

## THORLEY – A PARISH SURVEY

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An outline of the development of the historic parish of Thorley is set against the physical background. The administrative geography of the parish is summarised and the development of communications is outlined. The limited evidence for prehistoric and early historic occupation is considered, while evidence from Domesday Book is transcribed and an outline of the tenurial history from 1086 is given. Documentary evidence for the medieval landscape and economy is discussed and the development of the post-medieval landscape is considered through the themes of settlement patterns and land use. Some settlement shift from the medieval manorial centre had taken place by the mid-sixteenth century and enclosure of the lowland areas of the parish was completed by 1800. The story of the landscape is taken up to *c.*1900 and the main themes are outlined in a conclusion.

### Introduction

The 'parish survey' technique of landscape history research was developed by Bedfordshire County Planning Conservation Section. This study of Thorley is an application of the technique to an historic parish on the Isle of Wight. Research is mainly documentary so the results are inevitably biased towards the historic, particularly the post-medieval period. The story of man's effect upon the landscape of the Island is an area of research which deserves much more attention. Thorley parish survey is offered as an interim statement about one relatively small area.

The historic parish of Thorley comprises an area of 1,580 acres (Page 1912: 284) and is situated to the north of the Island's central chalk ridge. It is in the hinterland of the planned medieval town of Yarmouth, which is located beyond the north-western extremity of the historic parish. Its modern settlement pattern consists of the street village of Thorley Street, eight clusters of cottages/farm buildings, and isolated dwellings.

### The physical background (figure 1)

The relief of the parish ranges from 140 metres (450 feet) on Tapnell Down in the extreme south-eastern corner to sea level on the Yar estuary to the north-west. In terms of geology, a transect from south to north would show:

- i. Upper chalk – Tapnell Down, above a height of 100 metres.
- ii. Eocene (Reading, London Clay and Bagshot beds) between 100 and *c.*75 metres.
- iii. Oligocene, consisting mainly of the archaeologically significant Bembridge Limestone, from *c.*75 metres to a little above sea level.
- iv. Alluvium around the mouth of Barnfields Stream, and extending eastwards along Thorley Brook indicating much of the former extent of Thorley Haven between Thorley and Yarmouth parishes.

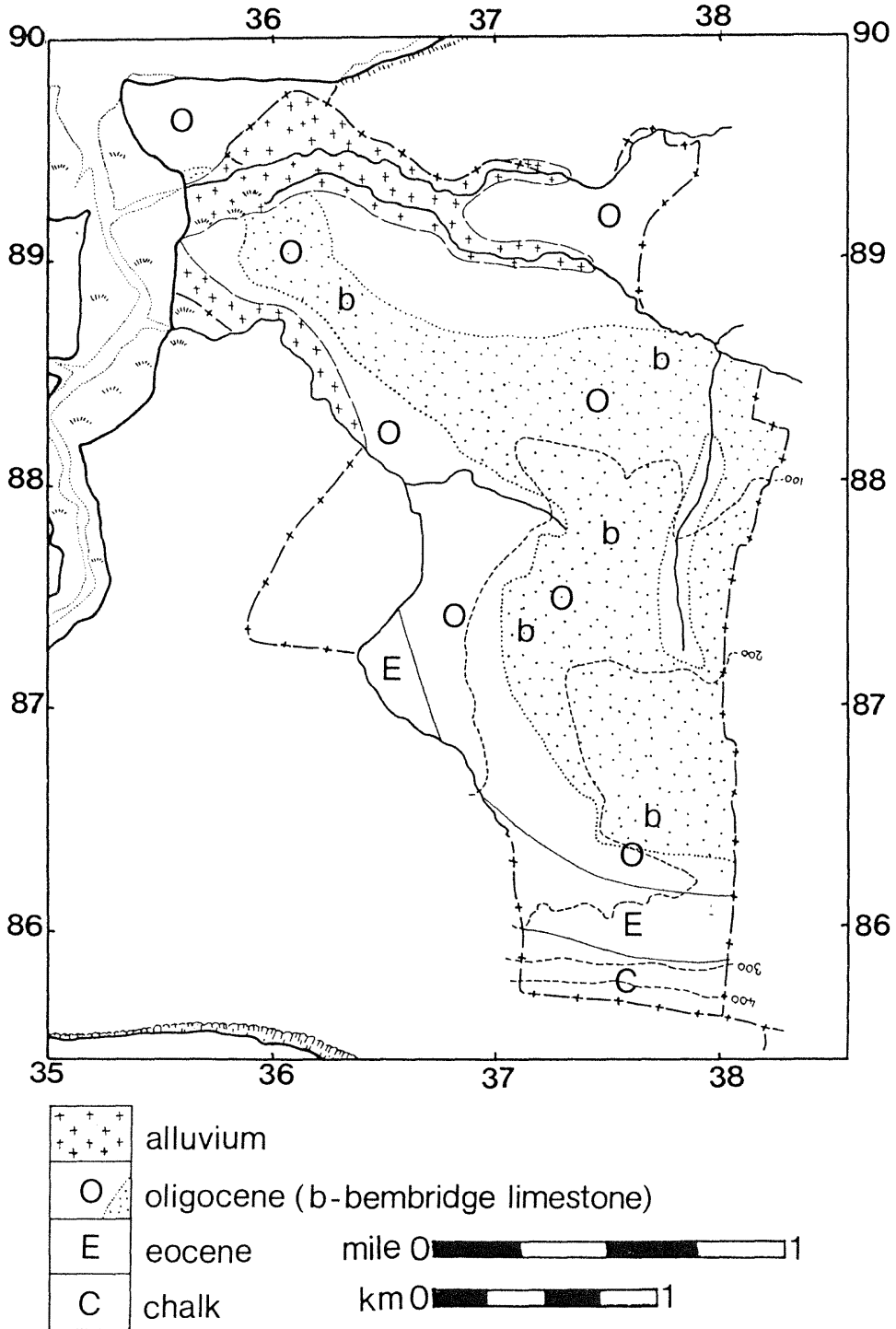


Figure 1: Yarmouth and Thorley parishes, solid and drift geology derived from Institute of Geological Sciences Special sheet – Isle of Wight drift edition 1:50,000, 1976, contours in feet.

