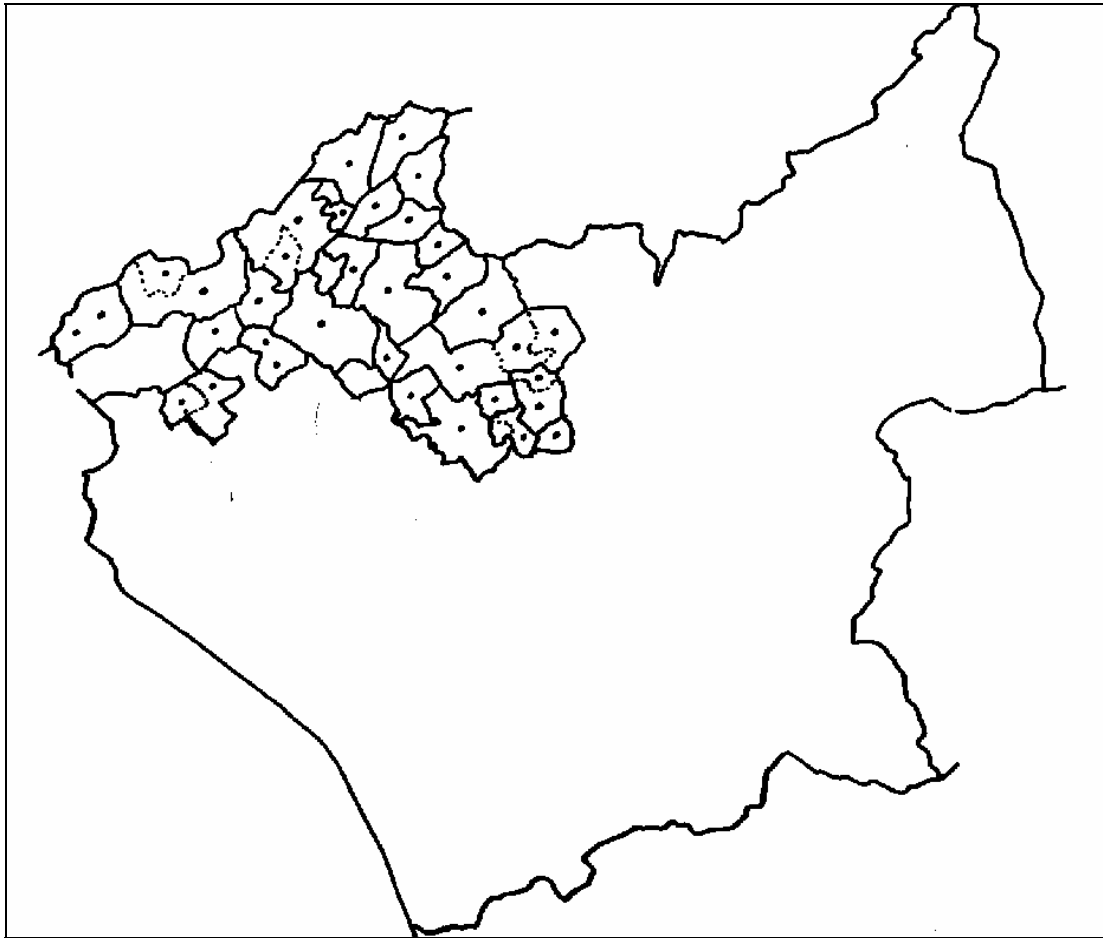
Map 26. The manor and soke of Rothley showing townships both fully- and part-soke at the time of the Domesday Survey

Source: Modified from N. Pye, *Leicester and its region* (Leicester, 1972), p. 60; P. Morgan, ed., *Domesday Book 22 Leicestershire* (Chichester, 1979), f. 230 b, c

Rothley soke in the thirteenth century was no longer the same soke it had been at the time of Domesday, for almost half of the eleventh-century lands had been lost. Many of the lands which remained under the Templars were also part of the parish. What were the secular and parochial links within the soke? Did these connections assist in preventing further fission within the soke?

⁵⁸⁷ This is in contrast to Domesday which informed us of four Wapentakes dividing the landscape of Leicestershire namely Goscote, Framland, Gartree and Guthlaxton (Map 52).

The deanery of Akeley



Map 27. Deanery of Akeley

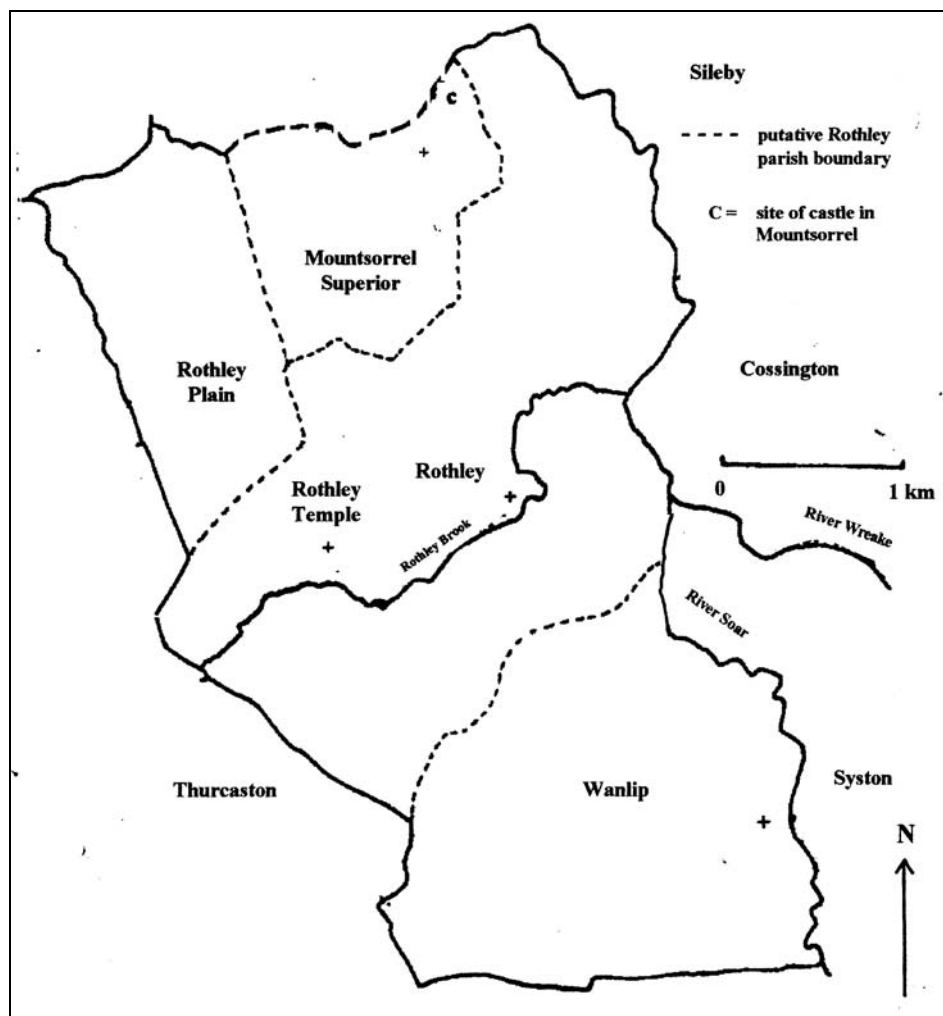
Source: W.P.W. Phillimore, ed., *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles Episcopi Lincolnensis AD MCCIX - MCCXXXV* (Lincoln, 1912), Vol. I, pp. 250-255

The deanery of Akeley covered north-west Leicestershire west of the river Soar, crossing that river but once to include the township of Barrow on Soar (Map 27). This deanery covered the area of Charnwood Forest, which Farnham described as 'a chance concentration of the wastes of the four great manors of Barrow, Groby, Whitwick and Shepshed'.⁵⁸⁸ The township of Rothley lay topographically within this deanery, as did Wanlip, a neighbouring township whose church owed a payment to Rothley *ab antiquo*.⁵⁸⁹ This may indicate that Rothley and Wanlip were conjoined townships before the Conquest, although tenurial ties no longer existed at Domesday. This 'greater Rothley' must also have included land later occupied by the southern half of

⁵⁸⁸ G.F. Farnham, 'Charnwood forest and its historians' *T.L.A.S.* 15 (1927-8), pp. 2-32.

⁵⁸⁹ Phillimore, ed., *Matriculus*, Vol. I, p. 253.

Mountsorrel which subsequently became a chapelry of Rothley. Mountsorrel, a twelfth-century town, was created to serve the castle there (Map 28).

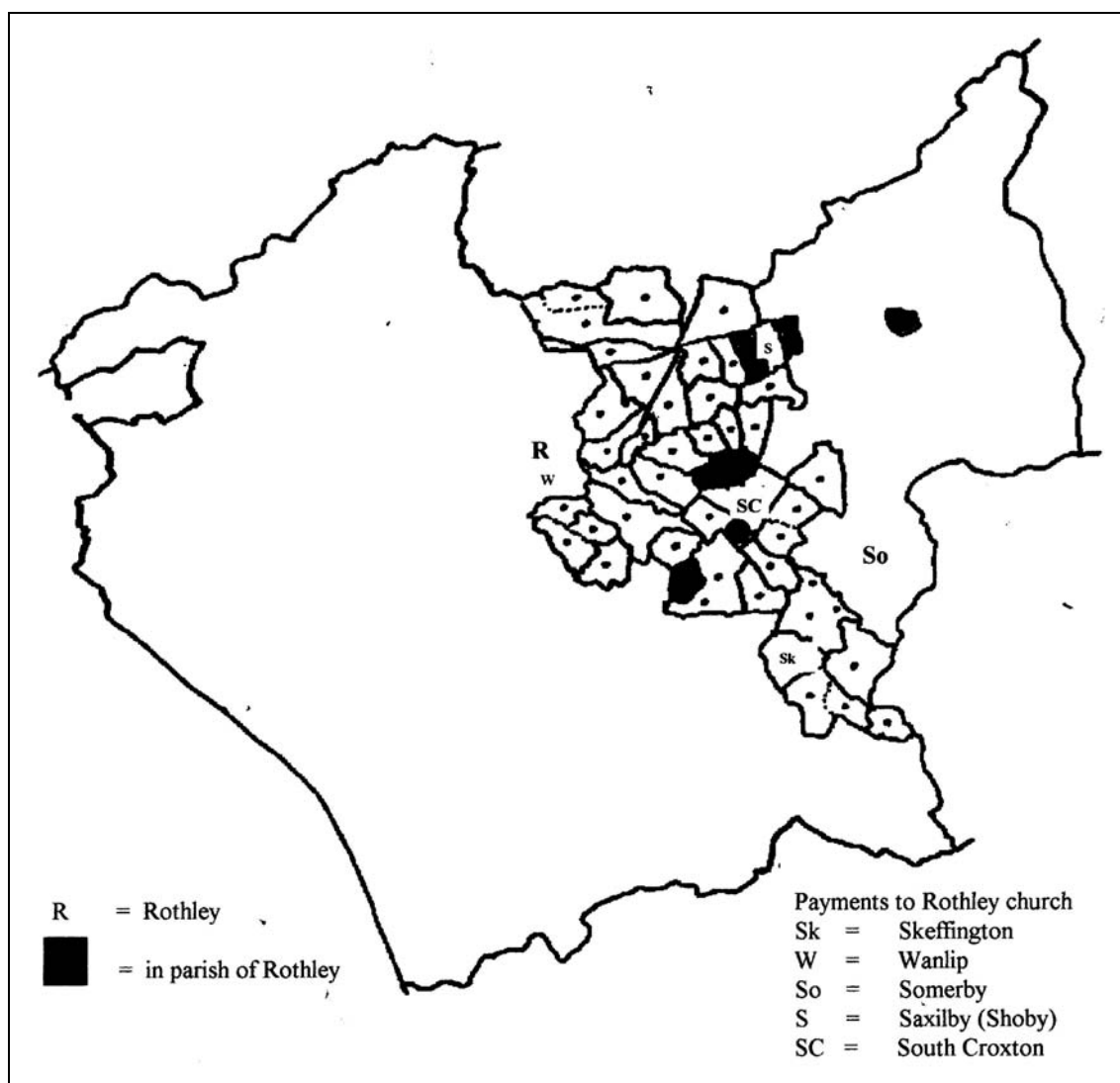


Map 28. Rothley, Mountsorrel superior (South End) and Wanlip

Sources: F.A. Youngs, Jr., *Guide to the local administrative units of England: Northern England* (London, 1991), Vol. II, pp. 233, 235; W.P.W. Phillimore, ed., *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles Episcopi Lincolniensis AD MCCIX - MCCXXXV* (Lincoln, 1912), Vol. I, p. 253

However, although Rothley soke and parish covered a considerable area to the east of the county, its five soke chapels situated at Gaddesby, Grimston, Wartnaby, Keyham and Chadwell lay topographically within the deanery of Goscote. In the *Matriculus* these chapels were recorded under Gaddesby, but all owed parochial dues to Rothley church.⁵⁹⁰ The secular and parochial connections with the soke can be seen in Figure 10.

⁵⁹⁰The *Book of Fees* of the thirteenth century gives evidence of a chapel at Baggrave a soke vill appended to Keyham. A moiety of the advowson for Baggrave pertained to the church of Hungarton, and belonged to Leicester Abbey. The township of Baggrave was granted by the Hospitallers to that abbey in the early



Map 29. The parish of Rothley lying within Goscote deanery

Sources: W.P.W. Phillimore, ed., *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles Episcopi Lincolnensis AD MCCIX - MCCXXXV* (Lincoln, 1912), Vol. I, pp. 238-279; L.R.O. DE 2/4 Ma/EN/A/24/1 Barsby and South Croxton enclosure award and map; L.R.O. 4D 72/1/2 Enclosure maps, awards and acts for the soke of Rothley

Domesday soke Vill	Deanery in the <i>Matriculus</i>	Parish ***	Site of chapel
Rothley	Akeley	Rothley	Gaddesby, Keyham, Grimston, Wartnaby, Chadwell with Wycomb ** (custumal)
Allextton	Goscote	Allextton	
Barsby	Goscote	Ashby Folville	
(South Croxton)**		South Croxton. Payment to Rothley church**	
Seagrave	Goscote	Seagrave	
Sileby	Goscote	Sileby	
Tugby	Goscote	Tugby	(East) Norton, Garthorpe (Keythorpe)
Skeffington	Goscote	Skeffington. Payment to Rothley church*	
Marefield North	Goscote		
Marefield South	Goscote	Tilton	
Halstead		Tilton	
Chadwell + Wycomb	Goscote	Rothley	
Tilton	Goscote	Tilton	Marefield, Whatborough
Asfordby	Goscote	Asfordby	
Keyham	Goscote	Rothley	
Wartnaby	Goscote	Rothley	
Twyford	Goscote	Twyford	Thorpe Satchville
Somerby	Framland/Goscote	Tithes to Rothley church**	
Frisby on the Wreake	Goscote	Frisby	
Saxelby	Goscote	Saxelby	
Grimston	Goscote	Rothley	
Baggrave		Rothley then Hungarton **	
Gaddesby	Goscote	Gaddesby a chapel acting like a mother church with burial rights	Keyham, Grimston, Chadwell, Wartnaby (in <i>Matriculus</i>)
Outside soke:			
Wanlip	Akeley	Wanlip. Payment to Rothley*	

Figure 10. Domesday soke of Rothley and thirteenth-century parish

Sources: W.P.W. Phillimore, ed., *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles Episcopi Lincolnensis AD MCCIX - MCCXXXV* (Lincoln, 1912), Vol. I, pp. 252, 253, 256-260; L.R.O. 44'28/867 Copy of the custumal of Rothley, including rental of Rothley soke

*evidence from the *Matriculus*

** evidence from later sources

*** unless otherwise stated the burial rights remained with the mother church of the parish

The chapelry of Gaddesby

Gaddesby chapel in the *Matriculus* was described thus:

Gaddisby est capella de Role habens capellanum suum residentem, et omnia que matrix ecclesia habet, et respondet pro omnibus synodalibus.

Gaddesby had many of the privileges of a mother church, and a resident chaplain.⁵⁹¹ Most of the land in Gaddesby belonged to the king at Domesday as of the soke of Rothley. In Domesday the holdings of Countess Judith in Gaddesby were listed together suggesting that she received them as a single unit. These included parts of Ashby Folville, Newbold Folville, Gaddesby and Brooksby.⁵⁹² Humphrey the Chamberlain received land in Barsby and Great Dalby which were recorded together, suggesting a single grant previously held by Alwin.⁵⁹³ Countess Judith's tenants' holdings lay in close proximity to Ashby Folville, but these holdings were partly subsumed under the sokes of Barrow and Rothley.⁵⁹⁴ The whole of Gaddesby belonged to the parish, although parts of the township came under the jurisdiction of Ashby Folville. Some parts of South Croxton came under the jurisdiction of the soke and were in Rothley parish. Barsby, a soke holding at Domesday, and under the Templars was in the parish of Ashby Folville. Newbold Folville came within the jurisdiction and the parish of Ashby Folville (Figure 11). Later evidence from the time of enclosure indicates that South Croxton continued to retain a strong connection with Rothley church through parochial tithes.⁵⁹⁵

Such interweaving of interests does not end here for there are cross-links between the sokes of Rothley and Barrow. Parts of Gaddesby, Frisby, Rearsby and Rotherby lay within Barrow soke under earl Hugh, and the king held land in Gaddesby and Frisby within Rothley soke (Figure 12). While earl Hugh held fewer than 9 carucates in total, the king held more than 16 carucates dependent upon Rothley. Other chief tenants held smaller parcels of land, the largest being that of Hugh Burdet with a priest.⁵⁹⁶ Later parochial obligations show further interweaving of assets between

⁵⁹¹ It is at this point that the other chapels attached to Rothley church are recorded in the *Matriculus*, placing the chapels alongside the chapel of Gaddesby. It is possible that Gaddesby carried out all the functions of a mother church, providing for the needs of the other chapels of Rothley because of its proximity to those chapels which lay along the Salt Way to the north, and in High Leicestershire to the east.

⁵⁹² DB f. 236 c.

⁵⁹³ DB f. 236 a.

⁵⁹⁴ One of these under-tenants was Hugh Burdet who had a more significant holding of 9 carucates under the Countess in Lowesby. Cf. DB f. 236 c. Much of the land in this part of the county was held under the Countess Judith, who might well hold the key to a greater understanding of this landscape.

⁵⁹⁵ L.R.O. DE 2/4 Ma/EN/A/24/1 Barsby and South Croxton enclosure award and map.

⁵⁹⁶ These are tax assessments, and might not tally with exact land holding sizes.

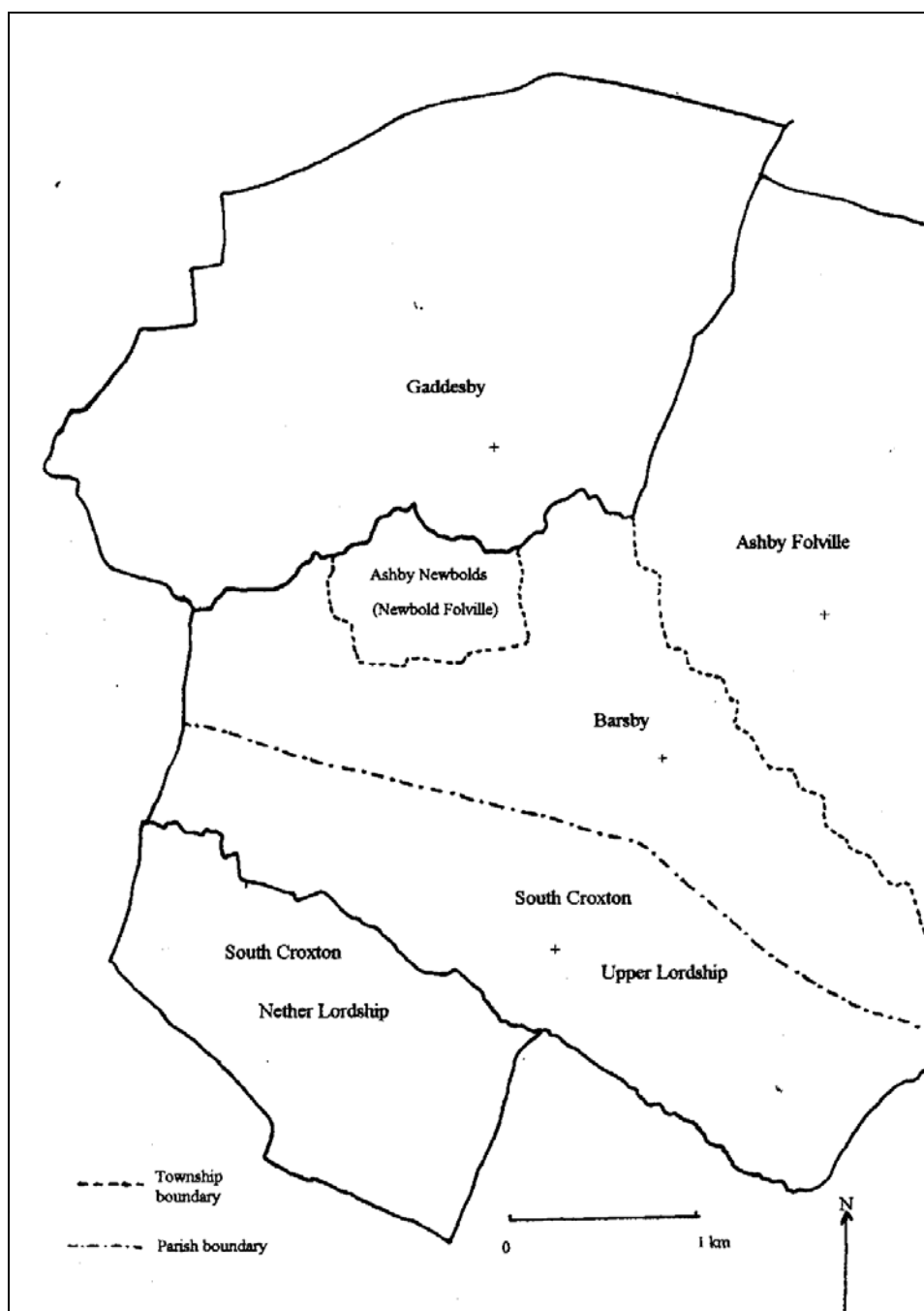
Asfordby, Frisby on the Wreake and the parish of Melton which could indicate further tenurial and parochial changes which require interpretation.⁵⁹⁷ The landscape around Gaddesby was an intricately woven palimpsest of secular and ecclesiastical interests between Ashby Folville, Barsby, South Croxton and Newbold Folville; between the two sokes of Rothley and Barrow; and possibly also involving the soke and parish of Melton.⁵⁹⁸ This untidy division of different interests may be the result of a separation and re-definition of territorial claims.

The combination of the territorial and parochial evidence associated with Gaddesby suggests a fragmented estate centred on that soke dependency, which could once have included Ashby Folville, Barsby, the Upper Lordship of South Croxton, Frisby on the Wreake, Rearsby and Brooksby, or parts of these townships.⁵⁹⁹ If the links between the sokes of Rothley and Barrow were once stronger, it would appear likely that they were severed prior to the formation of the parish of Rothley. The tenurial relationship between Ashby Folville and the soke of Rothley in the thirteenth century suggests that Ashby could once have been a part of the soke, and the development of a church and parish separate from that of Rothley within Ashby could have evolved at a later date.

⁵⁹⁷ L.R.O. 1D 41/2/237 Glebe terrier for Frisby on the Wreake. This terrier records that a house in Melton was part of the glebe of the church land in Frisby. Contained within this glebe terrier is a further terrier of land in Asfordby which belonged to the vicarage of Frisby.

⁵⁹⁸ Melton might also once have been part of the territory of Rothley soke. See Appendix A.

⁵⁹⁹ Which ties were most strongly felt within a vill community, those to the manorial lord, those to the community of the vill, or those to the parish? The continuing existence of a township which organised a separate agrarian unit which included the northern half of one settlement, along with the whole of another settlement such as can be seen at Barsby with South Croxton suggests that the community of the vill had much power and influence. Most of the tenants living in Barsby came within the soke of Rothley for they appear in the custumal under the Templars. Some of the tenants of South Croxton Upper Lordship were also within the custumal. The Rothley tenants in South Croxton came within the parish of Rothley, but the Barsby tenants were parishioners of the church at Ashby. A few of the South Croxton tenants came within the parish of South Croxton as did the tenants in the Nether lordship at South Croxton. These multiple allegiances could be defrayed through the payments of appropriate money dues. The working of the open fields would have required some organisation and a stronger hand if the farming year was to function adequately in order to feed the population, provide a surplus for the market, and to raise those annual payments which they owed to the soke, manor or parish. Later documents of the sixteenth century show that concerns regarding the duties of tenants were dealt with through the secular court of the View of Frankpledge at Rothley, and they recorded such matters as the laying and planting of hedges, the scouring of lanes, and the keeping of no more than the regulation number of animals. Cf. G.F. Farnham, ed., *Leicestershire mediaeval village notes* (Leicester, c. 1928), Vol. VI, p. 58-9.



Map 30. Gaddesby, South Croxton, Barsby, Ashby Folville and Newbold Folville⁶⁰⁰

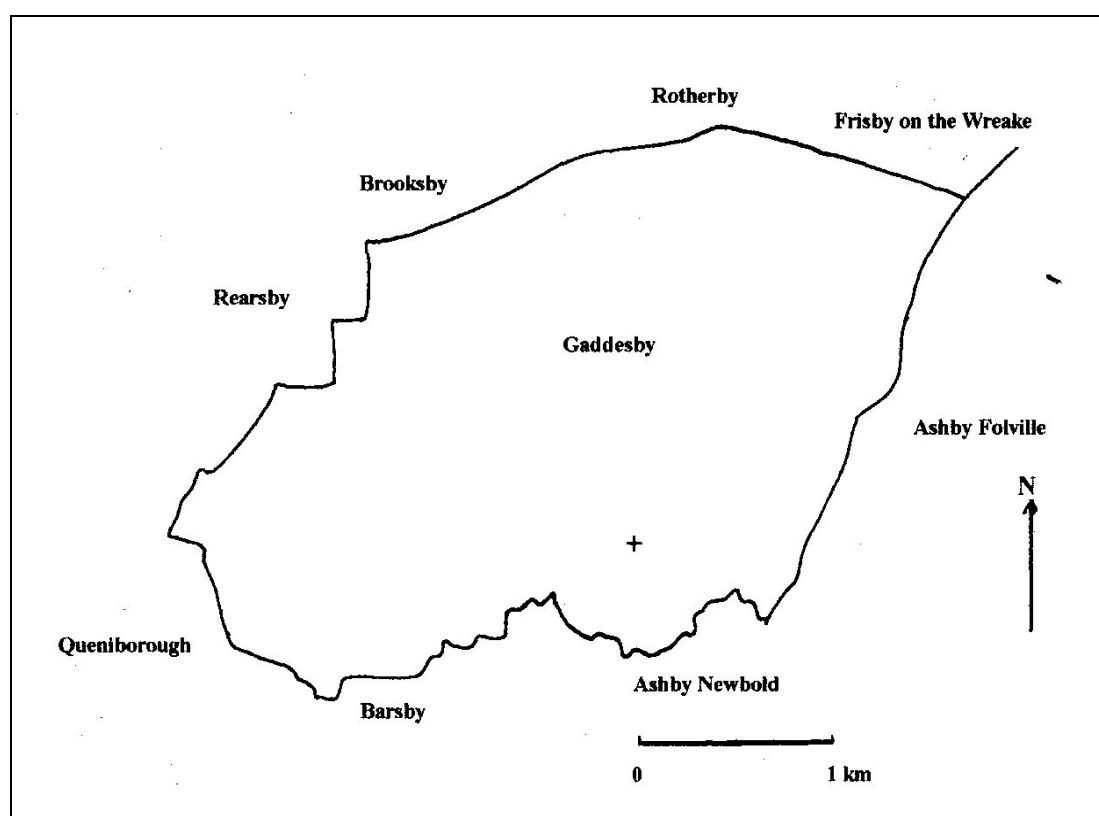
Sources: L.R.O. DE 76/Ti/112/1 Tithe map of parish of Gaddesby in Leicestershire; L.R.O. DE 2/4 Ma/EN/A/24/1 Barsby and South Croxton enclosure award and map; L.R.O. Ti/298/1/1/83 South Croxton tithe award 10 June 1844

⁶⁰⁰ Barsby and the Upper Lordship of South Croxton shared the same set of open fields. Ashby Newbolds was outside this open field unit. The Nether End of South Croxton had a separate set of open fields. The dotted line separating the settlements of Barsby and South Croxton is the line taken by the later enclosure road, and this was adopted in the nineteenth century as the parish boundary between the two.

Vill	Site of mother church	Chief tenant at Domesday	Holding
Gaddesby	Rothley	King	8 carucates and 3 bovates
		Countess Judith	2 carucates
		Earl Hugh	1 carucate (Barrow soke)
Barsby	Ashby Folville	King	5 carucates less 1 bovat
		Humphrey the Chamberlain	1 carucate (along with 1c land in Great Dalby)
South Croxton		Bishop of Lincoln	4 carucates
		Robert of Tosny	5 carucates (2 ½ c in Quenby)
Newbold Folville		Countess Judith	1 ½ carucates
		Henry of Ferrers	1 carucate
Ashby Folville	Ashby Folville	Countess Judith	4 carucates

Figure 11. Gaddesby, Barsby and South Croxton and their immediate neighbours

Source: W.P.W. Phillimore, ed., *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles Episcopi Lincolnensis AD MCCIX - MCCXXXV* (Lincoln, 1912), Vol. I, pp. 256-259



Map 31. Gaddesby township and its relationship with surrounding townships

Source: L.R.O. DE 76/Ti/112/1 Tithe map of parish of Gaddesby in Leicestershire

Vill	Chief tenant at Domesday	Undertenant at Domesday	Holding
Rearsby	Earl Hugh ⁶⁰¹		2 carucates less 1 bovat
	Robert de Bucy ⁶⁰²	Ingold	2 carucates less 2 bovates
	Countess Judith ⁶⁰³	Hugh Burdet	2 ½ carucates
Brooksby	Earl Hugh ⁶⁰⁴		2 carucates
	Countess Judith ⁶⁰⁵	Wulfsi	6 bovates
Rotherby	Earl Hugh ⁶⁰⁶		3 carucates less 2 bovates
Frisby	Earl Hugh ⁶⁰⁷		1 ½ carucates
	King ⁶⁰⁸		8 carucates
Gaddesby	Earl Hugh ⁶⁰⁹		1 carucate
	King ⁶¹⁰		8 carucates 3 bovates
	Countess Judith ⁶¹¹	Feggi	1 ½ carucates
	Countess Judith ⁶¹²	Odincar	½ carucate

Figure 12. Joint vills within the sokes of Barrow and Rothley

Source: W.P.W. Phillimore, ed., *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles Episcopi Lincolniensis AD MCCIX - MCCXXXV* (Lincoln, 1912), Vol. I, pp. 257-259

Keyham

The vill of Keyham lies to the south of Barsby and South Croxton, and was a detached chapelry of Rothley. It was surrounded by the non-soke vills of Beeby, Hungarton, Quenby, Ingarsby, Bushby with Thurnby and Scraftoft. Beeby was held by Crowland Abbey in 1086, in whose hands it had been since AD 948, when king Edred had re-granted the township with its church to the monks.⁶¹³ Beeby church has a lost dedication to Saint Guthlac, who was a founder of the abbey at Crowland.⁶¹⁴ In the Leicestershire Survey, Beeby and Keyham were included under the hundred of Beeby for taxation.⁶¹⁵ There was a connection between Keyham and Beeby, for in 1510 Beeby

⁶⁰¹ DB f. 237 a.

⁶⁰² DB f. 234 c.

⁶⁰³ DB f. 236 b.

⁶⁰⁴ DB f. 237 a.

⁶⁰⁵ DB f. 236 c.

⁶⁰⁶ DB f. 237 a.

⁶⁰⁷ DB f. 237 a.

⁶⁰⁸ DB f. 230 c.

⁶⁰⁹ DB f. 237 a.

⁶¹⁰ DB f. 230 c.

⁶¹¹ DB f. 235 c.

⁶¹² DB f. 236 c.

⁶¹³ J. Nichols, ed., *The history and antiquities of the county of Leicester* (London, 1800), Vol. III, part 1, p. 167, hereafter *Antiquities*. This date has been refuted, but the case for a pre-Conquest date is not. This was a re-grant, since the Danes had plundered and confiscated the abbey's holdings earlier in the century. The abbey's holding at Beeby was substantial, and they also had modest holdings in Sutton Cheney and Stapleton in the west of the county.

⁶¹⁴ L.R.O. MF 657 f. 44, AD 1535, Leicester Probate Registry, will of William Villiers of Beeby.

