

The First Fields in an Oxfordshire Parish

By ERNEST A. POCOCK

AT the time of Domesday, Clanfield in Oxfordshire was a very old and fully developed community. Long before the Saxon farmers came on the scene Iron Age farmers had a centre at Bampton, the neighbouring town two miles to the east, and sometimes in dry summers hut circles can still be discerned on the gravels. That Clanfield was among the early sites settled by the Saxons is suggested by the discovery of early Saxon pottery in the parish—in a section dug across ditches in Grants Hay, and in Busbies Close, Pound Lane. But how did the Saxons first farm the land, and where did they begin to open up the arable? These are practical questions that are a challenge to anyone, especially to a farmer like myself, knowing my own village and interested in its history. In this work a farmer stands in a unique position. He can read the work of other men and privately view his own land every day without any special effort. Inevitably, as he “gets his eye in,” things he took for granted take on a meaning. What at one time he took for a natural feature on these early-settled gravels can be seen to be man-made. Every bump in the field has a meaning, every bend in the road an explanation. Moreover, the experience he gains from his own land can be carried with him and tested out on other farms, wherever business or pleasure takes him.

For a long time I had accepted as natural the many old balks that appear in our modern arable fields. They seemed to have no rhyme or reason. They began anywhere, sometimes in the middle of fields, sometimes towards the edge, they went in any direction, changed course, and came to an end with no purpose at all. It was not until Mr David Sturdy, then at the Ashmolean Museum, asked me one day why fields seemed to rise when they approached a hedge that the reason for these became clear. The rise on a headland occurs simply because of the accumulation over the years of dirt cleaned off the plough. In the same way, dirt from the boot-scraper at the back-door of the farmhouse piles up until the day comes when it has to be carted away in a barrow. Manorial bylaws may have required men to throw dirt back on the land,¹ but who would do it thoroughly? In short, the balks in the middle of my fields were the headland boundaries of old furlongs, dating from before the enclosure of 1839. One other contribution to this problem came

¹ C. S. and C. S. Orwin, *The Open Fields*, p. 140.

from an old local farmer, now dead, who alleged that one of these balks or headlands in Clanfield was a road—an old Roman road. His dating of the road was wide of the mark, but the fact that it had once been a road was confirmed by later investigation.

Realizing the implications of these thoughts, I went over my own land, and saw that every balk had its parallel some eight to ten chains away. So in the summer of 1963, taking a copy of the enclosure map of the whole village, and with the help of my family, various members of the Clanfield History Society, and later Mrs B. Radford of Oxford who was also interested in the problem, and having obtained permission from other farmers, I proceeded to map out all the balks. Moreover, feeling that the size of the balks must have some relation to their age I also took cross-sections. I did not attempt to mark in the strips within the furlongs as these were so levelled out that only careful observation when the corn came through the ground would have shown them, and such work would have taken many years to accomplish. Nor was it possible to make much sense of the curious stepped ending that frequently occurs at the end of furlongs. Nevertheless, in general the picture emerged clearly. In one or two places where the shape of the furlong was a little complicated, I had difficulty in completing the outline from the ground, but a careful study of the air photographs of Clanfield supplied the answers. Luckily, I was also able to compare one air photograph of an adjoining part of Bampton parish with a pre-enclosure map of the Shrewsbury estate there,¹ and saw that the balks and headlands coincided on both map and photograph.

The next problem was to name the furlongs—a difficult and unfinished task: difficult because the axis of Barrow Field is south-east to north-west and yet all strip references are to north, south, east, or west; unfinished because the sources are few and scattered, and fresh information is continually coming to light. My main sources were as follows: the notices about the Act of Enclosure in *Jackson's Journal*, the Oxfordshire paper of that period, which specified the names of the furlongs over which the newly laid-out roads would pass; and a single pre-enclosure map which I found amongst the records of Bampton Church.² This map concerned a small estate in Clanfield, attached to St Leonard's Chapel. The chapel at the south end of the village is now cottages but it had once belonged to Bampton Church, and in 1818 a map was drawn and a schedule compiled of some strips which it owned in our parish. The map was not very accurate but it did locate and

¹ B.M. Map Room, PS4/3577, Maps C7e16(3).

² Exeter Cathedral Library MSS, D. & C. Exeter, Ch Comm. 74313, Survey of Bampton, 1818.

name the furlongs in which the strips lay. Moreover, the names of some furlongs, e.g. Badbury, are retained in modern field names, while a few have fallen out of use but are remembered by the older folk. Finally some came to light in deeds, wills, inventories, etc. Thus I was able to build up a map of the village before its enclosure, and in many places to enter up the old furlong names, or, at least, the names by which they were known just before the enclosure, for furlong names changed just as modern field names change (see Fig. I). Having slept on this work for some time now, I have tried to inter-

