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Historic Research Synthesis

Field systems in the High Weald

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1. Introduction

The English rural landscape is dominated by enclosure – parcels of land enclosed with boundaries – undertaken to organise land use activities and tenure. Historic landscape research from Hoskins [*Making of the English Landscape*] to the present day has explored many aspects of enclosure. It is a subject area fraught with difficulties due to the complexity of the processes influencing the form and survival of enclosures over time. There is a substantial body of work – research papers and books - on field systems and enclosures in England. Researchers such as Henry Gray, Joan Thirsk and Alan Baker in the 1950s and 1960s with Trevor Rowley, Mick Aston, Christopher Taylor, and Oliver Rackham in the 1980s and 1990s have contributed significantly to our knowledge and understanding of the subject. This paper is not intended to cover this background. The aim of this synthesis is to understand what recent research has been undertaken on fields and boundaries, particularly in the South East, over the last 20 years.

Fields and enclosures are the result of how farming systems - crop rotations, methods of livestock rearing and production - have been organised from settlements, which in turn are shaped by feudal organisation, ownership and inheritance. The different character of settlement patterns is often determined by the nature of the field system operating in the locality. Patterns of scattered individual farmsteads are the consequence of clearing land from woods and waste; whereas centralised villages, as in the in the champion landscapes of the Midlands, developed where larger areas of open land were held in inter-mixed holdings. This has resulted in a very distinct form of open field system pattern over which later parliamentary enclosures were laid. In the ancient woodland landscapes of the south east and central western England where settlement was dispersed through individual farmsteads, fields were laid out around each farm. Large areas of commons were interspersed amongst the farms, along with the remnants of ancient woodland.

Many studies on field systems have concentrated on the open and common fields and the associated archaeology that are characteristic of the Midlands of England. This may in part be due to the large amount of archive resources available to researchers on pre-enclosure and parliamentary enclosure. In the South East the study of field systems has often concentrated on identifying open field systems, where it is argued that for Kentish systems the division of arable fields into strips was part of the partible inheritance between all male heirs (Bailey and Galbraith 1973, 73; Gray 1915; Baker, 1965). However, research into ancient and wooded landscape enclosures is more problematic as enclosure often took place informally and was unrecorded in the archives. In addition, the previous land use tended not to survive to the same extent as in formal enclosure. In the South East, understanding the farming processes which led to piecemeal and non-formal enclosures requires piecing together a wide range of evidence.

As M Bailey (2010, 153) states in the introduction to his paper on common rights in arable fields, the study of different types of field systems has concentrated on form and origin rather than function and farming systems. He highlights that Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) has based enclosure typology on form and pattern rather than farming processes and it was this concern that fuelled the critics of HLC, for example Williamson (2007). However, this is a rather sweeping statement as research has also looked at farming systems and functions together with tenurial

rights. However, the method used by HLC of mapping enclosures using visual interpretation from historic maps together with identifying patterns in relation to topography, soils etc. is well established and provides a degree of national consistency, (Turner, 2007). HLC also encapsulates farming systems and the result of tenurial changes by capturing the pattern of different field systems.

Baker reflects on the difficulty in understanding different field systems thus: - '*Spatial differences locally, regionally and nationally in the complex of factors – physical, socio-economic, cultural, technological – influencing field system, inevitably resulted in contrasting rural settlement patterns and farming systems. These spatial differences were compounded by temporal discontinuities (the history of British farming systems is not one of continuous and uninterrupted progression towards increasing sophistication, commercialisation and specialization) and diffusions (the process of diffusion of agricultural innovations meant that, in respect both of individual practices and of entire farming systems, there existed time-lags in agricultural development from one area to another)'* (Baker 1983, 154).

2. Research on field patterns – forms and origins

The seminal works of Alan Baker on Field systems began with his PhD research into field enclosures in Kent, (Baker 1963, 1965) and published in Baker and Butlin (1973). Baker recognised the distinct difference in field patterns and settlement across Kent (Baker 1965, 152): the larger regular fields of East Kent compared with the smaller irregular fields of the Kentish Weald. He showed through his research of medieval archives that the field patterns in Kent were already well established in the 14th century. Gavelkind or participle inheritance was having a significant effect on the fields of the manors in east Kent for example at Wye (ibid p159; Baker 1964).

The historic settlement pattern of Weald is characterised by dispersed small historic farmsteads and hamlets with later medieval villages often occupying points on key routeways along the ridge tops. This pattern was recorded at the national scale by Roberts and Wrathmell in their research into settlement pattern across England (Roberts and Wrathmell 2002, 161). These maps show the central core of the Weald with its ancient enclosures contrasting with the more modern enclosures of the coastal plains. The Weald is described by Roberts and Wrathmell as having woodland survivals with small areas of Townfield land and 'yokes', open common pastures with intakes, set within continuous larger areas of medieval and post/medieval irregular closes (ibid 2002, 159 fig 6.5b). The Coastal Plains of Sussex comprise larger areas of Townfield lands, with earthwork survivals from previous landuse, intermixed with large areas of parliamentary enclosures and post-medieval intakes, medieval irregular enclosures adjacent to woodland survivals, intermixed with open common pastures (downland). The North Kent Coast was an extension of the Thames area of enclosures and comprised large blocks of Townfield lands, Medieval irregular closes with woodland survivals and open common pastures with intakes (ibid 2002, 159 fig 6.5b).