⁶¹⁵ C.F. Slade, ed., *The Leicestershire survey c. 1130* (Leicester, 1956), p. 37.

church paid a chief rent to the soke of Rothley through Keyham, suggesting a tenurial link with the soke.⁶¹⁶ Keyham was assessed at 4 carucates in Domesday, but by combining the Domesday assessments for both Keyham and Beeby a figure of 14½ carucates is reached, thus leading to the speculation that these two settlements could once have been a single, contiguous estate with the value of a 'hide' as given for Framland hundred (Map 32 and Figure 13).⁶¹⁷

The *Matriculus* identified the chapel of Keyham as being appended to Rothley church, but in the Book of Fees the chapel of Baggrave, a soke dependency, had been attached to the chapel at Keyham, but half the advowson of Baggrave was then in the hands of the abbot of Leicester under his church at Hungarton.⁶¹⁸ This placed Keyham in an intriguing indirect ecclesiastical relationship with the church of Hungarton, but there is no suggestion that Hungarton and Keyham were otherwise tenurially linked.⁶¹⁹

Township in Domesday	Parish	Chief tenant in Domesday	Assessment of holding in Domesday
Scraptoft ⁶²⁰		Coventry Abbey	12c
Keyham ⁶²¹	Rothley	King	4c
Hungarton ⁶²²		Robert of Tosny (Barkby)	6c
Ingarsby ⁶²³	Hungarton	Hugh de Granmesnil	12c
Quenby ⁶²⁴		Robert of Tosny	2 ½c
Beeby ⁶²⁵		Crowland Abbey	10 ½c

Figure 13. Vills in the environs of Keyham

Source: W.P.W. Phillimore, ed., *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles Episcopi Lincolnensis AD MCCIX - MCCXXXV* (Lincoln, 1912), Vol. I, pp. 256-258, 264

⁶¹⁶ G.F. Farnham, ed., 'The descent of the manor' *T.L.A.S.* 12 (1921-22), p. 76.

⁶¹⁷ This is the 'big' Leicestershire hide, which can be found in Domesday Leicestershire, cf. DB f. 235 c.

⁶¹⁸ *Liber Feodorum - Book of Fees commonly called Testa de Neville, Part II, 1242 - 1293* (London, 1923), p. 1280.

⁶¹⁹ This situation could also suggest that half the advowson of Baggrave had been granted to Leicester Abbey from the soke.

⁶²⁰ DB f.231 b.

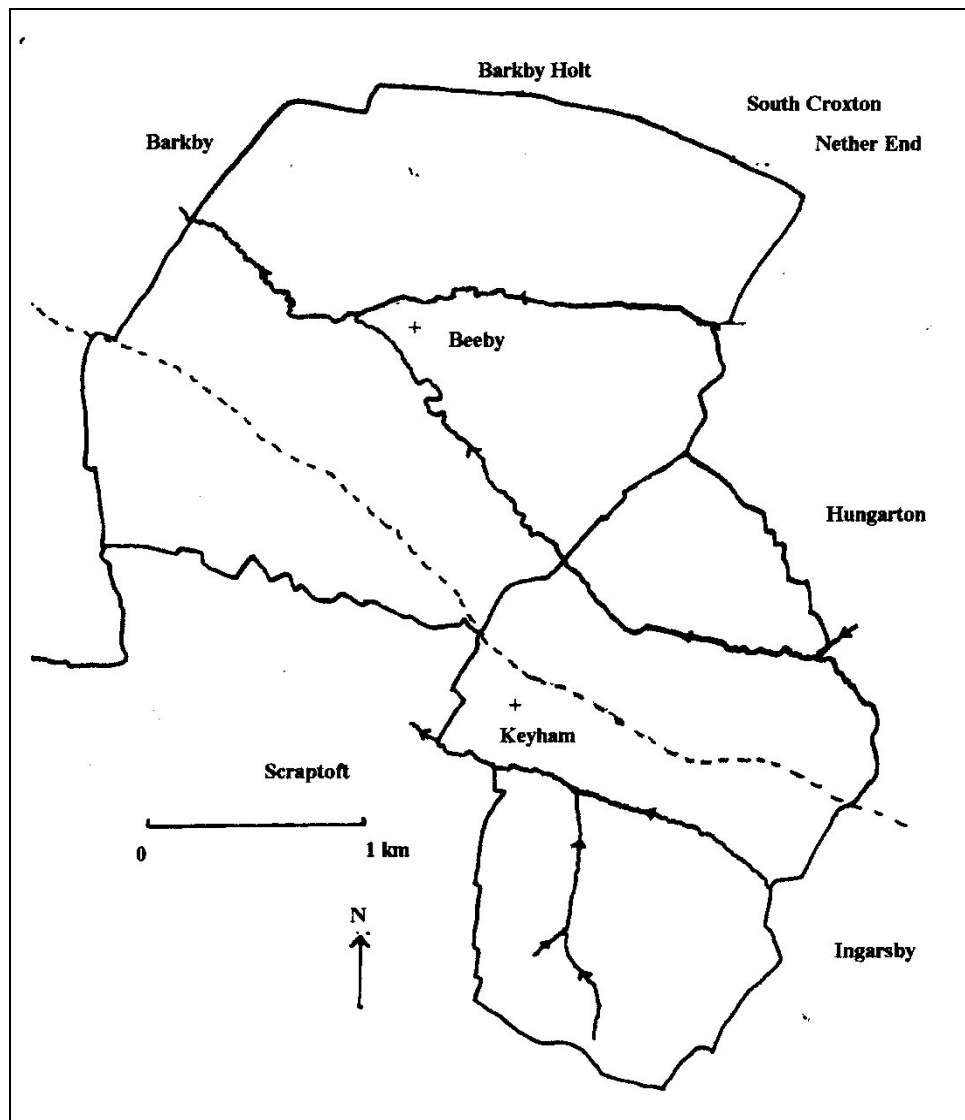
⁶²¹ DB f.230 c.

⁶²² DB f.233 d.

⁶²³ DB f.232 d.

⁶²⁴ DB f.233 d.

⁶²⁵ DB f.231 b.



Map 32. Beeby and Keyham

Sources: L.R.O. 44'28/1351 Enclosure map of Rothley Temple estates in Keyham 1771; L.R.O. Ti/28/1 1/73. Plan of the parish of Beeby in the county of Leicester, 1839

Grimston

Grimston, a chapel of Rothley church, lay in the north-eastern part of the county to the south of the Salt Way, between the vills of Shoby on its south-west and Saxelby to its south-east (Map 33). All three townships shared a boundary with Asfordby to the south. At Domesday a small holding of Saxelby belonged to the soke of Rothley which amounted to one carucate. No other land was attributed to Saxelby, and eleven carucates were accounted to Shoby. The Leicestershire Survey of *circa* 1130 assesses a total of six carucates to Saxelby, one of which still belonged to the king's soke, and six

carucates were assessed for Shoby.⁶²⁶ Both the Slade edition of the Survey and the V.C.H. edition identify the 11 carucates of Shoby at Domesday with the two entries for Shoby and Saxelby in the Leicestershire Survey.⁶²⁷ Shoby was a chapelry of Saxelby church, although Grimston stood between the two townships.⁶²⁸ The prior of Launde held the advowson of Shoby in the early thirteenth century and he later attempted to lay claim to the advowson of Grimston church believing that he had the right of presentation.⁶²⁹ It is possible that the prior had a grange in Shoby, which later became known as Priory Farm. Only half of the land in Grimston came under the soke of Rothley, but the whole of the township lay within that parish. These three townships experienced some intertwining of identities, because evidence from a later glebe terrier placed a carucate of Shoby land and its tenants under Grimston chapel. This could suggest that the land recorded in Domesday Saxelby under Rothley did in fact lie in Shoby.⁶³⁰ The parochial link of Grimston with Shoby is missed by the *Matriculus*, but the Domesday connection of a carucate of land with the soke, which is ascribed to Saxelby is rather puzzling.

Vill	Site of mother church	Chief tenant at Domesday	Size of holding
Grimston	Rothley	Robert of Bucy	3 carucates
Grimston	Rothley	King	3 carucates less 1 ½ bovates
Saxelby		King	1 carucate
Shoby		Ralph of Chartres	11 carucates

Figure 14. Grimston and its neighbours

Source: W.P.W. Phillimore, ed., *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles Episcopi Lincolnensis AD MCCIX - MCCXXXV* (Lincoln, 1912), Vol. I, pp. 256, 259, 260; DB ff. 230 c, 234 c, 231 d

Hundred	Vill	Chief Tenant	Holding
Dalby on the Wolds	Grimston	Richard Basset	3 carucates
	Grimston	King	3 carucates less 1 ½ bovates
	Saxelby	King	1 carucate
	Saxelby	Earl of Leicester	5 carucates
	Shoby	Earl of Leicester	6 carucates

Figure 15. The hundred of Dalby on the Wolds from the Leicestershire Survey circa 1130

Source: C.F. Slade, ed., *The Leicestershire survey* (Leicester, 1956), p. 17

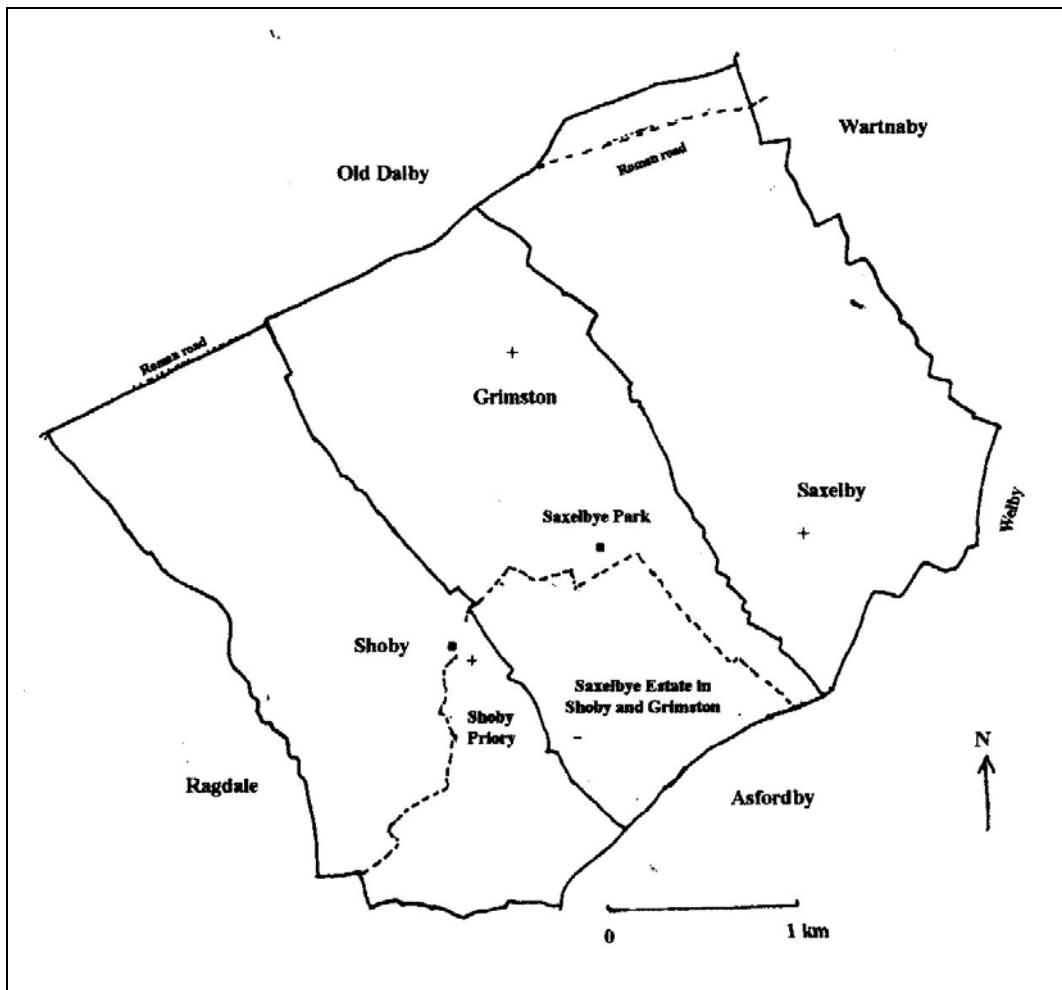
⁶²⁶ Slade, *The Leicestershire survey*, p. 17. Written in about AD 1130, the Survey is an incomplete fiscal assessment of the county covering Goscote and Framland Wapentakes. In the Survey the wapentakes were subdivided into hundreds, giving another view of the villis covered. It was arranged in complete townships, and so some of the problems presented by Domesday are avoided.

⁶²⁷ W. Page, ed., *V.C.H. Leicestershire* (London, 1907), Vol. I, p. 348.

⁶²⁸ Nichols, ed., *Antiquities*, Vol. III, part I, p. 405. Nichols also gives a footnote suggesting that Shoby, or *Shouldby*, was once parochially attached to Asfordby. Documentary evidence frequently links Grimston, Saxelby and Shoby in such a way that it can be difficult to distinguish between them.

⁶²⁹ Farnham, ed., *Village notes*, Vol. II, p. 338, Grimston and Saxelby, AD 1277.

⁶³⁰ L.R.O. 6D 46/4, Grimston glebe terrier, AD 1757.



Map 33. Shoby, Grimston and Saxelby with Saxelbye Estate

Source: L.R.O. DE 4686/28/2-5, Map of Saxelbye estate, part of Shoby and Grimston, AD 1896

Later evidence supports the possibility that there was another estate called *Saxelbye* which incorporated land lying in both Grimston and Shoby, and this can be found in a map of 1896 attached to Priory Farm, and lying next to Saxelbye Park in Grimston.⁶³¹ The estate can be seen straddling the boundary of Shoby with Grimston, and it is possible that this estate was once the grange attached to Launde Priory. Although much of Shoby once fell within the parish of Saxelby, an eighteenth-century glebe terrier for Grimston clearly states that some tenants in Shoby lived on the ancient demesne of Rothley and owed tithes to the church at Rothley payable through the chapel at Grimston.⁶³² Such territorial and parochial anomalies are complex and

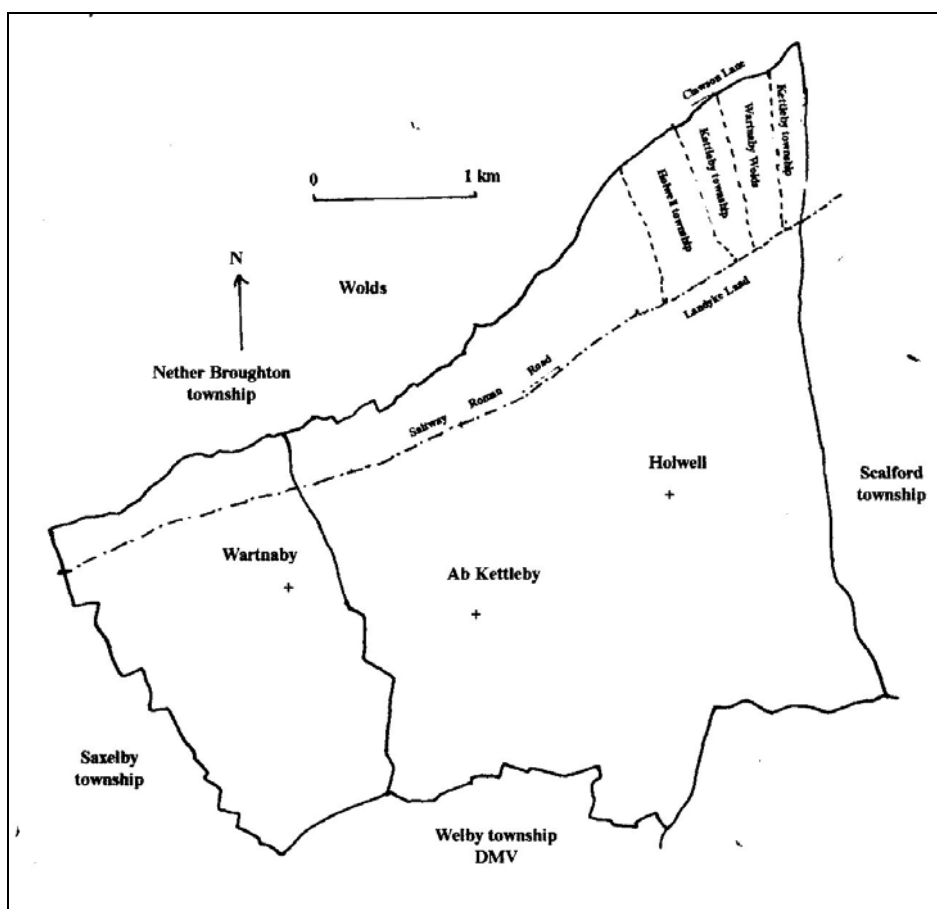
⁶³¹ L.R.O. DE 4686/28/2-5 Map of Saxelbye estate, part of Shoby and Grimston, AD 1896.

⁶³² L.R.O. 6D 46/4 Grimston glebe terrier, AD 1757.

difficult to disentangle, but could point to a larger territory which originally formed part of Rothley soke and parish.

Wartnaby

Wartnaby lies about five kilometres to the north east of Grimston along the Salt Way, and its southern boundary is shared with that of Welby. To its western boundary lie the fields of Saxelby, and about a kilometre to the east across the boundary with Framland Wapentake lies the settlement of Ab Kettleby. In Domesday the whole of Wartnaby township lay in the soke and parish of Rothley and was assessed at 6 carucates (Figure 16).⁶³³ The Leicestershire Survey gave the same assessment.⁶³⁴



Map 34. Wartnaby, Ab Kettleby and Holwell

Source: L.R.O. 4D 72/1/2, Vol. II, Documents relating to the manor and soke of Rothley

⁶³³ DB f. 230 c.

⁶³⁴ Page, ed., *V.C.H. Leicestershire*, Vol. I, p. 348.

Vill	Site of mother church	Chief tenant	Holding
Wartnaby	Rothley	King	6 carucates
Ab Kettleby		Robert of Bucy	6 carucates
Holwell	Ab Kettleby	Robert of Bucy	5 carucates
Holwell		Bishop of Lincoln	1 carucate
Asfordby		King	12 carucates
		King's servant	3 ½ carucates
Frisby on the Wreake		King	8 carucates
		Earl Hugh	1 ½ carucates

Figure 16. Wartnaby and its neighbours

Source: W.P.W. Phillimore, ed., *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles Episcopi Lincolnensis AD MCCIX - MCCXXXV* (Lincoln, 1912), Vol. I, pp. 259, 256, 272; DB ff. 230 c, 234 c, 231 a, 236 d, 237 a

In the fourteenth century, after protracted litigation, the Knights Hospitaller finally obtained the advowson of their chapel at Wartnaby, and re-organised their estate administration so that the vill of Grimston and Wartnaby answered to their manor court of Old Dalby, thus removing the necessity for the reeves of those soke vills to undertake the journey to the soke court at Rothley some 16 kilometres away. This manorial reorganisation established a jurisdictional relationship between Wartnaby and Old Dalby, but the parochial relationship with Rothley church remained unchanged. The parson of Ab Kettleby believed that his church had a parochial claim upon Wartnaby in the fourteenth century.⁶³⁵ Domesday records that both Holwell and Ab Kettleby were held by Gerard under Robert of Bucy, thus constituting a single estate with a priest which indicated the presence of a church.⁶³⁶ In the Leicestershire Survey the majority of this holding came under the Basset fee.⁶³⁷ If this priest had indeed served the neighbouring vill of Wartnaby in the fourteenth century, this could suggest that this once formed a single estate, which together with Wartnaby would have amounted to 11 carucates at Domesday and 15 carucates in the twelfth century.⁶³⁸ The difficulties in envisaging this as a single estate, of which Wartnaby was a part, is that the settlements lay on either side of the wapentake boundary for Goscote and Framland, although this postulation is not insurmountable given that the soke of Rothley crossed wapentake boundaries in a number of other places in the county. Of the three settlements, Holwell has the oldest name suggesting that this was once a religious site with a holy well.⁶³⁹

⁶³⁵ *Calendar of the Chancery Warrants 1244-1326* (London, 1927), p. 420. See above chapter 4.

⁶³⁶ A carucate of land also belonged to the Bishop of Lincoln.

⁶³⁷ Slade, *The Leicestershire survey*, p. 21. This amounted to 9 carucates. The extra 1 carucate was held by the Bishop of Lincoln.

⁶³⁸ The more usual measurement for a hide in the rest of the county would seem to have been calculated at 18 carucates. See DB f. 231 b, where the hide and a quarter at Burbage is valued at 22 ½ carucates.

⁶³⁹ The continuing disagreement over parochial administration into the fourteenth century could suggest that this putative estate once fell within Rothley soke. However, Ab-Kettleby with Holwell lay in the Wapentake of Framland, so if there had ever been an estate connection between the three townships, it

Further evidence for linking these three villis does not appear until the nineteenth century when maps and local knowledge were used to establish assarts linked to all three of these villis which had been made in the territory of the wolds to the north east (Map 34).⁶⁴⁰ It is possible that land lying to the north east of Ab Kettleby parish known as Wartnaby Wolds could have been the land which owed tithes to Ab Kettleby church in the fourteenth century. If this is the case then these assarts appear to have created a confusion in land holding and jurisdiction at a time when payments of tithes and manorial dues were still being clarified.

Chadwell with Wycomb

Chadwell and Wycomb were a joint township assessed (like Keyham) at 4 carucates in the Domesday Survey and lay surrounded by non-soke territory. They lay at the eastern extremity of the Rothley soke territory. The townships which lay closest to Chadwell and Wycomb to the north and west were Goadby Marwood and Scalford. Waltham on the Wolds lay to the east (Map 35). For each of these settlements there was a church in the *Matriculus*, and each church was in the patronage of an ecclesiastical organisation.⁶⁴¹ One slight suggestion of a connection with the soke was found in the neighbouring township of Scalford, when there was a claim of ancient demesne as of the soke of Rothley in 1392.⁶⁴² It is possible that part, or all, of Scalford was once attached to Rothley, the most likely connection being through the land which had descended to the Countess Judith at Domesday, and later to king David of Scotland in the early twelfth century. Despite this, attempting to place Chadwell and Wycomb within the context of a larger local estate has yielded little firm evidence, nor does there seem to have been any fiscal or parochial connection with their immediate neighbours. It is possible that Chadwell lay at the heart of an early settlement arising as a result of seasonal transhumance by the tenants of the soke which was ultimately granted a chapel of its own.⁶⁴³ If this were so, there would be no need to see Chadwell and Wycomb as part of a local estate. That Wycomb is an early settlement can be established through its

would probably pre-date the Wapentake divisions of the early tenth century. A connection subsequent to that division would be most unlikely.

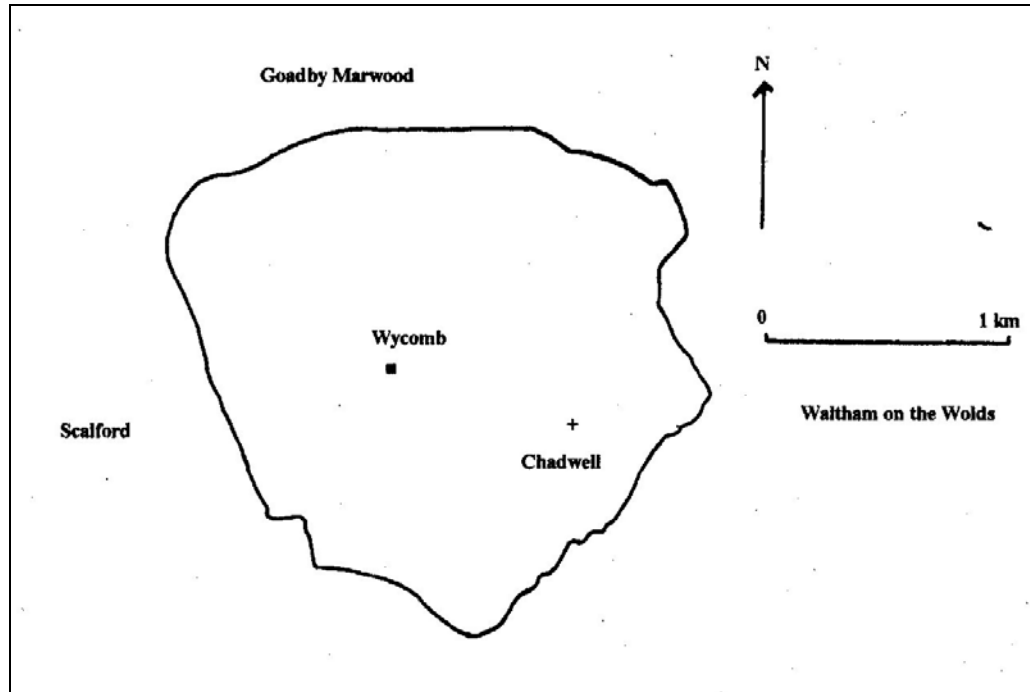
⁶⁴⁰ L.R.O. 4D 72/1/2, Vol. II. The assarts associated with Wartnaby were known locally as Wartnaby Wolds. The record of the judgement in the case states that Wartnaby Wolds had never been part of the soke of Rothley. It is unclear which parish it belonged to, but it would seem likely that the parish church of Ab Kettleby had been the recipient of the tithes.

⁶⁴¹ Goadby Marwood was connected with the abbey at Garendon, Waltham was in the patronage of the nuns of Eaton, and the patron of Scalford was the prior of Daventry. In the early thirteenth century Scalford parish had no dependent chapels, and its dedication was to St Egelwine the martyr, a name suggesting an early foundation.

⁶⁴² Farnham, ed., *Village notes*, Vol. IV, p. 30. An Assize Roll of AD 1392 gives some details.

⁶⁴³ Prof. H.S.A. Fox, personal communication.

name, for Goadby Marwood was the site of a Roman Town, and Wycomb (the old spelling is Wikeham) may originally have been a *vicus* settlement on the edge of this Roman centre.⁶⁴⁴



Map 35. Chadwell and Wycomb showing relationship with surrounding townships

Source: L.R.O. First edition OS map 6-inch series, sheet XIII

Vill	Chief tenant at Domesday	Holding
Goadby Marwood	Geoffrey de la Guerche	6 carucates
	Robert of Bucy	6 carucates
Scalford	Robert of Bucy	½ carucate
	Countess Judith	11 carucates
Waltham on the Wolds	Hugh of Grandmesnil	16 ½ carucates
	Guy of Craon	2 ½ + ½ carucates

Figure 17. Chadwell, Wycomb and neighbouring vills

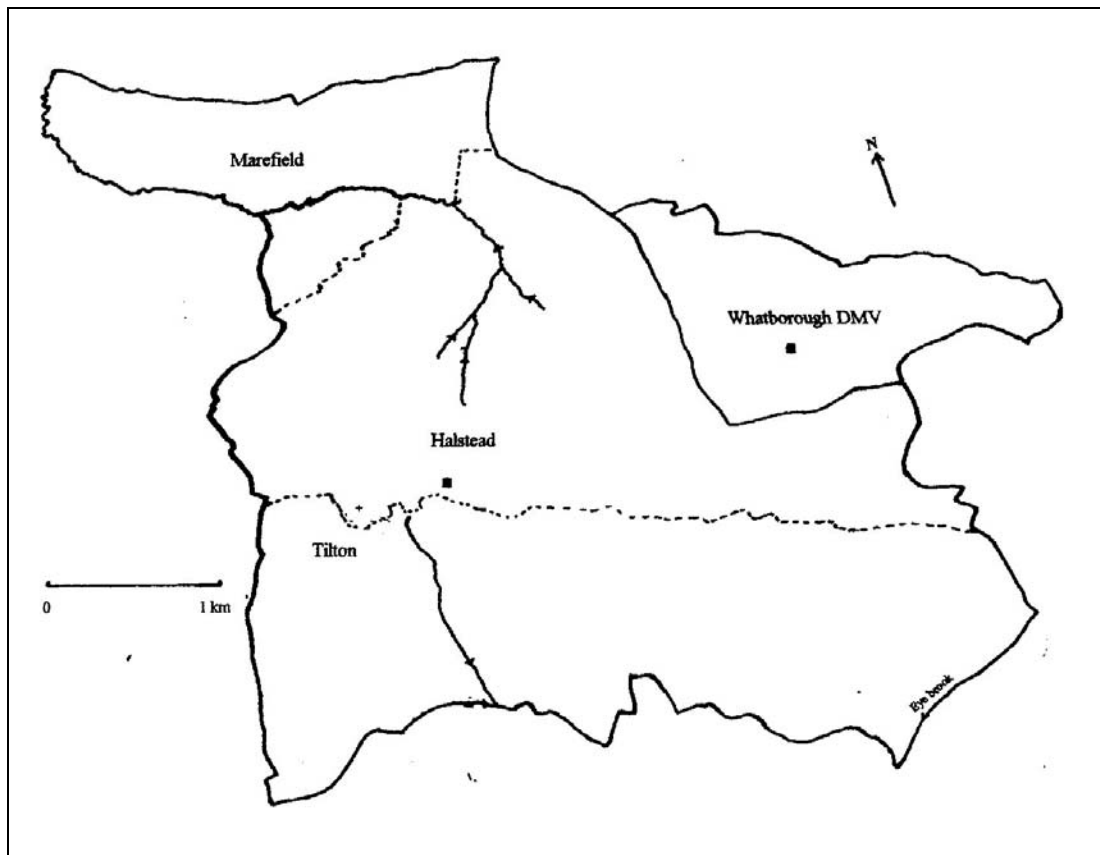
Source: W.P.W. Phillimore, ed., *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles Episcopi Lincolnensis AD MCCIX - MCCXXXV* (Lincoln, 1912), Vol. I, pp. 271, 272; DB ff. 234 c, 235 b, c, 236 c, 233 a

Tilton on the Hill

Part of Tilton belonged to the soke at Domesday and remained under the Templars in the thirteenth century. The parish encompassed other Domesday soke dependencies at Halstead and South Marefield, and in addition the vill of Whatborough,

⁶⁴⁴ M. Gelling, *Place-names in the landscape* (London, 1984), p. 323.

a royal holding at Domesday, was also part of Tilton parish (Map 36). Tilton was atypical of most other thirteenth-century soke villis in that it did not pay tithes to Rothley church. Its advowson had been in the hands of a local family, the Digbys. At Domesday the vill had a priest, which probably indicates the presence of a church,⁶⁴⁵ and the Domesday chief tenants were the king,⁶⁴⁶ Robert the Bursar, and the Archbishop of York, whose land is described as belonging to St Mary's Southwell.⁶⁴⁷



Map 36. Parish of Tilton, including Halstead, Marefield and Whatborough

Sources: L.R.O. DE 76 Ti/333/1 41/72 Tithe map for Tilton on the Hill, Leicestershire; L.R.O. DE 76 Ti/135/1 41/60 Tithe map of the township of Halstead in the county of Leicester; L.R.O. Ti/213/1 South Marefield map drawn for Thomas Cooper Hincks; L.R.O. Pre-1832 ancient parishes, institute of heraldic and genealogical studies (Canterbury, 1978)

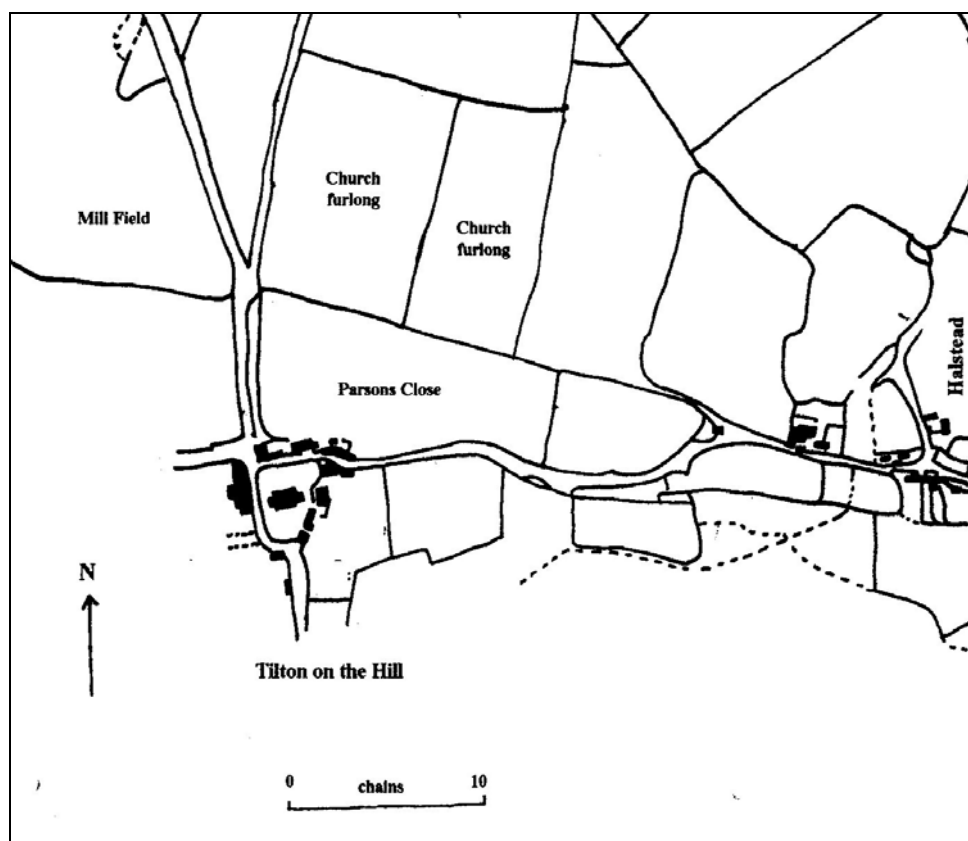
The advowson of the church at Tilton and of its chapels at Marefield and Whatborough was granted by the Digby family to the nearby priory of Launde in the mid-twelfth century.⁶⁴⁸ During the course of the medieval period much of Halstead was granted to Launde priory, along with further land in Whatborough. The church may have been regarded as part of the estate acquired by Launde Priory and after the Dissolution both

⁶⁴⁵ DB f. 235 a.

