

LIMERSTONE: RECONSTRUCTION OF A LANDSCAPE

John Margham

Abstract: Later documentary sources are used to reconstruct the landscape of the manor of Limerstone's demesne (home farm) in the twelfth century. This identifies a series of complementary landscape components whose locations were strongly influenced by physical geography (geology, hydrology, soils and climate). Additional resources to the south of the demesne were shared with neighbouring Brighstone manor and these are outlined. The relative importance of constraints and opportunities provided by physical geography in apparent contrast with the role of human agency in the development of this landscape are explored in relation to recent landscape history research.

Keywords: Medieval landscape, Limerstone

Introduction

The landscape of Limerstone manor can be reconstructed for the twelfth century. This is based on a range of later documentary sources dating to the thirteenth, sixteenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The relationship between geomorphology, drainage, geology and soils to the zoning of land used in this reconstruction raises the issue of how much the landscape of medieval Limerstone owes this zoning to physical constraints or to human agency.

Sources

The manor of Limerstone is well documented in late medieval and post medieval sources. An account of the manor survives in a Winchester pipe roll of 1278 (Page, 1998). Clifford Webster, a former county archivist, has reconstructed the topography of Limerstone manor using the bounds and field-names recorded in 1565 (Webster 1975-1999; Webster unpublished; Map 1). The present owners of Limerstone Farm have recently come into the possession of a manorial map of 1778 which includes field-names (Fig. 1). The Brighstone Parish Tithe Apportionment provides field-names recorded in 1841 (IWCRO JER/T/044-045).

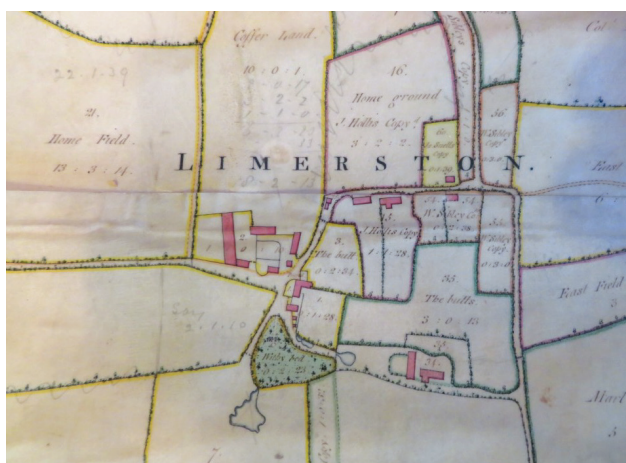


Fig. 1: An extract from the Limerstone manorial map of 1778

The Bishop of Winchester's Estate

During the pre-Conquest period, the Limerstone area was part of an extensive estate held by the bishop of Winchester centred on Calbourne. This



Map 1: Transcription of Clifford Webster's reconstruction of Limerstone's demesne in 1565 from Webster (unpublished) with amendments: 16th century boundary locations, well site and domestic buildings in 1793/4 added by the present author.



Fig. 2: Limerstone farmhouse from the west

was first defined in a charter purporting to be a grant by King Ecgberht in 826 of 30 *mansae* [hides] in *Cawelburnan*, but is probably a tenth-century document concocted by Winchester to validate their holding of the estate (Sawyer, 1968; Edwards, 1988). The boundary clause of this charter defines a landholding extending from the Solent to the English Channel, consisting of the medieval parishes of Calbourne and Brighstone, and part of Mottistone (Margham 2006). The Domesday Book records Winchester's Calbourne estate but by this date (1086) some areas to the south of the chalk ridge were independent manors: Brighstone, Chilton, Coombe and Shate. Three other landholdings in this area were sub-tenancies of Calbourne:

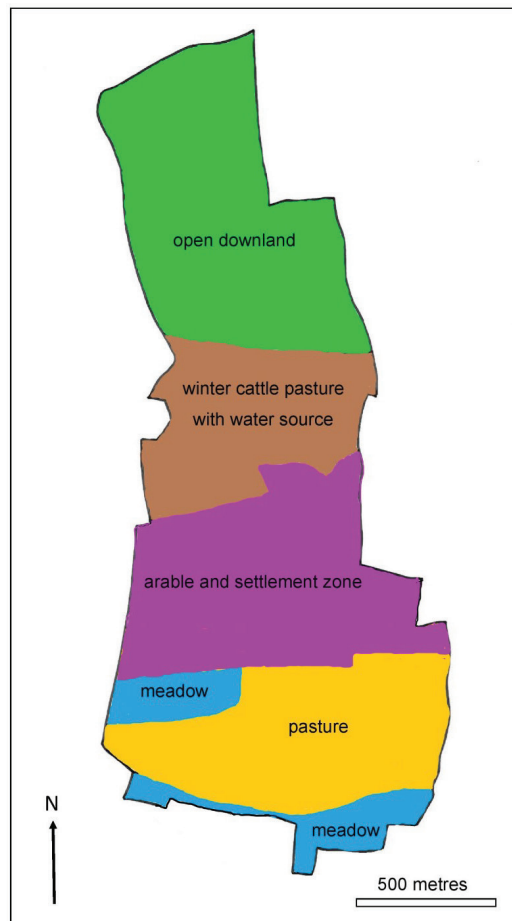
Of this land Robert holds 6 hides, Herpul 2 hides, and Alsige 3½ hides. 7 aloderies held these hides of the bishop, and could not withdraw elsewhere or from him. There are 3½ ploughs; and 3 villans and 22 bordars with 5 ploughs. There are 12 slaves, and 15 acres of meadow (Williams and Erskine 1989, 52v).¹

It is reasonably certain that the largest of these, Robert's 6 hides, can be identified as Limerstone. The two smaller landholdings were plausibly *Uggaton* (to the west of Brighstone) and *Waytes Court* (Page, 1912). Limerstone as a place-name was therefore not recorded in Domesday Book. This first enters the extant documentary record as *Lemerestune* in 1252, meaning 'Lēofmær's or Lēodmær's *tūn*' (Mills, 1996). The Old English personal name suggests the naming of estate by c.1100. The *tūn* element may indicate an earlier origin of the place-name. Wider research indicates that this became a widely used place-name element after c. 750 AD (Gelling, 1992), and some *tūn* names on the Island were of relatively recent origin in 1066 (Margham, 2017).

The process of becoming an independent landholding can thus be traced back to Domesday Book, and apparently before, as suggested by the place-name. The date when Limerstone became totally independent of Winchester is uncertain. The overlordship passed along with Swainston to the crown in 1284 but in 1498 and 1555-6 the manor was said to be held of the bishop of Winchester. The earliest mention of a sub-holding after 1086 was in 1255-6 when Mabel de Tichbourne granted a messuage in Limerstone (Page, 1912). The Tichbourne family held Limerstone until it was sold in 1724 (Webster, 1975-1999).

Limerstone in the Twelfth Century

Limerstone's demesne consisted of approximately 500 acres in the mid-sixteenth century. This was a compact land-holding extending 3km from north to south centred on Limerstone Farm in the preferred settlement zone just to the south of the Island's Lateral Ridge. It thus encompassed two landscape regions (Lateral Ridge and Southern Vale). The field names recorded in 1565, 1778 and 1841 provide



Map 2: A reconstruction of Limerstone's demesne in the twelfth century

evidence for differing zones of land-use from north to south. The following can be inferred from this evidence for the twelfth century (Map. 2):

- Unenclosed chalk downland from the course of *Stukelpath* down along *Fruckesdene* within the dissected plateau of the Lateral Ridge, rising up to 199 metres at the summit of Limerstone Down and then down-hill to a lynchet marking the southern extent of the chalk. A stipend was paid to a shepherd in 1278 (Page, 1998; Fig. 3). In 1565 this upland pasture was accessed from the manorial centre via 'the road to the Downs'.



Fig. 3: Limerstone Down: an area of chalk downland sheep pasture'

¹ 'Could not withdraw elsewhere or from him': a similar type of tenure was recorded within Winchester's estate of Downton (Wiltshire) where the holders of various lands in the time of King Edward 'could not separate themselves from the church' (Williams and Martin 1992, 164), and within Glastonbury Abbey's Polden estate (Somerset) where dependent thegns 'could not be separated from the church' (Turner. 2006).