In Kent and into parts of eastern Sussex, earlier colonisation is represented by the farms with ancient Jutish 'den' names. These originated as the summer lodges of the herdsmen which became the nucleus of new permanent farms, thus the seasonal sheilings developed into permanent abodes. Everitt states that fully established farms recorded in 12th or 13th century documents were not the

result of new creation but the ultimate stage in a lengthy process of historical evolution (Everitt 1985, 85).

Post-Conquest colonisation (1100-1300) is associated with the last big clearance from the Wealden woods and wooded 'chartlands' of the Greensand. ('Chart' is a Norwegian word meaning rough sterile stony ground and as a place-name it is common on the Greensand Hills such as Great and Little Chart, Brasted Chart (Everitt, 1987, 50)). The post-conquest colonisation gave rise to some very large Wealden parishes such as Biddenden and Hawkhurst in Kent, and Wadhurst and Mayfield in East Sussex. Independent freemen drove the process of clearing and enclosing land for new farms direct from the forest, probably either the younger sons from larger families or male heirs from the splitting of farms as part of gavelkind inheritance (Everitt 1985, 85). There was a rapid rise in the population following the Conquest when the inhabitants of Kent trebled. (ibid, 85). Those farms which have manorial and personal names suggest a later origin than those with names which have a tribal, landscape or pasturing origin.

In West Sussex, Anglo-Saxon fields, which extended from the South Downs north through the Low Weald and to the edge of the High Weald, are evidence of the manorial feudal system claiming territory i.e. clearing deep into the Weald for grazing pastures (Chatwin and Gardiner 2005). 'Planned' medieval fields in defined virgates (but not strip fields) have also been identified at Withyham near Ashdown Forest (Gardiner, 1985). An area of planned land division in the Archbishop of Canterbury's paramount manor of South Malling was identified through the court rolls as several named 'virgates' (areas of between 15-60 acres depending on soil conditions). These areas of land were laid out in parallel blocks, using natural features creating long linear enclosures, which were then subdivided into semi-regular fields intermixed with woodland (Gardiner 1985, 110). A similar situation was identified through the case study research for the Field Systems project, Earlye Farm in the sub-manor or borgh of Wadhurst , another South Malling virgate or 'yardland' - (See Report P(9 & 11 Case Study Research for the Field System Project; Redwood & Wilson 1958, 31-47). At Earligh near Frant semi-regular fields are organised along a small ridge and bounded by two streams. These farms are thought to be later examples of organised medieval settlement in the High Weald (Gardiner 1985, 112).

The late Wealden colonisation which is represented by historic farmsteads with extant medieval buildings are often associated with the small irregular fields bounded with thick shaws or rews (Sussex HLC and Revised Kent HLC for High Weald; Sussex and Kent Farmsteads Data). The late Peter Brandon has researched medieval enclosure in the Weald from its earliest times, in particular that of the commons and waste grounds (Brandon 1963, 1969). His research looked at the processes and forces for enclosures rather than the patterns and systems that evolved. This work is synthesised in his book on the Kent and Sussex Weald (Brandon 2003).

It was not until the 12th century that settlement became more centralised in villages and hamlets often growing up around a large den for a primary or paramount manor located outside of the Weald, for example the ridge top village of Mayfield, the manor and den of which belonged to the paramount manor of South Malling in the over-lordship of the Archbishop of Canterbury (Du Boulay 1966). These centres provided services for the scattered farmsteads, spiritual (church) and

commerce (fair and market ground) together with craftsmen (wheelwrights, farriers etc.). Fields around the settlements show periods of change reflected in boundary gain through subdivision of fields, and boundary loss through enlargement and rationalisation. Such changes are the result of changes in land use and/or in ownership as the settlement continuously accommodated people and services. See Brandon (2003, 86-87).

The enclosure of medieval and later deer parks once they have become dis-emparked gives rise to a distinctive field pattern, which also occurs elsewhere in England. The post-parkland field pattern can be identified by the outer boundary of the pale and by a regular pattern of enclosures divided by straight boundaries. There may be features of the former deer park still preserved within the later system, for example, ancient enclosed coppices, areas of wood pasture and built features such as lodges. Some deer parks may have been sub-divided while they were being used for keeping deer, for example, dividing woodland from 'lawns'. Such field patterns are illustrated in a paper on the two (East and West) deer parks at Wrotham in Kent. Seventeenth century maps show the regular enclosures after dis-emparkment in the late 16th century (Semple, 2008, 186-187). A similar pattern occurs at Glassenbury Park in Goudhurst in the High Weald (Revised Kent HLC for High Weald AONB). In rare cases maps of the enclosed deer park give an idea of the enclosure patterns, for example, Panthurst Park in Sevenoaks Weald in Kent belonging to Thomas Lambard (1630 KHLC U442 P02). One of the earliest enclosures of a medieval deer park by enclosure act in 1767, was that of The Broyle in the Low Weald of Sussex. The resulting landscape is one of regular fields set out along straight roads and all bounded by a curving park pale (Kay, 2000).

3. Research on field systems – function and farming systems

3.1 Summary Landscape History of the Weald

The Weald of Kent and Sussex is characterised by field patterns dominated by small fields with an irregular pattern and wide woody boundaries interspersed with irregular enclosed woods and scattered farmsteads. This is the generally accepted view and certainly when the Weald is viewed from the Greensand hills or the chalk Downs, this appears to be the case.