⁶⁴⁶ DB f. 230 c.

⁶⁴⁷ DB f. 230 d.

church and estate were granted to the Tamworth family.⁶⁴⁹ From the following maps it can be seen that the church and property to the east of the church belonged within the township of Halstead, whereas the settlement of Tilton on the Hill lies to the west and south of the church, but the church itself is outside that settlement (Maps 37 and 38). Each township had its own set of open fields, but both belonged to the same parish. It is possible that the division between Tilton and Halstead post-dated Domesday and may have been created to reflect new tenurial allegiances under Launde Priory.⁶⁵⁰



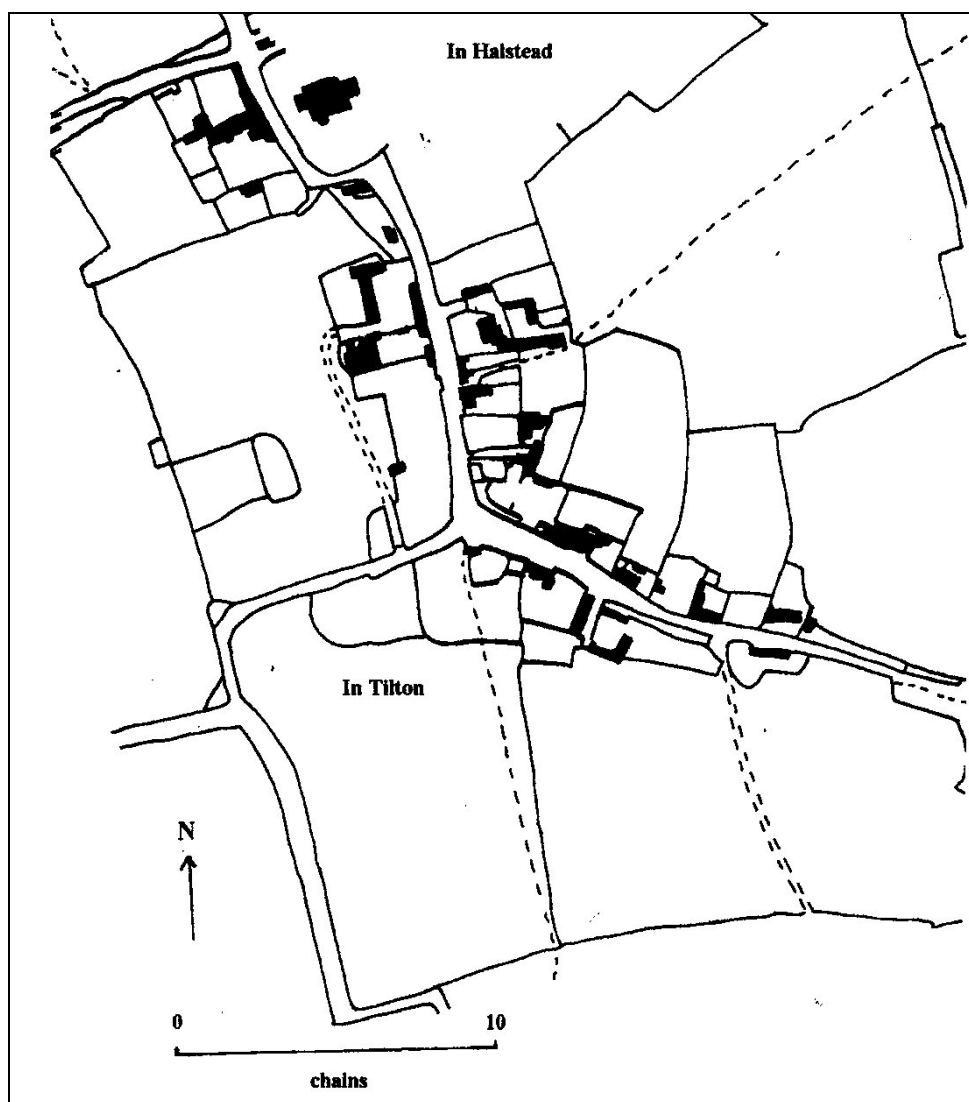
Map 37. Halstead and the church of Tilton on the Hill

Source: L.R.O. Ti/135/1 DE 76 41/60 Tithe map of the township of Halstead in the county of Leicester

⁶⁴⁸ Nichols, ed., *Antiquities*, Vol. III, part I, p. 302.

⁶⁴⁹ Nichols, ed., *Antiquities*, Vol. III, part I, p. 476.

⁶⁵⁰ Nichols, ed., *Antiquities*, Vol. III, part I, p. 476.



Map 38. Detail of settlement of Tilton on the Hill from the tithe map

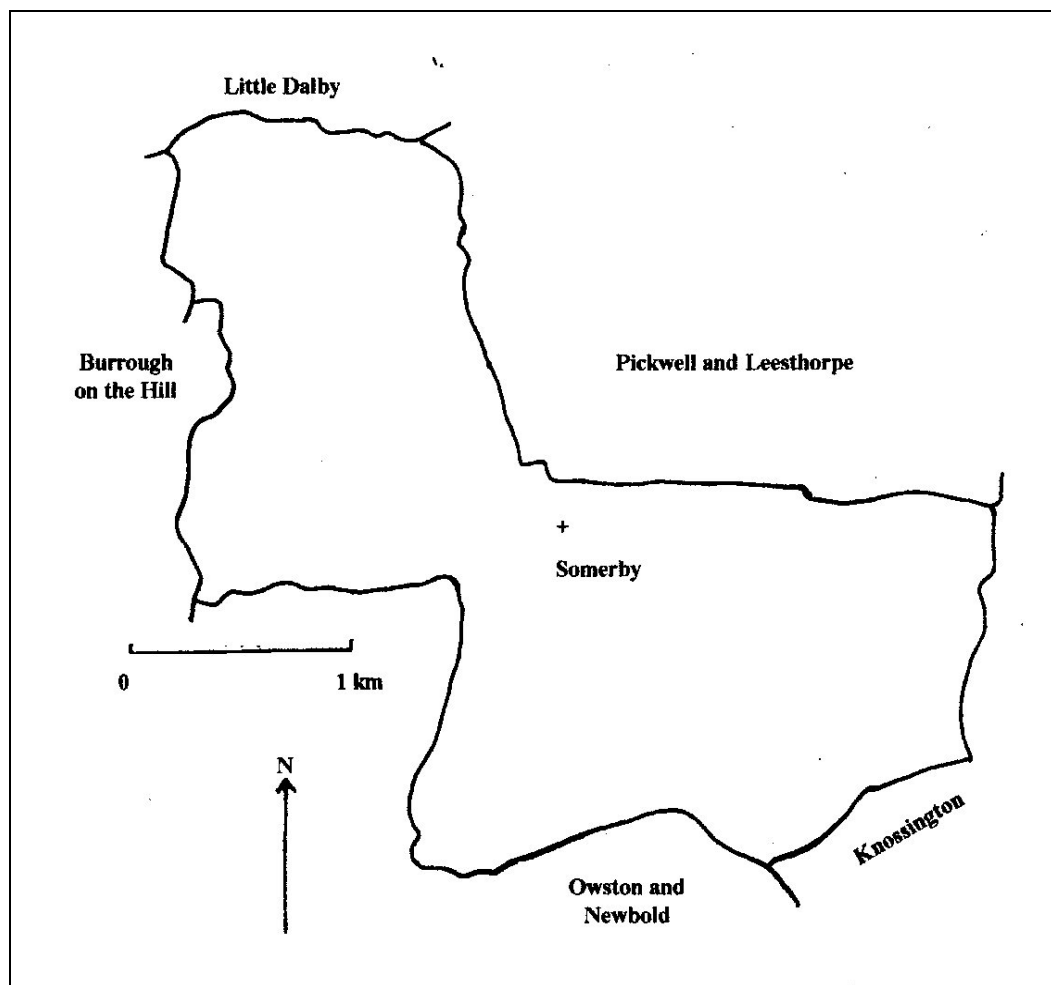
Source: L.R.O. DE 76 Ti/333/1 41/72 Tithe map for Tilton on the Hill, Leicestershire

Tilton had a priest at Domesday, which suggests that there was a pre-Conquest church in that vill, which could have served this large parish. The relative relationship with Rothley church is difficult to ascertain, but two possibilities are firstly, that Tilton church predated that of Rothley, and thus an earlier parish was created leaving Rothley church outside this parish, or a local agreement was struck between the king and the manorial lord of Tilton to enable the creation of a local parish church in that township leading to a parochial severance of those sokelands from the parish of Rothley.⁶⁵¹

⁶⁵¹ However, there is no evidence of a severance payment being made by Tilton church to Rothley, and so for the moment, this must remain uncertain.

Somerby

At Domesday only 1½ carucates of land in Somerby were attached to the soke of Rothley.⁶⁵² This still amounted to 5½ yardlands in the sixteenth century.⁶⁵³ The soke tenants belonged to both the soke and parish of Rothley at the time of the enclosure in 1760.⁶⁵⁴ This curiously shaped township contained a single street with tenements in different manors scattered throughout the settlement. The postulation that this was once a summer settlement shared by a number of groups of people from the lower valleys of the rivers Soar and Wreake is supported by the sharing of the jurisdictions of both the wapentakes of Gartree and Goscote, to which this township belonged.⁶⁵⁵



Map 39. Township of Somerby

Source: OS Leicestershire and Rutland first edition 6 inch series, sheets XXVII, XXXIII

⁶⁵² DB f. 230 c.

⁶⁵³ Farnham, ed., *Village notes*, Vol. IV, p. 119. A yardland was equivalent to a virgate, or a quarter of a carucate.

⁶⁵⁴ L.R.O. 8D 39/47/2, Enclosure act of Parliament for Somerby, AD 1760. Further information regarding the enquiry prior to enclosure can be found in L.R.O. 2D31/358/1-5, Papers concerning Somerby enclosure, 1761.

⁶⁵⁵ Prof. H.S.A. Fox, personal communication.

Vill	Wapentake in Domesday	Vill holding Jurisdiction in Domesday	Church connections in <i>Matriculus</i>
Pickwell	Gartree		None
Cold Overton	Framland		None
Somerby	Framland and Goscote		None
Burrough	Framland	Pickwell	None
Owston	Gartree		None
Newbold (Saucey)	Framland		No record
Little Dalby	Framland	Pickwell	None
Knossington	Gartree	Oakham	None
<i>Godtorp</i>		Pickwell and Somerby	

Figure 18. Fiscal, jurisdictional and ecclesiastical connections between settlements in High Leicestershire

Source: W.P.W. Phillimore, ed., *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles Episcopi Lincolnensis AD MCCIX - MCCXXXV* (Lincoln, 1912), Vol. I, pp. 262, 263, 269; DB ff. 235 a, d 236 a, 233 c

Unlike part-soke townships such as Tilton, the soke tenants living in Somerby were not absorbed into the parish of Somerby, but the reasons for this remain obscure. Perhaps the manorial lord either did not succeed in reaching an agreement with the church at Rothley, or did not attempt to enter such an agreement. For pragmatic reasons the soke tenants may well have used their local church for regular services, but they continued to pay their tithes to Rothley. Where they were buried is not recorded.

Summary

By the thirteenth century the soke had been reduced in size to about half that at Domesday, and of the nine soke vill or part-vills which had been alienated, only Skeffington retained a parochial connection with Rothley church. The parish of Rothley was not coterminous with the soke dependencies, and many payments made to Rothley church were revealed through documentary sources which were much later than Domesday or the *Matriculus*. The connection with the parish appears to have been a strong contributing factor in the retention of the dependency within the soke. Thus alienation may suggest that non-parochial lands could have been accretions to the soke after the formation of the parish. Some dependencies can be shown to have had a parochial connection with Rothley church which had not been recorded as part of the soke at Domesday, and from this it can be inferred that these lands were once part of the royal holding and hence of the pre-Conquest soke.

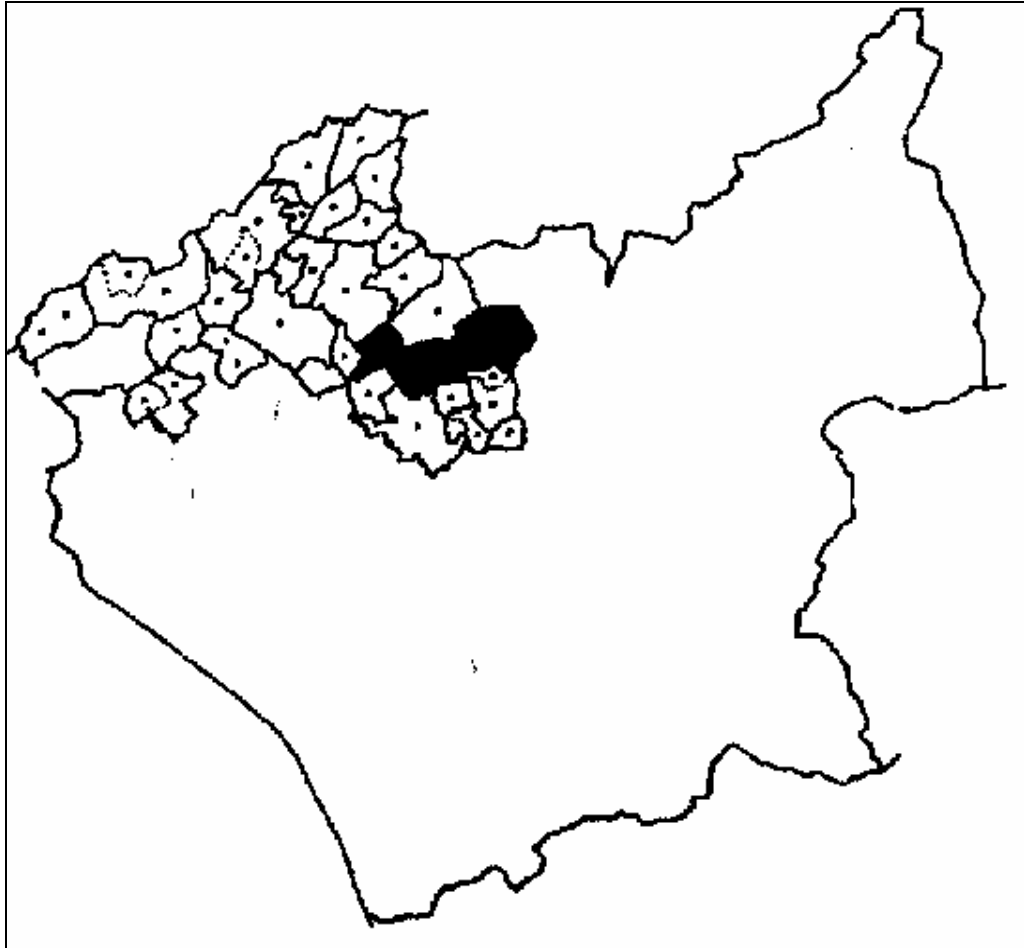
There were some part-soke townships such as Grimston and Gaddesby which were wholly within the parish, suggesting that the whole of these townships were once in royal hands and hence part of the pre-Conquest soke. Some soke townships were not recorded as part of the parish, such as Tilton, Marefield and Barsby, which suggests that these lands may have been additions to the soke after the creation of their own parishes, or they could have once been part of the parish, but there has been a severance agreement between Rothley church and a local lord to enable a later creation of local parish churches at Tilton and Ashby Folville.

Parochial links with Rothley parish can be demonstrated for eleven chapels or parishes, and these were Gaddesby, Grimston, Wartnaby, Chadwell, Keyham, with payments from the parishioners of Somerby, South Croxton, Skeffington, Wanlip, Mountsorrel, and Shoby. Following the Conquest the lands of Rothley soke appear to have undergone a process of fission, and many of those lands show no connection with the parish of Rothley. This could suggest that many lands which separated from the soke were not part of the central core of the soke, but they were always peripheral. Perhaps they came into the soke at a late date, leading to an easier severance of these ties. Most lands which remained under the Templars demonstrated parochial ties, and it was these lands which continued to maintain their links with the *caput* centre up to the Dissolution.

Did parochial ties hold the core of the soke together, or was it only the core which developed a parochial network, with other lands remaining fluid? An examination of other sokes and larger parishes in Leicestershire may offer some clues.

Other parishes and putative estates within the county

Deanery of Akeley: Barrow on Soar



Map 40. Parish of Barrow on Soar within the deanery of Akeley⁶⁵⁶

Source: W.P.W. Phillimore, ed., *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles Episcopi Lincolnensis AD MCCIX - MCCXXXV* (Lincoln, 1912), Vol. I, p. 253

Much of the soke of Barrow was held by earl Hugh at Domesday, and the secular jurisdiction spanned the deaneries of both Akeley and Goscote (Map 41). The deanery of Goscote was bounded by the river Soar to the west, and Framland deanery to the east. As in the soke of Rothley, many of the Domesday soke dependencies of Barrow lay within Goscote deanery. Although Barrow was a large soke, its parish was much smaller and lay to the west of the river Soar, a wedge of territory driving deep into the forest of Charnwood, with its jurisdiction extending through Quorn, the northern half of Mountsorrel, Woodhouse and on towards Charley Priory meeting the

⁶⁵⁶ The northern half of Mountsorrel was also included in the parish. The southern half of Mountsorrel was attached to the parish of Rothley.

boundary with Whitwick (Map 40). This core of the soke, underpinned by parochial connections, held many economic assets such as grazing for livestock and timber production, and included Mountsorrel, a market town planted within assarts between Rothley and Barrow.

Vill	Site of mother church	Jurisdiction	Chief tenant at Domesday	Size of holding
Barrow on Soar	Barrow	Barrow	Earl Hugh	15 carucates 10 houses in Leicester
Castle Donington		Barrow	Earl Hugh Countess Aelfeva*	5 carucates 22 ½ carucates
Cossington		Barrow	Earl Hugh	6 carucates
Hoton	Prestwold	Barrow	Earl Hugh Robert of Jort*	6 carucates 5 carucates
Seagrave		Barrow/Rothley	Earl Hugh King** Henry of Ferrers* Robert of Bucy*	2 carucates 6 carucates ½ carucate 2 carucates
Sileby		Barrow/Rothley	Earl Hugh Hugh of Grandmesnil* King** Hugh of Grandmesnil*	1 carucates 13 burgesses in Leicester 2 carucates 2 bovates 8 ½ carucates
Rearsby		Barrow	Earl Hugh Countess Judith* Robert of Bucy*	2 carucates less 1 bove 2 ½ carucates 2 carucates less 2 bovates
Brooksby		Barrow	Earl Hugh Countess Judith*	2 carucates 6 bovates
Frisby	Payment to Melton (glebe terrier)	Barrow/Rothley	Earl Hugh King**	1 ½ carucates 8 carucates
Prestwold	(Chapels at Hoton, Cotes and Burton)	Barrow	Earl Hugh Durand Malet*	2 carucates 1 ½ carucates less 1 bove
Charley		Barrow	Earl Hugh	4 carucates
Gaddesby	Rothley	Barrow/Rothley	Earl Hugh Countess Judith* Countess Judith* King**	1 carucates 1 ½ carucate ½ carucate 8 carucates 3 bovates
Rotherby		Barrow	Earl Hugh	3 carucates less 2 bovates
Woodhouse	Barrow	Barrow	Under Barrow	
Mountsorrel	Barrow/Rothley	Barrow/Rothley	Under Barrow and Rothley	
Quorn	Barrow	Barrow	Under Barrow	

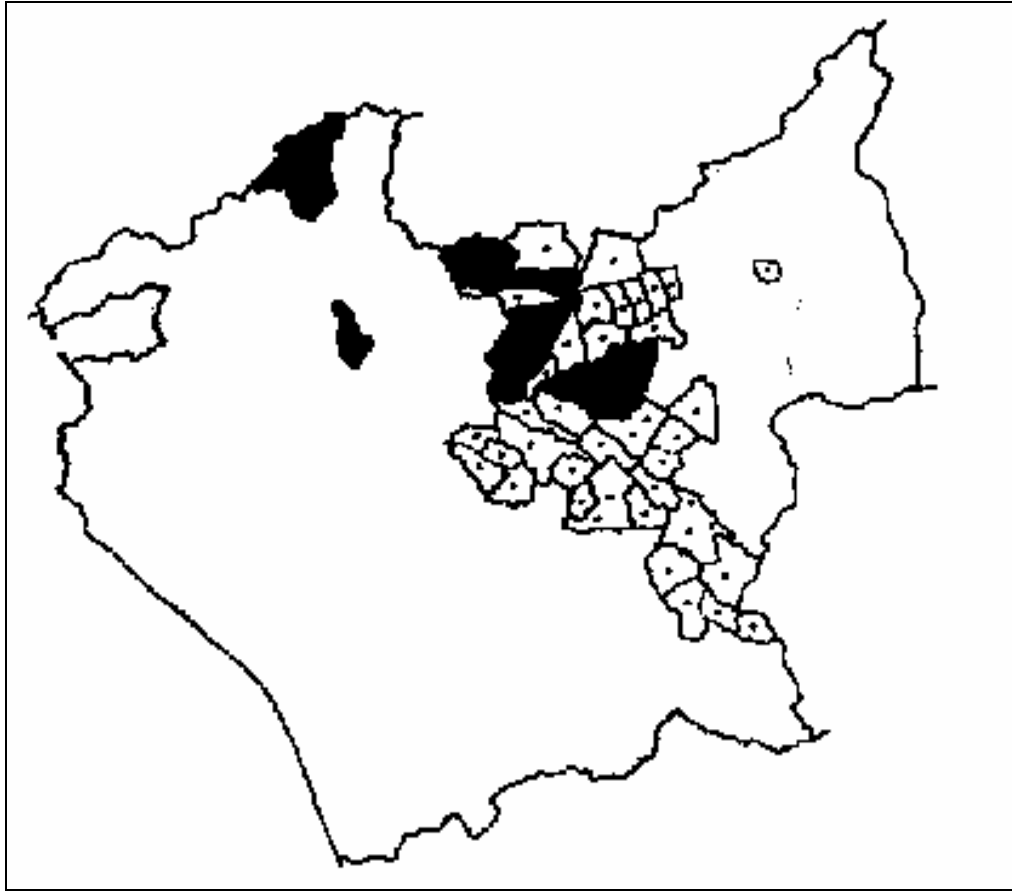
Figure 19. Soke of Barrow with ecclesiastical and jurisdictional connections

*Not under the jurisdiction of either soke

** As of the soke of Rothley

Sources: W.P.W. Phillimore, ed., *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles Episcopi Lincolnensis AD MCCIX - MCCXXXV* (Lincoln, 1912), Vol. I, pp. 252-260; DB ff. 230 a, c, 231 d, 233 a, b, 234 c, 236 a, b, c, d, 237 a

The deanery of Goscote: putative sub-estates associated with the soke of Barrow



Map 41. Soke dependencies of Barrow on Soar and their relationship with the deanery of Goscote

Sources: W.P.W. Phillimore, ed., *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles Episcopi Lincolnensis AD MCCIX - MCCXXXV* (Lincoln, 1912), Vol. I, pp. 252-260; DB ff. 230 a, c, 231 d, 233 a, b, 234 c, 236 a, b, c, d, 237 a

Prestwold was one of the part-vills of Barrow soke, which in the *Matriculus* possessed three chapels: one at Cotes (now deserted); another chapel at Hoton; and a third chapel at Burton-on-the-Wolds.⁶⁵⁷ Part of Prestwold came under the jurisdiction of the soke of Barrow in the Domesday Survey,⁶⁵⁸ and another part came under Durand Malet in 1086, who also held Burton on the Wolds and a small part of Wymeswold.⁶⁵⁹ An estate ascribed to Robert de Jort in 1086, and held by force, comprised 2 carucates in Wymeswold and 5 carucates in Hoton, which were jointly assessed at 7s.⁶⁶⁰ A small estate of 2 carucates in Wymeswold came under Roger de Bully in the Survey.⁶⁶¹ A further large estate in Wymeswold was held by Robert and Serlo under Hugh de

⁶⁵⁷ The monks of Garendon were beneficiaries of tithes from this parish.

⁶⁵⁸ DB f. 237 a.

⁶⁵⁹ DB f. 236 a.

⁶⁶⁰ DB f. 236 d.

⁶⁶¹ DB f. 234 c.

Grandmesnil.⁶⁶² A combination of the evidence of the *Matriculus* and that of the Domesday Survey, gives a suggestion of an estate centred on Prestwold, which encompassed Hoton, Burton on the Wolds and Cotes, and included parts of Wymeswold (Figure 20). Earl Hugh, who held the soke of Barrow, also held Loughborough and a hide of land in Burton on the Wolds as a separate estate which came under the jurisdiction of Loughborough.⁶⁶³ Thus the connection with the soke appears to have been secular only, and it is possible that this putative estate was a late acquisition of Barrow, after the creation of its own parish.

Vill	Chief tenant at Domesday	Holding	Mother church	Chapels	Obligations to mother church
Prestwold	Earl Hugh (Soke of Barrow)	2 carucates	Prestwold	Cotes with chaplain	Incense, sacraments and burial rights
				Hoton	Rights of a mother church
	Durand Malet	1 ½ carucates less 1 bovat		Burton on the Wolds	Tithes to Garendon Abbey
Burton on the Wolds	Durand Malet	5 carucates	Prestwold		
	Geoffrey of la Guerche	5 carucates			
	Earl Hugh (Jurisdiction of Loughborough)	1 hide			
	Earl Hugh	2 carucates			
	Earl Hugh	2 carucates less 1 bovat			
Hoton	Robert de Jort	5 carucates	Prestwold		
	Earl Hugh (Soke of Barrow)	6 carucates			

Figure 20. Relationships between tenants in the parish of Prestwold

Sources: W.P.W. Phillimore, ed., *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles Episcopi Lincolnensis AD MCCIX - MCCXXXV* (Lincoln, 1912), Vol. I, p. 255; DB ff. 235 d, 236 a, d, 237 a

Similarly, other pre-Conquest estates connected with the soke of Barrow could be postulated under Hugh of Grandmesnil at Belgrave, part of Thurmaston and Birstall, with the mother church at Belgrave (Figure 21); or again under Barkby, which may have been an estate incorporating the other part of Thurmaston and Hamilton with a mother church at Barkby, and including the nether end of South Croxton (Figure 22).

⁶⁶² DB f. 232 d. This manor had once been held by two brothers as separate holdings but then one brother had bought the other brother's share and created a single manor.

⁶⁶³ DB f. 237 a. Burton was found under several lordships in the Domesday survey. This holding was the largest. Another estate could be postulated from the close tenurial connections between Seagrave and Sileby, but no parochial connections recommend this as an estate. The vill was divided between the king, earl Hugh, Hugh de Grandmesnil, Henry de Ferrers, and Robert de Bucy, with the king holding the larger share of Seagrave, and Hugh de Grandmesnil holding the larger share of Sileby. These relationships do not lend themselves to the reconstruction of an estate.

Vill	Chief tenant at Domesday	Holding	Mother church in <i>Matriculus</i>	Chapels
Belgrave	Hugh of Grandmesnil	10 houses in Leicester		Thurmaston
	Hugh of Grandmesnil	7 carucates		Birstall
	Adelhaide, wife of Hugh of Grandmesnil	1 carucate		
Thurmaston	Hugh of Grandmesnil	10 carucates	Belgrave	
	Hugh of Grandmesnil	3 ½ carucates		
Birstall	Hugh of Grandmesnil	10 houses in Leicester	Belgrave	
	Hugh of Grandmesnil	6 carucates		
	Hugh of Grandmesnil	2 carucates		

Figure 21. *Matriculus* parish of Birstall held by Hugh de Grandmesnil at Domesday

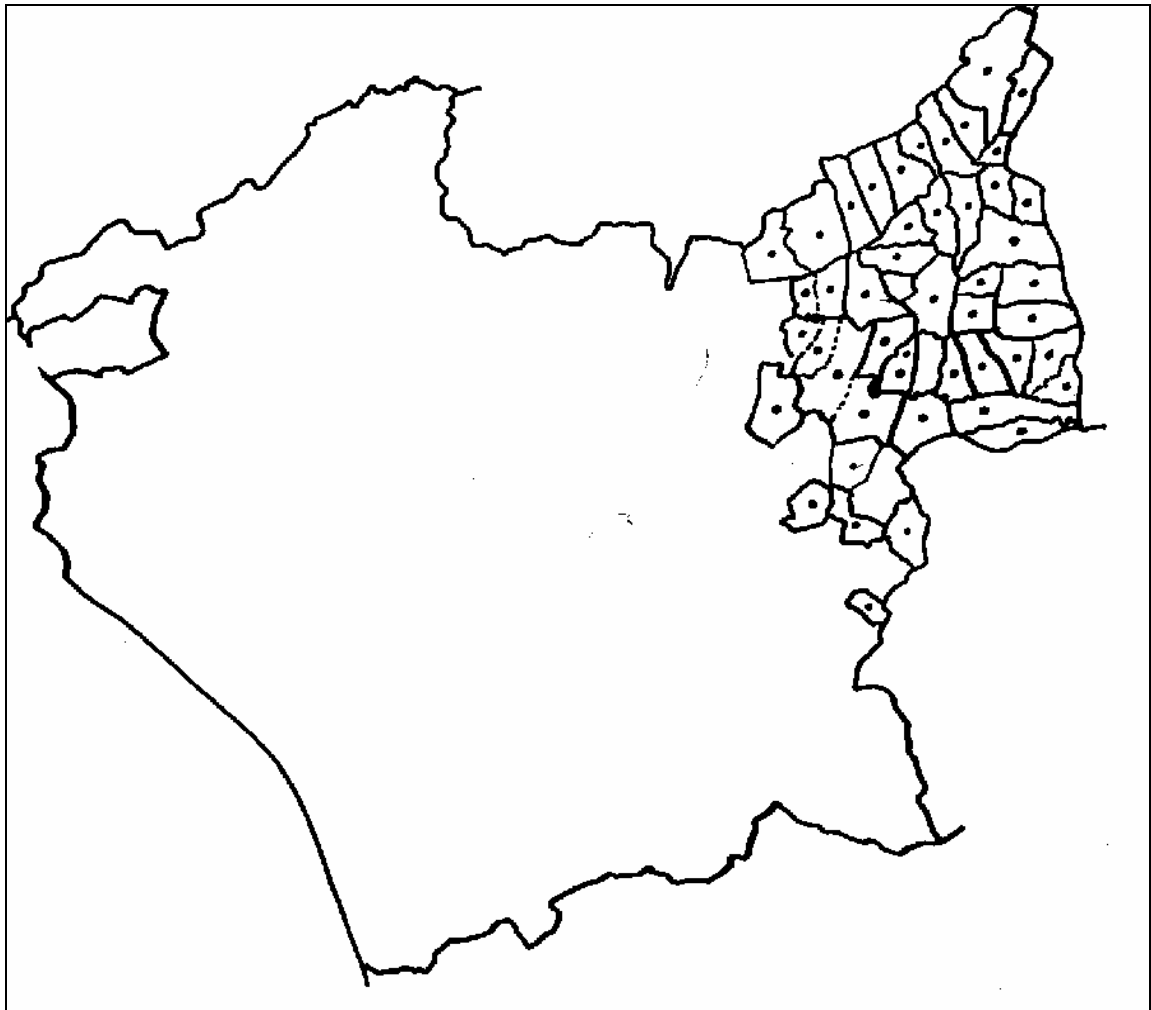
Sources: W.P.W. Phillimore, ed., *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles Episcopi Lincolnensis AD MCCIX - MCCXXXV* (Lincoln, 1912), Vol. 1, p. 256; DB ff. 232 b, d, 236 d

Vill	Chief tenant at Domesday	Holding	Mother church in <i>Matriculus</i>	Chapels
Barkby	Robert of Tosny	18 carucates less 6 carucates in Hungarton		Thurmaston Hamilton
	Adelaide	1 ½ carucates		
Thurmaston	Hugh de Grandmesnil (Given to St Mary de Castro)	3 ½ carucates	Barkby	
Hamilton	Part of Barkby		Barkby	
South Croxton	Roger of Tosny (Belvoir Fee)	5 carucates	South Croxton	

Figure 22. Relationship between the lands held within the parish of Barkby

Sources: W.P.W. Phillimore, ed., *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles Episcopi Lincolnensis AD MCCIX - MCCXXXV* (Lincoln, 1912), Vol. I, pp. 256f; DB 231 a, 232 b, d, 233 d, 236 d

The Deanery of Framland

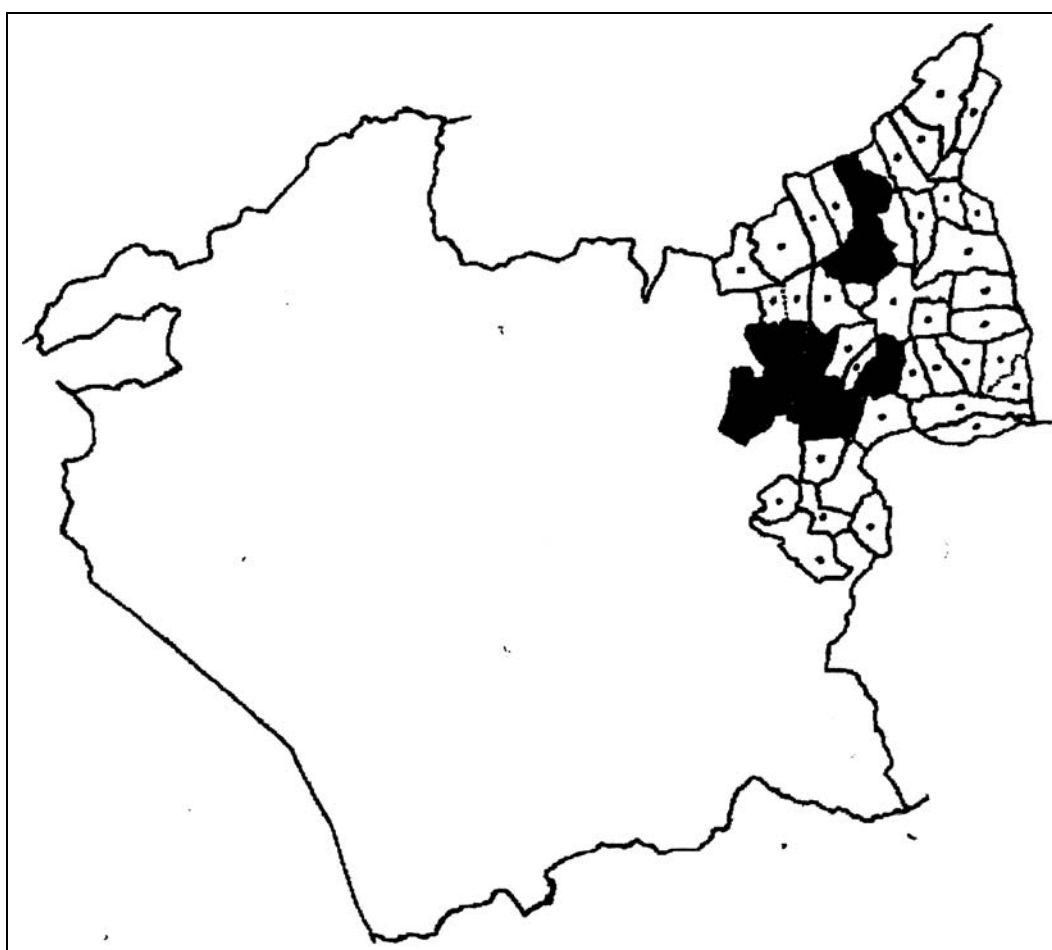


Map 42. Framland Deanery, Leicestershire, from the *Matriculus*

Source: W.P.W. Phillimore, ed., *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles Episcopi Lincolnensis AD MCCIX - MCCXXXV* (Lincoln, 1912), Vol. I, pp. 266-272

The deanery of Framland covered much the same territory as that of the Domesday wapentake, but although the vill of Owston and Newbold divided their fiscal jurisdiction between the wapentakes of Gartree and Framland, their parishes lay in the deanery of Gartree. Pickwell to the east of the county lay in both the wapentake and the deanery of Gartree, but at Domesday shared a jurisdiction with parts of Somerby, Burrough on the Hill and Little Dalby.⁶⁶⁴ Withcote and Cold Overton, (Framland deanery) and Knossington, (Gartree deanery) also lay within this shared landscape.⁶⁶⁵

⁶⁶⁴ It is possible that these shared jurisdictions arose from the inter-commoning of grazing land.