- The area to the south of the chalk ridge and encompassing the subsidiary greensand ridge included 'Winterland' field-names and the location of *Winterland Gate*, adjoining Coombe Tower, the starting point of the 1565 bounds (Map 1; Fig. 4). These names apparently indicate the use of this zone for pasturing cattle during the winter months. Unlike sheep on the downland, cattle needed a water source. One such source was located within this area: the former well between *West Winterland* and *East Winterland* supplied water to Limerstone before being disconnected c.1957 (pers. comm. Mary Case).



Fig. 4: Looking north-westwards to *West Winterland* and *Little Winterland*. Coombe Tower, which adjoins the site of *Winterland Gate*, is on the horizon on the right of the photograph. The well site formerly serving *Winterland* is within this valley below Coombe Tower. The 'road to the Downs' followed the valley up from the manorial centre.

- The field-names *Eastfield*, *South Field*, *Upfield* and *Westfield* adjoining the manorial centre to the south of the greensand (Ferruginous Sands formation) were recorded in 1565. A man was paid to look after the corn (and meadows) in 1278, when eight oxen were kept, sufficient for a plough team, with 38 acres of wheat, 6 acres of oats and 9 acres of peas and vetches (Page, 1998). The field-names and their locations as depicted in later maps suggest the former existence of two, possibly three, fields (Fig. 1). References in 1565 such as 'four acres of land in Southfield between the lands of other tenants there' and 'six acres of land lying in Upfield in separate parcels between the lands of other tenants there' imply that at least some of this area was farmed as open field furlongs. Limerstone also had open field furlongs within Sutton Field to the south of the demesne land. The 1565 field-name *Ballams*, which was to the south of the manorial centre, means 'land on which beans are grown' (Cavill 2018), and this accords with the later thirteenth-century record of arable produce.
- Field-names such as *Summerleaze*, *The Common* and *Common Ground* reflect

pastoral land use on the Atherfield Clay, with some lower-lying meadowland (*Russchmede*). A stipend was being paid to the oxherd and dairymaid in 1278 (Page, 1998). *Summerleaze*, an allusion to 'forage, grazing pasture or tillage, accessible or workable only in summer' (Cavill, 2018) suggests that at least some of this area can be contrasted with *Winterland* in terms of seasonal land-use.

- Meadowland was underlain by alluvial soils (*Long Mead*, *Brokeleaze* and *Millmead*, also *Bridge Close*) at the southern, lowest extremity of the demesne alongside the watercourse either side of *Shypwasshe Bridge* (Fig. 5). This zone included small areas of wathy beds depicted on the Tithe Apportionment map. The manorial watermill was located in this area, adjoining *Westmill Close* and *Millmead*. The issues of the mill were recorded in 1278 (Page, 1998). Although *Marshefield*, to the south-west of *Shypwasshe Bridge*, was within the manor of Brighstone, various Limerstone tenants had use of meadow there in 1565.



Fig. 5: *Shypwasshe Bridge* on the southern bounds of Limerstone's demesne, looking northwards to the slightly elevated area of former pasture, with Limerstone Down on the horizon

Whilst there is no explicit evidence for the zoning of land-use within Limerstone in Domesday Book, the statistics for the three sub-holdings of the bishop's manor of Calbourne to the south of the Lateral Ridge suggest that this was the case. Robert's 6 hides, Herpul's 2 hides and Alsige's 3½ hides had between them 3½ ploughs, 3 villans and 22 bordars with 5 ploughs, 12 slaves and 15 acres of meadow (Williams and Erskine, 1989). Open-field agriculture may not have been fully developed here by 1086, but parallels drawn from the wider English landscape imply that this was happening by or during the twelfth century. The development of a self-contained manor may have been set in motion by the individual recorded in Limerstone's place-name. This process would have been an incentive for the development of more intensive and integrated land-use within the demesne, in contrast to the previous more extensive exploitation of the

estate centred on Calbourne. Such extensive estates were 'based on established connections between broad ecological zones rather than the dynamic exploitation of confined ones' (Blair, 2018), with post-Conquest Limerstone exemplifying the latter. The mutual interrelationships between the various components of such an integrated landholding were illustrated in the late tenth/early eleventh century by Ælfric of Cerne Abbas (Appendix 1).