However, the mapping of the county of Sussex by historic landscape characterisation is revealing a more complex picture of the enclosure pattern, (Bannister 2010; 2013). A significant part of the Weald has been farmed since the early medieval period. With the addition of archaeological survey work, evidence is revealing prehistoric and Roman settlements where farming is likely to have taken place alongside management of trees and woods, industrial exploitation and transhumance (Brandon 2003, Chapter 6). Across the Weald there are areas where the field patterns are more regular, with a planned layout, suggesting perhaps enclosure from strip farming. It is likely that the soils and topography are more favourable to cultivation in these areas. It maybe that these are areas where settlement and farming go back to the early Saxon or even the Roman period. At that point the ground may have been more open, managed with the enclosures already in place, and some of their structure survives into later fields.

Archaeological evidence for landscape and social continuum between the different prehistoric and early historic periods is relatively rare. What happened to people when the Roman administration

collapsed? Did the rural population which, probably, comprised Romanised native families continue farming, manufacturing and exporting? Did the landscape radically alter with the growth of secondary woodland as farms and villas were abandoned? The recently completed 'Fields of Britannia' Project at Exeter University, collated evidence from the HERs and other research sources to see if Roman fields and settlement continued into the early medieval period and influenced enclosure patterns seen today.

The few sites recording pollen sequences showed that the landscape of the Weald comprised a mosaic of open ground, fields and woodland (not, as traditionally thought, heavily wooded throughout). There was a diversity of trees including oak, elm, beech, hornbeam and ash all managed and exploited for the iron industry (Rippon et al 2015, 133). This diversity of managed landscapes within the Weald core is reflected in the place-name evidence dating from the early medieval period. They reiterate the lack of evidence from Domesday due to the practice of transhumance and woodland pastures. Little evidence was found in the Weald for Romano-British fields orientated to medieval enclosures, except for a site at Cranleigh on the edge of the Weald, where such fields were orientated with enclosed medieval fields (Rippon et.al 2015, 166).

This suggests that, either there is no evidence because the Romans were not farming in the Weald, or that Romano-British sites have not yet been found in the Weald. The iron exploitation of the Eastern High Weald is well documented (Cleere and Crossley 1992). However, what is not recorded are the support services and infrastructure needed to maintain such an industry; the site at Bardown with its bath-house being the exception to this. Finding archaeological sites in the Weald is difficult for several reasons, the higher percentage of woodland and permanent grassland cover to arable making the recording of sites through field walking and aerial photography difficult, and the lack of major development with its associated developer-led archaeology (though this is now changing with the increase in new planned estates particularly in the Low Weald). Alternately, it has been argued that the lack of Roman settlement in the Weald may have been due to the control exerted by the Imperial estate (Classis Britannica) over the valuable Wealden iron industry (Rudling 1999, 24 in Leslie and Short eds).

Several Roman roads traverse the Weald from the coast towards London, such as Stane Street on the west side of the Weald, or the Greensand Way along the southern edge of the Weald. These would have attracted settlement at junctions and along waterways (Leslie and Short ed. 1999, 25). A recent conference on Roman roadside settlement raised questions regarding the absence of rural settlement in the Weald (Dr M. Allen, University of Reading "Rural Settlement of Roman Britain", Sussex Archaeological Society 9th April 2016). Evidence from this project suggests that later medieval fields respected Roman routeways and were aligned alongside them. Recent and on-going work by the Hastings and Area Archaeological Research Group [HAARG] in south east Sussex has revealed a number of Romano-British settlements alongside Roman roads. Survival of field boundaries associated with these settlements lie below the present ground surface and do not appear to be aligned with the present extant medieval closes, for example, at Footlands Farm, near Sedlescombe (Cornwell K & L 2005).

The Bexhill to Hastings Link Road has provided an opportunity for archaeologists to examine in great detail a transect across Combe valley in the southern edge of the High Weald / Low Weald landscape. The excavation and survey work has been undertaken by Oxford Archaeology and is now in the post-excavation analysis stage. The final reports are not expected for several years. However early results suggest that this is one of the most important excavations of its type for recording Prehistoric settlements, in the form of flint scatters and preserved wooden objects in wet ground conditions. It is likely that in the Roman period settlement (including field systems) occurred on the ridge tops and was closely associated with iron production. The archaeological evidence is also suggesting that following the collapse of the Roman Empire Saxon settlement continued to develop on the ridge tops and very close to present day farmsteads (Casper Johnson, East Sussex County Archaeologist pers.comm.).

Research undertaken in Cambridgeshire has examined the possible prehistoric to medieval continuum of field boundaries in the Bourn valley, (Oosthuizen, 2006 68-89). Using two methods of approach one map regression looking at boundary survival and the other examining the relationship of boundaries to each other, where shorter boundaries abut longer alignments. The results show parallel boundaries aligned at right angles to the stream within the valley, which are postulated to be prehistoric.

The Weald is a landscape of enclosure - of fields, of woodlands, of commons, of routeways, of parklands and of medieval forests and chases. The medieval woodland economy of Kent has been researched by Witney (Witney 1990). He describes how wood pastures were converted to enclosed woodland to serve the demand for wood around the coast of Kent and East Sussex, and how the heart of the Weald was the target of more colonisation in the 13th and 14th century. The small irregular fields carved out of woodland, which so dominate the Weald are generally thought to be Medieval in origin dating from the C12 & C13. (Harris 2004, 49-50). The more regular 'cohesive' assarts and the co-axial fields are probably much earlier and associated with the early medieval farmstead settlement of the dens. What the relationship is between these Saxon farms and Romano-British settlement is at present not so clear.