Map 43. Deanery of Framland showing possible extent of the estate based on Melton

Sources: W.P.W. Phillimore, ed., *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles Episcopi Lincolnensis AD MCCIX - MCCXXXV* (Lincoln, 1912), Vol. I, pp. 269-272; DB ff. 235 c, d

Geoffrey of la Guerche held much of the territory of Melton soke at Domesday. The administrative jurisdiction of the soke coupled with the evidence of the *Matriculus*, show a number of connections which could be used to postulate a large pre-Conquest estate structure (Map 43 and Figure 23). Freeby was separated from Melton by the estate of Thorpe Arnold, Wyfordby and Brentingby. Thorpe Arnold and Waltham on the Wolds were held by Walter under Hugh de Grandmesnil in 1086, and in the *Matriculus* Brentingby appeared as a chapel of Thorpe Arnold, suggesting a smaller estate within the vicinity of Melton. At Domesday Thorpe Arnold formed part of an estate under Walter who held of Hugh de Grandmesnil.⁶⁶⁵ The core of the Melton soke was underpinned by a large parochial network which was largely coterminous with the

⁶⁶⁵ Knossington was stated in Domesday as belonging to the jurisdiction of Oakham. Cf. DB f. 230 d.

⁶⁶⁶ DB f. 233 a.

secular jurisdiction, and could suggest that both the soke and parish were created at much the same time.

Other possible estates in Framland deanery which can be inferred from the *Matriculus* were Buckminster with Sewstern; Saltby with Bescaby; Holwell with Ab Kettleby and Bottesford with Nomanton.⁶⁶⁷ In 1086 Buckminster was held by the Bishop of Lincoln, while Sewstern was held by William Lovett, therefore no jurisdictional connection is apparent. Saltby, held by Roger of Bully, was a considerable estate in 1086 and was held before the Conquest by Morcar. Many of these lands in Framland held by named individuals prior to the Conquest were held freely, such as Ab Kettleby, Holwell, Harby, Wymondham, Goadby Marwood and Scalford. Some holdings were modest, but others were large. A small estate suggested in the *Matriculus* at Bottesford looks more of a reality at Domesday for in 1086 the jurisdiction of that vill extended to Redmile, Knipton and Stathern. One holding in Bottesford, which amounted to 12 carucates, was divided between six named men and four Frenchmen, all held by Leofric before the Conquest, suggesting an estate which covered a large part of north-eastern Leicestershire in the early eleventh century.

⁶⁶⁷ Croxton Kerrial was a very large parish which was not sub-divided into chapelries, but was granted as a whole in order to found the abbey of Croxton Kerrial.

Vill	Site of mother church	Chief tenant at Domesday	Size of holding
Melton	Melton	Geoffrey of La Guerche	7 hides ⁶⁶⁸ , 1 carucate
Freeby	Melton	Geoffrey of La Guerche	10 carucates
Wyfordby		Geoffrey of La Guerche	1 ½ c and ½ b
		Henry of Ferrars*	½ carucate
		Roger of Bully*	5 carucates 4 ½ bovates
Burton (Lazars)	Melton	Geoffrey of La Guerche	12 carucates less 1 bovat
		Henry of Ferrers*	1 carucate 1 bovat
		Roger of Bully*	3 carucates
(Eye) Kettleby	Melton	Geoffrey of La Guerche	8 carucates
Kirby (Bellars)		Geoffrey of La Guerche	17 carucates
		Geoffrey of La Guerche*	7 carucates
Sysonby	Melton	Geoffrey of La Guerche	2 ½ carucates
		Geoffrey of La Guerche*	2 carucates.
		Countess Judith*	½ carucate
Eastwell		Geoffrey of La Guerche	6 carucates
		King's servant - Askell*	5 carucates 2 bovates
Goadby (Marwood)	Tithe connection with Melton	Geoffrey of La Guerche	6 carucates
		Robert of Bucy*	6 carucates
Belonging to Melton:			
Welby ⁶⁶⁹		Geoffrey of La Guerche	8 carucates
		Countess Judith*	6 ½ c
		Countess Judith*	1 c 2 b
		Countess Judith*	½ c
Stathern ⁶⁷⁰ (Some jurisdiction also in Bottesford)		Geoffrey of La Guerche	8 carucates 2 bovates
		Robert of Tosny*	4 ½ c 3 bovates
		Robert of Tosny*	4 carucate 7 bovates

Figure 23. Melton and its associated vill

*These sub-estates did not belong to Melton

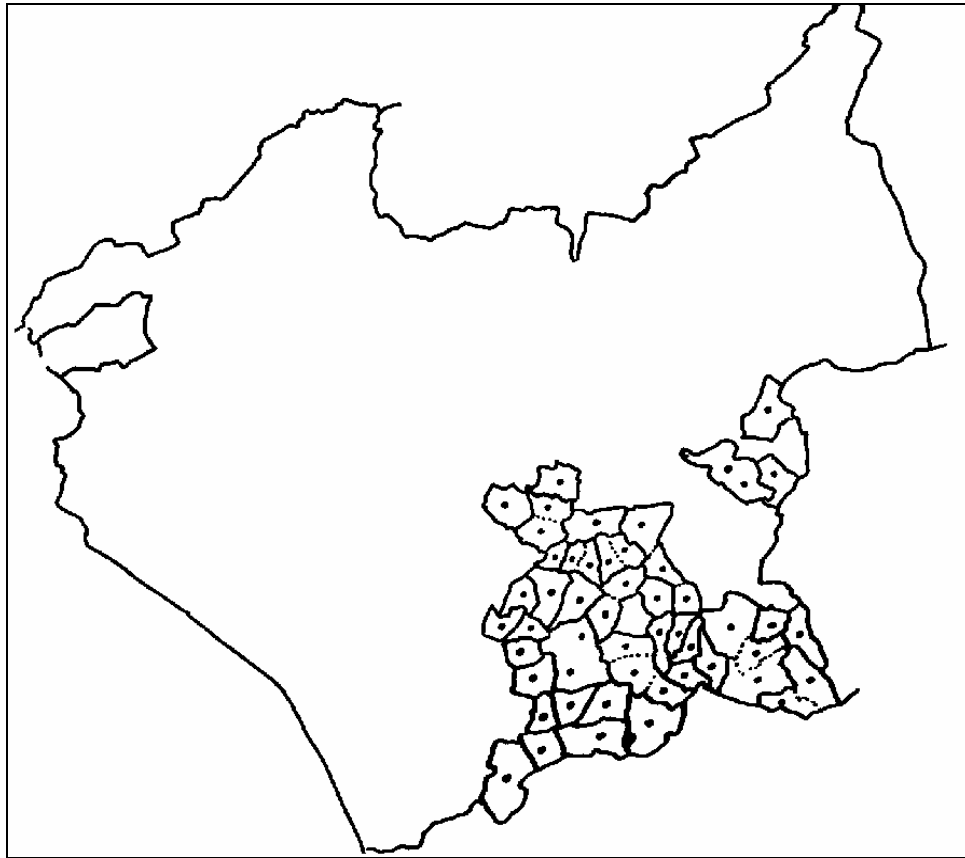
Sources: W.P.W. Phillimore, ed., *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles Episcopi Lincolniensis AD MCCIX - MCCXXXV* (Lincoln, 1912), Vol. I, pp. 269-272; DB ff. 235 c

⁶⁶⁸ DB f. 235 c. Each hide is said to have 14 ½ carucates.

⁶⁶⁹ Although Welby does not have an entry in the *Matriculus*, later evidence continues to link it with the parish of Melton.

⁶⁷⁰ DB f. 235 d. These lands under the jurisdiction of Melton were held by Leofric son of Leofwin before 1066. The lands of Robert of Tosny came under the jurisdiction of Bottesford.

Deanery of Gartree



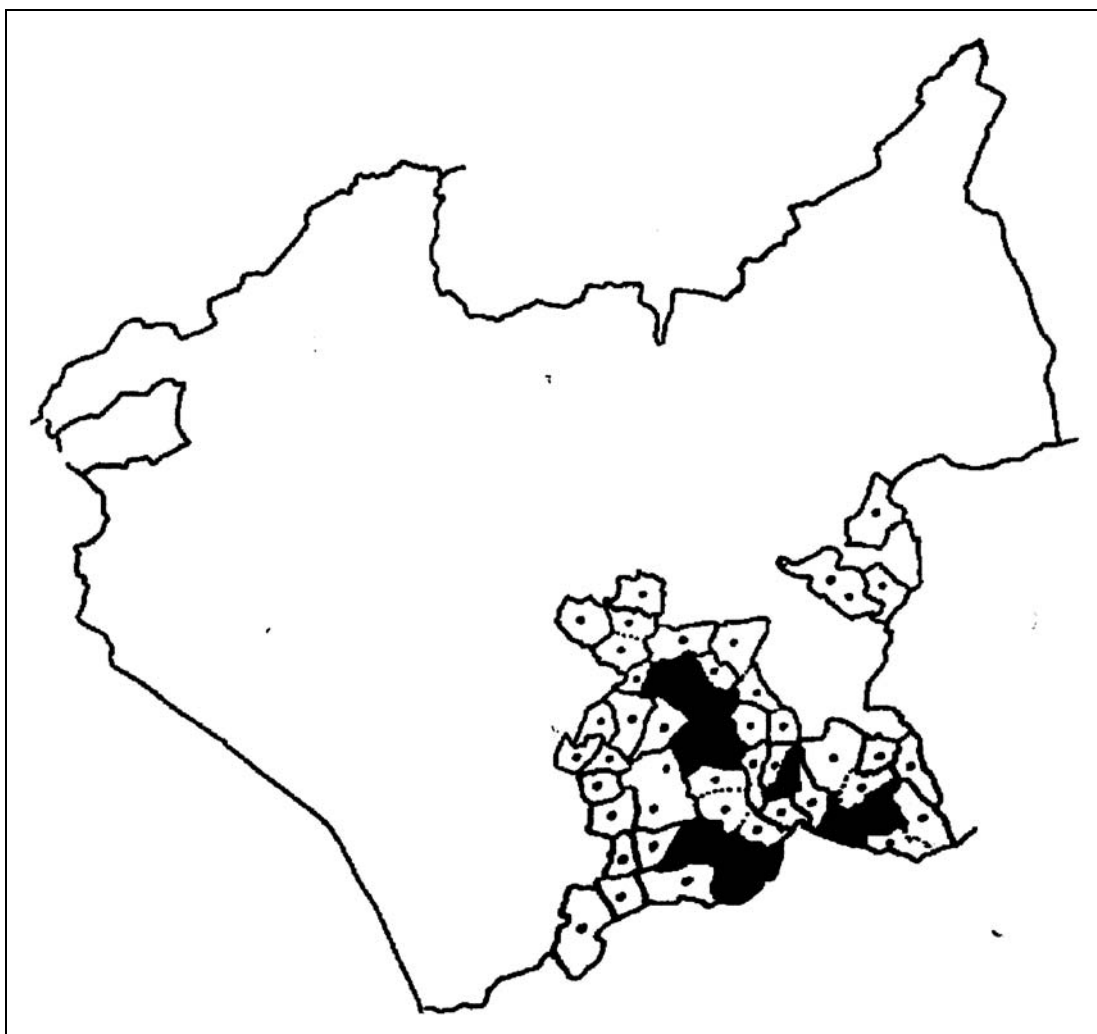
Map 44. Gartree Deanery, Leicestershire, from the *Matriculus*

Sources: W.P.W. Phillimore, ed., *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles Episcopi Lincolnensis AD MCCIX - MCCXXXV* (Lincoln, 1912), Vol. I, pp. 260-266

Gartree deanery covered much the same territory as the Domesday wapentake (Map 44),⁶⁷¹ and within its boundaries lay the Domesday royal soke of Great Bowden.⁶⁷² The parochial connections within the *Matriculus* suggest a number of smaller estate structures (Figure 24).

⁶⁷¹ One minor discrepancy lies in North and South Kilworth, which were placed (possibly by mistake) in the deanery of Guthlaxton. At Domesday both North and South Kilworth were assessed under Guthlaxton, but part of South Kilworth was assessed under Guy de Raimbeaucourt who held land in nearby Husbands Bosworth which came under Gartree Wapentake. Another difference between the wapentake and the deanery occurred at Kilby, a chapel of Wistow, but reckoned under the Wapentake of Guthlaxton in 1086. This could be a mistake, for there appears to have been no jurisdictional or fiscal reason why Kilby should have been separated from its mother church. Jill Bourne argues for the existence of a much larger estate based at Great Glen which incorporated the settlements at Wistow, Kilby, Newton Harcourt and Fleckney, and including Great Stretton. Cf. J. Bourne, 'An Anglo-Saxon royal estate *Aet Glenne* and the murder of St Wigstan' in J. Bourne, ed., *Anglo-Saxon landscapes in the east midlands* (1996), pp. 147-164.

⁶⁷² Also see D. Roffe, 'Great Bowden and its soke' in J. Bourne, ed., *Anglo-Saxon landscapes in the east midlands* (1996), pp. 107-120.



Map 45. Soke of Great Bowden from the Domesday Survey

Sources: W.P.W. Phillimore, ed., *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles Episcopi Lincolnensis AD MCCIX - MCCXXXV* (Lincoln, 1912), Vol. I, pp. 260-266; DB ff. 230 c

Possible minor estates within the soke of Bowden

Bowden was the *caput* township of this large soke in the wapentake of Gartree (Map 45). Bowden parish was confined to the caput centre, the later town of Market Harborough, and the township of Little Bowden. Little Bowden is an unusual township in that it lies partly in the county of the Leicester, and partly in Northamptonshire, thus the parish of Great Bowden breaks through the county boundary. Other secular and parochial connections within the soke appear to form smaller estates (Figure 24). For example both Medbourne (in Bowden soke) and Hallaton (non-soke) had chapels in

Blaston, and (Neville) Holt was also a chapelry of Medbourne.⁶⁷³ Such a configuration of townships and parishes suggests an early estate (or perhaps two conjoined estates) reconciled through the building of two separate chapels at Blaston.

Further examination of Bowden soke reveals other possible connections: Welham (non-soke) consisted of three lordships at Domesday, with dependent chapels at Cranoe and Glooston;⁶⁷⁴ a part-manor at Cranoe was held by the king under Bowden soke, and the other part was held by the Countess Judith;⁶⁷⁵ land in Glooston (non-soke) was held by Hugh de Grandmesnil from the Countess Judith.⁶⁷⁶ These connections within the parish appear very like an estate which had once been held by the Countess (or her antecessors) which had since fragmented, leaving only these connections to give a hint of its former existence.

Noseley (non-soke) appeared in Domesday under Hugh de Grandmesnil, who also held land in Carlton (Curlieu) and both villis had a priest. Land in Illston was held by Hugh de Grandmesnil,⁶⁷⁷ and Ingold⁶⁷⁸ (possibly the same Ingold who held land under Robert de Bucey).⁶⁷⁹ Some land in Carlton was held by the king as of the soke of Bowden. Thus the villis of Carlton, Illston and Noseley had considerable fiscal assessments and came largely under the jurisdiction of Hugh de Grandmesnil in 1086, with two priests amongst their assets, and from this it is possible to infer that Noseley once came under the jurisdiction of the soke of Bowden. The mother church of Galby had a chapel at Frisby in the thirteenth century, but in 1086 only a small part of Galby came under the soke of Bowden, for the larger share was held by Hugh de Grandmesnil who also held land in Frisby, the only record of that vill in 1086. This suggests that Frisby could once have come under the jurisdiction of the soke of Bowden. Thus the soke of Bowden appears to consist almost entirely of sub-estates, which can be postulated through a combination of parochial and secular connections. However, Roffe's examination of the wapentake and the soke concluded that,

'A simple model of continuity which posits unremitting fission as the only mechanism of estate formation is clearly inapplicable to the wapentake of Gartree. The apparently composite structure and diverse origins of the Bowden

⁶⁷³ The double chapel arrangement continued into the modern period, with Blaston having two churches: St Giles (Medbourne) and St Michael (Hallaton).

⁶⁷⁴ DB f. 234 b. The other two were 2 carucates held by Osbern under the Archbishop of York, and 1 carucate held by Gilbert under the Countess Judith.

⁶⁷⁵ DB f. 236 c.

⁶⁷⁶ DB f. 236 c.

⁶⁷⁷ DB f. 232 a.

⁶⁷⁸ DB f. 231 b.

⁶⁷⁹ DB f. 234 b.

sokeland illustrate that the soke in all its forms was not a fossil. Its constitution had probably always been fluid,.....⁶⁸⁰

He suggests that the right of tithe which underpinned the parochial system may have been no earlier than the reorganisation of the ecclesiastical provision in the tenth century in Northamptonshire, when a number of new minster churches were instituted.⁶⁸¹ This suggests that the estates postulated within the soke of Bowden using parochial connections would only be effective following the formation of such links. Evidence from Northamptonshire suggests that these links were probably created in the century before the Conquest.

⁶⁸⁰ Roffe, 'Great Bowden', pp. 107-120.

⁶⁸¹ Roffe, 'Great Bowden', p. 113.

Vill	Site of mother church	Dependent chapels	Chief tenant at Domesday	Size of holding
Great Bowden		Harborough	King	9 ½ carucates
			Countess Judith*	3 carucates
Medbourne		Holt, Blaston	King	2 carucates
			Robert of Tosny*	4 carucates
Cranoe	Welham		King	1 carucate
			Countess Judith*	2 carucates
Shangton			King	2 carucates
			Hugh of Grantmesnil*	4 carucates
			Robert of Vessey*	2 carucates
Carlton (Curliu)	Noseley		King	5 bovates
			Hugh of Grantmesnil*	11 carucates 1 bovine
Illston	Noseley		King	2 bovates
			King' Alms*	2 carucates 1 virgate
			Hugh of Grantmesnil*	9 carucate less 1 virgate
			Robert of Bucy*	½ carucate
Galby		Frisby	King	1 ½ carucates
			Hugh of Grantmesnil*	13 carucates 2 bovates
King's Norton		Little Stretton	King	3 carucates
(Little) Stretton	King's Norton		King	9 carucates
Smeeton (Westerby)			King	1 carucates 2 bovates
			Hugh of Grantmesnil*	1 plough (land lies in Leicester)
			Hugh of Grantmesnil*	5 carucates less 1bovine
			Robert the Bursar*	3 carucates
Foxton			King	2 carucates
			Countess Judith*	7 ½ carucates
Within jurisdiction:				
Theddingworth			William Lovett	3 ploughs
			Earl Aubrey*	3 carucates 2 bovates
			Earl Aubrey*	6 ½ carucates
			Countess Judith*	2 carucates
			Earl Hugh*	5 carucates
Blaston	Medbourne (St Giles)		Robert of Tosny	2 carucates
	Hallaton* (St Michael)		Robert of Tosny*	2 carucates (jurisdiction of Medbourne)
			Countess Judith*	1carucate (jurisdiction of Robert of Tosny)

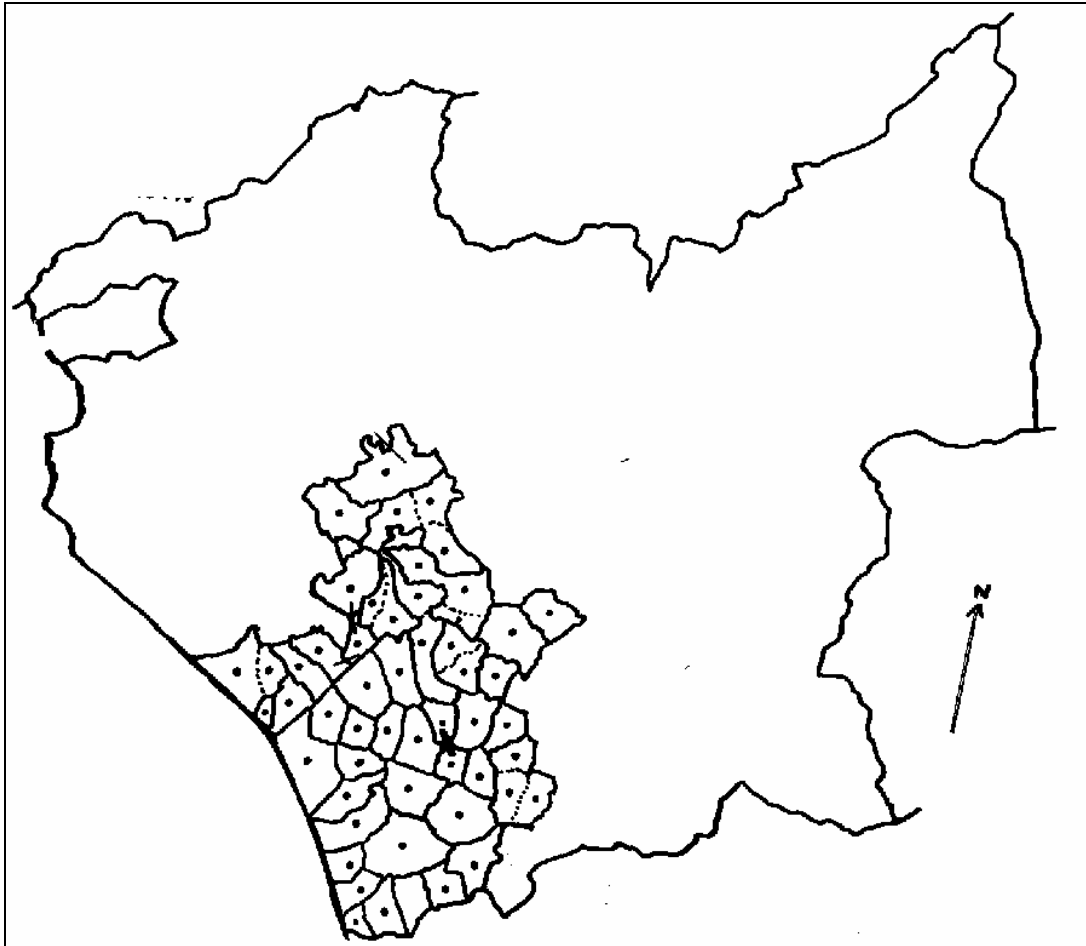
Figure 24. Soke of Great Bowden and associated vill

* Not part of the soke of Great Bowden

Sources: W.P.W. Phillimore, ed., *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles Episcopi Lincolnensis AD MCCIX - MCCXXXV* (Lincoln, 1912), Vol. I, pp. 260-264; DB ff. 230 c, 231 b, 232 a, b, d, 233 d, 234 a, b, d, 235 c, 236 c, b

Deanery of Guthlaxton

The territory of the Domesday wapentake of Guthlaxton occupied two deaneries in the *Matriculus*, Guthlaxton and Sparkenhoe, each of which were approximately equal in area, although the number of parishes differed markedly.⁶⁸² Groups of villas consisting of a mother church with one or more chapels were in greater numbers in Guthlaxton deanery (Map 46).



Map 46. Guthlaxton Deanery, Leicestershire, from the *Matriculus*

Source: W.P.W. Phillimore, ed., *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles Episcopi Lincolniensis AD MCCIX - MCCXXXV* (Lincoln, 1912), Vol. I, pp. 238-245

The *Matriculus* records parochial links which suggest a number of earlier territorial arrangements.⁶⁸³ Burbage and Aston Flamville might once have formed one large territory, and it is also possible that Sharnford might once have formed part of an

⁶⁸² Guthlaxton was reckoned to have forty-three parishes, and Sparkenhoe had twenty-one parishes. However, the latter had very large parishes which were sub-divided into chapelries. Cf. Sister Elspeth 'Ecclesiastical history' *V.C.H. Leicestershire* (London, 1907), Vol. I, pp. 355-401.

⁶⁸³ The maps are based on the parish boundaries as they existed pre-1832, with some minor adjustments to take account of evidence from tithe and enclosure maps.

estate encompassing Claybrooke Magna and Wigston Parva,⁶⁸⁴ since it sits neatly between the two villas with an ecclesiastical connection. Indeed the Domesday survey connects both Wigston Parva and Sharnford through a priest named Aelfric.⁶⁸⁵ The township boundaries of Claybrooke pose a particular problem because they cross the Roman road of Watling street, suggesting that the territorial arrangement in this part of the county may predate the Roman period, which anomaly has been the focus of a study by Phythian-Adams.⁶⁸⁶ Further secular and parochial connections exist to the south east of Kirby Muxloe where Narborough with Huncote, Enderby with Whetstone, and Aylestone with Lubbesthorpe and Glen Parva funnel together to meet at the boundary with Kirby Muxloe. Kirby was a chapel of Glenfield, as was neighbouring Braunstone, and in 1086 both Lubbesthorpe and Kirby Muxloe were holdings of William Peverel, who also held the unidentified *Bromkinsthorpe*. Further lands were held by Hugh de Grandmesnil in Ratby, Groby, Desford, *Bromkinsthorpe*, Glenfield and Braunstone, and Ulf held all these lands before the Conquest (Map 47 and Figure 25).⁶⁸⁷ Together these lands could have formed a large estate along with one further vill, that of Markfield, also held by Ulf before 1066, and recorded in the *Matriculus* making a payment to the church of Ratby on the feast of St Gregory.⁶⁸⁸ Such a connection probably pre-dated the twelfth-century re-organisation of the parishes, because Markfield lay in the deanery of Sparkenhoe.⁶⁸⁹

⁶⁸⁴ The *Matriculus* also included the chapel of Wibtoft under Claybrooke.

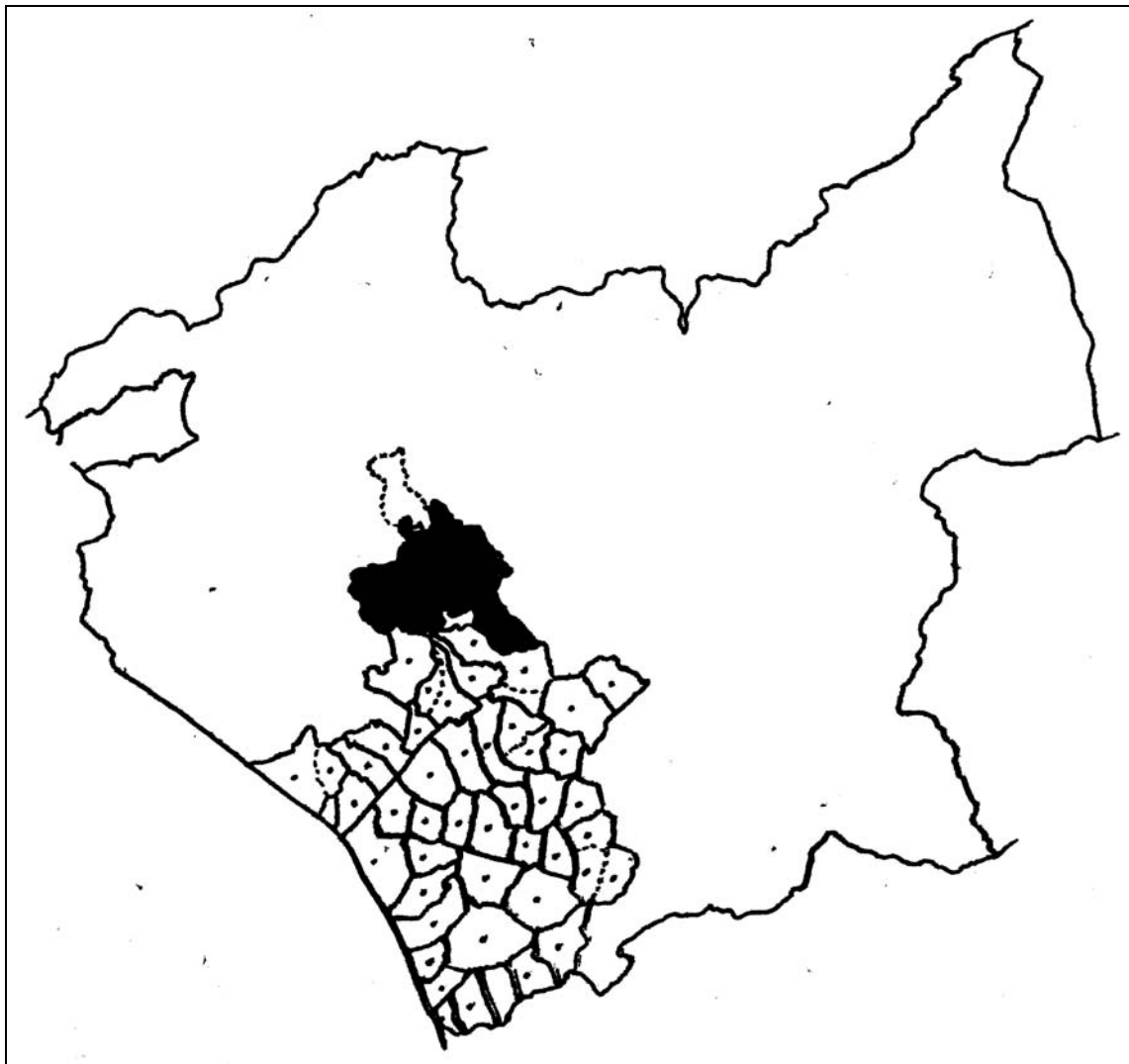
⁶⁸⁵ DB f. 231 b.