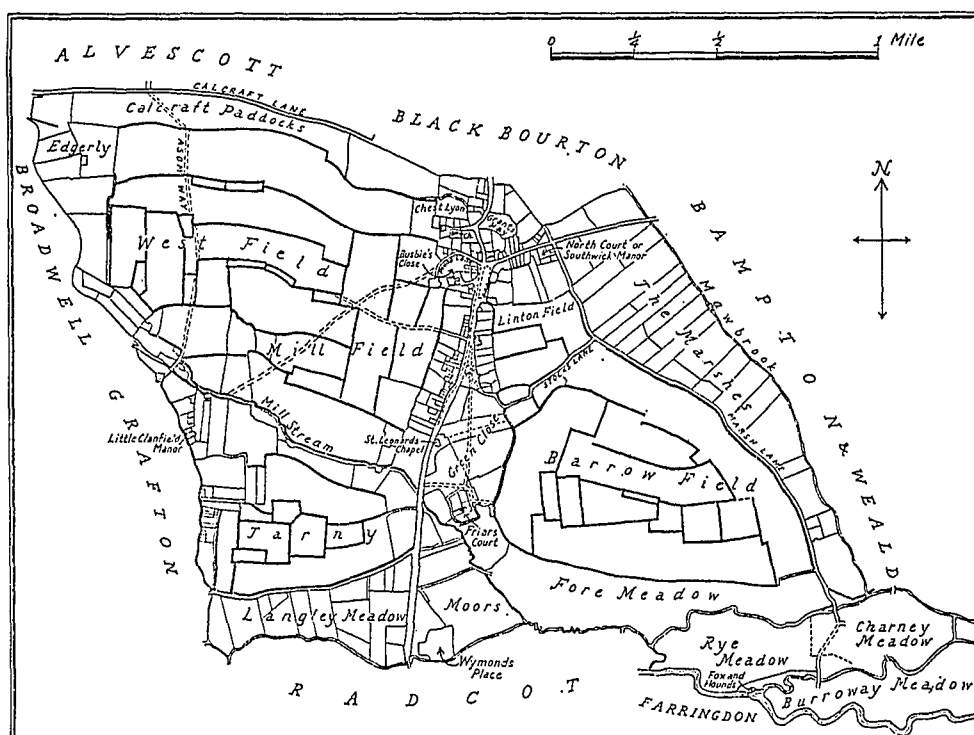


FIG. I

CLANFIELD PARISH

Note. The thick black lines indicate balks, the dotted lines old paths.

pret my discoveries and to understand how the village fields were opened up.

Clanfield lies in the south-west corner of Oxfordshire, near the counties of Berkshire and Gloucestershire. The main houses of the village lie about a mile north of the river Thames or Isis, but the south-east portion of the parish reaches to the river. The soil in this area is chiefly loam over gravel. Here and there a patch of clay creates a drainage problem, but it is never more than an acre at most, and generally much less. The Upper Thames

valley seems flat to the motorist passing through it, but it is not really so, and in Clanfield the slight undulations determined the use of the land. The area had a high-water table, and until recently the risk of floods, even summer ones, was considerable. The only land suitable for ploughing, therefore, lay on the higher well-drained ground. This consisted of two islands in the centre of the parish separated by the main street. The low marshy valleys surrounding these islands were suitable only for meadow and pasture.

The island of arable on the western side of Clanfield is divided in two by the Broadwell or Mill Stream, travelling across it from north-west to south-east. Originally the northern half was called West Field and the southern half, Tarney, i.e. Thorn Island. By the seventeenth century, however, West Field had been split into two and the southern half was called Mill Field. The name Mill Field derives either from a water mill on the west, or a windmill in the east end of Mill Field, which was in my farm buildings. The eastern island of arable, running north-west to south-east was, and still is, called Barrow Field, and lies between the old village and the meadows running to the river. Its northern end, lying nearest the village, is a later addition and came to be known as Linton Field (the first reference I have found to this field is dated 1648);¹ possibly it was set aside for flax growing. The reason for the name Barrow Field is not entirely clear. It has generally been assumed that the field contained a barrow, and indeed the first Ordnance Survey map of 1828-30 marks a barrow in the centre of the field. Today, however, nothing of this can be seen on the ground, nor can anything be seen in the air photographs. The earliest record of the field is in the Osney Deeds of the mid-thirteenth century, where the field is referred to as Burwe.² South of Barrow Field is a meadow still called Burroway Meadow in which a burgh stands beside a lost ford which crossed the Thames. A prehistoric way passes over Barrow Field from Black Bourton Barrow through Burroway ford, following the course of an old Hundred boundary, to the moated enclosure in Stanford Park. Thus it would appear that it took its name originally from the Burgh Way, but whilst the meadow land came to be known as Burroway Meadows, the arable field became Barrow Field.³

The earliest references to the fields and furlong names of Clanfield are to be found in three Osney deeds of c. 1340.⁴ The first is a gift made by a certain

¹ Bodleian Library, Clanfield Deeds.

² H. E. Salter, ed., *Cartulary of Osney Abbey*, IV, Oxford Hist. Soc., xcvi, 1937, Osney deed no. 482, pp. 507-8.

³ I discuss these ancient landmarks more fully in an article awaiting publication on prehistoric cultures in southern England.

⁴ Salter, *op. cit.*, deeds nos. 484, 482, and 483a.

Nicholas Nysternon of 5 acres in one field and 5 acres in the other, plus small portions of meadow. The last two are gifts by Peter Bokerel of 17 acres of arable and 4 acres of meadow. Although these deeds refer to two fields, it is clear that they are not describing two fields in the geographical sense, but a two-course rotation. One field, West Field, is the one that later became divided into West Field and Mill Field, whilst all the rest, including Tarny, are referred to as East Field, though by no stretch of the imagination can they all be said to lie in the east. From this it would appear that West Field was looked upon as the principal field and was the first to be brought under the plough. Indeed, some memory of this fact may have lingered on to explain why West Field was still referred to as Clanfield Field as late as the nineteenth century: it is so marked on the Davis map of Oxfordshire (1797) and on the Ordnance Survey map of 1828-30.