Much of the parish is drained via Thorley Brook, with small streams flowing NNE into the brook, then WNW into the Yar estuary. This drainage pattern is best described as rectilinear. The south west of the parish is drained via Barnfields Stream.

### **Boundaries in the landscape**

The historic parish of Thorley is now part of Yarmouth Civil Parish in the South Wight Borough area. In the eleventh century during the reign of Edward the Confessor, Thorley was part of the estate in the West Wight centred on King's Manor, Freshwater, held by Earl Tostig.

The ecclesiastical parish of St. Swithin's originated in the eleventh or twelfth centuries. The church stood just to the north of Thorley Manor, and is marked by the graveyard and the still extant south porch and belfry. The proximity of the church to the manor house suggests that it was of proprietary origin, established to serve the lord and his household before attaining full parochial status. Worsley (1781: 265) claimed that the church was probably built by Amicia de Clare, who was married to Baldwin de Redvers IV in 1226 and died in 1245 (Pers. Comm. J. O'Donnell). This was presumably a rebuilding, for in 1161–70 Thorley was recorded as having a rector (Hase 1988: 57). The earliest date ascribed to the church is recorded by Dugdale who mentions the grant of Thorley church to the Priory of Christchurch Twyneham by Richard de Redvers junior (Caley *et al* 1830: 305). The grant was confirmed by the Bishop of Winchester in 1150 (*ibid*). Godric the priest who held nearby Melevsford in 1086, can probably be identified with Godric 'leader and chief' of Christchurch Twyneham minster until 1087 (Hase 1988: 51–2) and may have had some connection with a manorial chapel at Thorley, (Doubleday 1900: 524).

The area which is Thorley parish would have been taken from a larger 'parochia' or mother parish which was served from a 'minster' church. Minster churches served relatively large areas, with pastoral responsibilities for an area wider than a single village (Franklin 1984: 69). The existence of minster churches on the Isle of Wight is recognised (Hockey 1982: 2) but it is uncertain whether Thorley parish was taken out of Freshwater or Shalfleet parochia. All Saint's, Freshwater, has fabric of Anglo-Saxon workmanship (Taylor and Taylor 1965: 246) and was the mother church to St. Mary's, Brook (Hockey 1982: 4). A case for Thorley formerly being served from All Saint's, Freshwater could be made from envisaging Tostig's West Wight estate being the same as Freshwater's parochia. Tostig held Freshwater, Afton, Thorley, Compton and Brook in 1066. Thorley would be anomalous if it were not part of the Freshwater parochia at this date, for all Tostig's other West Wight holdings were within this area. Shalfleet church was recorded in 1086 and has later 11th century fabric (Renn 1969: 268). Thorley being a daughter church of Shalfleet can be argued from the link between St. Swithin's and Christchurch priory's manor of Ningwood in Shalfleet parish (Hockey 1982: 7), the tithing of Thorley in 1560 including Hamstead and Wellow both in Shalfleet, and the presence of a line of small leaved limes (an indicator of ancient woodland) along Barnfield's stream, the medieval boundary between Freshwater and Thorley parishes.

For much of the time from the establishment of the ecclesiastical parish, i.e. by the twelfth century, the parish has been coterminous with the manor of Thorley. The bounds of the parish are from Yarmouth mill north-eastwards along the northern side of the former Thorley Haven, then eastwards parallel with Thorley Brook, northwards to take in the north end of Hill Place Lane and part of the Yarmouth to Newport road, southwards to Thorley Brook following the brook to near Lee Farm, then southwards to the summit of Tapnell Down (the series of dog legs along this boundary reveal themselves as 'crop marks' on aerial photographs and represent the defining of the boundary on the ground by the enclosure of the common in the seventeenth century, the common being shared between Thorley and Wellow in Shalfleet parish), then westwards along Tapnell Down and northwards to the source of Barnfield's stream, and

following the stream to SZ 36408725, westwards to SZ 35888725, north-eastwards returning to the stream at Barnfield's Bridge (this detour from the stream represents a boundary change of c.1800, i.e. it is not shown on the 1781 map) and finally back to the Yar estuary along Barnfield's stream.

The parish is bounded by the following parishes, Yarmouth to the north-west, Shalfleet to the north and east, and Freshwater to the south and west.

### Communications

The southern edge of the parish abuts the ridgeway running the length of the Island, along the line of chalk downs. Most of the other roads and paths developed in a piecemeal fashion later. The road from Newclose Farm to the junction south of Thorley Manor is an 'enclosure' road, the path from the rear of Newclose Farm to the manor represents its former alignment, via Tattels and Goldings (figure 3). The present road to the south of the manor is shown on the map of c.1800 – its realignment may be associated with the rebuilding of the manor house c.1700. The Highway Commission were active from 1813 into the 1820's, ordering the repair of roads and the construction of bridges – Barnfield's Bridge, 1817 and Holbrook's Bridge, 1818 (IWCRO HC1, HC3).