⁶⁸⁶ C. Phythian-Adams, 'Continuity, fields and fission: The making of a midland parish' in C. Phythian-Adams, ed., *E.L.H. Occasional Papers* 3, 4 (Leicester, 1978).

⁶⁸⁷ DB f. 232 a. Through a combination of both tenant and church connections, it is possible to suggest an earlier estate which comprises these villas. Later evidence links *Bromkinsthorpe* with St Mary de Castro in Leicester. Cf. Farnham, ed., *Village notes*, Vol. VI, p. 239.

⁶⁸⁸ March 12th. St Gregory was a saint of the seventh century. This dedication does not appear for any other medieval church in the county.

⁶⁸⁹ At Domesday Markfield lay in the Wapentake of Guthlaxton and was held by Hugh de Grandmesnil as sub-tenant to the Countess Judith. Before 1066 Markfield was held freely by Ulf.



Map 47. Possible pre-Domesday estate based on Ratby, Groby, Desford, Glenfield, Braunstone, Kirby Muxloe and Markfield

Sources: W.P.W. Phillimore, ed., *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles Episcopi Lincolnensis AD MCCIX - MCCXXXV* (Lincoln, 1912), Vol. I, pp. 245; DB ff. 230 a, 232 a, c, 235 b

Additional putative estates within Guthlaxton deanery were Misterton with its chapelries of Poultny and Walcote, which could also have included Kimcote and Swinford, suggesting a much larger estate than appears in the *Matriculus* (Figure 26).⁶⁹⁰

⁶⁹⁰ At Domesday Ralph held some land in all three of these villis under the Bishop of Lincoln. Following the entry for Swinford the Survey stated that Godric held these lands from Ralph before 1066, cf. DB f. 231 a. Misterton, Lutterworth and Catthorpe were held by earl Ralph prior to the Conquest; and further land in Swinford and Walcote had been held freely before the Conquest by Oslac thus suggesting a possible estate which could once have covered much of the territory in the southern tip of Leicestershire. Cf. DB f. 236 a and DB f. 234 b, respectively.

Vill	Jurisdiction	Site of mother church	Chief tenant at Domesday	Size of Holding
Ratby			Hugh of Grandmesnil	6 carucates less 3 bovates
Groby			Hugh of Grandmesnil	6 carucates less 3 bovates
Markfield		Payment to Ratby	Countess Judith	2 carucates
Desford	3 carucates in Ratby		Hugh of Grandmesnil	3 carucates less 3 bovates
			Hugh of Grandmesnil	2 houses in Leicester
Glenfield	½ carucate in Ratby		Hugh of Grandmesnil	6 carucates less 3 bovates
Braunstone	½ carucate in Ratby	Glenfield	Hugh of Grandmesnil	6 carucates less 5 bovates
Kirby Muxloe		Glenfield	William Peverel	3 carucates less 3 bovates
<i>Bromkinsthorpe</i>	2 carucates in Ratby		Hugh of Grandmesnil	1 house in Leicester
			William Peverel	2 carucates + 5 bovates

Figure 25. Vills associated with Ratby

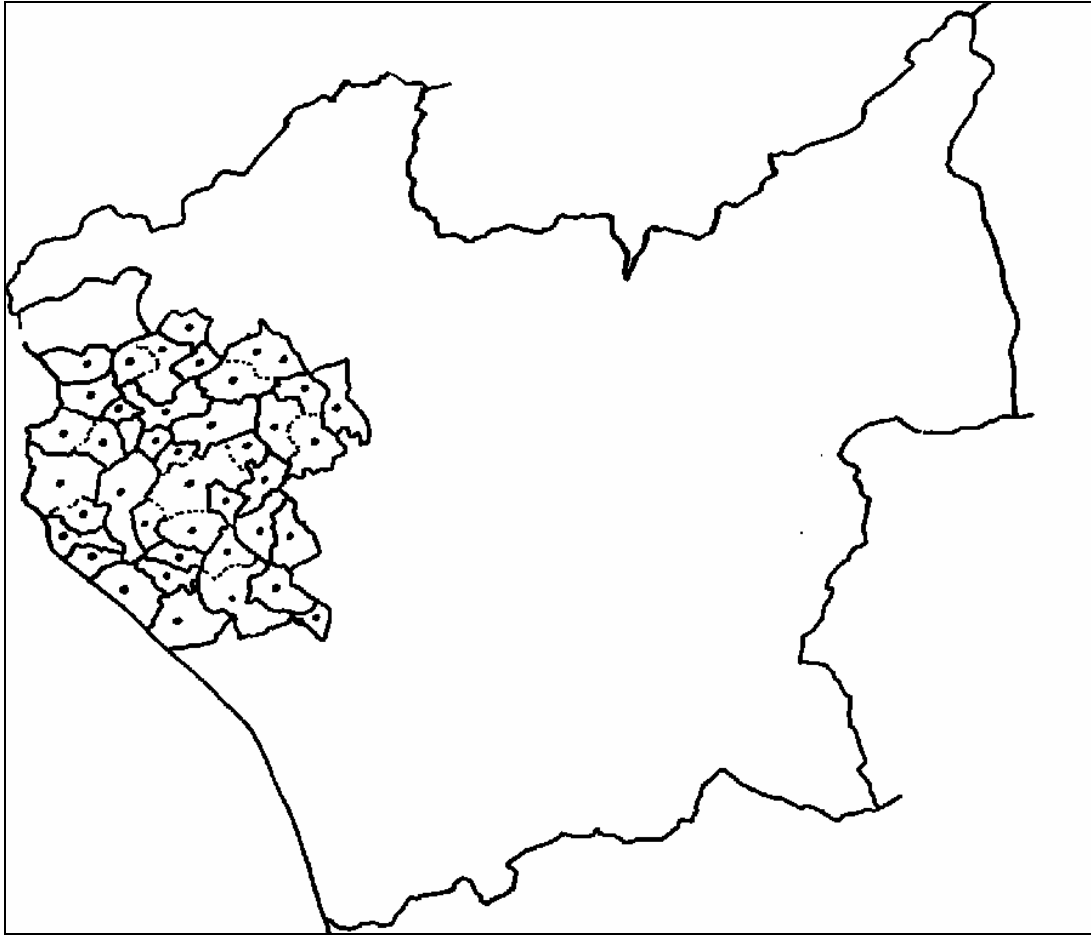
Sources: W.P.W. Phillimore, ed., *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles Episcopi Lincolnensis AD MCCIX - MCCXXXV* (Lincoln, 1912), Vol. I, pp. 245; DB ff. 230 a, 232 a, c, 235 b

Vill	Antecessor	Site of mother church	Chief tenant at Domesday	Size of holding
Misterton	Godric		Bishop of Lincoln	3 ½ carucates
			Guy of Raimbeaucourt	1 carucate
	Earl Ralph		Mainou the Breton	2 carucates
Poultney	Godric	Misterton	Bishop of Lincoln	4 carucates + 9 burgesses in city
Walcote	Godric	Misterton	Bishop of Lincoln	4 carucates
	Oslac		Robert of Bucy	2 carucates
Swinford	Godric		Bishop of Lincoln	2 bovates
			King's Alms	2 ½ carucates
			Earl Aubrey	1 ½ carucates
			Hugh of Grandmesnil	5 bovates
	Oslac		Robert of Bucy	2 ½ carucates
	3 thanes		Robert of Bucy	3 ½ carucates
			Geoffrey of la Guerche	1 carucate
Kimcote	Godric		Bishop of Lincoln	13 ½ carucates
Lutterworth	Earl Ralph		Mainou the Breton	13 carucates
Catthorpe	Earl Ralph		Mainou the Breton	2 carucates

Figure 26. Vills associated with Misterton

Source: W.P.W. Phillimore, ed., *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles Episcopi Lincolnensis AD MCCIX - MCCXXXV* (Lincoln, 1912), Vol. I, pp. 242-3; DB ff. 231 a, b, d, 232 b, 234 b, 235 b, d, 236 a

Deanery of Sparkenhoe



Map 48. Sparkenhoe Deanery, Leicestershire, from the *Matriculus*

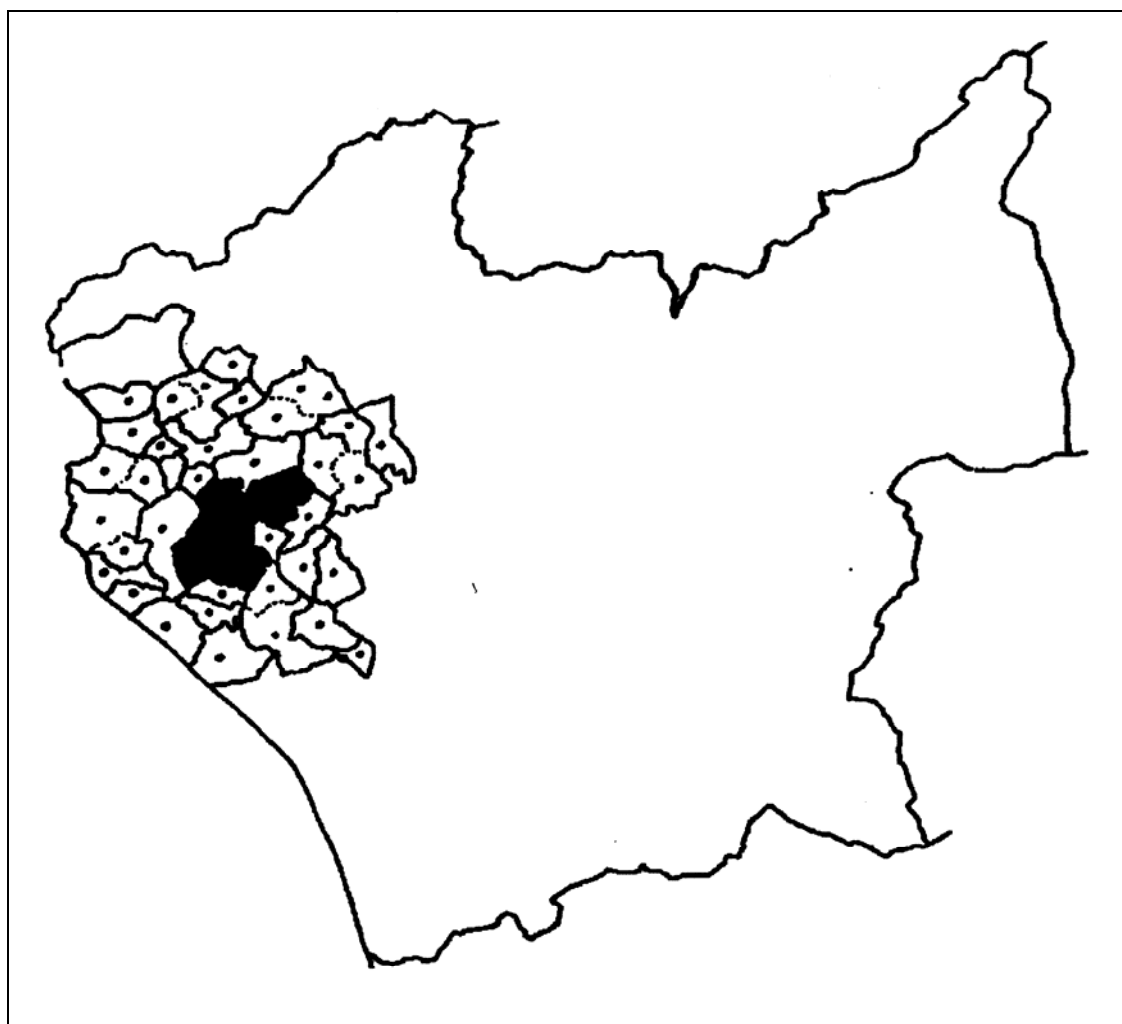
Source: W.P.W. Phillimore, ed., *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles Episcopi Lincolnensis AD MCCIX - MCCXXXV* (Lincoln, 1912), Vol. I, pp. 246-250

The deanery of Sparkenhoe contained no named soke at Domesday (Map 48). It did, however, consist of a number of very large parishes with appendent chapelries which formed an interlocking pattern of possible estates. The mother church of Market Bosworth lies at the heart of the soke and claimed chapels at Carlton, Barlestone, Sutton Cheney, *Cotes* and Shenton (Map 49). The Domesday account records the Count of Meulan holding part of the land in Market Bosworth,⁶⁹¹ and Hugh de Grandmesnil held a smaller part with a priest and a deacon (Figure 27).⁶⁹² The remainder of the parish was very fragmented, but whether this was the result of a larger estate which had been broken up by the eleventh century, or a number of smaller estates which were later

⁶⁹¹ DB f. 231 c.

⁶⁹² DB f. 233 a. This was once the Queen's holding.

brought together in the twelfth, is difficult to determine. As there was already a priest and a deacon recorded for Market Bosworth in 1086, the former suggestion would appear to be the most likely.⁶⁹³ Foss interpreted this 'cluster of villis in west Leicestershire' as a possible royal dowry, because one holding in Bosworth was referred to as *de feudo reginae* 'of the Queen's holding' in 1086, and on this basis he was prepared to postulate the existence of a pre-Conquest superior minster sited at Market Bosworth, with the priest and the deacon of the church in that township holding 2 carucates of land under Hugh de Grandesmesnil.⁶⁹⁴



Map 49. Parish of Market Bosworth

Sources: W.P.W. Phillimore, ed., *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles Episcopi Lincolniensis AD MCCIX - MCCXXXV* (Lincoln, 1912), Vol. I, pp. 246; DB ff. 231 c, 233 a

⁶⁹³ DB f. 231 c and DB f. 233 a. If this was so, there is a strong case for including the church of Barton in the Beans, for part of this vill, along with part of Market Bosworth, was in the hands of Alwin before 1066, and both were subsequently of the Queen's holding.

⁶⁹⁴ P.J. Foss, 'Market Bosworth and its region - clues to its early status and connections' in J. Bourne, ed., *Anglo-Saxon landscapes in the east midlands* (1986), pp. 83-106. Cf. DB f. 233 a.

Vill	Domesday Antecessor	Jurisdiction	Site of mother church	Chief tenant at Domesday	Size of holding
(Market) Bosworth	Saxi			Count of Meulan	6 carucates
	Alwin			Hugh of Grandmesnil	2 carucates
Barleston			Market Bosworth	Hugh of Grandmesnil	3 carucates less 1 virgate
				Robert of Bucy	1 carucate 1 virgate
Carlton			Market Bosworth		
Sutton (Cheney)			Market Bosworth	Crowland Abbey	2 carucates
				Hugh of Grandmesnil	1 carucate
<i>Cotes</i> (?Brascote with Newbold Verdon)			Market Bosworth	Hugh of Grandmesnil	2 carucates
Shenton	Harding		Market Bosworth	Earl Aubrey	1 carucate
				Henry of Ferrers	2 bovates
				Robert of Vessey	6 carucates less 2 bovates
Barton in the Beans	Alwin			Hugh of Grandmesnil	1 carucate
Stapleton (attached to Sutton)				Crowland Abbey	2 carucates

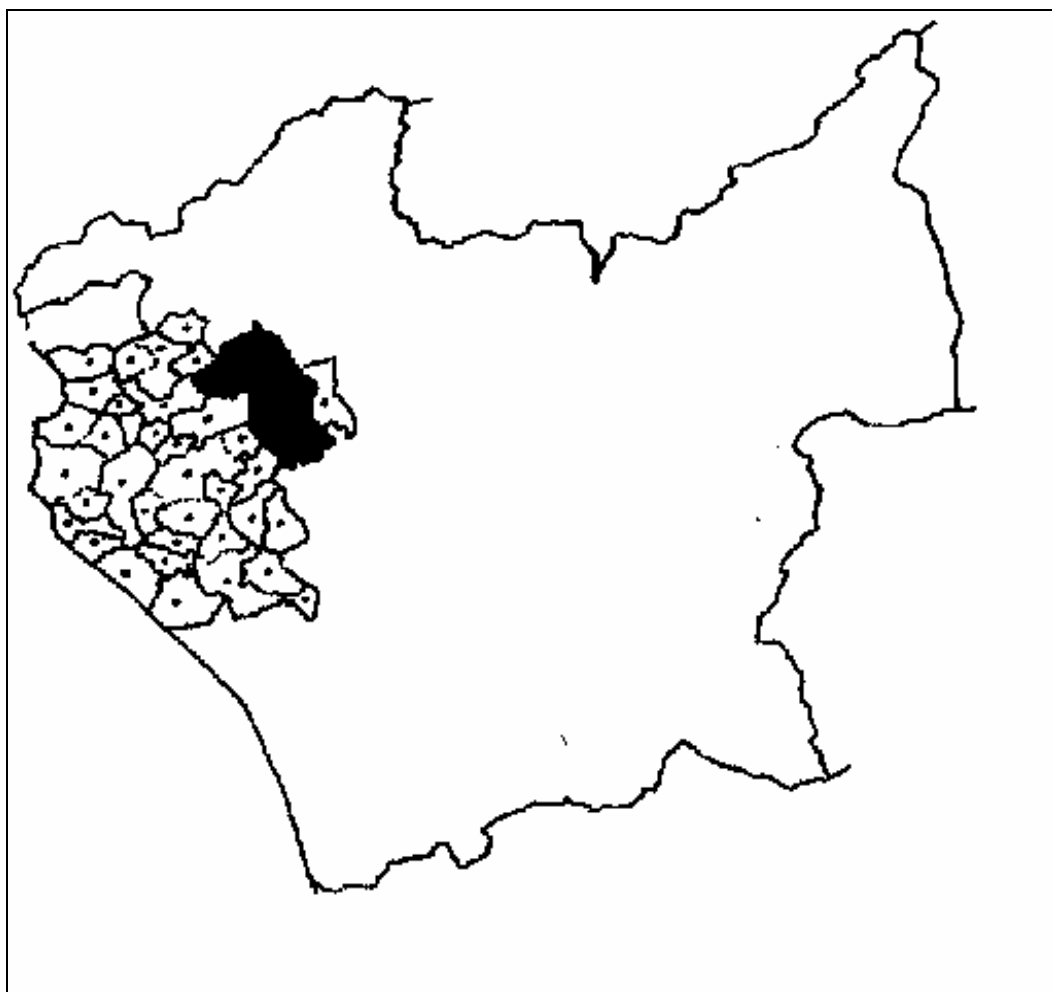
Figure 27. A putative pre-Conquest estate at Market Bosworth

Sources: W.P.W. Phillimore, ed., *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles Episcopi Lincolniensis AD MCCIX - MCCXXXV* (Lincoln, 1912), Vol. I, pp. 246; DB ff. 231 c, 233 a

A further estate within the deanery which could be inferred using a combination of parochial connections and Domesday jurisdiction would be Ibstock with its chapels at Hugglescote and Donington le Heath, and Thornton with chapels at Bagworth and Stanton under Bardon (Map 50 and Figure 28). In 1086 Ibstock also came under the jurisdiction of Bagworth, and thus a putative large estate could have been held by a tenant called Saxi in this part of the county prior to the Conquest.⁶⁹⁵ There were a number of groups of villas with parochial links, suggesting several smaller estates. Although the deanery of Sparkenhoe lacked a soke or other large jurisdiction, it had a solid parochial network consisting of groups of holdings which could have constituted estates coterminous with the deanery.⁶⁹⁶

⁶⁹⁵ DB f. 237 b. Saxi held a considerable number of lands in this part of Leicestershire.

⁶⁹⁶ Church dedications in the deanery include St Botolph at Sibson, Holy Trinity at Normanton le Heath and Norton by Twycross, and Holy Rood at Bagworth. Sibson was held by earl Aubrey in 1086, along with a holding in Shenton, which came under the parish of Market Bosworth in the *Matriculus*.



Map 50. Putative estate held by Saxi before the Conquest

Sources: W.P.W. Phillimore, ed., *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles Episcopi Lincolniensis AD MCCIX - MCCXXXV* (Lincoln, 1912), Vol. I, pp. 247; DB ff. 235 c, 236 a, 237 b

Vill	Antecessor	Jurisdiction	Site of mother church	Chief tenant at Domesday	Size of holding
Ibstock		Bagworth		Count of Meulan's Men	6 carucates
Hugglescote			Ibstock		
Donington le Heath			Ibstock	Nigel of Aubigny	3 hides
Thornton					
Bagworth	Saxi		Thornton	Count of Meulan's Men	9c
Stanton under Bardon			Thornton	Geoffrey of la Guerche	3c

Figure 28. A putative pre-Conquest estate under Saxi

Sources: W.P.W. Phillimore, ed., *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles Episcopi Lincolnensis AD MCCIX - MCCXXXV* (Lincoln, 1912), Vol. I, pp. 247; DB ff. 235 c, 236 a, 237 b

Summary

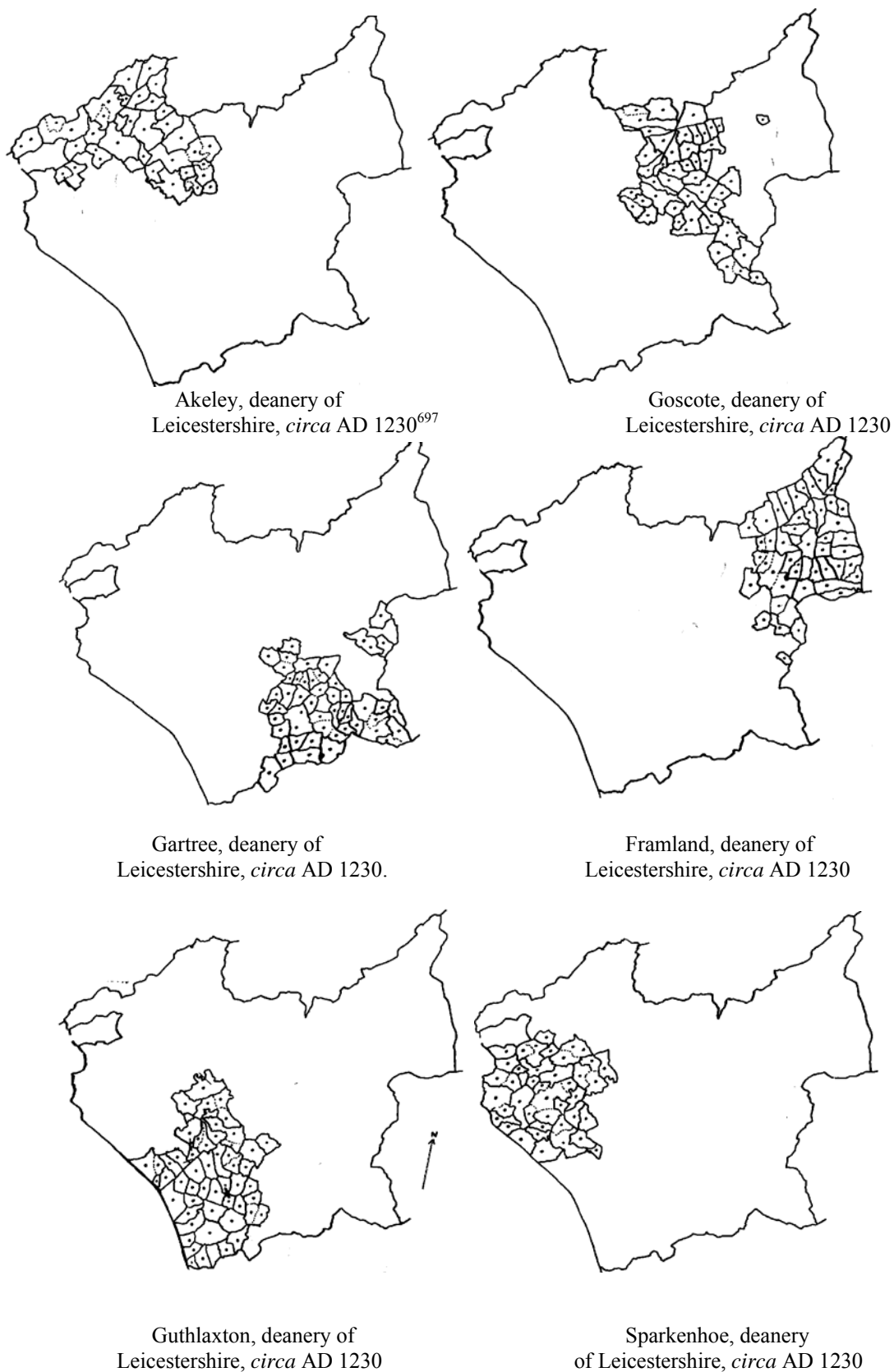
There were four names sokes in Leicestershire at Domesday, and these all show a strong central secular jurisdiction. Three of the sokes, namely Rothley, Barrow and Bowden, all give evidence of detached secular dependencies. The fourth soke, Melton, had jurisdiction over a core estate and one detached dependency. Rothley had both a central parochial jurisdiction and detached and scattered parochial dependencies. Barrow and Bowden had a parochial jurisdiction close to the centre of the soke, but no detached parochial dependencies. Melton had a parochial jurisdiction which extended over its secular estates. There were other large parishes in the county at Domesday with both secular and parochial jurisdictions at a central vill. These ties suggest pre-Conquest estates. Few non-soke estates in the county showed central jurisdiction coupled with detached dependencies.

The reconstruction of pre-Conquest putative estates must necessarily be tentative, but by combining the evidence from the Domesday Survey and the *Matriculus* of Hugo of Wells the following can be postulated: the royal soke of Rothley covered a large jurisdiction at the time of the Domesday Survey, and the *Matriculus* records its large parish. The tenorial evidence of Domesday suggests a number of sub-estates within the soke, many of which incorporated a chapel appended to the church at Rothley. The estate based on Tilton is the exception, for although much of the territory

within Tilton belonged to the jurisdiction of Rothley, the church at Tilton does not appear to have had a connection with Rothley church.

The royal soke of Great Bowden lay within the wapentake of Gartree, and appears to have had a number of pre-Conquest sub-estates, but they did not form part of the parish. Many of these putative estates appear to have had a strong parochial network independent of the soke. The parish of Bowden stood within a contiguous boundary suggesting a small estate attached to the *caput* which was close to, and breaching, the county boundary. The soke of Melton appears in two discrete blocks of land, the first lying in a contiguous territory around the mother church at Melton, and the second appearing as a sub-estate with parochial links lying to the north-east of the county. Barrow, a large soke with an extensive jurisdiction, crossed the boundaries of both deaneries and wapentakes, but appears to have consisted of a number of sub-estates many of which formed separate parishes which comprised soke and non-soke vill. The parish of Barrow, however, was confined to a contiguous estate extending deep into the wastes of Charnwood. The wapentake of Guthlaxton had no soke, but two large putative estates were centred on Misterton and Ratby. Sparkenhoe deanery contained a number of large parishes which could arguably have formed pre-Conquest estates particularly at Market Bosworth, perhaps from a once royal holding.

Of the two royal sokes, the parish of Rothley was as extensive as its secular jurisdiction, although the boundaries of each were not coterminous; Bowden soke was extensive but its parish was relatively small and discrete. These joint factors distinguish Rothley and its dependent vill from the other sokes within the county. Later evidence confirms that, with the exception of Tilton parish, all vill under soke jurisdiction in the thirteenth century also fell within the parish of Rothley. Other evidence hints at a once larger parish of Rothley which included both Wanlip and Skeffington. Why did the soke of Rothley appear to follow a different pattern from other sokes in the county? Could the hand of the king have exerted a conservative influence? Is it possible to reach any conclusions regarding the origins of the soke?



Map 51. Deaneries of Leicestershire from the *Matriculus* of Hugo of Wells

Source: W.P.W. Phillimore, ed., *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles Episcopi Lincolniensis AD MCCIX - MCCXXXV* (Lincoln, 1912), Vol. I, pp. 238-279

⁶⁹⁷ ● = church or chapel recorded in the *Matriculus*.



Domesday Survey,⁶⁹⁸
Goscote Wapentake



Domesday Survey,
Framland Wapentake



Domesday Survey,
Gartree Wapentake



Domesday Survey
Guthlaxton Wapentake

Map 52. Domesday Survey, wapentakes of Leicestershire
circa AD 1086

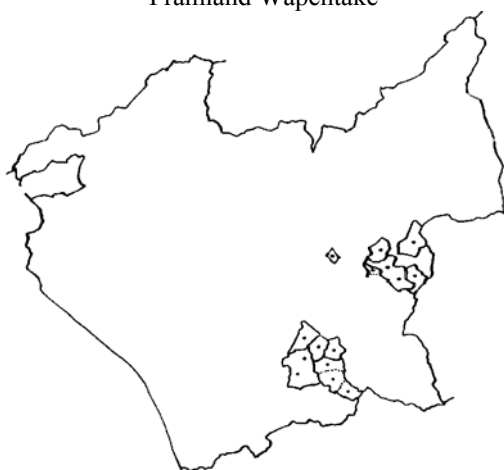
⁶⁹⁸ ● = vill named in the Domesday Survey.



Goscote Wapentake⁶⁹⁹



Framland Wapentake



Gartree Wapentake (incomplete)

Map 53. Leicestershire Survey *circa* AD 1130 (incomplete)

⁶⁹⁹ ● = vill named in the Leicestershire Survey.

Chapter 7

Rothley parish and the possible origins of the soke

In Morris' examination of the origins and early development of the parochial system he discovered that a number of phrases had been adopted by different workers when referring to a local church.⁷⁰⁰ He found the term *ecclesia propria* or 'proprietary church' the most helpful of the phrases he encountered, although this did not suit every circumstance. Churches were classified under the law-codes of kings Edgar, Aethelred and Cnut, but the terms used remained fluid in the late Anglo-Saxon period. He assessed the structure of the Old English diocese as,

'pyramidal in its organisation. At the apex stood the head minster or cathedral. Next came minsters of lesser status, often called old minsters or mother churches, which dominated areas roughly equivalent to modern rural deaneries. The old minsters formed the basic framework for the local administration of ecclesiastical affairs. They had their own dependent chapels, but in addition to them numbers of private churches came to be founded by the owners of estates, lay and ecclesiastical. By the late 11th century it was such proprietary churches, together with supplementary *feldcirca*, which comprised the broad base of the structure.'⁷⁰¹

Thus Morris appears to be suggesting that by the eleventh century there were two parallel systems in operation: that of the minster churches with a cathedral (head minster) to serve a diocese, a mother church (lesser minster or old minster) often with

⁷⁰⁰ R. Morris, 'Churches, settlement, and the beginnings of the parochial system: c. 800-1100' *The Church in British Archaeology*, Research Report 47 (CBA, 1983), pp. 63-91.

⁷⁰¹ Morris, 'Churches', p. 64.

dependent chapels to serve a smaller area equivalent to rural deaneries, and alongside this system there appeared private churches (proprietary churches) founded by estate owners, and below these there were field churches. These estate owners fulfilled the hallmarks of the rank of a thegn in the eleventh century, for they were to have five hides of land, a cookhouse, a fortified gatehouse and a church - the *Eigenkirche*.⁷⁰²

Hadley examined the origins of the late medieval parochial structure in the northern Danelaw.⁷⁰³ She preferred to avoid the use of the term 'minster' believing it to be a loaded word which had become over-used. She looked at three categories of church: churches with pre-viking origins which continued as mother churches in the later medieval period; those which were pre-viking, but were not later mother churches; and mother churches without evidence of earlier origins. She chose this formula because she saw it as both reflecting the surviving evidence and corresponding to real differences between the churches themselves. One example of an important church was that of Repton in Derbyshire, which has a recorded history of a religious community from the end of the seventh century, and had an association with the Mercian royal house, becoming a burial place for Merewalh, one of its kings from the eighth century, and also of Wistan, a Mercian royal prince murdered in the ninth century.⁷⁰⁴ The historical evidence is supported by archaeological excavation, which uncovered a complex of buildings. By the time of Domesday only two priests were recorded for the church as a remnant of its former glory, but Repton remained a mother church throughout the medieval period with no fewer than eight chapels, and an isolated chapel at Measham, Leicestershire suggesting the possible extent of its parish.⁷⁰⁵ Hadley pointed out that Repton was an important manor in the eleventh century, which later passed into royal hands, and its soke corresponded closely with its parish. Hadley considered the evidence for a number of other churches in the northern Danelaw, including Southwell in Nottinghamshire, which may have been connected with the early eighth-century Abbess Eadburgh. Southwell Minster had a large parish in the later

⁷⁰² Morris, 'Churches', p. 71. This is found in the law-code of king Cnut, III, 60.1. Thus Morris sees this growth in lordship as a formative influence in the proliferation of local churches. Churches in unusual locations such as hilltops, were usually either monastic in origin, such as Breedon on the Hill, Leicestershire, or they served a political or military purpose, such as Holme-on-Spalding-Moor, Humberside. Morris also noted that churches were not only a product of settlement, they could also be a dynamic influence on the settlement itself. He posed questions about whether the graveyard or church might already be there before the population, and thereby act as an 'attractive force in the process of regrouping', or if the church, once established in the community then acts as a 'stabilising factor and tethering the settlement to its vicinity'.