Beyond the Demesne

The area defined by the 1565 bounds and the 1778 estate map was Limerstone's demesne. The manor also had interests in the area further to the south, in *Marshefield*, Sutton Field and along the coast. This observation is consistent with the late Anglo-Saxon concept of 'inland', i.e. the demesne farm, and the contrasting 'warland', land outside the demesne where villans held land and owed labour services to the land-holder of the demesne (Faith, 1997). In the sixteenth century, the successors to these villans were the copyholders living beyond the bounds of the demesne.

Limerstone manor's interest in the area to the south of the demesne is demonstrated by the holdings of George Trencher in the fifteenth century. He was

'a free tenant for 74 acres of land called Hawkeley in Sutton formerly [held by] John Trencher and William Middlemarsh by military service for half of a quarter of a Knight's fee and suit of court at Limerston and pays annually 2s.6 d. as appears by court roll, dated 1 June 1472, by charter shown there' (Webster, 1975-1999).

Immediately to the south of Limerstone's demesne was *Marshefield*. Whilst this was a constituent of Brighstone manor, Limerstone tenants had pasture rights there in 1565. This meadowland was known as *Common Mead* in 1841 when it was sub-divided into seven unenclosed parcels of varying sizes. This arrangement would appear to have originated with annual apportionment as documented in meadowland adjoining Sutton Field in 1565.

Further to the south was Sutton Field, in the area to the south-east of Thorncross. Sutton formed part of the manor of Brighstone. However, Limerstone copyholders held lands in Sutton Field and the adjoining meadowland, a fine example of evidence from the 1565 Limerstone survey being:

William Currelle held, by copy dated 14 October 1528, for life at rent of 20s.: 26 acres of land lying in the fields of Sutton, viz: in Clay Furlongs Six Acres, and 20 acres lying in Sutton Field of which six acres lie in Horydytche Furlong, and ix acres in Sondihyll and six acres in Lyttecrofte and two acres in Hickatstretes Furlong, one acre of pasture lies in Charell [Carle] Mede running north opposite the common pole between the hedge there and the running doles and abutts upon his own land [running doles being evidence of annual distribution of meadowland] (Webster, 1975-1999).

Other land-holders owing suit to Limerstone in 1565 with lands in Sutton were John Currel (copyholder) 6 acres in a close, John Barron (copyholder) 2 acres abutting Sutton field, John Worsley gent. (free tenant) 1 messuage and 12 acres of land in Sutton,

and George Trencher esquire (free tenant) 74 acres of land in Sutton. None of these provide specific evidence for holding open field strips in Sutton Field. However, Thorncross had 'pieces of arable land' in Sutton Field documented in the 1630 survey of Brighstone manor (Webster 1975-1999). The three small quantities of arable specified to be within Sutton Field of about one acre each suggests that some arable here was farmed in open field strips or furlongs enclosed from former open field land at this date, as does the reference to Clay Furlongs held by William Currelle cited above. The morphology of fields to the west of Sutton as depicted on the 1793/4 Ordnance Survey map suggests that these were enclosed from former open field furlongs.

The 1565 manorial survey also itemises Limerstone's land-holdings within Brighstone's East Field, several of which appear to be open field furlongs or enclosed former open field furlongs. This is exemplified by plot 660 in the 1630 survey of Brighstone manor,

'A piece of arable land, lying in Butts furlong in Eastfield next the land of Mr Wayte on every side',

this instance being held of Brighstone, not Limerstone. It is quite possible that landholdings of Limerstone within Brighstone manor fields originated before the definition of Limerstone's demesne and manor. This impression is supported by a lease of 1680 within Brighstone manor which included part of Longmead Meadow (3 acres), lying in common with Limerstone farm (Webster 1975-1999).

There are several references in the 1630 Brighstone manorial survey to tenants having 'common of pasture for 10 sheep' on Sutton Common, which adjoined the coast (Webster 1975-1999). Sutton Common may have been intercommoned with Limerstone at one time, but there do not appear to have been any instances of Limerstone tenants having rights of common there in manorial surveys from 1565 onwards.

However, further to the west within Brighstone, in the 1565 survey of Limerstone Robert Smyth, a copyholder, held 'One acre in South Marshfield [plot 336 on the tithe map] at *Schrepeledge* Chine [south of Marsh Green] on the west side of the same and on the south side of a certain ditch there' (Webster 1975-1999). Whilst this was not part of Sutton Common, it illustrates the intermixed interests of Brighstone and Limerstone in this coastal strip of rough pasture.

Physical Constraints or Human Agency?