From our earliest records, namely, Domesday Book, the Hundred Rolls, the Osney Deeds, manorial records, and O.S. maps, we are able to see where the earliest settlements lay in the parish. These were four in number: one at Grants Hay, in what was later called Southwick Manor; another by Friars Court Farm; another at Little Clanfield; and another in association with Barrow Field. The present street form of Clanfield is modern. Near the church is a central green, now a private field of about 4 acres called Grants Hay. Around it, still clearly to be seen on the eastern portion, are small paddocks of about 1 to 2 acres. Excavations in 1964 showed that this was the site of an early Saxon settlement, and that the central field was probably an Iron Age burgh. The darkness of its soil showed that it had been greatly used for yarding cattle for security at night.

Friars Court, the second centre of settlement in Clanfield, is now a moated farmhouse with out-buildings. For many years it was owned by the Knights Hospitallers, and the Hundred Rolls and many surviving court rolls tell of a community living there. Around the house a Roman coin and Romano-British pottery have been found, suggesting that a British farmer may have lived there during the Roman period. That it is an ancient and prehistoric site is suggested by the fact that it is on the ancient straight way from Black Bourton Barrow leading to Radcot Bridge, Faringdon Church, and thence to Furze Hill, near Coxwell. Similar but uninhabited moated sites are to be found in Berkshire at Stanford park, and near Wadley, Faringdon, and at Radcot, Oxon.

Little Clanfield, the third site, with its manor house, seems by elimination to be the old Manor of Putts, which in the Hundred Rolls belonged to the Abbot of Cirencester. It would appear that this settlement was not confined originally to the land of modern Little Clanfield but had land all along the

western edge of West Field, and that it may have included Edgerly farm and Pittslands, an area in neighbouring Alvescot parish. Certainly, our parish had ancient connections with Alvescot. Finally, it is interesting to note that in this part of the parish, i.e. along its western edge we find a prehistoric site called Badbury, an enclosure of some 2-3 acres, standing at the side of the Asom Way. This is a prehistoric north to south way, affording a river crossing, and now partly lost, but its name was still in use at the time of the enclosure award.¹

The fourth settlement is connected with Barrow Field and Burroway, which were at one time separate from Clanfield, being, as the Osney deeds say, of the "ancient demesne of Bampton." In 1818 the St Leonard's extent still referred to Barrow Field as "Wield" (Weald), which was the part of Bampton parish next to it. In the Hundred Rolls De Valance had an estate with six freemen and twelve cottars in this area. Stocks Close and Stocks Lane on its north side reveal the site of one of the chief tenants, but there is no sign here of other habitations. For these we have to look to Burroway meadow, where the last of a group of houses, the *Fox and Hounds* public house, serving the bargees on the river, survived until about a hundred years ago when it was accidentally burned down. Again, as we have previously noted at the other three settlement sites, a prehistoric burgh of about 3-4 acres lay in the centre.

In my search for the origin of Clanfield and the beginning of its ploughlands, two things stand out: all the earliest settlements are on pre-Saxon sites; yet when I look at the furlong map of Clanfield I can see nothing which clearly says that the people from any of these centres began to open up the arable fields that I have mapped. Indeed, all the facts seem to indicate otherwise. If, as I have suggested, the size of the balks bears some relation to their age, then clearly the oldest lie in West Field, in its northern sector. If we look for the oldest furlong names, they are to be found there also. If greater age is implied by a balk that winds with careless indifference, then these too lie in West Field (with perhaps one exception in Barrow Field). In the earliest deeds of Osney abbey, we note yet again the importance of West Field. If we look at our earliest maps, we see West Field alternatively named Clanfield Field.²

When we look at Westfield as a whole (i.e. West Field and Mill Field) (Fig. II) we are aware of a group of furlongs possessing all the above-mentioned characteristics of great age. They form a triangle with its base on the north side consisting of Longlands (A, B, and C), and its apex at Great

¹ Part of the Asom Way is shown as furlongs M, N, and O on Fig. II. See also below, p. 93.

² See p. 89 above.

Hillingworth (U) and Green Benny (X). The size of the balks is one clue to the order in which the fields were cleared, but very conveniently the names of some of these furlongs also tell us the direction from which they were opened out. Over Redlands furlong (I) must obviously lie beyond, and have been cleared after, Redlands (D) (=Rid or cleared lands). Redlands lies next to Longlands (A, B, and C) and must be the furlong, rid or cleared after the latter one. So we reach the conclusion that in Longlands, a furlong nearly three-quarters of a mile wide (or long), with the largest balks of all, we have the place where our Westfield began. But where did the people live who opened out this first furlong? None of the settlements in Clanfield, already mentioned, lies near it. Yet as a farmer I expect men to plough their first lands at the back-door. Perhaps it was the work of a now vanished settlement? On the north side of Longlands furlong, between it and Calcroft Lane, are a line of paddocks. From air photographs we can see that many of these were split up into smaller paddocks stretching from the lane to Longlands. Although there is as yet no archaeological evidence to prove it, I suspect that here within these small paddocks may have stood the huts of the settlers who first opened out Longlands. An old man, now eighty years old, who has worked all his life on the farm to which these paddocks belong, has pointed out that the soil here is darker than on the adjoining land. A similar distinction has already been noted in Grants Hay. Moreover, the fact that a lane runs in front of these paddocks along the line of a soil change, and that a right of way existed up to enclosure times behind them, on Longlands headland, sets these paddocks apart from the surrounding land. Moreover, these paddocks have always remained outside the common fields, when the nature of the soil suggests that they should have been incorporated with them. The name of the lane that passes by these crofts is significant. On the map it is Calcroft Lane (Cattle-Croft), but I always knew it as Cowcroft. Lanes in Clanfield are known not by their ultimate destination, but by the places they pass. This, of course, is obvious: e.g. Marsh Lane goes by the marshes; Langley Lane goes by the long meadow. Thus the meaning of the name of this lane is 'the lane that goes by the cattle or cow crofts or paddocks'. These crofts are tentatively put forward as the remains of former house sites.