The importance of neighbouring Yarmouth as a trading centre in the later Iron Age is indicated by finds of amphorae from the first century BC on the seabed off Yarmouth Common and a hoard of seven or eight staters found near Yarmouth in 1867. Yarmouth regained significance as a trading centre in the later twelfth century with the foundation of the new town, c.1170 (Beresford 1967). Thorley Haven, which existed until the eighteenth century (IWCRO unlisted, c.1675) was perhaps a precursor of medieval Yarmouth and important for water borne communication with Thorley Manor. In the railway age, Thorley was served from Yarmouth Station, 1888–1953 (Insole and Parker 1979: 34).

### The prehistoric landscape

Much of the Island to the north of the central chalk ridge is thought to have been heavily forested in the later prehistoric period, but the Thorley area was undoubtedly an exception to this rule. A solitary round barrow stands on the parish boundary on Tapnell Down, but apart from this there are no extant prehistoric monuments. Find spots are restricted to a polished flint axe from Tapnell Farm and a retouched flint flake from west of Thorley Copse. However, air photographic evidence indicates at least nine ring-ditches, four sub-rectangular enclosures and linear features, all on the Bembridge Limestone (figure 2). The date and function of most of the cropmark sites have not been ascertained from excavation but it is reasonable to assume that a substantial proportion are prehistoric.

A ring ditch at SZ 37738813 was excavated in the summer of 1984 and was shown to be associated with a ploughed-out Bronze Age round barrow, only the encircling ditch surviving as a feature cut into the Bembridge Limestone.

### The Romano-British and Early Medieval periods

No specific sites of the Romano-British period have been recorded within the parish. However, a quantity of pottery sherds as well as two brooches dating from the first and third centuries were recovered from the plough soil during excavation of the ring ditch (pers. comm. F. Basford). Subsequent random field walking on the Limestone plateau has revealed a wide distribution of prehistoric flintwork and Romano-British ceramics. This Roman material implies the continued importance of the area for settlement from the later prehistoric period. However, we know nothing of the precise location of this settlement, apart from its being in the Thorley/Thorley Street area on the Bembridge Limestone to the south of Thorley Brook (formerly Thorley Haven).

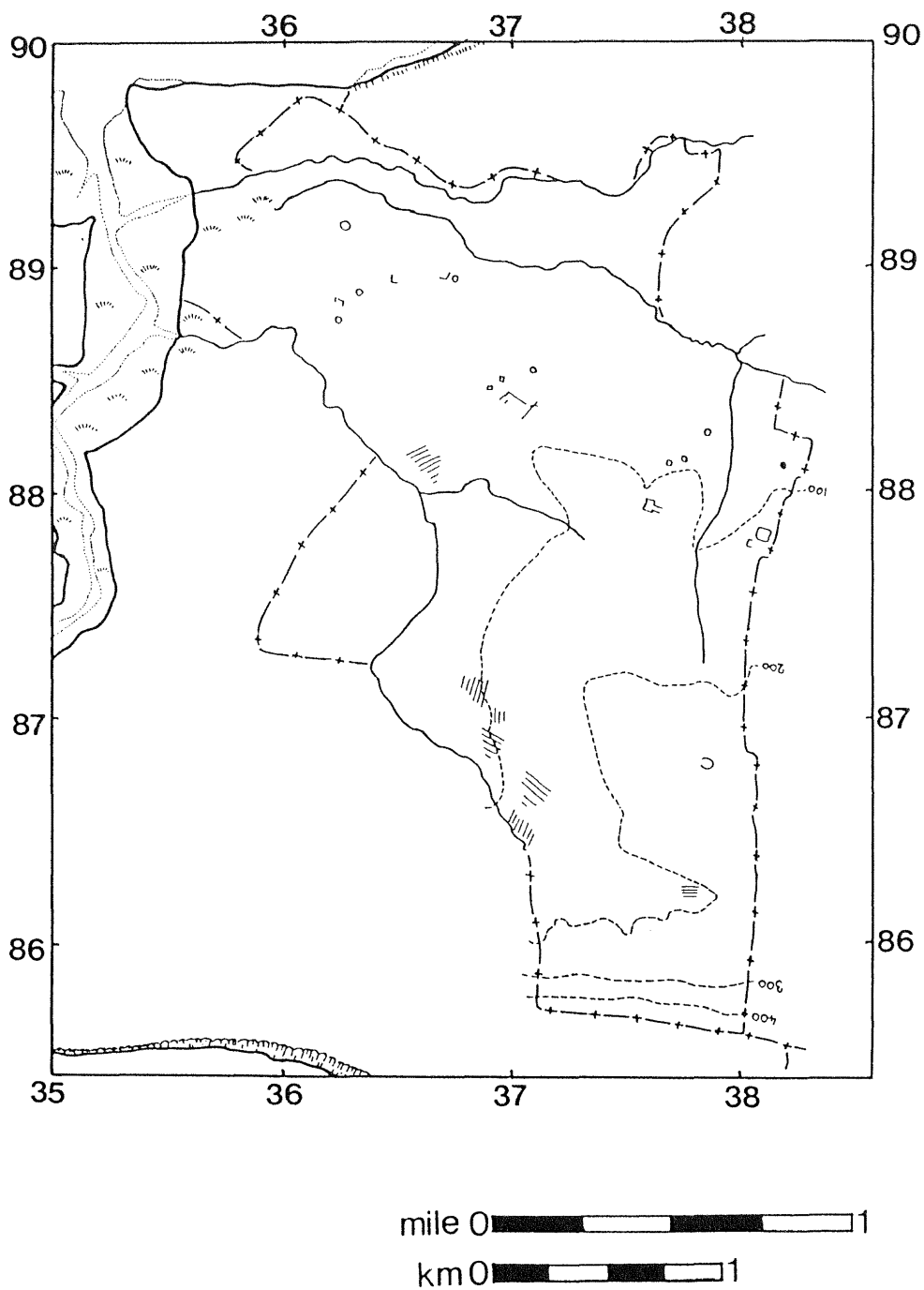


Figure 2: Thorley parish crop marks plotted from aerial photographs, contours in feet.