⁷⁰³ D. Hadley, *The northern Danelaw: Its social structure, c. 800-1100* (Leicester, 2000), particularly chapter 5, on the 'Ecclesiastical organisation', pp. 216-297.

⁷⁰⁴ Hadley, *Northern Danelaw*, p. 221.

medieval period, with records dating from the tenth century, and a number of dependencies which were all, with one exception, within the parish. The church was a college of secular canons with an eleventh-century prebendal system, and each canon acted as a parish priest.

Hadley also examined the evidence for later mother churches which did not have evidence for early origins. Orston in Nottinghamshire was a royal manor at Domesday which had two priests. The church was granted to the dean of Lincoln towards the end of the eleventh century, and there were four chapels appended to the church, which could have been the remnant of a much larger parish. Hadley continued her examination and concluded that many of the churches with no known pre-viking origins displayed features similar to those churches with known early origins. She noted that many of these churches were situated at the centre of large Domesday estates, particularly those with a central manor and many dependent berewicks and sokelands. She further noted the close correlation between those sokelands and the parish of the central church, and believed that this supported the findings of other workers who proposed that 'parishes of major early churches were framed around secular territorial units'.⁷⁰⁶

Hadley believed that the impact of the Scandinavian conquest and settlement might not have been as disruptive as formerly thought.⁷⁰⁷ She saw the survival of sculpture in churchyards from the tenth century as indicative of the use of such places for burial, and that such sculpture probably showed a thriving church. She concluded,

'The evidence from the northern Danelaw is consistent with that from other regions, which reveals a group of churches founded by the ninth century, serving areas based on the estates on which they sat, that survived to form the mother churches of the later Middle Ages. The nature and efficacy of the pastoral care they provided at an early date are open to debate, but it is evident that the parish structure of the later medieval period finds its origins in the seventh, eighth and ninth centuries, even in the northern Danelaw, where Scandinavian settlement certainly had a disruptive effect.'⁷⁰⁸

Morris and Hadley appear to be in broad agreement over the nature of ecclesiastical provision within the later Anglo-Saxon period, even though they disagree over the terminology which should be used. The Scandinavian conquest and settlement has been

⁷⁰⁵ Hadley, *Northern Danelaw*, p. 225.

⁷⁰⁶ Hadley, *Northern Danelaw*, p. 279. She cites S.R. Bassett, 'In search of the origins of Anglo-Saxon kingdoms', in S.R. Bassett, ed., *The origins of Anglo-Saxon kingdoms* (1989), pp. 3-27.

⁷⁰⁷ Hadley, *Northern Danelaw*, p. 289.

⁷⁰⁸ Hadley, *Northern Danelaw*, p. 297.

considered by Hadley in her study of the different types of surviving church within the northern Danelaw. How far did the church and parish of Rothley conform to this framework of ecclesiastical provision in the late Anglo-Saxon period?

The Diocese of Leicester

Early references to post-Roman Leicester can be found in a number of historical sources. Bede described the conversion of the Middle Angles in the mid-seventh century,⁷⁰⁹ and a bishopric is implied for the Middle Angles and Leicester identified as the bishop's seat in the early ninth century.⁷¹⁰ When the city and county were overrun by the Danes in the late-ninth century, the see of Leicester was merged with that of Dorchester. However Stafford, in her study of the east midlands' region, considered that 'the religious life and organisation of eastern England survived the earliest phases of Viking attack' which occurred in the late-ninth century.⁷¹¹ She saw that 'relic cults' and other evidence gave proof that many monastic sites in the region were still thriving, such as Breedon, Bakewell, Repton, Peterborough, Bardney and Derby, as late as the 860s. The Danelaw was re-conquered in the early-tenth century, and the Danes were converted to Christianity. By the mid-tenth century Leicester was described as one of the five boroughs in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, but there was no mention of the episcopal see.⁷¹² The bishop continued to exercise his diocesan duties through his palace or court at St Margarets, Leicester, in the early eleventh century, and Leicester continued to be called a *civitas* in the Domesday record. Much of the land of the Bishop of Lincoln in the eleventh century lay outside the city walls, and bitter quarrels ensued between the bishop and the ambitious earls of Leicester. The outcome of the different conflicts resulted in the prevention of a restoration of the former bishop's see within the city, and the county continued within the diocese of Lincoln for the remainder of the medieval period.

Thus, while Leicester underwent an ecclesiastical re-organisation in the ninth century, it is possible that the ministry of the Christian church could have continued unabated, if in a somewhat subdued form. Places such as Peterborough Abbey were refounded in the mid-tenth century, although the earlier abbey was by then in ruins.⁷¹³ In the tenth century there was a monastic reform movement throughout Europe and this,

⁷⁰⁹ L. Sherley-Price, ed., *Bede: A history of the English church and people* (Harmondsworth, 1968), revised edition, p. 176.

⁷¹⁰ D. Williams, *Leicester: the dignity of a city 655-1926* (Leicester, 1990), p. 4.

⁷¹¹ P. Stafford, *The east midlands in the early middle ages* (Leicester, 1985), p. 128.

⁷¹² M. Swanton, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* (London, 2000) revised edition, p. 110.

⁷¹³ Stafford, *The east midlands*, p. 128.

in turn, affected England and the east midlands. Stafford saw this movement as beginning through the patronage of the southern court and the king, but in the east midlands the patrons were the reformers themselves and the local nobility. Bishop Aethelwold obtained grants of former monastic lands such as Ely and Breedon, and other grants were made by the king to such reforming monks to refound other monastic sites.⁷¹⁴ Such reforms would have had an impact on Leicestershire, and it is possible that Rothley church and other important churches in the county were established as a result of this movement.

What is the earliest evidence for a church at Rothley? A church can be inferred for Rothley from the recording of a priest at Domesday. Such ecclesiastical provision to the extremities of the soke could have been made by an itinerant priest residing near the royal centre. Other settlements within the soke which did not later emerge as chapelries but which contributed tithes to the church at Rothley could also have been served through such a ministry.⁷¹⁵ In the course of time, some soke dependencies, particularly those which were held jointly by other manorial lords must also have wished to make provision for a church within the settlement in which their manorial holding lay. The emergence of small churches attached to a lord's estate began in the late-tenth and eleventh century, and on larger estates many of these became the mother churches which gave rise to dependent chapels at the periphery of their parishes.⁷¹⁶ The mother church was usually enjoined to minister the sacrament of baptism and give the right of

⁷¹⁴ Stafford, *The east midlands*, p. 130. Stafford was citing from the *Liber Eliensis*, 73-6; S. 782; S. 749.

⁷¹⁵ This could have been the case at South Croxton where the church appears to have been established by two lords who shared the advowson of the church, but the church stood in that half of the settlement where much of the land belonged to the soke at Domesday.

⁷¹⁶ See also J. Blair, 'The growth of local churches, c. 850-1100' *The church in Anglo-Saxon society* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 368-425. Private chapels established on estates of lay lords in the eleventh and twelfth centuries were initially intended to serve those who lived on the demesne, but gradually these chapels were adopted as churches by the whole community, and on larger estates these new parish churches built chapels of ease to serve parishioners who lived at some distance from the mother church at the centre of the estate. Rothley church was atypical in that its dependent chapels as recorded in the *Matriculus* lay not within its immediate territory to the west of the river Soar, but lay at some distance from the mother church. Skeffington church which lay at some distance from Rothley was recorded as making an annual payment to Rothley church. Other territory which came under the secular jurisdiction of Rothley soke did not fall within its parish. Particular parishes such as Tilton, for which much of the parish fell within the secular jurisdiction of Rothley, had a parish church which was in the patronage of a local manorial lord, and other lands once under the soke possessed churches which had been appropriated by local monasteries. The Domesday sokes of Barrow and Bowden show similar discrepancies between secular and parochial boundaries, but the differences were more marked. The soke of Barrow covered an extensive area both to the east and west of the soke centre, but the lands which came within its parish boundary lay only to the west in Charnwood Forest, giving the appearance of a local parish church. Similar gaps in jurisdiction occur in Bowden soke which covered an extended area within the wapentake of Gartree, but its parish was confined to Market Harborough, a twelfth-century planted town, and Little Bowden. Overlapping jurisdictions under Rothley occurred at several points in the thirteenth century: lands inside the secular jurisdiction but within other parishes lay at Marefield, Halstead, Tilton and

burial. Chapels might also have existed in the eleventh century which were unrecorded by Domesday, for the existence of other churches can be inferred from the Grandmesnil grant to the monastery of St Evroul in the eleventh century at Thurstaston, Glenfield, Carlton Curliu, Noseley, Belgrave and Peatling in Leicestershire, for which there were no records in Domesday.⁷¹⁷ Rothley exercised parochial rights over its attached chapels at Wanlip and Mountsorrel (South). Wanlip church owed a payment to the church at Rothley in recognition of its former relationship for it had gained independence by the end of the twelfth century.⁷¹⁸ Mountsorrel, a town planted in the twelfth century next to the castle there, had two chapels one of which was appended to Rothley in the southern half of the town. The presence of the chapels at Mountsorrel and Wanlip suggests that Rothley was once the centre of a contiguous, manorial estate lying to the west of the River Soar.⁷¹⁹

However, Rothley was also the mother church to a large and scattered soke, which suggests an extension to the more local ecclesiastical jurisdiction. By the late tenth century Anglo-Saxon laws gave a local lord who wished to build a church on his estate permission to do so. Such permission was granted on condition that he compensated the minster on which his estate had previously depended by paying a portion of the tithes from the population within his estate.⁷²⁰ The lord was entitled to keep one third of the tithes for the building and upkeep of the local church with a graveyard, and the remainder of the payment was to continue to benefit the minster church. Additional compensation to the minster usually took place in the form of a grant of land, an annuity or a payment in kind of wax or incense or some other commodity. Such payments can often be detected long after the original connection with the minster church had been severed, and examples can be found in the *Matriculus* such as a payment of 12d to Ratby by the church of Markfield.⁷²¹ Later evidence can reveal similar payments such as the tithes from the parish of South Croxton church from

Barsby; and land within the parish of Rothley which came under the secular jurisdiction of another lord lay in Grimston.

⁷¹⁷ M. Chibnall, ed., *The ecclesiastical history of Orderic Vitalis* (Oxford, 1972), Vol: III, Book VI, p. 237. Parsons identifies Peatling as Peatling Parva not Peatling Magna. This evidence led Parsons to conclude that priests must have been under-recorded in the Leicestershire returns of the Domesday survey. See D. Parsons, 'Before the parish: The church in Anglo-Saxon Leicestershire' in J. Bourne, ed., *Anglo-Saxon landscapes in the east midlands* (Leicestershire, 1996), pp. 11-36.

⁷¹⁸ W.P.W. Phillimore, *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles Episcopi Lincolniensis AD MCCIX-MCCXXXV* (Lincoln, 1912), p. 253. Wanlip chose to become independent of the church at Rothley whereas Mountsorrel South remained dependent on Rothley throughout the medieval period.

⁷¹⁹ J. Nichols ed., *The history and antiquities of the county of Leicester* (Leicester, 1795), Vol. I, part I, p. lxxv, hereafter *Antiquities*. Both these Rothley chapels were dedicated to St Nicholas.

⁷²⁰ Parsons, 'Before the parish', pp. 11-36.

⁷²¹ Phillimore, *Matriculus*, p. 247.

which a former relationship with the church of Rothley can be inferred.⁷²² Numerous payments such as wax, incense and tithes of corn were recorded in the *Matriculus* which could also have arisen from these relationships, and many such payments were subsequently granted to monasteries making it difficult to trace the connection with the original minster church.⁷²³ Where such large estates existed, the church at the manorial centre often became a mother church to one or more daughter chapels of ease within the estate, some of which would ultimately obtain their own graveyards. Both Rothley church with its two estate chapels, and other local churches with or without chapels but within the soke jurisdiction, hint at estates under emerging local parishes. The emergence of such estates may have signalled the fragmentation of larger territories, and at the same time could have undermined the ecclesiastical relevance of a large *parochia*.⁷²⁴

Rothley church and some soke chapel buildings can be dated from the middle of the twelfth century, and as such they sit within the period of much estate reorganisation.⁷²⁵ As aspiring manorial lords, the Templars' wish to acquire the soke coincided with the king's need to establish a place to be buried. The grant of Rothley constituted a generous gift to the Templars who then proceeded to prepare a church at the New Temple in London which would receive the king's remains in due course.⁷²⁶ Thus in 1231 the king re-assembled soke assets which had previously been farmed out to a number of tenants, and to facilitate the grant of the advowson the bishop re-constituted a parish which may have been on the point of fragmenting.⁷²⁷

Rothley parish: a sub-diocese?

The Domesday record of one priest at Rothley is enough to suggest the presence of a church, but is insufficient evidence to consider a group of minster clergy serving a

⁷²²As indicated from the enclosure award of 1798. See L.R.O. DE 2/4 Ma/EN/A/24/1, Barsby and South Croxton enclosure award and map.

⁷²³Such severance of tithes and other ecclesiastical benefits can be detected in the Grandmesnil grant of the twelfth century. Chibnall, *Orderic Vitalis*, Vol. III, Book VI, p. 237.

⁷²⁴Parsons recognised that this process of attrition within the minster territory would leave minsters with 'a rump' of their former *parochia* by the twelfth century. Parsons, 'Before the parish', pp. 11-36.

⁷²⁵Gaddesby has Norman fabric within its church tower. Cf. D. Parsons, *Churches and chapels: investigating places of worship* (CBA, 1998), p. 53f. Chadwell has a twelfth-century nave. Cf. N. Pevsner, *The buildings of England: Leicestershire and Rutland* (London, 1951), revised edition 1994, p. 129. That the *Matriculus* presents Gaddesby having all the rights of a mother church could be interpreted as a church or chapel in transition: either Gaddesby was about to be elevated to full parish status, or it was a church about to be demoted to that of a chapelry under Rothley.

⁷²⁶Neither Henry III nor his wife were ultimately buried there, choosing instead to rest in tombs which were created for them in Westminster Abbey. Thus the foundation of Rothley soke as a possession of the Templars arose out of the pious intentions of the king who showed favour to this military order.

⁷²⁷Thus further division into smaller estates was prevented and a re-assembly of soke assets ensued.

large *parochia*.⁷²⁸ The *Matriculus* of circa 1230 records that a vicar was installed at Rothley, chaplains were to serve each of the chapels, and in addition Gaddesby had all the rights of a mother church. When the endowment of the church and chapels was made in 1240/1, the grant was already recognised, and it can be inferred that the land grant and benefits for the clergy serving in the parish were already in place. Thus in 1278 during the episcopacy of Richard Gravesend, when a grant of the church of Rothley (originally made in 1240/1 by Bishop Grosseteste) was confirmed to the Knights Templar, it was already an established endowment.⁷²⁹ The endowment included the rectory of the church of Rothley with the grant of glebe, and stipulated the arrangements which were to pertain within the parish. The bishop granted to Robert of Saundford, master of the order of the Military Temple, the church of Rothley and all its appurtenances and its vacancy save that of the perpetual vicarage, on condition that they should appoint a suitable chaplain.⁷³⁰ Although the amount of land attached to Rothley church itself was not specified, the chaplain was to be granted

'totum altaragium ecclesie de Roleya cum manso persone, et cum tota terra de dominico ipsius ecclesie, cum omnibus ad eandem terram pertinentibus'

A similar but unspecified donation of land was described for the chapel of Gaddesby. Glebe attached to the chapels of Keyham, Grimston and Wartnaby was reckoned at one virgate each, and that attached to the chapel at Chadwell and Wycomb amounted to a bovat. Thus the glebe reckoned to the chapels amounted to 3 virgates and 1 bovat, plus the unspecified land which belonged to both Rothley church and the chapel of Gaddesby. In the middle of the thirteenth century the annual values of the glebe and other appurtenances of the church and chapels of Rothley which had been

⁷²⁸ Parsons looked at this argument for Leicestershire and decided that the Domesday evidence for churches must be incomplete at best. See D. Parsons, 'Churches and churchgoing in 1086' in C. Phythian-Adams, ed., *The Norman Conquest of Leicestershire and Rutland: A regional introduction to Domesday Book* (Leicestershire, 1986), pp. 38-42.

⁷²⁹ F.N. Davis, ed., *Rotuli Ricardi Gravesend: Episcopi Lincolnensis AD MCCLVIII-MCCLXXIX* (Lincoln, 1925), p. 162-164. The point at issue with regard to the document for 1240/1 is that the *Matriculus* gave no clue to these grants of land, nor did it specify in any detail how the chapels of Rothley related to the mother church. Perhaps a reorganisation within the diocese had hoped to alter the jurisdiction of the soke and promote Gaddesby to a mother church. This would have created a separation from the mother church at Rothley, which should have been recognised in the form of a special payment of tithes. Why this arrangement does not appear in the *Matriculus* is unclear. The document of AD 1240/1 emphasised that Gaddesby was to pay its dues as a chapel, and included payments which were to be made by the churches of Skeffington and Wanlip. Had a separation of Gaddesby from Rothley been successful there seems little doubt that Gaddesby would have become a mother church in the thirteenth century, as indeed it did eventually under the re-organisation of the church in the nineteenth century.

⁷³⁰ Davis, ed., *Rotuli Ricardi Gravesend* p. 162-4. This document is also to be found in Nichols, *Antiquities*, Vol. III, part II, p. 958. There are a few transcription discrepancies between the two documents. For the purpose of this paper, I have used the transcription edited by the Lincoln Record Society. According to Nichols the grant of the perpetual vicarage was still in the hands of the bishop in the eighteenth century.

confirmed by the bishop and chapter of Lincoln were specified in the rental and customary of Rothley thus: Rothley 26 marks; Keyham 10 marks; Wartnaby 10 marks; Grimston 10 marks; Chadwell 10 marks; Gaddesby chapel 14 marks, giving a total value of 80 marks.⁷³¹ The value of the appurtenances of Rothley and Gaddesby equalled the values of the other four chapels combined, and by inference the total amount of glebe and appurtenances attached to both church and chapels must have exceeded one carucate of land, and could have been nearer two carucates.⁷³² This does not appear generous as a royal endowment, for as Stenton pointed out, minsters which were royal or episcopal manors usually possessed 'considerable estates'.⁷³³

The church at Rothley held modest possessions - its own house with the demesne land attached, and the vicar was enjoined to be resident and to have the assistance of both a deacon and a clerk.⁷³⁴ The rights of each chapel were described, and it was obligatory that the chaplain and clerk installed at each chapel were appointed and paid for by the vicar.⁷³⁵ In addition, an agreement was reached between the archdeacon and the Templars, the former to receive an annual pension of four marks, and the latter to have not only the rectory but also the rights of a peculiar jurisdiction.⁷³⁶ The church and chapels of Rothley would henceforth enjoy the services of thirteen men. The master of the Templar order in England would fulfil the obligations of rector and would have the additional right of holding an ecclesiastical court within the parish. This action confirmed Rothley parish as a 'peculiar' jurisdiction and had the effect of placing Rothley church at the head of a sub-diocese.⁷³⁷

The origins of Rothley

At Domesday Rothley was a substantial royal holding, larger than the royal holding at Bowden,⁷³⁸ and exceeding the size but not the wealth of Geoffrey la

⁷³¹ L.R.O. 44'28/867, Rothley Temple MSS: Custumal of Rothley soke. 80 marks was worth £53 13s 4d.

⁷³² One carucate of land was the amount stipulated by Blair as being the minimum which would have been required by a minster church.

⁷³³ F.M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1971), 3rd ed., p. 152. Early minsters needed land which would support a religious community, although this might have consisted of just two or three priests.

⁷³⁴ Further information about the vicars and chaplains can be obtained from an article by A. Hamilton Thompson, 'The vicars of Rothley' *T.L.A.S.* 12 (Leicester, 1921-2), pp. 121-127.

⁷³⁵ This grant stipulated the authority which was to be exercised by the vicar of the parish, and gave him the right to appoint his own clergy.

⁷³⁶ This delay in the appropriation of the church was due to the previous incumbent John of Vercelli surviving until AD 1277, thus the Templars were forced to wait nearly forty years before coming into possession of the vicarage.

⁷³⁷ The court for the church of Rothley was held within the church building in the early seventeenth century. See Nichols, *Antiquities*, Vol. III, part II, p. 989. The payments from Wanlip and Skeffington churches, once chapels of Rothley, were also included in this grant, and were involved in the resolution of the dispute over the great tithes at Gaddesby, also described within the grant.

⁷³⁸ DB f. 230 c.

Guerche's soke holding of Melton.⁷³⁹ Barrow, the soke holding of earl Hugh, was less extensive, but shared many of the Rothley dependencies particularly Gaddesby where that chapel belonged to Rothley.⁷⁴⁰ Because of its status as a royal soke, Parsons postulated that Rothley could once have been a minster of some importance, and its large parish could have formed part of an extensive *parochia*.⁷⁴¹ What evidence can be used to explore this hypothesis? Later endowments of the church of Rothley have been examined above, but further evidence can be explored by comparing Leicestershire with other parts of England. Such evidence could include:

- Royal holdings as minsters
- The extent of Rothley parish
- The architecture of Rothley church
- The presence of late Anglo-Saxon sculpture
- Topographical evidence
- Tithes, glebe and other payments to Rothley church
- Rothley church as a putative Hundred minster
- Rothley Temple as the site of a Roman villa

Royal holdings as minsters

Royal holdings which have been shown to be minsters in the ninth to eleventh centuries can be seen at Cheddar (Somerset), Thatcham (Berkshire), Axminster (Devon) and Warminster (Wiltshire).⁷⁴² Cheddar, a double minster with a royal hunting lodge, was where King Eadmund was staying when he suffered a near-accident in the Gorge in the mid-tenth century.⁷⁴³ The hunting lodge was to increase in importance, and the minster to decrease over the next two centuries, so that in Domesday there was no mention of the church there. Blair describes another royal centre with a minster at Cookham in the Thames valley which was referred to by King Aethelbald as a town in the eighth century, but by Domesday it was recorded only as a royal manor served by a

⁷³⁹ DB f. 235 c.

⁷⁴⁰ DB f. 237 a. Other lands shared with the soke were alienated in the twelfth century. It is those sokelands which did not share parochial ties with the mother church which were most likely to be loosely connected in a confederation.

⁷⁴¹ D. Parsons, 'The church in Anglo-Saxon Leicestershire' in J. Bourne, ed., *Anglo-Saxon landscapes in the east midlands* (Leicestershire, 1996), pp. 11-36, at p. 26.

⁷⁴² J. Blair, *The church in Anglo-Saxon society* (Oxford, 2005), p. 326.

⁷⁴³ Blair, *The church*, p. 327.

modest mother church. These examples are taken from those parts of England in which documentary evidence has survived to give us the pre-Domesday information which can elucidate origins. In Leicestershire, which was within the Danelaw, very few documents survive which can give us any clear indication of minster origins in general, and none which can throw light on the origins of Rothley as a Domesday royal holding. However, it is possible by analogy to suggest that, as a royal holding, Rothley could also have been a site of a minster.

The extent of Rothley parish

Rothley church served its parish in two ways: the first was as a mother church to its immediate estate, and the second as the centre of a parish which covered an extensive *parochia* in central and eastern Leicestershire, with detached chapels lying in the settlements which belonged to its soke at Domesday. The estate chapels were typical of those which were appearing all over England in the tenth to the twelfth centuries. Just before and after the Conquest there appear to have been considerable changes in church organisation in England. Manorial lords built churches on their land, and endowed them with land for the sustenance of the parish priest. Many such churches show little architectural evidence from the pre-Conquest period, and dating of the surviving structures would suggest that the majority of churches were built in the first two hundred years following the Conquest. Morris referred to this rapid growth of churches as appearing like 'mushrooms in the night', considering that many could have been built out of wood at an earlier period, to be re-built at a later date in stone.⁷⁴⁴ He estimated the number of the churches in existence at the time of the Domesday survey to be as many as 6 or 7000 - perhaps three quarters of all local churches in existence by 1100.⁷⁴⁵ Even if the pace of church building had been brisk, he thought it unlikely that so many had been built with the coming of the Normans. It was more likely, he believed, that there had been a steady progression of building with possibly a brief respite during the period 980 to 1016 (a time of turbulence) and again between 1016 and 1075.⁷⁴⁶ Such church building and re-building coincided with the proliferation of manorial churches of local lords within their own estates. Thus the immediate estate in which Rothley church stood as a mother church at its heart could have arisen during this period of local building. How could such an extensive *parochia* with detached chapels sit within this local context?

⁷⁴⁴ R. Morris, *Churches in the landscape* (London, 1989), pp. 140-167.

⁷⁴⁵ Morris, *Churches*, p.147.

⁷⁴⁶ Morris, *Churches*, p.148.

In the seventh century, following the re-introduction of Christianity into Britain, newly installed bishops believed their duty lay in converting the population.⁷⁴⁷ They encouraged lay lords, particularly those of royal birth who controlled large territories, to endow the church with land which would give an income for the support of a community of secular clergy who would convert, baptise, and administer the sacraments to the local population. This land holding would also enable the priests to be free from secular control, and would become a permanent grant. The Old English word *mynster* referred to this house of priests or canons, and its Latin form was *monasterium*. These houses were not to be confused with later medieval monasteries founded for closed orders and set apart for prayer and contemplation.⁷⁴⁸ Breedon on the Hill, a monastery founded in the late seventh century through a land grant to Peterborough Abbey, gave pastoral care over an extensive *parochia* in a territory which spanned parts of what would later become Derbyshire and Leicestershire.⁷⁴⁹ By the time of the *Matriculus* Breedon had become a mother church serving a local parish which bore little resemblance to the extensive *parochia* over which it must once have presided.⁷⁵⁰

The architecture of Rothley church

The church building at Rothley which survives is of post-Conquest date, but its double dedication to St Mary and St John was a common feature of pre-Conquest minsters (Map 54 and Plate 1). Blair describes a number of these dedications, and noted that many churches followed a continental practice with the name of an apostle being paired with St Mary or the Holy Saviour, with the lesser church of St Mary standing due east of the greater apostolic one (Map 55). Blair's emphasis was on the gradual development of some minster sites which incorporated later chapels, tombs or crosses within the precinct of the minster. The earliest extant fabric of Rothley church is of the Norman period, and the font in the church has been dated at *circa* AD 1160 (Plate 4).⁷⁵¹ The presence of a priest in Domesday Rothley is enough to imply the existence of an ecclesiastical building of some kind, and it is possible that this structure was either of

⁷⁴⁷ A discussion of these early minster sites and their purpose can be found in Blair, *The church*, pp. 84-91.

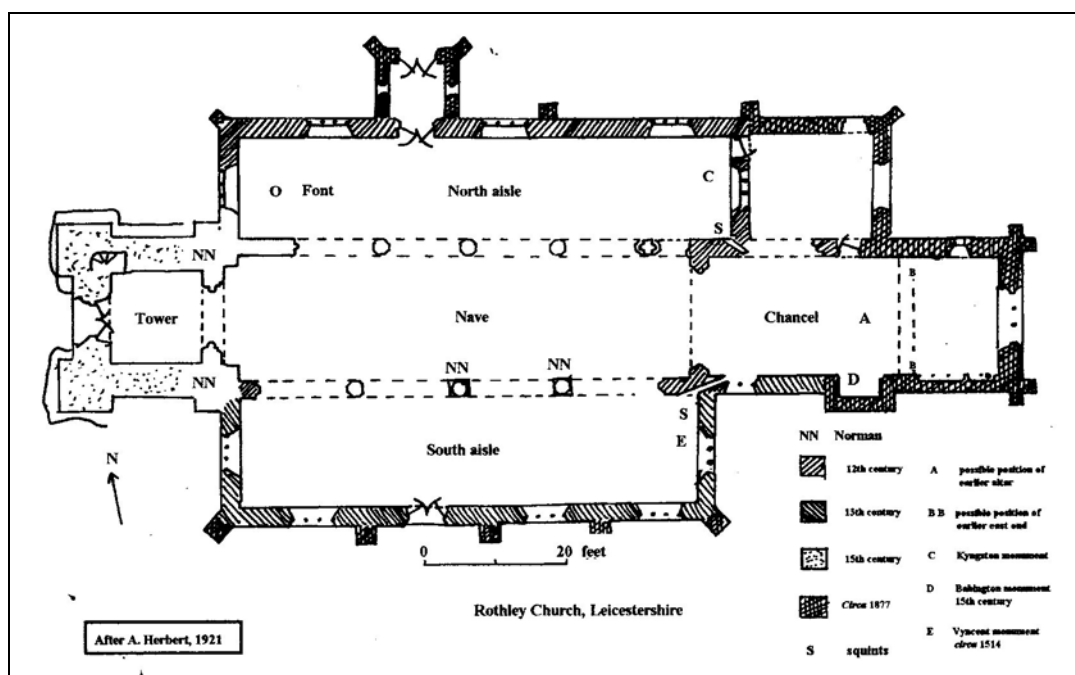
⁷⁴⁸ These minsters were often double houses of male and female clerics who shared a communal life and who ministered to a large territory which became known as its *parochia*.

⁷⁴⁹ Parsons, 'Before the parish', pp. 11-36.

⁷⁵⁰ Breedon has a topographical Old English name, and thus the siting of an early monastery is not surprising, unlike the name of Rothley which would have arisen no earlier than the ninth century. M. Gelling and A. Cole, *The landscape of place-names* (Stamford, 2000), pp. 167; 244-5.

⁷⁵¹ Pevsner refers to the church as 'A large and impressive church, of pink granite and grey stone dressings.' The font is described as 'Norman, circular, of drum shape, with an all-over pattern of large concentric lozenges'. Pevsner, *Buildings*, 2nd ed., p. 364.

wood or wattle and daub. Franklin, in his work on churches in Northamptonshire, recognised similar difficulties in identifying early minsters.⁷⁵² While accepting that it would be difficult to reach any definitive conclusions, he realised that answers could only be reached through a combination of architectural and documentary evidence, alongside later jurisdictional and parochial connections. He was willing to consider the possibility that churches which contained fabric dated later than the Conquest might well have been re-modelled on earlier ecclesiastical buildings. Thus a careful consideration of the standing building formed an essential part of his approach to understanding a site.



Map 54. Plan of the church of St Mary the Virgin and St John the Baptist, Rothley

Source: A. Herbert, in J. Wallace-Watts, 'The church' *T.L.A.S.* 12, (1921-2), pp. 100-120

Although much of the tower at Rothley church can be dated to the fifteenth century, there is also evidence of Norman work and the whole stands on a base which is not only larger, but may once have supported an earlier structure (Plate 3). The dimensions of the church at Rothley are also worth noting: the length of the twelfth-century nave is 64 feet, and its width 17 feet 8 inches; and the length of the twelfth-century north aisle slightly exceeds that of the nave, being 70 feet long and 14 feet 4

⁷⁵² M.J. Franklin, 'The identification of minsters in the midlands' in R.A. Brown, ed., *Anglo-Norman Studies: Proceedings of the Battle conference* (Bury St Edmunds, 1984), Vol. VII, pp. 69-89.

inches wide.⁷⁵³ Within these twelfth-century walls there are two hagioscopes or squints, one from the north aisle and one from the later thirteenth-century south aisle.⁷⁵⁴ The later clerestory windows appear to have been punched through the twelfth-century walls of the nave, thus suggesting that the original walls of the nave were 30 feet high. Franklin postulated that in some Northamptonshire churches such high walls could have contained fabric from an earlier period which had become architecturally obscured by later alterations.⁷⁵⁵ The twelfth-century pillars supporting the arches into the thirteenth-century south aisle suggest that the wall was not blank at the earlier date, and could have been either open, or led into a contemporary building. The chancel comprises thirteenth- and nineteenth-century additions and alterations, and is forty feet long. The church is impressive in length and height, and gives the appearance of economic prosperity in the twelfth century.⁷⁵⁶ The length of the chancel raises the possibility that it could have been rebuilt to incorporate an aligned chapel standing to the east of a smaller and earlier chancel. Speculation regarding the elongation of the chancel gains additional weight from the evidence of the two hagioscopes for both squints focus on points which are about a third of the distance in front of the present eastern end, and from this it is possible to infer that the chancel once ended at this point, with elongation taking place at a later date. The drawing of Rothley church in Nichols indicates that in 1791 the chancel was already long, and thus the nineteenth-century rebuilding cannot have been responsible for this alteration.⁷⁵⁷ Thus the origins of the chancel must remain obscure and can only be resolved by archaeological means.⁷⁵⁸

⁷⁵³ It was in this aisle that the ecclesiastical court is reputed to have been held.