WEST FIELD

In looking again at the furlong pattern of West Field, it seems that three groups of people were at work before the field was completely opened out. At an early stage, the settlers (whom we will call Group 1) working out from Longlands met restriction and competition on the east and west as other settlers (whom we will call Groups 2 and 3) began to open out furlongs from

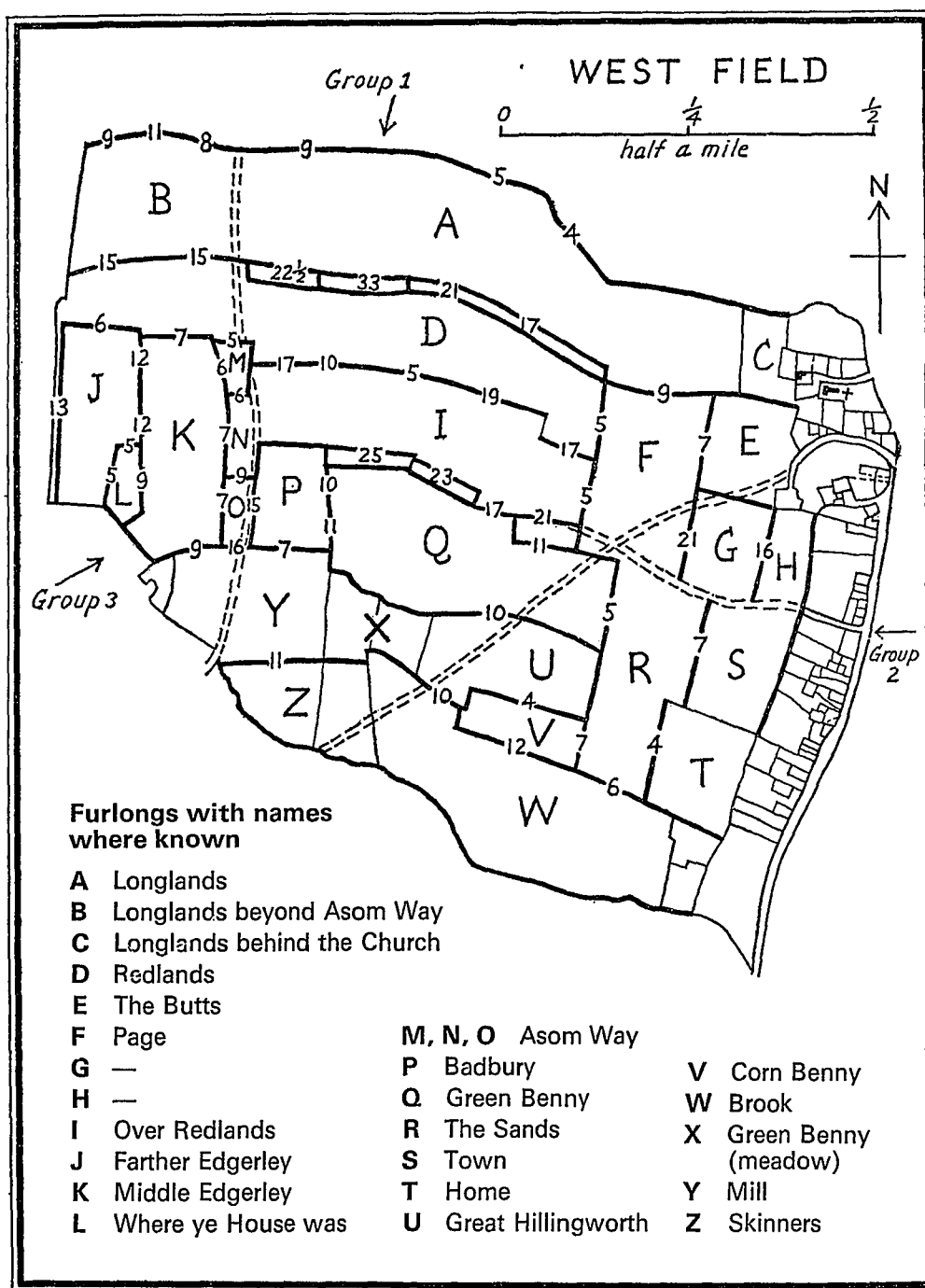


FIG. II

Note. The numbers inserted in the balks in Figures II-V represent the measurement in square yards of their cross-sections. This, of course, is only a rough guide since the balks are not uniform throughout their length.