Nothing at all has been recorded from the early medieval period, apart from the old English placename Thorley, 'the thorny lea', first recorded in 1086 as Torlei (Kokeritz 1940: 226).

### **Thorley in 1086**

The Domesday Manor of Thorley was held by one of the King's thanes:

'Alsi, the son of Bricsi holds Torlei. Earl Tosti(g) held it. It was then assessed at 3 hides; now at 2 hides. There is land for 7 ploughs. In (the) demesne are 2 ploughs; and (there are) 10 villeins and 11 bordars with 6 ploughs. There are 7 serfs, and 6 acres of meadows. T.R.E., and afterwards, it was worth 8 pounds; it is now worth 12 pounds.' (Doubleday 1900: 524).

In addition to the entry for Thorley, immediately above it there is the entry for Melevsford:

'Godric the priest holds Melevsford of the King Edward in parage (in paragio). It was then, as now, assessed at 1½ virgates. There is land for half a plough; but in (the) demesne is 1 plough with 2 bordar, and (there are) a mill, which returns nothing (sine censu) and 1½ acres of meadow. It was, and is now, worth 10 shillings.' (ibid).

It has been suggested that Melevsford was in the vicinity of Yarmouth Mill, thus within Thorley parish (Kokeritz 1940: 1x). This area consisted of a substantial inlet of the sea, Thorley Haven, until the post-medieval period (IWCRO unlisted, c.1675), so it is not a very likely location. Another possibility is the site that was later to become the town of Yarmouth in the twelfth century, which would have formed a peninsula bounded on the north by the sea, on the west by the Yar estuary, and on the south by Thorley Haven. However, this is accounted for by the 1 hide and 2½ virgates in Ermud in 1086 (Doubleday 1900: 525). If Melevsford can be located in the Yarmouth/Thorley area a strong possibility would be the Hill Place Lane area of Thorley parish. Before the draining of Thorley Haven, this would have formed an area of approximately 80 to 100 acres relatively isolated from the rest of Thorley, an enclave into Shalfleet parish. This perhaps reflects the relative size of the cultivated areas and meadowland in 1086, Thorley with 2 hides and 6 acres of meadow, and Melevsford 1½ virgates (¾ hide) and 1½ acres of meadow. The six-inch map of 1862 shows 'old mill race' at SZ 376894. Could this have been the location of Melevsford Mill?

### **Lords of the Manor**

Before 1066, Thorley belonged to Earl Tostig. At the time of the Domesday Book, the manor was held by Alsi, son of Bricsi. It later came into the Crown's possession and was granted to Richard de Redvers by Henry I. It remained with the Earls of Devon until it was granted to the Crown by Isabella de Fortibus in 1293. Edward II granted the manor to Piers Gaveston, but it reverted to the King in 1312. In 1314 it was granted to Nicholas la Beche, but by 1325 was in the hands of 'Edward the King's son'. The custody of Thorley was given by Edward to John le White in 1331, but in the following year it went to Hugh le Despenser, and was granted to him permanently in 1337. It was not listed amongst Hugh le Despenser's possessions at his death in 1348, and appears to have belonged to his brother or nephew, Gilbert le Despenser. It was granted in 1382 in custody to John Sleggh during the minority of Gilbert's heir, Thomas le Despenser. Thomas came of age and into possession, and Thorley followed the descent of the manor of Mapledurwell, until passing to Isabel, wife of George, Duke of Clarence. Isabel died in 1476, the Duke holding the manor until 1478, when forfeited to the Crown. In the same year Thorley was granted to Anthony Earl Rivers for six years, it was later leased by the Crown to William Bowman and Henry Kyllavon in 1539 and

subsequently to Richard Belvege. The estate was in the tenure of Robert Urry from early in the reign of Elizabeth, and remained with the Urrys until Elizabeth, the Urry heir, sold her right in the manor in 1679 to Sir Robert Holmes. Thomas, Lord Holmes, was the owner in 1762, who died in 1764 and was succeeded by his nephew the Reverend Leonard Holmes who died in 1804. The manor passed to his daughter Elizabeth, wife of Sir Henry Worsley Homes. On her death in 1832, it passed to her granddaughter, Elizabeth wife of William Henry Ashe A'Court who succeeded his father as Lord Heytesbury in 1860 (compiled from Page 1912: 284–285, 288).

### **The Medieval landscape**

No woodland was recorded for Thorley in Domesday Book. This negative evidence does not imply the total clearance of woodland by 1086. The woodland was not of sufficient value to be recorded. The predominance of Bembridge Limestone underlying the parish and its associated cropmark sites implies much deforestation in prehistory, but sub-Roman neglect of tillage and the development of secondary woodland is a possibility. Thorley had 75 acres of coppice in 1648 (IWCRO HBY/1239), a similar amount to the present. The only area of woodland with more than fifteen ancient woodland indicator species within the parish is Thorley Copse with seventeen species, an area of wet ash-maple woodland (Hornby 1982). Little can be said about woodland in the medieval landscape except that it was not very extensive, and that in 1325 the lord of the manor complained that ‘certain persons unknown had felled his trees there and carried away the timber.’ (Page 1912: 284).