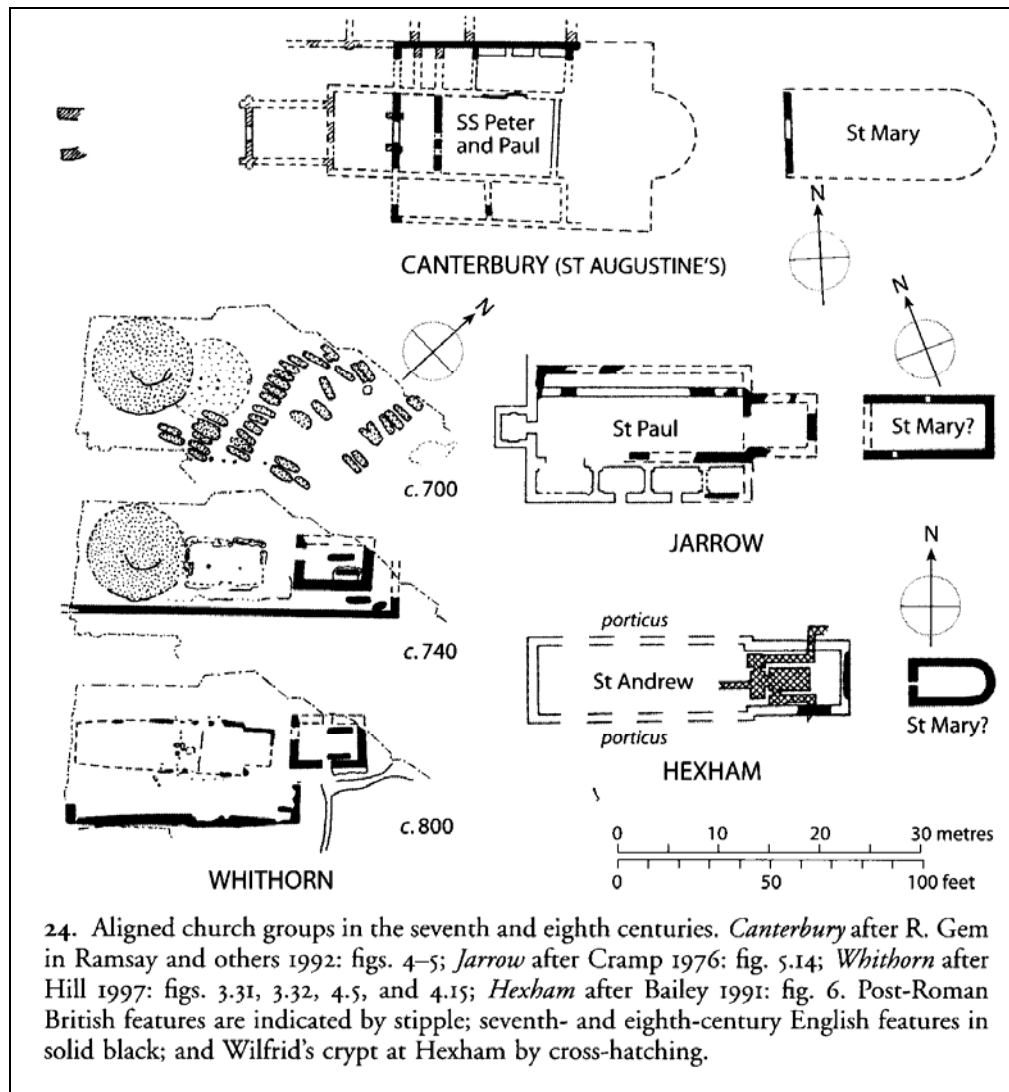
⁷⁵⁴ It is possible that the squint from the south aisle was created within the twelfth-century masonry during the thirteenth century.

⁷⁵⁵ Franklin, 'The identification of minsters', pp. 69-89.

⁷⁵⁶ Although this was a royal holding and much of the wealth could have come from the crown, the foundation of the town of Mountsorrel which served the castle to the north of Rothley might well have contributed to the wealth experienced by the village at this time.

⁷⁵⁷ Nichols, *Antiquities*, Vol. III, part II, p. 958, plate CXXIX.

⁷⁵⁸ For an article on the church of Rothley which contains detailed line drawings see J. Wallace Watts, 'III: The church' *T.L.A.S.* 12 (1921/2), pp. 99-120.

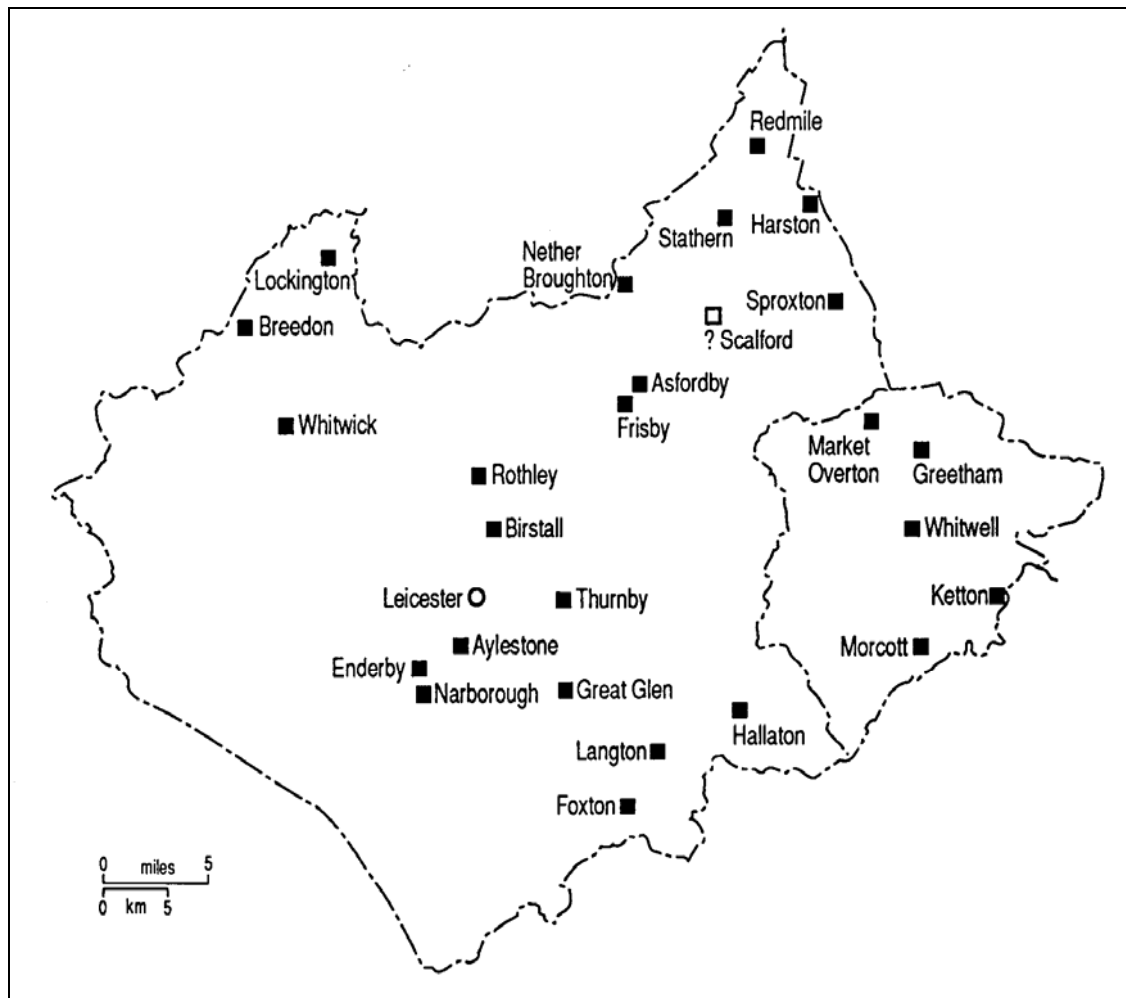


Map 55. Plans of aligned church groups

Source: J. Blair, *The church in Anglo-Saxon society* (Oxford, 2005), p. 200

The presence of late Anglo-Saxon sculpture

Architectural evidence of pre-Conquest date has been used by Parsons as an indication of ecclesiastical activity (Map 56). He put this evidence together to draw a map of possible pre-Conquest churches in Leicestershire in order to come to some conclusions about the nature of church provision in the early eleventh century.⁷⁵⁹



Map 56. Anglo-Saxon carved stonework in Leicestershire

Source: D. Parsons, 'Before the parish: the church in Anglo-Saxon Leicestershire' in J. Bourne, *Anglo-Saxon landscapes in the east midlands* (Leicester, 1996), p. 16

Rothley has within its churchyard to the south of the church an Anglo-Saxon cross-shaft for which the dates of the mid-ninth to early eleventh century have been suggested (Plate 2).⁷⁶⁰ The cross-shaft was described by Herbert to be in two parts, the lower stone is 10 feet 5 inches in height and the upper stone 2 feet.⁷⁶¹ Routh compared some of the decoration of the cross-shaft to an ivory panel in the Victoria and Albert

⁷⁵⁹ Parsons, 'Before the parish', pp. 11-36.

⁷⁶⁰ Pevsner, *Buildings*, p. 364. Pevsner states that the date of the mid-ninth century was suggested by Sir Thomas Kendrick. The cross-shaft has been given a date of eleventh century on the Sites and Monuments Record for the county, because of some Viking-type figures carved on the shaft in the shape of dragons.

⁷⁶¹ This description by Albert Herbert was included in the article by T.E. Routh, 'The Rothley cross-shaft and the Sproxtan cross' *T.L.A.S.* 20 (Leicester, 1938-9), pp. 66-76.

Museum which had a border of Carolingian acanthus and dated at *circa* AD 1000.⁷⁶² The fabric of the cross-shaft is coarse grain millstone grit and probably originated in Derbyshire. The decoration includes a beast of Jellinge-type, and Routh compared this with a similar beast to be found on a cross at Sproxton, Leicestershire, in the north east of the county. He also saw a parallel to the Rothley carvings in the responds of the original Saxon chancel arch of Bibury church, Gloucestershire. He viewed the acanthus foliage of the cross-shaft to be related to the Winchester school from which Brønsted derived the Ringerike style of carving which occurred in England during the reigns of Svein Forkbeard and Cnut.⁷⁶³ Other carvings on the cross-shaft could be paralleled with similar designs which can be ascribed to any date between the early tenth and twelfth centuries. Similar crosses were recorded from as early as the ninth century as markers for sites set aside for the act of worship and prayer.⁷⁶⁴ The occurrence of simple crosses began at an early date, and one of these simple crosses with early carvings is believed to mark the grave of Acca, bishop of Hexham, who died in AD 740.⁷⁶⁵ Bailey recognised that plain stone crosses were common in Britain and on the continent before the eighth century, but he questioned why there emerged a later tradition of decorated stone crosses only in Britain.⁷⁶⁶ He was unable to explain why such a tradition of decoration did not happen elsewhere in Europe. He went on to describe a number of stone crosses from the eighth century which were centred on the cult of Oswald in Northumbria, and he speculated whether the presence of such cults could provide a possible background for decorated crosses to emerge.⁷⁶⁷ Thus decoration became the means of indicating possible dates and stylistic provenance of particular stone sculptures, and the style of the Rothley cross-shaft fits well with other sculptures of the tenth century or later.⁷⁶⁸

One further piece of evidence which may give a *raison d'être* for the Rothley cross-shaft is the possible connection with this site of the Mercian martyr St Wistan. An early sixteenth-century will was discovered which suggested that the chapel at Rothley Temple was dedicated to St Wistan, the Mercian prince who trained as a monk

⁷⁶² Routh, 'The Rothley cross-shaft', pp. 66-76.

⁷⁶³ Svein Forkbeard was King of Denmark from AD 988 to 1014, and Cnut was King of the English from AD 1016 to 1035.

⁷⁶⁴ Blair, *The church*, p. 321.

⁷⁶⁵ F. M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1971), 3rd ed., p. 150.

⁷⁶⁶ R.N. Bailey, *England's earliest sculptors* (Toronto, 1996), p. 48.

⁷⁶⁷ Bailey, *England's earliest sculptors*, p. 50.

⁷⁶⁸ Frisby on the Wreake and Asfordby, both under the Domesday jurisdiction of Rothley soke possessed fragments of stone crosses of pre-Conquest date. Evidence from the records of Launde Priory indicate that the church at Frisby was once dedicated to St Guthlac. It is possible that this stone cross is an indication of a former cult-site of that saint.

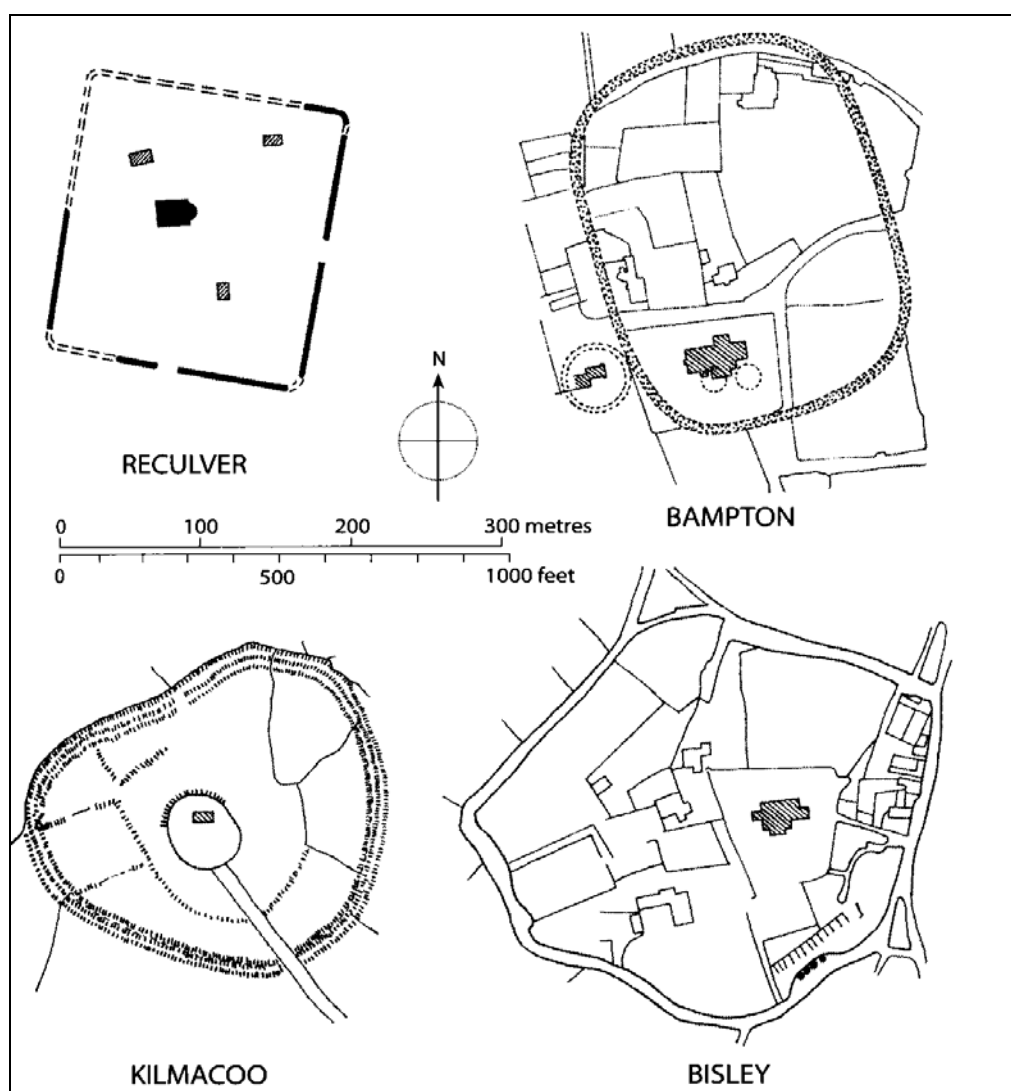
at Repton and who was murdered in a family feud in AD 849.⁷⁶⁹ Following his murder, Wistan's body was carried to the vault at Repton priory in Derbyshire. Wistow church (Leicestershire) is dedicated to this saint, as is the church in Wigston (Leicestershire) where his body is believed to have rested overnight. Rothley was suggested by Lloyd as another resting place for Wistan's body, and he cites from a will which states that the testator wished to be buried in 'the church yard of St *Wystane* in the temple of Rothley.' Whatever the basis for this legend, a belief that Wistan was connected with the site at Rothley Temple would undoubtedly add religious significance to the nearby church. Just as crosses had been used to indicate a cult of Oswald in Northumbria, perhaps a similar cult had emerged in or near Rothley shortly after the death of Wistan. As a royal site perhaps Rothley had been connected with Wistan or his family, and it is possible that a cult could have emerged here which would have led to the later placing of a stone cross. Such a cult site could also indicate a favourable position for the establishment of a royal church of some significance.

Topographical evidence

Given both the Domesday and the architectural evidence, is it possible that Rothley might have been a late Anglo-Saxon minster? Many old minsters were once part of a large territory, and were given land by royal grant. Blair has made a study of known minsters in an attempt to classify landscape features of these foundations, and to enable informed speculation regarding minsters in areas where the documents are few. Minsters were often to be found in enclosures, either man-made or natural, and such were the minsters of Reculver, Kent, (inside a Roman fort); Bampton, Oxfordshire, which lay within a perimeter ditch; and Bisley, Gloucestershire, which show lost boundary features within the modern landscape (Map 57).⁷⁷⁰ Kilmacoo was included to show an Irish monastic site with surviving earthworks. From the diagram it can be seen that many early minsters were founded within an enclosed space which can sometimes be seen within the landscape.

⁷⁶⁹ P. Lloyd, 'A study in the dedications given to religious buildings in Leicestershire before the Reformation', M.A. Dissertation, English Local History, University of Leicester, 1973. There are two contenders for the place of Wistan's death, Wistow (Wistan's stowe) in Leicestershire being one of them. Unfortunately Lloyd does not cite the reference of the will, nor does he give any details of the will writer such as their name or the date of the will. Lloyd has taken the reference to mean that the Templar chapel at Rothley Temple must have been dedicated to St Wistan. While this may be true, there is no indication that there was a burial yard at the chapel, for burials during the medieval period remained with the church at Rothley half a mile away.

⁷⁷⁰ Blair, *The church*, p. 197



Map 57. Plans of churches within enclosures

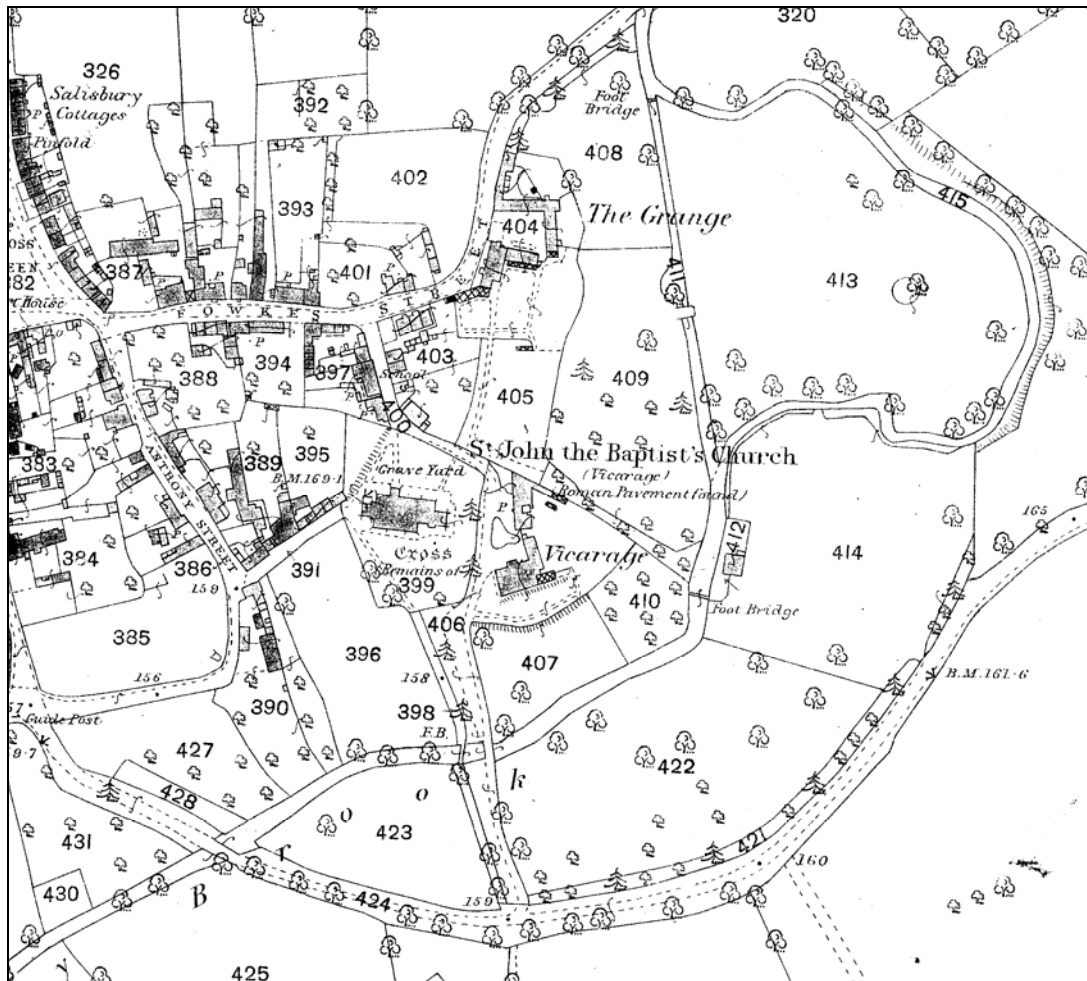
Source: J. Blair, *The church in Anglo-Saxon society* (Oxford, 2005), p. 197⁷⁷¹

Morris also established a preference of early monasteries for watery sites, and noticed that they were often established in the triangles of ground formed in the angles where two rivers met, citing as his examples Jarrow in Tyne and Wear, and Leominster in Herefordshire which was bounded by the rivers Kenwater and Lugg.⁷⁷² He saw that such areas made excellent natural enclosures for monastic sites. Many early monasteries were also sited overlooking running water and examples given by Morris

⁷⁷¹ Blair has obtained some information from H. M. Taylor and J. Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon architecture* 1-3, (Oxford, 1965-78).

⁷⁷² Morris, *Churches*, pp. 110-111.

included the Thames at Tilbury, and the Trent at Repton.⁷⁷³ Is it possible that the site of Rothley church could fit such criteria?



Map 58. Plan of Rothley

Source: First edition OS 25-inch series, XXV.6

Rothley stands on the banks of the Rothley Brook, and this stream is fed by springs which rise in Charnwood Forest to the west, and bounds the church to the south and east where it then joins the river Soar just north of its confluence with the river Wreake (Map 58). The church of Rothley has direct access to Rothley Brook to the south of the churchyard by a footpath which has a footbridge to cross the brook. A natural enclosure is provided for the church not only by the brook, but also from the scarp which lies to the east of the church, below which the brook flows before reaching the river Soar. The road by which traffic enters the settlement runs along Rothley House Lane to the south of the brook, and now crosses the brook *via* a bridge where

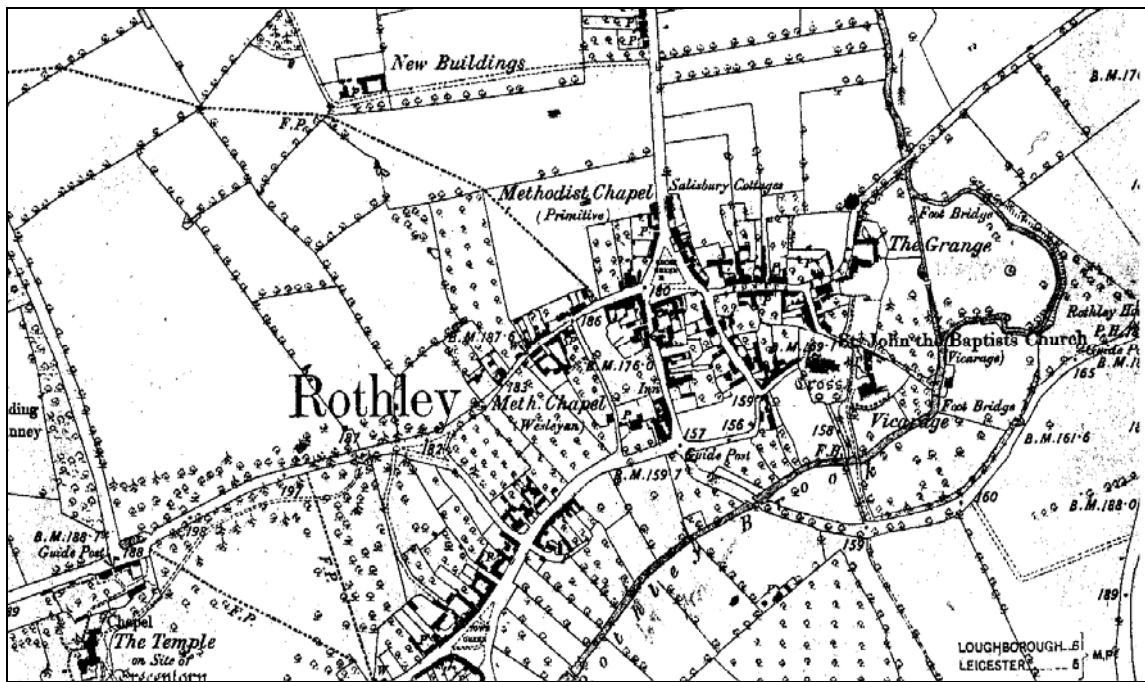
⁷⁷³ Morris, *Churches*, pp. 111-112.

there was once a ford. The road continues up North Street to enter the main shopping precinct at Cross Green where a market was once held and a courthouse stood. When the rivers and brook flood, the water has been known to rise some way up Fowkes Street to the north of the church, thus rendering Cross Green the only approach to the church which stands on a spur of high ground within the loop of the flood water. Within the curve of Rothley House Lane lie the Priest Meadow and the old vicarage. Rothley church is in a prominent position looking out over water and it stands in a natural enclosure next to the vicarage on a spur of high ground within a flood plain.⁷⁷⁴

The juxtaposition of the manorial curia with Rothley church offers another possible link with minster sites. Blair reviewed the work done by Biddle and Haslam who noted that old minsters often shared the same centre with the manorial holding. Biddle gave Winchester palace and minster as an example, and Haslam looked at the *villae regales* with adjacent minster churches in towns in the south of England.⁷⁷⁵ Blair put forward an alternative viewpoint in which many minsters were set apart from the royal palace and could later form the urban nucleus, and he cites the minster at Gloucester which lay half a mile from the royal centre at Kingsholme, and the minster at Chesterfield in Derbyshire which lay a mile and a half from the manorial centre at Newbold. At Leighton Buzzard in Bedfordshire the church was in the town and the Anglo-Saxon royal manor was a mile and a half to the south in Grovebury, and Blair continued his analysis of former minsters and churches which lay at a distance from the manorial centre, frequently within their own precincts.

⁷⁷⁴ Modern building obscures the church from the view of the settlement centre, but if the space to the west of the church is a result of infill, then it could be that the view of the church from the settlement centre would have been impressive. Infill can be suggested on the grounds that a number of the older houses facing this space are substantial, and it can be argued that they were built to impress, and intended to face outwards.

⁷⁷⁵ J. Blair, 'Minster churches in the landscape' in D. Hooke, ed., *Anglo-Saxon settlements* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 35-58. Blair cites from M. Biddle, 'Winchester: the development of an early capital', in H. Jankuhn, W. Schlesinger and H. Steiner, eds., *Vor- and Frühformen der europäischen Städte im Mittelalter* pt. I



Map 59. The settlement of Rothley and the hamlet of Rothley Temple

Source: First edition OS 6-inch series

Could this argument be applied to Rothley? The settlement of Rothley stands more than one kilometre to the east of the manorial centre at Rothley Temple (Map 59). Although such a juxtaposition of a minster with a manorial complex does not conform to the observations made by Biddle and Haslam, it is in keeping with the argument put forward by Blair. The subsequent history of the settlement of Rothley and the hamlet of Rothley Temple shows that this once royal holding developed in such a way that the manorial site was separate from the church-centred settlement site. The base for power which should have been held by the manorial lord was compromised by the prominent position held by the church within the settlement. Although the manorial lords held land within the settlement of Rothley, there was no manorial curia within the confines of the oldest part of the settlement. The most prominent house near the church is the old vicarage, itself a building with medieval origins, lying next to the church, and this would appear to reinforce the proposition that the essential nature of this site was monastic.

(Gottingen, 1973), p. 239; and J. Haslam, 'The towns of Wiltshire' *Anglo-Saxon towns in southern England* (Chichester, 1984), pp. xiv-xvi, 135-40.

Tithes, glebe and other payments to Rothley church

Church dues and tithes can give some indication of status and wealth from the pre-Conquest period. Stenton described the *cyric-sceat* and *sawol-sceat*, later known as church-scot and soul-scot, which were amongst the earliest of payments made to minster churches for the rights of burial and evidence for payment of church-scot could identify former minster churches.⁷⁷⁶ Such dues and payments are often the only extant evidence of former relationships between later parish churches. Blair pointed out that control over the place of burial became one of the real indicators of the new parish churches, who continued to pay the minster church some recompense for its loss of mortuary fees.⁷⁷⁷ Although such evidence is often late, Parsons was convinced that 'the occurrence of such regular payments in later medieval documents is one of the means of identifying former minsters and their offspring'.⁷⁷⁸ Payments from Wanlip and Skeffington have already been noted for the thirteenth century.⁷⁷⁹ Such payments have been identified within the Rothley documents as late as the eighteenth century, linking churches or groups of parishioners who made payments to the church at Rothley, despite their apparently living within the parish of another church. Payments can be found in Shoby where parishioners living within the parish of Saxelby were recorded within the glebe terrier for Grimston, a nearby chapel of Rothley, for contributing payments to the church at Rothley,⁷⁸⁰ and in South Croxton where parishioners were making tithe payments to Rothley church although living within the parish of South Croxton church.⁷⁸¹ A small number of parishioners living in Somerby paid tithes to Rothley church and continued to come under the jurisdiction of the soke court in the eighteenth century.⁷⁸² Such payments give a clear indication of early parochial

⁷⁷⁶ Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 154. In the post-Conquest period, tithe had replaced the church-scot, and had become a legal obligation for all parishioners, and increasingly it was being used for the support of the priest within the parish church. If the new parish church had a graveyard, and was founded on land which had once been served by a minster, then the lord would be required to continue giving two thirds of his tithe to the minster church, and many parish churches in this position can be identified many years, and sometimes centuries, later, through payments of tithe and mortuary fees in recognition of this more ancient relationship. Chapels which were attached to these new parish churches were created to serve outlying settlements of the estate which was held by the manorial lord, and these chapelries were often found in townships which were attached to the mother church of the parish. The manorial lord enjoyed profits and income through his parish church, and it became part of the manorial assets.

⁷⁷⁷ For more information see Blair, *The church*, section on 'Changing burial practice in post-Viking England', pp. 463-471.

⁷⁷⁸ Parsons, 'Before the parish', p. 23.

⁷⁷⁹ See Chapter 6, Map 29, page 151.

⁷⁸⁰ L.R.O. 6D 46/4, Grimston, Leicestershire, glebe terrier AD 1757.

⁷⁸¹ L.R.O. DE 2/4 Ma/EN/A/24/1, Barsby and South Croxton enclosure award and map.

⁷⁸² L.R.O. 4D 72/1/2, Enclosure maps, awards and acts for the soke of Rothley, including Rothley (1781/2), Wartnaby (1764), Keyham 1771/2), Chadwell with Wycomb 1777/8), Barsby with South Croxton 1794/8), and Somerby (1761/5).

connections, although none of these were recorded by the *Matriculus* of Hugh of Wells, and it is unlikely that such arrangements were made subsequent to that document.

Rothley church as a putative Hundred Minster

In the tenth century, minsters were attached to the newly formed Hundreds to create a religious focus which operated at sub-diocesan level. Blair discusses the privileges maintained by some minsters in the administration of justice.⁷⁸³ As a peculiar jurisdiction, Rothley acted at sub-diocesan level in place of the bishop in the thirteenth century, and it is possible that this jurisdiction was a remnant of earlier privileges which would have been granted to a minster of the Hundred of Goscote.⁷⁸⁴ The meeting of the moot court for the hundred of East Goscote was reputed to be on a hill near Syston called the *Moodebush Hill*.⁷⁸⁵ A number of villas within Goscote Hundred paid a chief rent at this court, including Skeffington, which was attached to Rothley at Domesday, and whose church made a payment to Rothley church.⁷⁸⁶ Cox identified this meeting place on a Barkby map of 1609 in which the hill was named the *Mute Bush* indicating the presence of a moot site.⁷⁸⁷ As Cox pointed out, this moot site was placed conveniently near to the Roman Fosse Way which leads to Leicester.⁷⁸⁸ This site lay approximately six kilometres from Rothley, a manageable walking distance, with a bridge at Cossington to take the traveller across the river Soar. The proximity to the moot site would render Rothley eminently suitable as an ecclesiastical centre acting as an adjunct to the secular justice of the moot site for the hundred of Goscote.

Rothley Temple

Rothley Temple was the manorial site on which the Templars built their preceptory, and the site retained extra-parochial status after the Dissolution allowing the manorial lord to maintain his own chapel with relative freedom from religious control. The chapel on the site would in any other manorial situation have become the church of the local community, but at Rothley Temple the manorial complex remained resolutely outside the vill over which it exercised jurisdiction. Close to the Temple site a substantial Roman villa has been discovered which indicates that this site must have

⁷⁸³ Blair, *The church*, p. 448.