other sides. Soon after Longlands (A, B, and C) was marked out, Group 2 opened out a block of furlongs, including Butts (E), Page (F), and Hand G, so that when Group 1 marked out Redlands (D) and later Over Redlands (I) they came up against a pre-existing boundary on the east side. Meanwhile on the west Group 3 had joined in. Although they did not mark out their furlongs, Farther Edgerley (J) and Middle Edgerley (K), tight up against Longlands, yet they were there before Redlands (D) was opened out, to restrict it and shorten its strips. When Group 1 marked out Redlands (D) they incorporated in it the odd furlong at its eastern end against Page (F). This may have belonged to Group 2 but the run of its lands suggests it belonged to Group 1 and perhaps was struck out to contain Group 2 or to balance up with Longlands. The west end of Over Redlands (I) is of interest. Furlongs M, N, and O are later additions and show not only the course of the ancient valley crossing, the Asom Way, but also the width allowed for it at that period. In other words, it was in use at the time of the field clearance. Its course across Redlands (D) and Longlands (A) is hidden by the fact that road and strips ran in the same direction. In later times, perhaps because of land shortage, M, N, and O were ploughed, very much narrowing this way in consequence. The culmination of Group 1's work is to be seen in Great Hillingworth (U). On the east there was already a barrier of furlongs: the furlong under the houses, Town (S), Home (T), and Sands (R) furlongs, which Group 2 had opened out. On the west the barrier furlong was Badbury (P), its name deriving from the ancient enclosure partially visible in air photographs under Middle Edgerley (K). L is also a curious furlong: an old deed refers to it as "where ye house was." Mill (Y) and Skinners (Z) furlongs seem to be connected with Group 3. Brook Furlong (W) is also associated with Group 3, because it was opened out from that end. The headland at the west end is much greater than at the east end where it finishes up as odd gores. Corn Benny (V) in the centre is a bobby furlong¹ with two strips of different lengths. As we shall note later, because of the direction of its strips, it would seem to have been cleared by Group 2. Green Benny (X) was an island of private land in the midst of the common fields. It was a boggy island, the Green being a reference to the fact that the grass never dried off there even in a hot summer. On laying drains through it a few years ago I found the strata were continually changing every three or four feet, running the gamut of all soils from sand to clay. Frequently we dug through mighty oak stumps, and it was here we found a perfect unpolished stone axe head about two feet down.

In looking at West Field two further points may be added. The axis of the

¹ A bobby is an odd, small piece of land.

furlongs, with the exception of Butts (E), all run in the same direction from the point from which it is suggested they were opened up. All Group 1's furlongs run from north to south, Group 2's from east to west, and all Group 3's from the outside of the field inwards. Group 1 had the most developed road system. In between Longlands (A) and Redlands (D) ran a road between a double headland, as also between Over Redlands (I) and Green Benny Furlong (Q). The latter road was used by the village to reach Asom Way and Little Clanfield Mill, but was partly realigned at the enclosure.

Finally, I suggest that the name of the settlement along Calcraft Lane may be identified with that of Benny, a place returned in the Hundred Rolls as having six serfs and thirteen cottars, and belonging to Chestlyon manor.¹ Today this site is still owned by Chestlyon Farm. For a long time I had looked to Green Benny for the location of this settlement, but it was obvious that there was no room here for the houses of serfs and cottars. Green Benny is only some 6 acres in size, and tight all around it lay the common field. However, since Green Benny Field appears to mark the end of the territory cleared by Group 1, it may well be that the name of this group was Benny and that Benna and his followers were the men who began the first furlongs in Clanfield.

TARNY FIELD

Tarny Field (Fig. III) is the south part of Clanfield's western island of arable land. Its name means thorn island, and in the Osney deeds of 1241 one furlong was called Briar Furlong. But it must have been farmed by Iron Age farmers for in Top of Tanny Furlong (K) are two slightly irregular circles and many storage pits. Moreover, north of these, in furlong E are boundary marks that have nothing to do with furlongs or modern divisions. In the east end of this furlong is a circular hut ditch of about 15 ft diameter with a rectangular yard, some 20 ft long, attached to it. This suggests that Tarny must have reverted to scrub and thorn after being cleared and farmed in the Iron Age, and at the subsequent Saxon clearance took second place to West Field from which Clanfield took its name of "cleared land".

The build-up of dirt on the Tarny headlands agrees with this as it is not so large as in West Field. The greatest double headlands here are 1 ft 7 in. by 36 yds, and 1 ft 9 in. by 30 yds wide as compared with the headlands between Longlands and Redlands in West Field measuring 2 ft 2 in. by 60 yds. Two

¹ Chestlyon manor house is sited at the end of the Calcraft Lane paddocks. It is near Grants Hay, but it is not associated with it tenurially. It should be noted that the old way from Bampton came to Southwick manor, with which Grants Hay is associated, thus indicating that Southwick was the older settlement. In the Hundred Rolls, however, Chestlyon was the principal manor.