Thorley had an important place in the medieval economy of the Island as a rabbit warren, ‘the greatest part of it (Thorley) was once a warren, as appears by a grant of the Countess Isabella, who gave to the Prior of Christ-Church, a fifth part of the coneys in her manor of Thorley...’ (Worsley 1781: 264). This grant was made in 1291. In 1306, the keeper of the manor was ordered by the King to restore this tithe to the canons of Christchurch Twyneham, as it had lapsed when troops waiting for transportation to Gascony had eaten most of the rabbits (Hockey 1982: 207). The warren was mentioned in the lease of the manor by the Queen to David Urry in 1582 (IWCRO Thorley parish card index) but there is no physical evidence for former rabbit production, e.g. pillow-mounds, in the modern landscape.

Compared with neighbouring Freshwater parish, Thorley was an area of relatively early enclosure. Little can be said about open field agriculture in Thorley, except that three names of open fields appear in the 1648 manorial survey – Westfield, Homefield and Eastfield, (IWCRO, HBY/1239), and that traces of former ridge and furrow can be seen on aerial photographs (figure 2). There were 21 husbandmen and one farmer in 1378/9 (IWCRO transcription), probably engaged in mixed farming; the weaver recorded at the same date suggesting sheep farming as well as arable agriculture. It is only from the mid-sixteenth century onwards that we know of the relative importance of arable land and sheep common in the parish. The two tide mills in the thirteenth century Manor of Thorley with Wellow (Hockey 1982: 195) would probably have been used for processing grain or possibly wool.

### **Village and farmstead**

The earliest detailed maps showing all roads, buildings and property boundaries on the Island are the working drawings for the Ordnance Survey, first edition, of 1810, surveyed from 1793 onwards at six inch scale (IWCRO copies). Within Thorley parish these indicate the following elements of the settlement pattern:

1. The church and manor, named ‘Thorley’ (SZ 367891).
2. The linear settlement of Thorley Street, consisting of c.23 buildings (SZ 373887 – 389885).

3. Two small groups of buildings between 1. and 2., (Goldings SZ 370889 and Tattels SZ 371889).
4. Two buildings to the north of 2. (Hill Place SZ 375891).
5. Tapnell Farm (SZ 374867).
6. A single isolated building (Dog Kennel Cottage, SZ 373878).
7. Mill (Thorley Mill, later known as Yarmouth Mill, SZ 356894).

To what degree is the settlement pattern of c.1800 representative of the medieval and earlier post-medieval settlement of the parish?

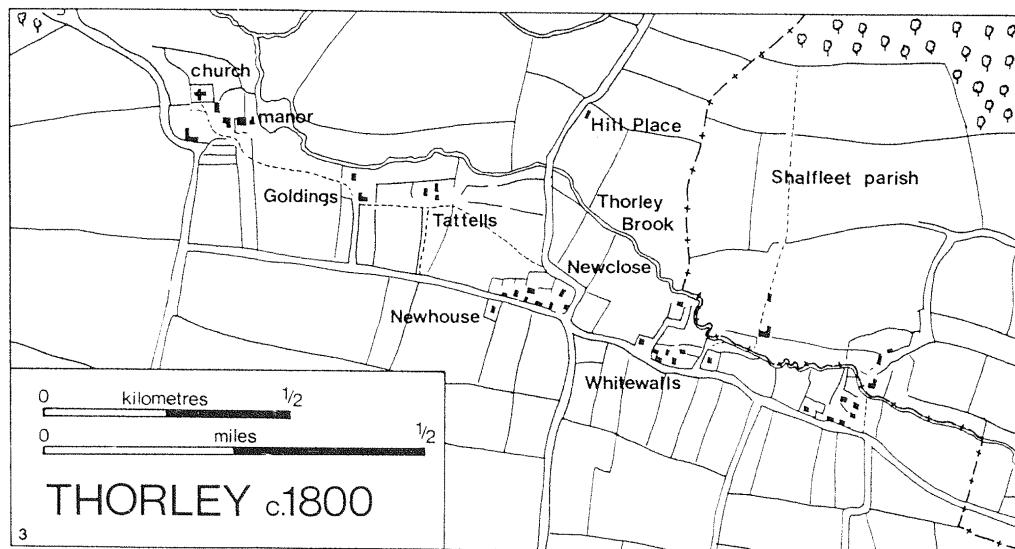


Figure 3: Thorley and Thorley Street, c.1800, redrawn from working drawings for the first Ordnance Survey.

No aerial photography has been found to show evidence of settlement shift or desertion and no earthworks are extant. The sources available are documentary evidence and the physical fabric of the buildings in the modern landscape. Each of the settlement sites of c.1800 will be examined in turn.

1. *The church/manor complex of the medieval church of St. Swithin and Thorley Manor*

The church was founded in the eleventh or twelfth century, almost certainly as a manorial chapel. The present manor house is 'A perfect William-and-Mary house' (Pevsner and Lloyd 1967: 772). The building of the manor site in 1608 included a dwelling house of six bays, a bakehouse, two stables of four bays, three barns of five bays and a dovecote (Hockey 1982: 143). This site must have been the focus of the Domesday manor of Torley and the pre-conquest manor held by Earl Tostig. There was probably an adjoining manorial hamlet for at least some of the 10 villeins, 11 bordars and their dependents, and the 7 serfs, of 1086. Thorley is listed as a deserted medieval village in the county lists of the Medieval Village Research Group (DMVRG 1966; Beresford and Hurst 1971), but this must be seen in the context of the dynamic nature of the settlement change in many areas of England, with settlement shift as well as shrinkage and desertion (Taylor 1983).