⁷⁸⁴ There were other peculiar jurisdictions within Leicestershire in the medieval period, and these were at Groby, Ratby, Swithland, Thurcaston, Evington, Great Bowden and Newtown Linford. Nichols, ed., *Antiquities*, Vol. I, part I, p. lxxxviii. No other peculiar jurisdictions covered as much territory as that at Rothley.

⁷⁸⁵ Nichols, ed., *Antiquities*, Vol. III, part I, p. 453. A Roman coin has also been found on this site. See Nichols, Vol. III, part I, p. 559.

⁷⁸⁶ Nichols, ed., *Antiquities*, Vol. III, part I, p. 439.

⁷⁸⁷ B.H. Cox., 'Leicestershire moot-sites: The place-name evidence' *T.L.A.H.S.* 47 (1971-2), pp. 14-21.

been the centre of a large agrarian estate two thousand years ago. The establishment of an Anglo-Saxon farmstead or settlement associated with the former Roman site would not be impossible. That the demesne at Rothley was a royal holding later associated with the site occupied by the Templars also could indicate Anglo-Saxon activity at the Temple site, suggesting continuity of occupation.⁷⁸⁹

Summary

Rothley was a royal soke holding at Domesday, and served an extensive parish within Leicestershire during the medieval period. It can also be shown that the parish was once larger because there were residual payments made to the church later in the medieval period which continued to be made in the eighteenth century. The episcopal endowment of the church of Rothley and its soke chapels records land attached to the *caput* church amounting to at least a carucate. The main church at Rothley in the thirteenth century was served by a vicar, a chaplain and a clerk, and each of the five chapels was also served by a chaplain and a clerk. Later glebe terriers, and ecclesiastical payments to Rothley give further extensions to the parish at Shoby, Skeffington, South Croxton and Somerby. Rothley also acted as the mother church to chapels at Wanlip and South Mountsorrel. The dedications of the mother church and of the chapels are in keeping with a religious site of high status. The documentary evidence put forward in this chapter supports the proposition that Rothley was once a minster church.

The topographical evidence for Rothley as a minster church, though circumstantial, is in keeping with other churches of high status elsewhere in the country. Rothley church sits on a promontory which is encompassed by a natural enclosure, and during wet seasons this promontory can be surrounded on three sides by floodwater. Rothley church is at the centre of its settlement, with the manorial curia more than one kilometre to the west, rendering the church and not the manor as the focus for the oldest part of the settlement. The archaeological evidence is also compelling: a will suggests that the nearby site of Rothley Temple was connected with the Mercian saint Wistan, and an Anglo-Saxon stone cross-shaft which stands within the churchyard could indicate that this was a cult centre dedicated to that saint. The cross-shaft is a fine example of carved work of the mid- to late-tenth century. Although the foundation of Rothley as a religious centre could well be earlier, extant evidence indicates religious activity from

⁷⁸⁸ It lay 2 kilometres east of Syston, and about 3 kilometres from the Fosse Way.

the tenth century. An indirect link between Rothley and the Hundred court once held near Syston, leads to the speculation that Rothley church could once have been the minster for the Hundred of Goscote.

⁷⁸⁹ A high status brooch of Anglo-Saxon date has been found near this site. S.M.R. Leicestershire MLE 6112. This brooch has been given a tentative date between AD 410 and AD 849.

Conclusions

Rothley was a royal Domesday soke holding, the manor, soke and parish of which covered an extensive territory in Leicestershire in the medieval period. The soke land of Domesday, which continued as part of the soke into the early modern period, demonstrated a variety of farming land on both low and high ground. The development of the settlements and the links between the farming communities suggest inter-commoning and a sharing of grazing and arable land. Some of the vills held by the Templars in the thirteenth century maintained jurisdictional links with Rothley either through the courts and administrative processes of the soke, or through the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the parish into the nineteenth century. Other vills, which belonged to the soke at Domesday, were no longer part of the soke under the Templars, and the majority of these vills exhibited no further connection with either the soke or parish, and may indicate temporary holdings at Domesday.

Following a period of partial fragmentation in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, the Templars did much to re-assemble the core of the soke and the Hospitallers re-organised the administration of the manor. As lords they kept and maintained the records of the soke, some of which survived, and these give a window through which the manor and soke can be viewed in the later medieval period. Both the Templars and Hospitallers exercised a 'loose' manorial hand, using the services of paid labour and officials. As absentee landlords for much of the soke, the daily running of

the manor was in the hands of the steward, often a local man who lived at the manor site. Both Templars and Hospitallers exploited the manor and soke to raise cash income for their exploits in the middle east, and later to support buildings and services for the succour of pilgrims. The court rolls of Rothley are extant from the late fourteenth century, and these record many land exchanges among the tenants who were termed *secreti* or *liberi indigenorum*, with foreign purchasers being termed *forensis* or *extrinsecus*. Charters of land purchase and documents of sale and release are extant from the thirteenth century, and show land being freely transferred between individuals and groups, both male and female.

The Rothley custumal records many details of tenants and their holdings, but its primary function was to record the payments rendered, with only a brief reference to the customary labour dues. The services owed by the tenants of Rothley were light and performed on one day per year. No labour services were made by the tenants of the soke, but there were a few small annual payments of food and goods. The rents paid by the soke tenants were 'assized' or fixed, thus preventing the lords from increasing future payments. Later 'Pains and orders' of the agrarian organisation of Rothley gave details of customs which were overseen by the tenants themselves. The right to tax soke tenants 'at will' was retained by the king, and this ensured a royal connection which enabled the tenants to maintain a legal advantage. The Rothley Temple documents reflect the development of 'ancient demesne' as a legal concept, and the use of one of its rights, the 'little writ of right close', appears in the court rolls of the later fourteenth century. The soke tenants procured an early commutation of villein services from the beginning of their relationship with the Templars through a court ruling which decreed that their tenements were held in socage. The relationship between the tenants of the manor and soke and their manorial lords was determined by this legal agreement which was reached in the mid-thirteenth century. This relationship was later aided by the tenants' legal rights to resort to their ancient demesne status, but it was not determined by it. Their foresight was fortuitous, and it laid the ground for legal advantages which ancient demesne tenants elsewhere did not enjoy.

In the later fourteenth century the tenants took advantage of their socage ruling to prevent the Hospitallers from increasing their rents or re-introducing villein services. At the same time, a crisis in the availability of labour appears to have spurred the Hospitallers to lease out their demesne land at Rothley, which suggests that the tenants successfully resisted pressure to perform labour services. The soke tenants maintained

legal documents of their own, and were able to present these to the jury of the soke court. The tenants of Rothley continued to be proactive in their dealings with their lord, and in the sixteenth century they negotiated a release from their labour services and agreed upon an enclosure of the demesne lands. With this partial enclosure there was a separation brought about between the Temple land and that of the township of Rothley. Soke tenants with both large and small holdings showed a differentiation in the socio-economic structure of their villis, with some tenants being demonstrably wealthier than some of their neighbours. Although the manorial lords exercised a light hand and their interference appears to have been minimal, there were some serious disputes which were heard in the king's courts and the tenants used their own records to support their legal claims. A number of tenants were demonstrably wealthy with sub-tenants of their own. The advantages of holding a tenement within the soke were keenly sought in the later medieval period, and the court protected these tenants' rights.

Open-field farming predominated within the soke, and the demesnes of the manor and the holdings of the tenants were intermingled for much of the medieval period. The later soke retained land which was both in the valley and on high ground, it had access to woods and wastes, and inter-commoning occurred in a number of places suggesting that the agrarian decisions were made at township level. Settlement patterns varied throughout the soke, and in places these suggest a high degree of co-operation within and between settlements and townships. In High Leicestershire one part-soke agrarian unit ignored both tenurial and parochial boundaries, and appeared instead to be a response to the needs of the local community. Husbandry in much of the soke can be shown to be usual for the midlands, but in the Soar valley, at Rothley, there appears to have been cattle rearing on a commercial scale. Although many of the extant records which indicate the workings of the medieval agrarian economy were manorial, it is difficult to determine whether these records determined policy or merely recorded it. The landscape evidence occasionally suggests that some decisions were made at township level by the tenants themselves especially in areas where manorial control was limited.

Rothley was one of four sokes recorded within the county in the Domesday survey. Of these sokes, two were in royal hands, the soke of Rothley, and the soke of Great Bowden. Bowden soke enjoyed a discreet parish centred upon the soke *caput*, and there is evidence to show that the pre-Conquest territory over which the soke exercised jurisdiction had once extended southwards into Northamptonshire. Both the

parish and soke of Rothley enjoyed an extensive jurisdiction within the county, although the evidence for the parish was not recorded in its entirety at Domesday, and connections to Rothley parish continued to be revealed into the early modern period. The full extent of Rothley's medieval parish may still await discovery, and it is possible that further investigations could disclose additional parochial links and payments.

The chapels of Rothley church lay on the periphery of the soke territory except Gaddesby which formed a large block of land in the centre, and whose chapel had all the rights of a mother church. A thirteenth-century grant by the bishop gave details of the structure of the parish and the extent of its 'peculiar' jurisdiction. Rothley church was to enjoy the services of three clergy: a vicar, a chaplain and a clerk, and both chaplains and clerks were to serve at each of the chapels, each having glebe for their own support. The glebe for the parish was generous but not considerable for a royal soke, and amounted in total to about 2 carucates of land, equalling that of the demesne of the manor. As a 'peculiar' the soke functioned as a 'sub-diocese' outside the direct control of the bishop and the parish acted independently, and both parish and soke were large with a high degree of correlation between the two areas of jurisdiction. A crisis in the later fourteenth century resulting in the priest of a neighbouring church claiming tithes from one of the soke chapels may indicate pressure from a reduction in the number of tithe paying parishioners after the Black Death. Tithes continued to be paid to the parish by soke dependencies into the eighteenth century, and a large number of thirteenth-century soke dependencies retained later parochial ties with Rothley church, the main exception being Tilton, which retained jurisdictional ties with Rothley but its parish remained local. An early connection between the royal manor site at Rothley Temple and the Anglo-Saxon royal martyr St Wistan was suggested by a sixteenth-century will, and a late-Saxon stone cross standing in the church-yard at Rothley suggests a cult site centred on this Mercian saint, which is probably of late tenth-century date. A connection between a former-soke holding which made payments to Rothley church links this church indirectly with the Hundred court at Syston, leading to the postulation that Rothley church could have served the hundred of Goscote as a tenth-century minster. A *parochia* of this size could have its origins in an earlier royal estate.

Hoskins once wrote, 'everything in the landscape is older than we think.'⁷⁹⁰ This would appear to be as true for Rothley as for many another settlement which survives from before the Conquest. The manor house at the Templar site was farmed during the

⁷⁹⁰ W. G. Hoskins, *The making of the English landscape* (London, 1977) 2nd. ed., p. 13.

Roman period; its large, late-medieval soke was probably formed from an earlier and larger royal Saxon estate; its church with recognisable twelfth-century features was probably founded at least 150 years earlier than its architecture suggests. All these elements have provided the framework for the study of this landscape. However, the shaping of this territory has come about from the decisions and actions of different individuals and groups of men and women: lay and ecclesiastical tenants; royal and peasant landholders. If the king and the manorial lords exploited Rothley for its wealth, so too did the tenants. The men and women of the soke were instrumental in shaping the nature of the tenements which they controlled. By altering their tenants' agreement between themselves and their manorial lords in the thirteenth century they gained an important strategic point in their favour. Unlike many other peasant landholders, the tenants of Rothley had much more control over their own destinies. The ability to out-manoeuvre their overlords continued to characterise the tenants' relationship with authority. The tenants, however, did not appear to wish to lord it over their superiors: they used the law, but usually complied with it; they wished to change elements of the management of the soke, they did not seek to destroy its integrity. They exploited the advantages of both socage and ancient demesne tenure, and this provided the basis for the often substantial wealth of many.

The site of Rothley manor, and its extensive soke and parish, has witnessed a long and complex history. It has been shaped not only by the interaction of royal and ecclesiastical events, but also by the disputes played out between the manorial lords and their tenants. These tenants demonstrated an independence of thought and action coupled with a legal *savoir-faire* and an ability to resist pressure from their manorial lords. Both landlords and tenants often pulled in different directions creating tensions from above and below which helped the manor, soke and parish to maintain its integrity. The soke was a lucrative prospect to those who controlled its assets, and this, coupled with parochial independence, appears to have proved an irresistible lure to outsiders. By providing advantages to all levels of its internal society, these elements ensured its survival.

Appendix A

Menton

In the mid-thirteenth century, a custumal was written for the soke of Rothley, and for other lands associated with the soke. This custumal was written for the Templars, who had held the soke since 1231, and it established their assets in the soke of Rothley and beyond. At the end of the custumal there was an additional vill called *Menton*, but there was no suggestion that this vill belonged to the soke, although it was accounted as a Templar holding.⁷⁹¹ The rental appears to contain only those holdings of the Templars which were in Leicestershire at the time, and there is no suggestion that lands outside Leicestershire were included. Where was *Menton*? Why was it included within the rental of Templar holdings? Is it possible to use the evidence given for *Menton* to establish its identity?

The holdings of the Templars in Leicestershire were numerous, and these are easy to establish for the mid-thirteenth century by reference to the various editions of the Book of Fees, for those lands which were held in chief, that is, with no intermediary tenant between the land holder and the king.⁷⁹² The Book of Fees was a register of the king's interests in land and other assets, and was designed to enable the royal exchequer to determine whom to tax when the need for cash arose.

⁷⁹¹ L.R.O. 44'28/867 Rothley Temple MSS: Custumal of Rothley, f. 14. This holding would be counted as part of the bailiwick of Rothley.

⁷⁹² *Liber Feodorum – The Book of Fees – commonly called Testa de Neville, Part II 1242-93 preserved in the Public Record Office* (London, 1923), pp. 1280-2.

Among the entries for Leicestershire in 1251 to 1252, the inquisition established that the Templars had a number of holdings. Their holdings in Goscote hundred comprised Rothley with its soke and church which were worth £60, and other land which had been part of the soke at Domesday, but was now assessed separately as a Templar holding, namely North Marefield, South Marefield and Baggrave, all of which they had acquired as a separate donation. Baggrave was included with its church, which the Book of Fees stated had once pertained to the church of Keyham, as of the soke of Rothley, but by then had become a chapel of Hungarton, which was of the donation of the abbey of Leicester. The Templars, however, held other land in Leicestershire, for in the hundred of Framland they held land in a vill called Normanton, whose name reputedly derived from the lands of the Normans and is recorded as *terra Normannorum in Normanton*, and this derivation has been given as one meaning of its name.⁷⁹³ However, Nichols suggested that the name could also have come from a corruption of North Manton, as this township was the most northerly within the Bottesford group, and indeed the most northerly in the county, a suggestion which does not appear unreasonable. The term *terra Normannorum* had arisen during the previous 50 years since the time of king John when those holding land both in Normandy and in England had been forced to relinquish one or other holding. This released much land in England which had been given up by those Norman lords who wished to maintain their holdings in Normandy.

When did the Templars acquire Normanton? An earlier document in AD 1230 offers clues, for Matilda, the wife of William de Colvill the elder, demanded from the master of the Templars the third part of 13 bovates of land in Normanton as her dower.⁷⁹⁴ Matilda accepted the rights of the Templars in 1230, and the master of the order asked for a view or survey to be carried out, which was granted. By 1288 the only remaining link between this land and the Templars was a payment of 4s for the capital messuage which appears to have been sub-let to the Colvill family.⁷⁹⁵

The Book of Fees goes on to give a brief provenance for the land which the Templars had in their possession in Normanton: in the early thirteenth century William de Colvill the elder had come to an agreement with the king part of which included the

⁷⁹³ *Book of Fees*, pp. 1280-2.

⁷⁹⁴ G. Farnham, ed., *Leicestershire mediaeval village notes* (Leicester, c. 1928), Vol. 6, p. 187. *Curia Regis Roll 107. Mich. 15 Henry III, AD 1230, m. 14d. Leyc.*

⁷⁹⁵ Farnham, ed., *Village notes*, Vol. 6, p. 192. *Inquisitions post mortem* Roger de Colevill, 51/8, Vol. II, p. 420.

granting of Normanton; from William the land had been passed on to his son, William the second, who had then enfeoffed the land to Peter Humour, after which it was enfeoffed in two parts, one part to William Meindurant, and the other part to Robert and Jordan Estre, two brothers. Robert and Jordan sold their interest in their land to the Templars, and the overlord William Colvill confirmed this grant. In 1247, Henry de Colvill, brother of William the second, leased the property which had been previously confirmed to the Templars, but the Templars claimed that their rights in the property emanated not from William de Colvill the second, but from another brother John de Colvill, who had entered the Templar order, and had become the preceptor at Temple Bruer. John had then demised the property to his brother, without the consent of the master of the Temple. The land the Templars acquired was exchanged in 1258 when Henry de Colvill entered into a transaction with the Templars to give them a selion of land and a dwelling in Normanton in exchange for two selions and a toft which they already had. This exchange was agreed upon, and the name of the master of the Templars at the time was Amadeus de Morestello.⁷⁹⁶

If Normanton is to be equated with *Menton*, is it the earlier land holding which belonged to the Templars in that township, or the later? The evidence for *Menton* within the Rothley rental follows that of the other soke vills. Its position within the document is outside the soke holdings, but within the reckoning required by the Templars. The income due from the tenants of *Menton* amounted to £5 9s 10 ½ d. The stipends of the servants for *Menton* amounted to 2s 6d, for the chicken keeper 4s, and for the smith 8s. Under *Altera Familia* there were other outgoings namely for the two carucates or ploughs at *Menton*. If a carucate of land was reckoned to be 8 bovates, then two carucates would have amounted to approximately 16 bovates. The document for 1230 reckons that there were 13 bovates in Normanton, and so this information alone cannot support the identification of Normanton with *Menton*, although the difference in calculation of land size and rent liability need not exclude this interpretation.

Does Normanton appear in the Domesday Book, and if so, does this shed light on the origins of the name and the size of the total holding? Unfortunately Domesday does not give us the name of Normanton. This vill was closely associated with Bottesford, and formed part of its dependencies alongside Easthorpe, Redmile, Muston and

⁷⁹⁶ J. Nichols., ed., *The history and antiquities of the county of Leicester* (Leicester, 1795), Vol. II, part I, appendix p. 12.

Knipton, and they all formed part of the holding of Robert de Tosny.⁷⁹⁷ There is no evidence that the Templars ever held property in any of these dependencies.⁷⁹⁸ Thus the link between *Menton* and Normanton is tentative at best.

The name of *Meuton* appeared in the Hundred Rolls of AD 1279.⁷⁹⁹ It is extremely difficult to tell apart the 'u' and the 'n' in thirteenth-century manuscript hand. Could *Meuton* be the *Menton* of the Rothley custumal? *Meuton* was easier to identify, because in the Hundred Rolls it appeared to be associated with Melton. The Hundred Rolls declared that this land of *Meuton* had been held by the Templars for about 30 years, thus bringing the holding within the remit of the Rothley rental. In looking at documents which refer to Melton in the thirteenth century the spelling of the name is variously *Meuton*, *Meaulton* or Melton, and did not settle on the name of Melton until about the year AD 1260.⁸⁰⁰

Could *Meuton* be identified with Melton? In the Charter Rolls there is recorded a gift of land in *Meauton* to the Templars and the donor was Jollende Fontibus.⁸⁰¹ The Templars were granted this land on condition that they gave Alan Bolun of London £10 a year during his life, and on his death the Templars were to be quit of the debt. A second entry, this time in the Close Rolls, reveals that the Templars were to be quit of a further encumbrance of land in *Meauton* namely 100 marks payable on the feast of St Lawrence, for which they had been distrained by the sheriff of Leicester in the November of that year.⁸⁰² There is also evidence from a document written in French which refers to a carucate of land in Melton held by the Templar order in 1278.⁸⁰³ By 1323, following the suppression of the Templars, land in Somerby in Melton was referred to as having belonged to the Templars, but had been reclaimed by John de Mowbray who had rights of holding a fair in the town at the feast of St Lawrence.⁸⁰⁴ However, in the Hundred Rolls, the Templars were recorded as holding land in both

⁷⁹⁷ DB f. 234 a.

⁷⁹⁸ One interesting set of dependencies at Bottesford comes under the holdings of six named individuals and 4 Frenchmen. Between them they held 12 carucates of land from Robert de Tosny. The whole of this had been held by Leofric before the Conquest. However the land was organised, it is clear that by the late eighteenth century enclosure involved a combination of Bottesford, Normanton and Easthorpe, a copy of which act can be seen in Nichols. Tithes of hay arising out of 30 acres of land in Normanton were allotted to the rector of Muston church suggesting a close parochial link. Many rights devolved to the men's and women's hospitals in Bottesford. Cf. Nichols, ed., *Antiquities*, Vol. II, Part I, p. 89.

⁷⁹⁹ *Rotuli Hundredorum Temp. Hen. III et Ed. I in Turr' Lond' et in Curia Receptae Scaccarij Westm. Asservati* (London, 1818), Vol. II, p. 240.

⁸⁰⁰ L.R.O. 5D 33/189 Farnham Bequest MS, Melton Mowbray.

⁸⁰¹ *C.Ch.R.*, 25th May 1244 (London, 1903), Vol. I, p. 278.

⁸⁰² L.R.O. 5D 33/189 Farnham Bequest MS, Melton Mowbray.

⁸⁰³ Nichols, ed., *Antiquities*, Vol. II, part I, p. 240.

⁸⁰⁴ L.R.O. 5D 33/189 Farnham Bequest MS, Melton Mowbray.

Meuton and in Somerby, so it is unlikely that those two holdings were one and the same.

So what evidence is there to link the entry for *Menton* in the Rothley custumal with the entries for Melton? There is evidence that *Meuton* and *Meauton* referred to Melton, and as it is impossible to tell the difference between *Meuton* and *Menton* in thirteenth-century handwriting, thus it is reasonable to infer that these were one and the same place. Somerby appeared in the rental as part of the soke, suggesting that Somerby and *Menton* were not the same place, although the inquisitors for John de Mowbray appeared to believe that both places came under the jurisdiction of Melton.⁸⁰⁵ The dues in the Rothley custumal owed by the people of *Menton*, were paid three times a year, at the feast of St Martin, Easter, and the feast of St Lawrence. No payments in the soke of Rothley were made at the feast of this last saint. Another possible connection between the *Menton* of the Rothley custumal, and Melton, is a reference to a messuage (house) which had once belonged to Robert Boleyn. Could this man have been a relative of the Alan Bolun referred to in the Charter Roll of 1244? Thus there are three links between *Menton* and Melton: a payment on the feast of St Lawrence; *Meauton* or *Meuton* used as alternative spellings for Melton in the documents; and a house in *Menton* which was connected to a family by the name of Boleyn. Thus it is reasonable to identify the *Menton* in the Rothley custumal with the Templar holding in the township of Melton in the thirteenth century.

⁸⁰⁵ This misunderstanding could have come about because part of Somerby was counted as being in Framland Hundred, as was Melton. That part of Somerby which belonged to the Templars came under Goscote Hundred, in recognition that it was part of the soke of Rothley, which was also in that hundred.

Appendix B
Inquisitions as evidence for peasant wealth
in the soke of Rothley

It is possible to establish the status and wealth of some soke tenants through the use of inquisitions which were carried out to protect the interests of the king or other feudal lord. The inquisitions *ad quod damnum* established the holdings and assets of a tenant who held some of his goods from a feudal lord, and were undertaken when a the tenant wished to donate some property to the church in perpetuity, and in order to establish that remaining property would leave the beneficiary able to fulfil tenorial services which were attached to the property. In Gaddesby in the 1320s there lived two tenants of the soke who held their land of different lords, and who were recorded in inquisitions from which it is possible to draw a picture of tenure and obligations of wealthier tenants. These tenants were Robert de Overton of Gaddesby, and Robert of Gaddesby.⁸⁰⁶

⁸⁰⁶ G.F. Farnham, ed., 'Gaddesby' *T.L.A.S.* 13 (1923-24), pp. 266-268. Both of these individuals appear in the Lay Subsidies for the years 1327 and 1332 demonstrating that they had separate identities.

Date	Holding	Name of sub-tenant	Name of chief tenant	Property	Rent payable	Value
June 1323	Included in grant	Robert de Overton of Gaddesby	Hospitallers	1 messuage, 60 acres arable, 6 acres meadow	4s 8d	66s 8d
	Remaining in Gaddesby, not in grant	Robert de Overton of Gaddesby	Hospitallers	Land + tenements	20s	100s
	Remaining in Gaddesby, not in grant	Robert de Overton of Gaddesby	John Folville	Land + tenements	3d	100s
August 1323	Included in grant	Robert de Gaddesby	Hospitallers	1 messuage, 40 acres arable, 5 acres meadow, 13s 4d	5s	46s 8d
	Remaining land in Gaddesby + Baggrave	Robert de Gaddesby	Hospitallers, John Chevercourt		13s 4d 20s	100s 60s
1333	Included in grant	Robert de Gaddesby	Robert son of Ralph under John Folville	1 virgate + 1 messuage	8s	4s + service
	Included in grant	Robert de Gaddesby	Hospitallers	1 messuage	5s 4d	2s 6d + service
	Included in grant	Robert de Gaddesby	John Folville	1 messuage + 1 virgate	7s 8d	4s 4d + service
	Remaining land in Gaddesby	Robert de Gaddesby	John Folville	1 messuage + 2 carucates	20s	£4 + service
	Remaining land in Gaddesby	Robert de Gaddesby	Hospitallers		4s	60s

Figure 29: Lands held by Robert Overton and Robert de Gaddesby

Sources: Farnham, ed., 'Gaddesby', p. 267. *Inquisition ad quod damnum*, File 167 (9), taken at Barsby 2 August, 17 Edward II, 1323; and File 225 (17), taken at Melton Mowbray on Monday, before St Thomas the Apostle, 7 Edward III, 1333

Robert de Overton held land in Gaddesby from both the Hospitallers and from John de Folville, lord of Ashby Folville, the neighbouring township to the east. This Robert also held lands and tenements to the value of £10 in addition to the messuage and 60 acres of arable which he wished to grant to the church. Robert of Gaddesby was even wealthier, for his possessions within the township in 1323 amounted to a messuage, 40 acres of land and 13s 4d of rents which he granted for the founding of a chantry within the church at Gaddesby. He also held various other properties in Gaddesby and Baggrave which amounted to 100s value held under the Hospitallers, and 60s value held under John Chevercourt.⁸⁰⁷ In 1333, the same Robert granted a further three messuages and a two virgates of land for the support of another chantry chapel within Gaddesby church.⁸⁰⁸ This property was held under three different overlords namely: Robert son of Ralph under John Folville of Ashby Folville; the Hospitallers of the manor of Rothley; and of John Folville himself. The properties remaining to Robert after this grant had been made were a messuage and two carucates of land under John Folville for a yearly rent of 20s, and rents to the value of 60s from tenants within the township of Gaddesby, for which Robert paid the Hospitallers an annual rent of 4s. Both Roberts were considered to be wealthy enough at the time of the next Lay Subsidy of 1332 to make payments of 6s 8d.⁸⁰⁹ Thus the two intermediary lords in Gaddesby in 1333 were John Folville, and the Knights' Hospitaller.⁸¹⁰ Robert of Gaddesby must have been a person of wealth and status for in 1323 he was also found to be the keeper of forfeited and other Leicestershire lands in the king's hands for that year.⁸¹¹

Between the drawing up of the customary of Rothley and the early fourteenth century, there appears to have been a shift in the land holding patterns within the soke. Some tenants of the soke had accumulated or acquired tenements above and beyond their immediate needs, and were sub-letting them on terms which they determined for themselves. The value of the rents which were raised on the properties held by Robert

⁸⁰⁷ Farnham, ed., 'Gaddesby', p. 267. *Inquisition ad quod damnum*, File 167 (9), taken at Barsby 2 August, 17 Edward II, 1323.

⁸⁰⁸ Farnham, ed., 'Gaddesby', p. 267. *Inquisition ad quod damnum*, File 225 (17), taken at Melton Mowbray on Monday, before St Thomas the Apostle, 7 Edward III, 1333.

⁸⁰⁹ Farnham, 'Gaddesby', p. 266.

⁸¹⁰ In Domesday Gaddesby had 8 carucates of land. A survey of the land held by the Templars in Gaddesby in the mid-thirteenth century demonstrates that Gaddesby had 6 carucates of land under those overlords. By 1333 the Hospitallers had an unspecified amount of land, and the Folvilles held 2 carucates. This indicates that the Templars were granted land rights in part of Gaddesby, but not all of it.

⁸¹¹ *C.C.R., Edward II, 1318-1323* (London, 1971), p. 654.

of Gaddesby under the Hospitallers in 1333 were fifteen times what he paid his own overlords, making such an investment clearly worthwhile. The rents from his remaining properties were sufficient to offset the rents for the chantry lands which continued to be payable by him to Robert's overlords. Through this inquisition the king was able to ensure that the overlords themselves would still be able to meet their commitments to the crown.

Appendix C

Plates

Medieval Rothley, Leicestershire: manor, soke and parish

Plate 1: St Mary the Virgin and St John the Baptist, Rothley, Leicestershire



Plate 2: The Rothley cross-shaft, Rothley, Leicestershire



Plate 3: Church tower and footings, Rothley, Leicestershire



Plate 4: Norman font in the south chapel, and the nave and chancel looking east, Rothley church, Leicestershire



Plate 5: Rothley brook looking west from the bridge leading to the church in Ro



Plate 6: The chapel at Rothley Temple, now Rothley Court, Rothley, Leicestershire



Plate 7: Vernacular architecture, Church Street, Rothley, Leicestershire



**Plate 8: Vernacular architecture: Town Green (above) and Anthony Street (below)
Rothley, Leicestershire**



Plate 9: Vernacular architecture: Town Green, Rothley, Leicestershire



Plate 10: All Saints, Keyham, medieval chapel of Rothley, Leicestershire



Plate 11: St John the Baptist church, South Croxton, Leicestershire, which made payments to Rothley church



Plate 12: Main street in South Croxton, Leicestershire (above looking south west and north east); Court Close, South Croxton, Leicestershire (below)

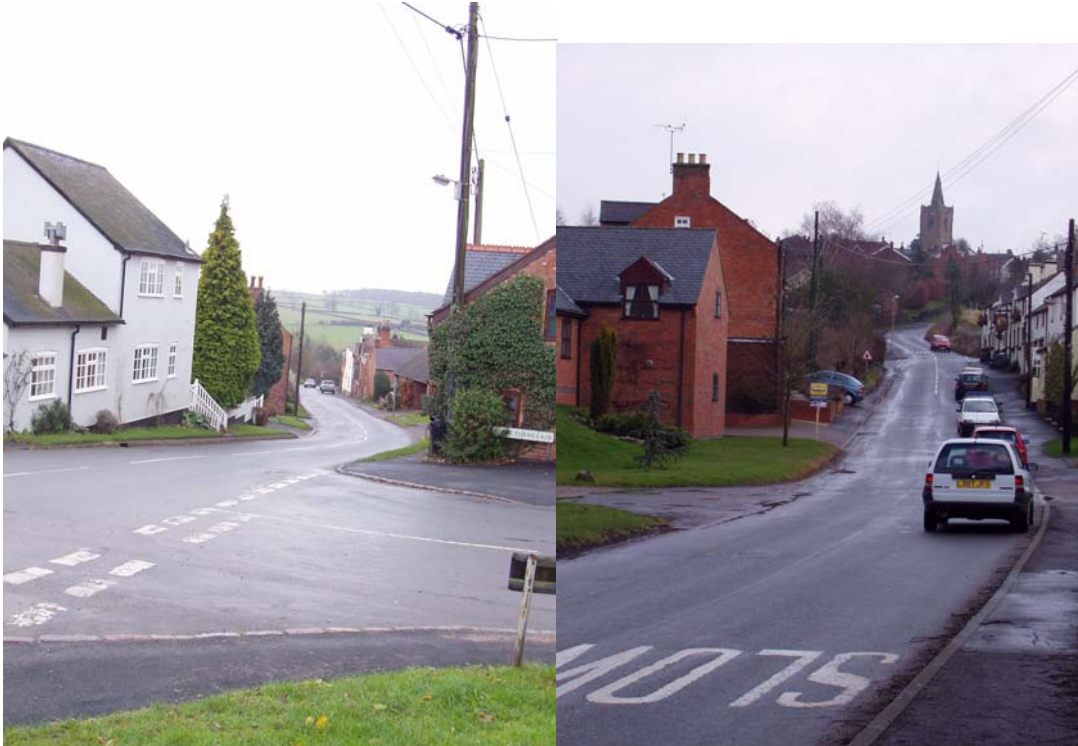


Plate 13: St Luke, Gaddesby, medieval chapel of Rothley, Leicestershire



Plate 14: St Mary, Chadwell, medieval chapel of Rothley, Leicestershire



Plate 15: St Michael, Wartnaby, medieval chapel of Rothley, Leicestershire



Plate 16: St John the Baptist, Grimston, medieval chapel of Rothley, Leicestershire



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