Evidence for the early medieval enclosure of the Weald is provided through archive research into holdings (including Anglo-Saxon Charters), place-names and settlement history, including the high degree of survival of late medieval domestic and agrarian buildings. The early medieval Weald was a pastoral system. It formed part of large Saxon agrarian estates controlled by estate centres or paramount manors outside the borders of the Weald along the Coastal Plains of Sussex and Kent, or key river valleys such as the Stour in Kent. The pattern created by transhumance survives to this day in the layout of roads, tracks and paths, along which are strung settlements and farmsteads with Saxon names derived from this process. Researchers such as Witney, Everitt, Brandon and Gardiner have described this process in some detail and their work forms the basis of continued research in the Weald.

Once the process of transhumance began to break up possibly under the apparent pressure from the demand by pioneering settlers for land; it is generally thought that early medieval enclosure was on a piece-meal basis as and when needed for settlement and farm expansion. This break-up may have

been driven by the 'expense' of driving stock to and from the Weald (was it better to breed and fatten in the Weald before driving back to the manor?) and/or the demand for more land and settlements by an expanding population. A contribution to the decline in transhumance system might have also been the overstocking by pigs etc. which in effect removed the seed source to enable the woodland to regenerate.

Research has also shown that early farms were planned through manorial control, where virgates or yardlands were laid out to take advantage of the soil variety and land use requirements (Gardiner 1985, 109-14). These farms were mixed with arable, permanent pasture and coppice woods depending on the soil types and topography. Brandon gives a description of the postulated clearing and settlement process (Brandon 2003, 84). A virgate was a variable in size and a unit for tenurial control and the collection of rents and service dues by the parent manor (Brandon, 2003, 86). Virgates also tended to occur where there are small groups of farms or hamlets suggesting a sharing of the workload of clearance and farming and over time the holdings became sub-divided by inheritance and land purchase, (Brandon, ibid). The effect on the field systems and patterns is not clearly understood and far more research is need in the Weald to establish this.

In addition to this, in some areas there appears to have been a re-organisation of the original field pattern, perhaps to improve farm efficiency in the post-medieval period (Brandon 2003, 111-128). The relaxation of the system of gavelkind may have helped drive this change. Gavelkind or participle inheritance meant that property was divided equally amongst male heirs. This was balanced in the Weald by the relative ease of buying and selling land as traditional manorial rights and customs were not so strict. However, according to Mingay, where mixtures of freehold and assart holdings, both practising primogeniture, occurred with copyhold it proved difficult to accumulate land into larger holdings. This was typical of the Weald (Mingay 1989, 295).

The influence of rural industry and, in particular the iron industry, on the farming and farmers was strong and before 1650 may have assisted in the agricultural poverty of the High Weald. Iron workers could command wages often triple that of farm workers resulting in a loss of the latter to the iron manufacturers and the abandonment of land leading to a decline in its value and quality. At the same time the numerous iron pits dug across farm land also affected the ability of farmers to graze and cultivate land as illustrated by a report from John Fuller of Rosehill in Brightling in 1740 (Mingay 1989, 310). What is interesting is the relationship of iron (and marl) pits to field boundaries. For example, at both Earlye near Frant and at Batemans in the Dudwell valley, pits are located in field corners or against field boundaries, suggesting that fields were enclosed to make best use of the subtle changes in geology and hence soil types. In stream valleys, where Wealden Clay and Ashdown Beds meet, field boundaries were aligned along the junction. Iron stone found in the Wadhurst Clay formation, and sandstone (used for building) in the Ashdown Beds were dug from pits where this material outcropped. The resulting pattern of boundaries and pits can be seen in many areas of the eastern Weald. The relationship of pits to boundaries does not suggest that it was the farmers themselves exploiting the ore to conserve the space within the fields. Many medieval ironworks were run and worked by French immigrants (Cleere and Crossley 1995, 119-121).

At Earlye there are numerous pits and quarries as indicated by the smaller rounded woods located in field corners [See figure 1 below]. To the north of the main stream is a line of small pits which lie along an outcrop of the Wadhurst Clay, where iron stone was extracted (and possibly marl as well). Whilst to the south, pits were dug into the Tunbridge Wells sandstone beds, most likely to provide stone as footings for farm buildings, or perhaps for the furnace site.

The location of pits and quarries at field corners and within areas of ancient wooded shaws, meant that farming could continue while extraction took place. The marl encountered when digging for the iron stone was spread on the fields as a soil improver. The location of these features so close to areas of ancient woodland and boundaries originating from woodland could well explain the high numbers of ancient woodland indicator species in these ancient 'industrial areas' now regenerated woodland [See Sansum 2015 in the Earlye case study report P11 of this project]