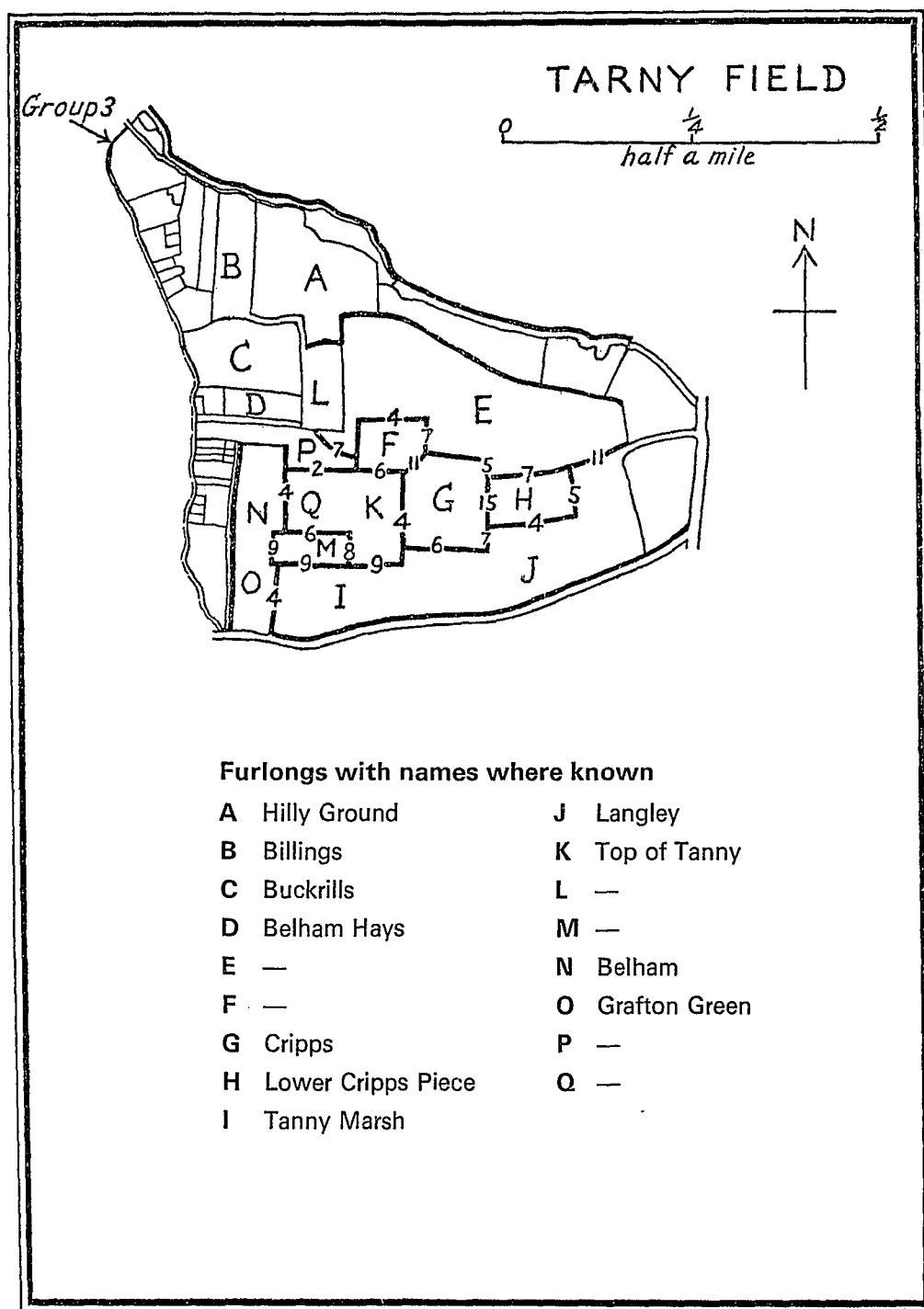


FIG. III

things are noticeable about Tarny: the amount of land held in severalty in the north-west corner near the manor house, namely, Hilly Ground (A), Billings (B), and Buckrills (C); and the fact that the field was clearly opened out from the central and highest point. Obviously when it was opened out, and for much of its life, a larger community existed in its north-west corner. This district, including Grafton, has in recent times for various reasons gradually lost its population. The opening out of the furlongs would appear to have taken place in the following order: furlong L came first, followed by P and Q; then F and M were added, followed by Top of Tanny (K), Cripps (G), and Lower Cripps (H). Later drainage, and the obvious need for more land, caused E, Grafton Green (O), Belham (N), Tanny Marsh (I), and Langley Furlong (J) to be opened out in stages. The effect of drainage is revealed in the names of these last two furlongs. Tanny Marsh tells us that when it was opened out and named, the Langley was still a marsh called Tanny Marsh, but when Langley Furlong was opened out, the marsh had been drained sufficiently to make it a meadow, i.e. the Long Lea, so its name had been changed from Tanny Marsh to Langley. This order in the opening out of the furlongs is confirmed by the headland measurements and shows that the people who cleared it must have worked from the western sides, presumably from the settlement site of Group 3.

BARROW FIELD

Barrow Field (Fig. IV), as we have already noted, was first called Burwe Field, meaning 'the way past the burgh'. It has associations with settlements below it, by the river at Burroway, and on the north and north-west at Stocks Lane and Green Close. The greatest double balks in this field vary from 2 ft 2 in. by 40 yds to 2 ft 2 in. by 45 yds. These are not so large as those in West Field but larger than Tarny's and they are found in the centre of the field. A large single headland, 1 ft 4 in. by 35 yds is also found in the east corner at the west end of Marsh (H), and in Pease Land (Z) is another, 1 ft 7 in. by 35 yds.