## 2. *The linear settlement of Thorley Street*

The 23 buildings of *c.*1800 extended for a distance of about 800 metres (figure 3) and apart from some infilling, the settlement remains little altered. Thorley Street can be seen as secondary to the envisaged former settlement around the manor site. When did it become the predominant element in the parish's settlement pattern?

The Old Rectory in Thorley Street is a seventeenth century lobby entrance house, indicating some settlement in the area by this date. Of the other seven domestic buildings in Thorley Street on the tithe apportionment map of 1844, Newclose Farmhouse is an eighteenth century building, Lightwood Cottage/Forge Cottage is nineteenth century, Whitewalls has nineteenth century details but is possibly older, Blacksmiths Cottage is eighteenth century, 1 and 2 Newclose were rebuilt in brick and are dated 1903, Lilac Cottage is seventeenth or eighteenth century, and New House Cottage is dated 1762. From external examination there is architectural evidence for some buildings in Thorley Street by *c.*1700.

A manorial survey of 1680 (IWCRO HBY/1236) lists fifteen tenements, only five of which are named. Whitewalls is in Thorley Street, Pyle Place and Ways Place were possibly located there, and the other two, Hill Place and Goldings are elsewhere. Of the remaining ten tenements, it is reasonable to assume that at least some were in Thorley Street. There were seventeen copyholds and one freehold in 1608 (IWCRO transcription, PRO C315/421) with seventeen houses and cottages mentioned. Only four are named, Hill Place, Goldings, Pyle Place and Ways Place. In the survey of 1559/60 (IWCRO transcription) there were seventeen copyholds belonging to Thorley Manor, four tenements of which can be identified, one at least, Whitewalls, being in Thorley Street. The documentary evidence examined suggests the existence of Thorley Street by the mid-sixteenth century.

## 3. *Goldings and Tattels*

These two former farmsteads are located between the church/manor complex and Thorley Street alongside a footpath linking these two elements, the path representing a formerly more important routeway (see above).

Goldings now consists of an isolated stone cottage of eighteenth century appearance, with some timber framing within (MHLG, 1960). Two buildings are shown here on the map of *c.*1800. In 1608, William Urry had the copyhold of two cottages – Goldings and Hilcottes (IWCRO transcription, PRO C315/421) with nine acres and common for ten sheep. In 1680 it was described as 'a cottage and orchard called goldrings and about one acre of land four acres of meadow and common for 10 sheep' (IWCRO HBY/1236). This can be identified in the hearth tax of 1665 (Russell 1981: 87) with the entry of Thomas Reyner's two hearths.

Until *c.*1972, Tattels was two cottages on either side of a central chimney, but filled in brick lined ventilation slots indicate its former use as a barn. There are foundations of another building with rubble walling to the north-east of the cottage. It is not mentioned by name in any of the above cited surveys but in 1843 was rented by Barnabus Leigh who farmed 133 acres (IWCRO TA/13).

## 4. *Hill Place*

The house has been completely rebuilt within the past twenty years. It has been identified as the tenement of 34 acres with common for 30 sheep in 1559/60 (IWCRO transcription), and is named in 1608 (IWCRO transcription, PRO E315/421) when it consisted of a house, barn, stable and two 'posthouses'. It had five hearths in 1665 (Russell 1981: 87).

### 5. *Tapnell Farm*

This has a large eighteenth century barn and the farmhouse is probably of an eighteenth century date with later additions. It was leased as Tapwell Farm in 1715 (IWCRO HBY/448), but is not mentioned by name in the sixteenth and seventeenth century surveys.

### 6. *Dog Kennel Cottage*

This isolated cottage is eighteenth century with nineteenth century additions and alterations. It is not mentioned in the older documentary sources examined, but is shown on the tithe apportionment map (figure 4).

### 7. *Yarmouth Mill*

This tidal water mill was built of brick in 1793 (Major 1970: 97), but the presence of substantial amounts of stone walling in its fabric implies a rebuilding. There were two tidal mills within the Manor of Thorley with Wellow in the thirteenth century (Hockey 1982: 195), Yarmouth Mill at the mouth of Thorley Haven perhaps being the site of one of them.

In 1801 there were nineteen houses in the parish, including the manor house (Vancouver 1813), in 1680 there were fifteen copyholders, in 1608 seventeen copyholders and one freeholder, and in 1559/60 seventeen copyholders. These figures and the evidence reviewed above suggest that, with the possible exception of Tapnell Farm (a new site perhaps associated with intake of downland in the later sixteenth century), the settlement pattern remained relatively static in the post-medieval period. What can be inferred from the medieval evidence?