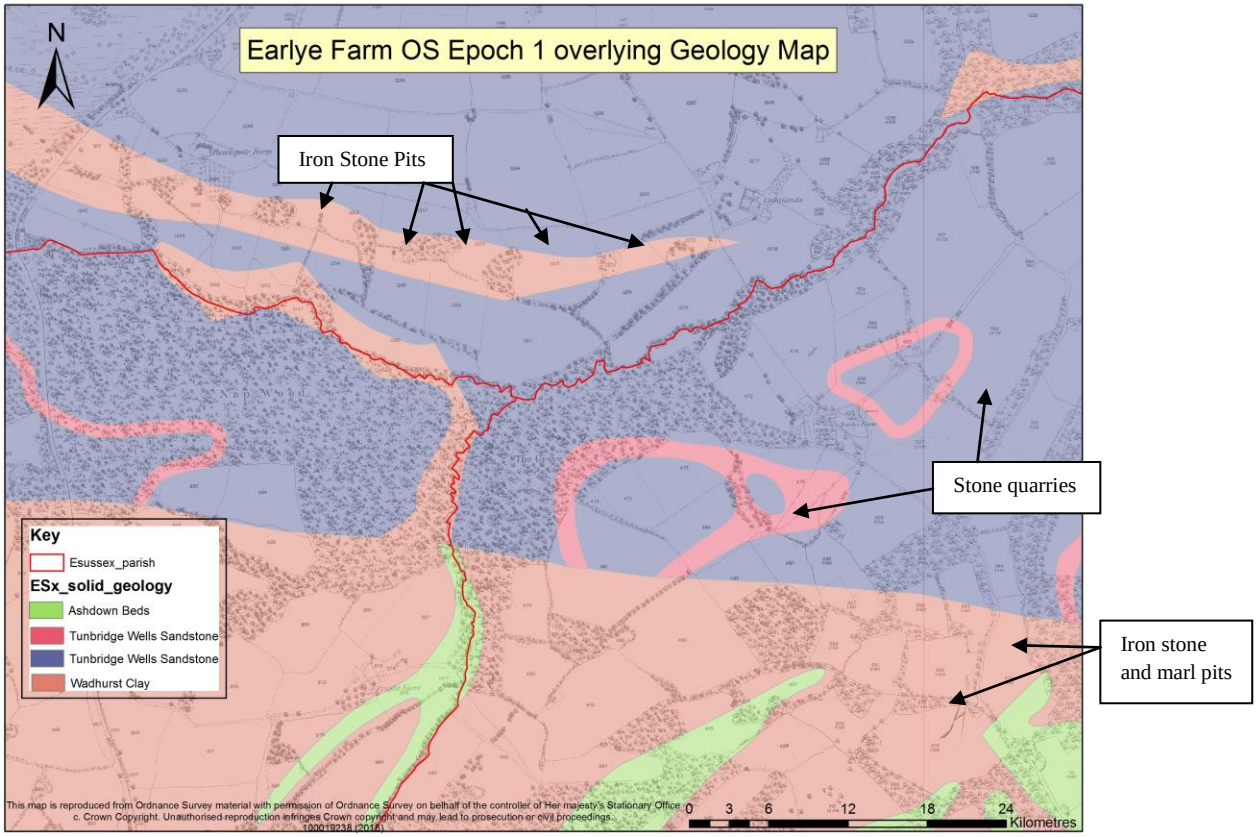

Figure 1. The relationship between the extraction pits at Earlye Farm, Frant and solid geology. Those dug for iron stone for the furnaces lie on the Wadhurst Clay whilst to the south are two possible sandstone quarries lying on Tunbridge Wells Sandstone.

In the late 17th and early 18th centuries many of the small Wealden commons and greens were gradually enclosed breaking down the remnants of the communing and grazing inherited from the Saxons. Where the rights did survive, pressure was intense and it was usually carried out by small holders and waste-edge cottagers surrounding the surviving commons such as at Ashdown Forest (Mingay 1989, 294). In addition, the medieval forests such as St Leonard's, Worth and Waterdown were gradually enclosed by wealthy land owners to plantation woods or to fields, creating a

fieldscape of large regular field layouts, with regular planned woods. This process began in the early post-medieval period and extended into the 19th century.

Further change and re-organisation took place within the modern period (19th and 20th century), with the establishment of orchards especially in the parish of Cranbrook (Bannister 2013). This led to the fields being further enlarged. When the orchards were grubbed in the mid-20th century these internal boundaries were again removed and the fields enlarged even further for arable production (corn, oil seed rape and beans).

The nature of the landform, geology and the resulting soils makes the Weald an extremely difficult place to farm – water-logged soils in winter and drought conditions in summer. Together with the wooded character of the Weald, carving out fields and managing them for corn production resulted in smaller fields than elsewhere in the region, (Brandon 2003, 53-68; Woolridge & Goldring 1960, 5-19).

Overviews of the agriculture and farming in the Weald are given in Edwards 2008a, Martin and Martin 2006, Chapter 2; Lake et al 2014).

3.2. Relationship of historic farmsteads with their fields

Research into understanding the context of historic farmsteads with the landscape in the Weald has been undertaken in the Rape of Hastings by Barbara and David Martin. The detailed recording of historic farmsteads, their form and function is set in context of the agricultural scene at the time of the use and re-use of the farm buildings (Martin & Martin 2006, Chapter 2).

The Weald is characterised by farmsteads comprising farm buildings set loosely around a courtyard (or several courtyards) and some strung along main droveways into the Weald (Lake et.al 2014; see also Edwards 2006, 2008a, 2008b). This loose courtyard and linear droveway farmsteads are strongly associated with the High Weald where keeping and fattening cattle together with the remnants of transhumance (the movement of stock to fattening areas) was still practised into the later medieval period. The livestock were over-wintered in yards, fed with preserved and cut fodder which, in the following spring, was spread as manure on to the adjacent fields from the yards and barns (Lake et al 2014 p120-121; Spray, 1981).