One prominent feature of this field is the continuous line of furlongs opened out alongside the marshes on the north-east. The modern lane runs along the headland of these furlongs and, like so many lanes in our area, lies on the line of soil change. The oldest furlong here is Marsh (H); as other furlongs were made they adjusted their line to take into account the bend in the boundary between two kinds of soil. E is a rather curiously shaped furlong, the west end of which was finally determined by a study of the air photographs. Somewhere in this region is a furlong called 'Louse'. It is an interesting fact that today when I winter cattle in the modern large field that

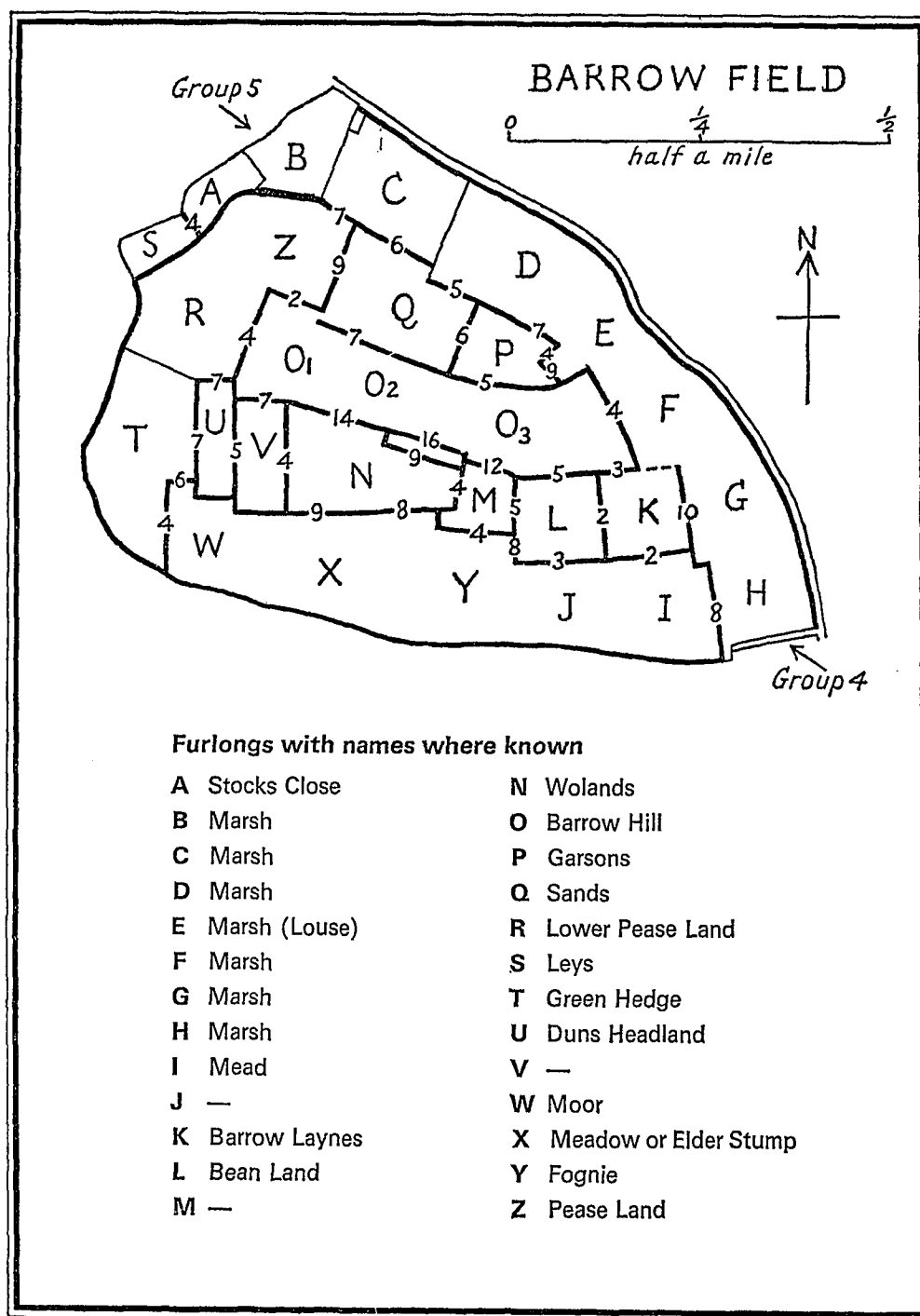


FIG. IV

covers this area, their necks become covered with lice. This row of furlongs carries on through D and C, and ends in B. This latter furlong was already in severalty at the enclosure, but was really a collection of gores, plus one or two strips that had been privately enclosed at some time—an excellent illustration of the way consolidation took place most easily at the ends of fields. The fact that the gores are in B, and that the largest headland is at the other end, in H, must surely mean they were first opened up by people working from the south-east corner, i.e. by the Burroway community, Group 4.

Meanwhile a series of fields had been cleared from Stocks Lane end by Group 5. The headland measurements suggest that Pease Land (Z) came first, then O₁ and O₂ up to the east end of Wolands (N), then Duns Headland (U), followed by V and N. From the east a group of four furlongs was opened out by Group 4. Barrow Laynes (K), Bean Land (L), and J and I, of which the first two are on clay soil. Furlong O₃, a later continuation of O₂, shows how the early settlers taking into account existing boundaries to the east at F, south at L and K, and following the headland of O₂ produced a furlong of fan-like hands, enabling them to do without gores at one end or the other. E, the odd furlong already mentioned, was opened out after this, and tried to regain the length that F had lost. In preparing to cultivate D, they attempted to produce a furlong parallel with the line of the soil change, and did not mind going back to the line of F. Because of all this, when the furlong called the Sands (Q) was opened out between G and O₂, a very oddly shaped piece was left, and this, when finally ploughed, produced Garsons (P). The remainder of the work was concerned with opening out the odd furlongs around the west and south of the field, as the land was drained.