The documentary evidence relating to medieval population gives no indication of its distribution within the tithing/manor/parish, and due to the limitations of the data indicates broad trends only. The ten villeins, eleven bordars and seven serfs of 1086 give a total of twenty-eight (Doubleday 1900: 524) but to this figure we need to add the dependents of the villeins and bordars and any sub-tenants that they may have had (Margham 1989: 56–57), and similarly for the one bordar of Melevsford. The next reference is not until the 'Nomina Villarum' of 1316, when the 'villa de Thorlye' was considered wealthy enough to provide a foot soldier for Edward II (Feudal Aids, 2 1900: 321; Beresford 1954: 282). With the Lay Subsidy of 1334, Thorley tithing paid £3. 6s. 10d. (Hockey 1982: 146), representing about 2.3% of the Island total. There were twenty-eight names recorded in the Poll Tax of 1377/8 (Hockey 1982: 150), very much a minimum number for heads of households, due to exemptions and evasion (Beresford 1958). The same is true for the tax of 1379 with thirty-one names (IWCRO transcription), but the list of occupations of tax payers is of interest. Thorley is amongst the vills listed in appeals for tax relief in 1380 and 1387, claiming to have been destroyed (Hockey 1982: 148–9). An overall reduction in the numbers of inhabitants is likely with the plague of 1348–50 and the French raid of 1377 (Hockey 1970: 138, after Froissart). Thorley was not included in the list of parishes with fewer than ten inhabitants in 1428 (Feudal Aids, 2 1900: 342), so the depopulating effects of the plague, French raids and later medieval economic changes were not catastrophic. However, an 8.5 per cent reduction from the 1334 level was given in 1445, which is specifically stated to be in aid of poor towns and villages damaged and destroyed (Hockey 1982: 148–9). In the Lay Subsidy of 1522/3, the tithing paid 42s. 6d. and 22 names are recorded, 2.2 per cent of the Island total (Hockey 1982: 153).

From the eleventh to the fourteenth century very little can be inferred, but in line with wider trends an increase in population is envisaged (Postan 1972). The later medieval figures suggest an overall decline in the numbers of inhabitants of Thorley but tell us nothing about the distribution of population within the parish. Where did the thirty-one named individuals of 1379 and the twenty-two names of 1522/3 live? The post-medieval documentary evidence

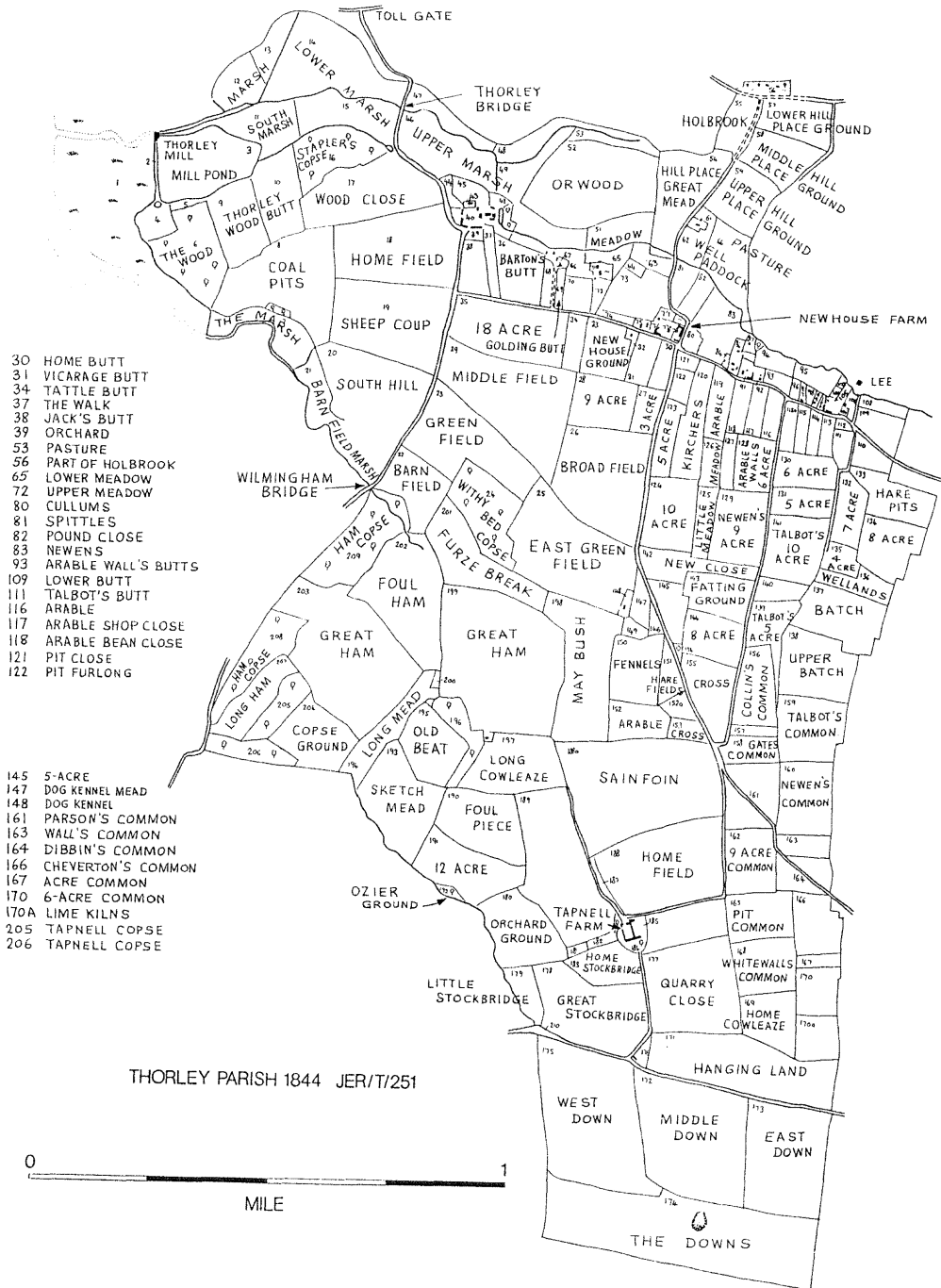


Figure 4: Thorley parish, 1844, redrawn from the Tithe Apportionment map IWCRO MP/C/17; field names from the Tithe Apportionment Book, IWCRO TA/13.

suggests the existence of Thorley Street by the mid-sixteenth century. However, the model of settlement shift from the manorial site to Thorley Street remains an unproven hypothesis until tested by intensive fieldwork. The decline of demesne farming and the enclosure of the open fields may be factors associated with such changes in the settlement pattern.