Within the High Weald there appears to be a link between the survival of historic farmsteads and intact field types, especially those with assart type fields. This is particularly apparent in the parish of Hawkhurst and the southern part of Cranbrook, and it suggests that the antiquity of the historic medieval character of the farmed landscape is well preserved in these areas. By contrast historic farmsteads which have been lost or under gone significant change appear to be linked with those fields which have also undergone change. This suggests that these fieldscapes retain considerable time-depth and that heritage assets are layered as palimpsests, with fragments of earlier land use surviving as key boundaries, earthworks and soil marks alongside altered and converted farmsteads or relict building platforms or below ground structures.

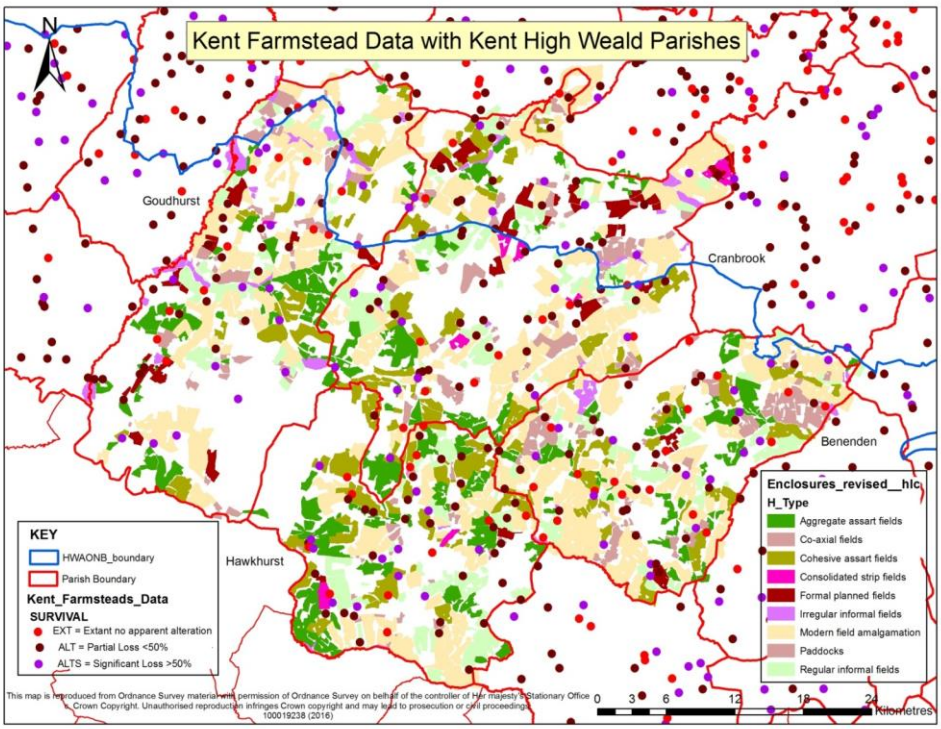

Figure 2 The survival of historic farmsteads overlying field character types from Revised Kent High Weald HLC (2014). [The HLC for the whole of Kent was undertaken in 1999-2000 - a broad-brush HLC which lacked the detail of later HLCs, such as Sussex. The High Weald straddles the county boundary and thus a revision of the Kent High Weald AONB parishes is currently in progress].

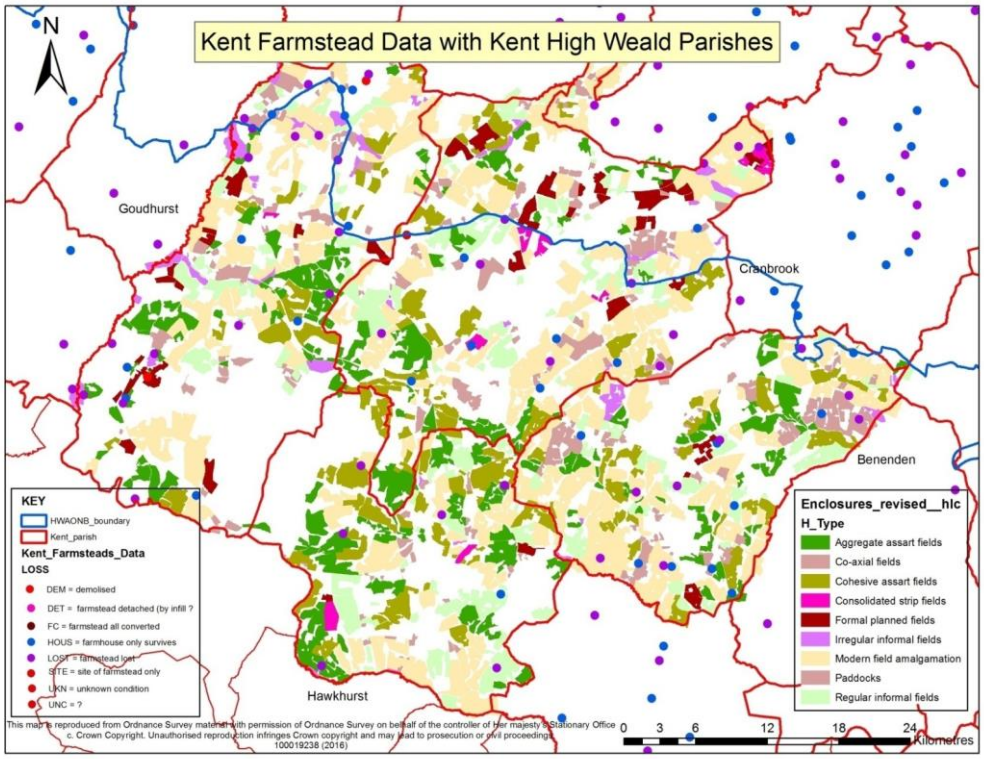

Figure 3 The loss of historic farmsteads overlying field character types from the revised Kent HLC for the High Weald (2014)