LINTON FIELD

Although at first sight, Linton Field (Fig. V) appears to be part of Barrow Field, this is not so. It is a separate unit bounded on the south by Stocks Lane (i.e. the lane to Stocks Close). Robert Stock is named as having land there in the Hundred Rolls. On the west it is bounded by Clanfield Green and houses, on the east by the Marshes, and on the north by properties associated with Grants Hay and the Southwick Manor. It was the last field to be opened up. Its largest double headland is only 1 ft 2 in. by 34 yds and its single one 1 ft 4 in. by 27 yds. Compared with the other arable blocks it lies rather low, and I suspect can only have been brought into cultivation after the village became better drained. Culvery Furlong (A), with a single headland of 1 ft 4 in. by 27 yds, was clearly the first to be ploughed. Obviously when this happened the crofts on the west and Home Close on the east were already enclosed. Its name Culvery—dove or pigeon-pond—is interesting inasmuch

as the manor pond and pigeon-house still exist on its north side. The next furlong would seem to have been the longest part of the Marsh Furlong (B), stretching from the marshes to the village houses, and following the existing

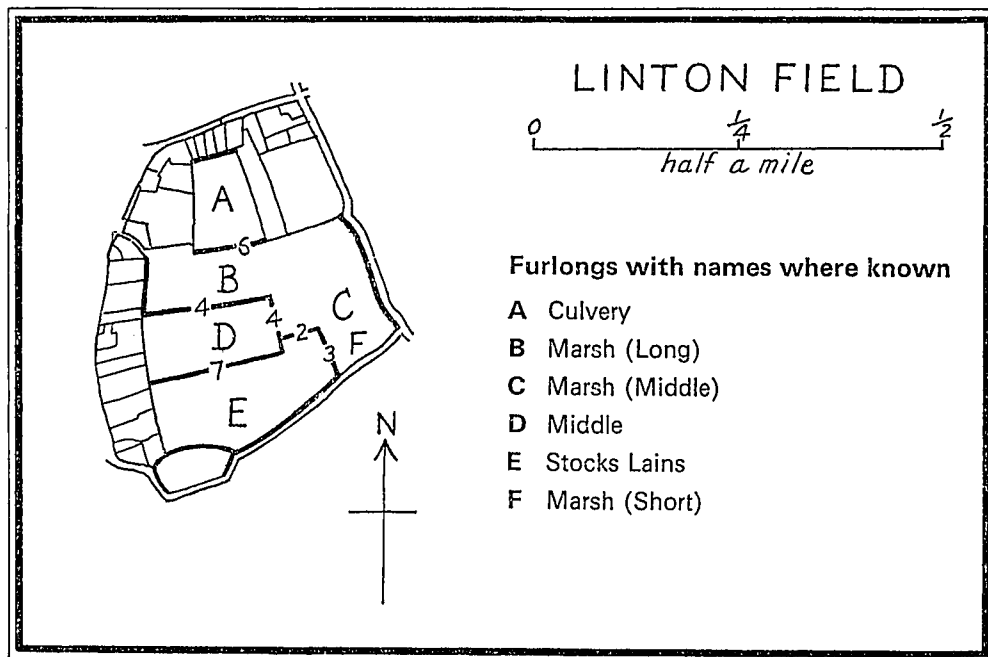


FIG. V

boundaries on the north side. Middle Furlong (D) then followed, after which came the middle portion of Marsh Furlong (C), Stocks Lains Furlong (E), and finally the shortest portion of Marsh Furlong (F).

WYMANS

Amongst the earliest records of Clanfield is a reference to Wymondsplace.¹ Today a field near The Moors is still called Wymonds. It is that portion of the Langley which was cut off from the modern Langley by the causeway built across it to serve the wharfage at Radcot.² On the air photographs an enclosure and strips can clearly be seen in the meadow. Here, no doubt, is the effort of one man, Wyman, who sought in the waste to make a home of his own. The plot of his house and some twelve strips, cover about 3 to 4 acres.

¹ *Calendar of Close Rolls, Richard II, vol. I, 1377-1381, p. 281.*

² *E. A. Pocock, Radcot and its Bridge, 1966.*

CONCLUSION

The period of earliest settlement in English villages is shrouded in mystery. Yet someone somewhere did strike out the first furlong; there must have been a long period before the parish took its present form, when independent settlements nibbled away at the adjoining land until the day came when they had to come to terms with one another. What the records and the archaeologist fail to tell us may still be found in the land and in a common-sense approach to the evidence it preserves. It remains for us to devise new means of interpreting it. I have made such an attempt here. My ideas may be challenged, but the best test of their validity will be a similar investigation in other villages. For example, the shape of the first furlong, Longlands, may resemble that identified in other villages.¹ It may be possible elsewhere by studying balks on the ground and in air photographs to reconstruct a pre-enclosure map of the arable land of an early settled parish and compare it with an existing map. Although every community was a law unto itself, it may well be that some of the things seen here in Clanfield are common to other villages as well.

¹ See, for example, Lord Rennell of Rodd, *Valley on the March*, 1958, pp. 92-118.