### **Common field and enclosure**

Much of the parish between Tapnell Farm and Thorley Street is again an area of open field agriculture owing to hedgerow removal over the past forty years, but unlike its medieval counterpart it is not farmed in selions and furlongs! The Tithe Apportionment map (figure 4) shows a fully enclosed parish except for the upper slope of Tapnell Down, as does the map of c.1800. The presence of former open fields is suggested by these maps in the area immediately to the south of Thorley Street, with fields long in relation to their width – directly enclosed open field furlongs. The names of these fields from the Tithe Apportionment book (IWCRO TA/13) give no indication of furlong or open field names. There are open field names in the manorial survey of 1648 (IWCRO HBY/1239) – Westfield, Homefield (to the west of the manor site) and Eastfield, but all are less than fifty acres. The arable fields accounted for 156 acres at this date. The earliest field names recorded from the parish are three closes mentioned in the 1559/60 survey (IWCRO transcription). The overwhelming majority of fields listed in the survey of 1608 (IWCRO transcription, PRO E315/421) are closes, so much of Thorley's former open fields were enclosed by the early seventeenth century.

The lower slope of Tapnell Down (West Down, Middle Down and East Down in 1844) was enclosed by 1608, when it was listed in the demesne as 'enclosed common Thorley Downe 100 acres.' This part of the down was most probably enclosed after 1560, for the total area of enclosed land in the demesne rose from 500 acres to 683 acres between these two dates. The major area of unenclosed land in the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was common land – for each of the copyholders listed in 1559/60, 1508 and 1648 the acreage of enclosed land is followed by an entry of common for x sheep. The amount of unenclosed land can be calculated – 1560, 699 acres; 1608, 610 acres and 1648 657 acres (the figures are only approximate – the apparent increase from 1608 to 1648 can be attributed to the rather flexible nature of customary acres). There was common for 616 sheep in 1560 and 590 in 1680. Apart from chalk downland, the common land was located on the Bembridge Limestone on the eastern side of the parish, as shown by the Tithe Apportionment fieldnames (figure 4), indicating former copyholder's share after enclosure. Thorley Common adjoined Wellow Common in neighbouring Shalfleet parish – from the evidence of manorial surveys and maps it can be inferred that Thorley Common was enclosed between 1680 and c.1800. In the later sixteenth or seventeenth century rough pasture became available in the low lying area to the north of the manor site due to the draining of Thorley Haven (bounds – IWCRO unlisted, c.1675).

### **Thorley in the nineteenth century**

Thorley was almost entirely enclosed by 1800, but the lands of the smaller tenants were still scattered in the 1840s. This can be illustrated by the 132 acres farmed by Barnabus Leigh in 1843. He farmed Tattels and Whitewalls – his fields lay in eight non-connecting locations. The glebe was similarly scattered. At this time the whole parish still belonged to the lord of the manor but was entirely farmed by tenants. There were two large farms, Tapnell, 514 acres, and Thorley (Manor) 613 acres, the other tenants holding amounts ranging from one to 200 acres. About two-thirds of the parish was arable land, compared with about ten percent in 1648. A trade directory of 1895 records that the main crops were wheat, oats and barley, and that Lord Heytesbury was the lord of the manor and sole land owner (Kelly's 1895).

In the nineteenth century, the parish church finally caught up with the majority of the parishioners; ‘With the exception of the south porch, the ancient church of St. Swithin as an ecclesiastical edifice has ceased to exist, it having been found necessary in 1871 to remove it to a more convenient position. The reason assigned for this unfortunate necessity was, that it stood so far from its own parishioners – the village having gradually developed towards the east – that it was practically useless’ (Stone 1891: 2, 61). W. S. Stratton’s church of St. Swithin in Thorley Street incorporated some material from the medieval church (Pevsner and Lloyd 1967: 771).

### Conclusions

This study has attempted to summarise the landscape history of Thorley parish to 1900. The evidence is biased towards the relatively recent past, but this could be partly remedied by systematic archaeological fieldwork on the extensive area of arable land to the south of Thorley and Thorley Street. However, three major themes can be identified.

1. The abundance of crop-mark sites on the Bembridge Limestone in the northern part of the parish, implying intensive use of the landscape in the later prehistory which must have continued well into the Romano-British period.
2. The historic settlement pattern of the parish consisted of two main elements at least from the later middle ages onward. A change of settlement focus from the church/manor site to Thorley Street could have taken place from the fourteenth century onwards, associated with a reduction of population. Settlement shift may have been part of later medieval social and economic changes, with a change of emphasis from arable to pastoral land use, the enclosure of open fields and the decline of demesne farming.
3. The enclosure of the parish was completed by 1800, over half having been enclosed by the mid-sixteenth century. Thorley remained in single ownership into the present century, but the role of the lord of the manor had changed substantially from the eleventh century to the nineteenth, this being reflected in the landscape.

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