Overall medieval farms and farmsteads were smaller in the Weald than elsewhere in the South-east. Brandon cites farms of between 30 and 50 acres being typical (Brandon 2003, 66-7). In the 18th century an average figure of 40 acres is given for the High Weald (Mingay 1989, 292). Where holdings were under five acres they were managed by farm labourers and people with other employment such as butchery and coppice work or workers in the craft or iron industry etc. This fragmented ownership contributed to the survival of many small fields.

The creation of new farms in the 17th and 18th century was rare. Assarting had reached its zenith with only about 500 acres enclosed in small parcels from Ashdown Forest (Mingay 1989, 293). This reflects the gradual breakdown of the feudal control by paramount manors over their settlements in the Weald, through the sub-letting of custumal lands and the break-up of farms through gavelkind inheritance. There was no increase in farms sizes in the central High Weald between 1733 and 1786 (Mingay 1989, 293). Interestingly, many Wealden farms were not ring-fenced but had complimentary lands away from the farm. The 17th and 18th century was a period of active buying and selling and sub-letting.

Many such small farms lasted into the 19th century but were lost or became amalgamated with other farms in the agricultural depression following the Napoleonic wars (Sheppard 1992). Some small farms did establish on newly enclosed land from the remaining commons and wastes, such as the enclosure of the medieval forests on the northern edge of the Weald.

Little research was identified which looked at the history of individual farm holdings. Whether some Wealden farms were ring-fenced i.e. all their fields lay together as a unit and with out-lying land on the marshes or on the Downs, or whether farmsteads had fields scattered within a parish or beyond. The evidence from the Earlye case study for this project indicates that while there was a core of land attached to the farmstead, fields where bought and sold, or exchanged between different ownerships over time extending back into the medieval period [See P 9 & 11 (2016) of the Field systems in the High Weald Project]. The size of farms may have varied with the fortunes and prosperity of the owners. Research into the Land Utilisation and National Farm Surveys is being undertaken by Professor Brian Short which may throw some light on these questions (pers.comm).

3.3. Place-name research

Using place-names and field names for understanding field patterns is useful but can be fraught with difficulties.

Richardson summarises the approach to using field names in understanding landscape development (Richardson, 2002). Names are fickle - they can change over time through changes in the field boundaries, changes in ownership, and in land use. Often names with a topographical or land use origin can survive. Some field names can be given an *ante quem* date such as forge or furnace fields i.e. from probably 16th and 17th century, when the Wealden iron industry was reaching its height. Geographical names for lands and colonies overseas are dated to when these lands were first discovered. However, despite these draw backs place names are still an important source of evidence for how fields and settlement have evolved in the Weald.

A good example of place-names indicating origins is from the Manor of South Malling where those borghs located 'in the wood' consistently have names ending in hurst (hyrst - copse wood or wooded slope or enclosed woodland on a hill) and field (feld – enclosed from woodland) such as Wadhurst and Mayfield. Those 'without the wood' consistently end in the Saxon settlement names of 'ton' (farmstead) and 'ham' (hamm enclosure or meadow land usually by a riverside) such as Middleham and Norlington. (Du Boulay 1966, 125; Field, 1989, Mawer and Stenton 2001).

Place-name form and date may also provide clues as to the period of the field patterns. Place-names ending in 'den' meaning swine pasture for grazing, are possibly indicative of later settlement associated with woodland clearance (assarting). In these areas, the custom of grazing pigs and cattle in wood pasture and commons may have continued into the medieval period (Harris 2004, 24-31). The revised HLC for Cranbrook and Hawkhurst is consistent with this; settlement names ending in 'den' being more frequent in Hawkhurst, where assarts are also more common (Bannister 2013). Hawkhurst was a parish comprised of numerous swine-pastures belonging to the Saxon Royal Manor of Wye, which was granted to Battle Abbey after the Conquest (Hasted, 1797 VII p142-157; Witney 1976, 256-266).

Earlier place-names are those with suffixes of 'ingas' - ham, hurst and ley. 'Ingas' means 'the people of', for example, Angley, Branden, Farningham and Sissinghurst (Wallingberg 1931, 318-324). Roman remains have been found in this locality. At Angley the field system has been modified by post-medieval parkland. At Farningham the fields have been lost to a golf course, but at Sissinghurst the pattern of regular fields can still be seen despite some boundary loss in the modern period.