The reconstruction of Limerstone's demesne presents a picture of the zoning of land use from north to south: unenclosed downland; winter cattle pasture; a settlement zone surrounded by arable fields; lowland pasture; and meadowland. This zoning continued southwards from the demesne with Sutton Field and Sutton Common, located on Wealden beds and associated gravels and alluvium, with further meadowland and open field furlongs and rough pasture along the coast. Much of the latter has been lost due to coastal erosion. The example of *Cashyd* illustrates this process. This was a tenement of 30 acres within the tithing of Sutton in

1630, which can be identified with Chine Farm on the Brighstone parish boundary adjoining the Atherfield area. At some time in or after 1680 the nearby tenement

'which stood and belonged to the grounds called Leap Place [Shepherd's Chine] were taken down and set up at Cashyd by reason of the washing away the land within 2 roods, where the said tenement stood' (Margham, 2019).

The influence of the physical background on the development of landscapes has been much debated over the past few decades. Rippon (2008) provided an overview of the debate. Subsequently, Williamson (2013) added to this with the publication of *Environment, Society and Landscape in Early Medieval England*. Although the role of physical factors in landscape history had previously been emphasised, for example in the work of Alan Everitt (1977, 1986), by the 1990s there was a general consensus that it was human actions that were entirely responsible for variations in landscape character, rejecting the notion of 'environmental determinism', that the physical environment dictated settlement patterns and land use (Rippon, 2008). This consensus was challenged by Tom Williamson. His *Shaping Medieval Landscapes* examined the development of open field agriculture in eastern England and identified a correlation between the distribution of 'regular' open fields and heavier clay soils (Williamson, 2003). Simon Draper's (2006) study of the landscape of Roman and early medieval Wiltshire also addresses this issue stating that the physical landscape of a region is fundamental to 'understanding its settlement and society. This may sound obvious to many, but we are only now emerging from a period in landscape studies when it became almost fashionable to downplay environmental factors in favour of social and cultural explanations for change, for fear of being branded an adherent of "environmental determinism"'. Williamson (2013) considered the relative importance of physical conditions and human agency, demonstrating the significance of physical geography, geology, hydrology, soils and climate in the pattern of human interaction with the environment. He does, however, qualify this, identifying a false dichotomy between 'human choice' and 'geographical determinism'. He concludes that choices of where to settle were conditional on everyday practicalities:

'Landscapes are a consequence of human agency, but agency exercised knowledgeably, in a real world' (Williamson, 2013).

The reconstruction of the landscape of Limerstone's demesne in the twelfth century and observations regarding the meadowland, the open field furlongs in Sutton Field and the coastal strip of rough pasture to the south accord with this more mature and nuanced approach to the significance of the physical background in medieval landscape history. Geology, soils, drainage and landforms were important in providing opportunities for the development of a range of complementary land uses. Human agency was also significant in acting within these constraints and exploiting opportunities to provide a productive

and integrated landscape centred on the manorial focus, now known as Limerstone Farm.

Appendix-1 Ælfric's Colloquy

Ælfric the Homilist of Cerne Abbas in Dorset produced his *Colloquy* to help boys in the monastic school there improve their fluency in Latin. This consisted of a series of dialogues outlining various occupations. Three examples are of particular relevance in showing interrelationships between areas of contrasting land use within an estate (Cavill 2001, 42-3):

What do you say, shepherd? Do you have to work hard?

Yes, sir, I do. In the early morning I drive my sheep to their pasture and watch over them with the dogs, whether it is hot or cold, in case wolves attack them. Then I take them back to their folds, and milk them twice a day. I move their folds, and I make cheese and butter. And I am loyal to my lord.

Well, ploughman, what do you say? How do you go about your job?

Oh, sir, I have to work hard! I go out at dawn, driving the oxen to the field, and I yoke them to the plough. No winter is so severe that I dare hide at home, because I am afraid of my lord. But when I have yoked the oxen and fastened the ploughshare and the coulter to the plough, each day I have to plough a full acre or more.

And oxherd, what do you do?

Oh, my lord, I work hard. When the ploughman unyokes the oxen, I lead them to pasture, and all night I watch over them, alert for thieves. And then in the early morning I take them back to the ploughman, well fed and watered.

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Author: John Margham

email: jnmargham@gmail.com