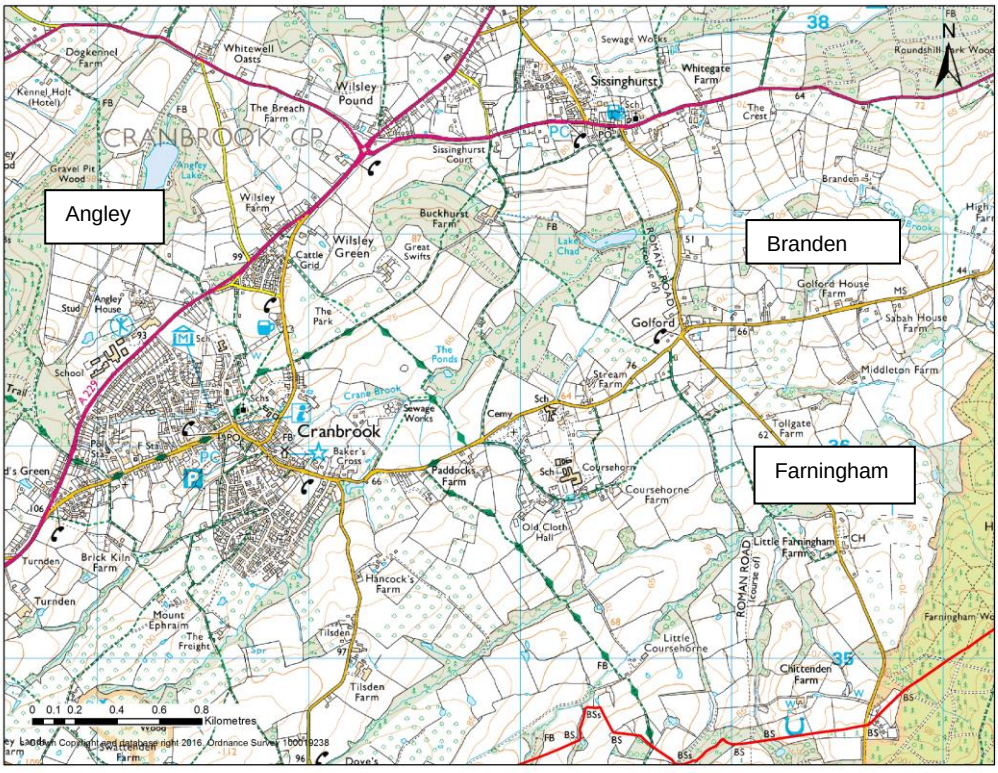

Figure 4 Map of Cranbrook showing earlier place names

Denshireing, or the practice of paring the turf, burning it and then spreading the ash was a frequent practice in the Weald in the 18th century. This was a practice also common in the South-west known as Devonshiring and was part of convertible husbandry of a mixed farming system. Marling was also a common practice in the early post-medieval period in the Weald. Evidence for these practices survives in many field names, such as Marlpit field, Marlings and Denshire Field as well as the water-filled marl pits in field corners. Denshire fields occur frequently in the vicinity of Ashdown Forest and the other former medieval forest areas, where turf paring and burning was an important part of improving soil fertility, (Mingay 1989, 301).

The parish tithe maps are a good source of field names and provide a base line from which names can be traced both back and forward in time.

4. Research on field systems – typology

The difference between field patterns in the champion landscapes of the Midlands and the ancient landscapes of the South east and, parts of south west are already well documented and well established in landscape history research (See Hoskins, 1956; Rackham 1986; Taylor 1975 and Hall 1982; Hall 2014).

Within Kent the difference in field patterns between the Weald and the north Kent plain had been observed as early as the 18th century by John Boys. He came from East Kent, and as a farmer and landowner concentrated much of his descriptions of Kentish Agriculture on the landscapes of the North Downs. He rather dismissed the Weald from an agricultural perspective (Boys 1795).

In Kent, the irregular fields of the Weald with shaws and rews compared with the straight edged regular fields of East Kent, were observed by Baker in his research into the origins of different field systems (1963, 224). Due to the labour needed with forest clearance and because the soils are heavy and infertile by comparison with other parts of Kent, the fields cut out of woodland were small and most of the land was probably enclosed from the very beginning (Chalklin 1960).

On a Wealden estate in Little Chart and Pluckley of 600 acres 11% of the land comprised shaws (Gully 1960). Brandon puts forward an interesting theory regarding shaws, which is often borne out by field work. He suggests that shaws were not the narrow strips of wood left after wood clearance and enclosure first put forward by William Marshall in 1798 (as these would not have been stock-proof), rather they were a field boundary (bank) planted to a hedge which was subsequently left unmanaged to grow mature and allowed to spread into the field; thence it was brought into woodland management as underwood coppice when the price of the crops dropped (Brandon 2003, 67-8). The bank and ditch or lynchet of the original hedge lay within or on one edge of the shaw. He suggests that shaws should be seen not as static landscape features but ones that ebbed and flowed depending on agriculture prices and the demand for underwood.

Historic Landscape Characterisation has developed a field system typology drawing on past work and looking at the field patterns through historic map evidence. Across England counties produced their own typology based on the historic enclosure processes. The descriptions and origins of different field system types for the various county HLCs varies across the country. As expected each typology

relates to the history of enclosure within each county. Ancient enclosures and new or planned enclosures being the main division across the country. (See for example Turner 2007, Bannister 2010). The county HLC typologies have now been revised into a national thesaurus as a precursor to a national HLC map drawing together all the different HLC types (Historic England 2015).

The tapestry of different fields systems is far more intimate and intermixed in the South east, and particularly in particular the Wealden area, than the open 'champion' landscapes such as the Midland Plain. Despite the critics of HLC, the HLCs for Kent, Surrey and Sussex do record the complexity of observed field patterns across the landscape and the HLC clearly highlights the areas of assarting in the Weald, the regular fields of the uplands, South Downs, and the heathlands and enclosed Forests. [See P5 of the Field Systems in the High Weald Project].

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