

Chapter 4. St Helens Rural Fringes

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St Helens, was originally written by Gill Chitty. With her agreement, it has been edited by Jennifer Lewis, whose comments and observations on evidence which has emerged since 1980 are presented alongside the original text in boxes.

The district covered by the Metropolitan Borough of St Helens contains eleven historic townships the bounds of which are herein identified as those defined by the Ordnance Survey on the first edition of its six inch sheets published in the 1840s (fig. 4.1). However, the present County boundary does not wholly respect these more ancient boundaries and excludes Billinge Higher End, part of Bold township and bisects Ashton-in-Makerfield to exclude the medieval settlement to the east. Fieldwork has been confined to the rural and semi-rural areas of open land within the Borough but research has been extended to cover the entire district in order to provide a framework for an understanding of its historical development.

Full searches of published material have been completed for all townships but documentary searches have been confined almost exclusively to collections in local record offices and libraries. Despite this restriction in scope, the large number of records has necessitated a selective approach. Those townships with greatest areas of undeveloped land were chosen for detailed study - Bold, Rainford and Ashton (Garswood). The study of Newton-le-Willows has been reserved for a detailed report on the medieval and post medieval town. This township is, therefore, only discussed where appropriate in order to place it within the context of the area.

Rob Philpott has examined the landscape history and archaeological evidence for the early development of Newton-le-Willows (1988, 8-21, 51-59).

Documentary work and field survey is concerned with sites from the post-Roman period up to the mid-18th century and includes standing buildings. There are also a large number of sites, known to have existed from documentary sources, for which it is not yet possible to identify an exact location on the ground. Continued research will probably allow the identification of some of these.

Topography and Geology

The topography of the St Helens area is dominated by the basin of the Sankey Brook and its tributaries which drain south east into the Mersey (fig. 4.2). To the north of the basin the land rises over 100 metres towards Crank and Billinge Hill, reaching 179 metres at Billinge Beacon. In the south west of the district at Brown Edge and Blundells Hill, the land rises to over 76 metres.

The drift cover over two-thirds of the district is boulder clay (fig. 4.3). In the north west are the Shirdley Hill Sands and the remains of formerly extensive mosslands which covered the poorly drained areas of Rainford, Windle and Eccleston. Parr Moss lies on the south east side of the Sankey basin.

Fluvio-glacial sands and gravels occur in small areas on the south west and extreme eastern edges of the district. The Triassic Bunter Sandstone and Pebble Beds (now part of the Sherwood Sandstone Formation) outcrop in the south west of the district in Rainhill and also on the eastern margins of the County around Newton-le-Willows. Billinge Hill is formed by the Carboniferous Coal Measures which provide the solid geology from here southwards over most of the district. Fieldwork here has produced little archaeological evidence in an area where mineral extraction and quarrying have caused a great deal of disturbance.

Identification of the full extent of the former mosslands is difficult. The peat cover is disturbed and discontinuous due in part to the extensive extraction of sand for the glass industry and to some three or four centuries at least of reclamation and cultivation.

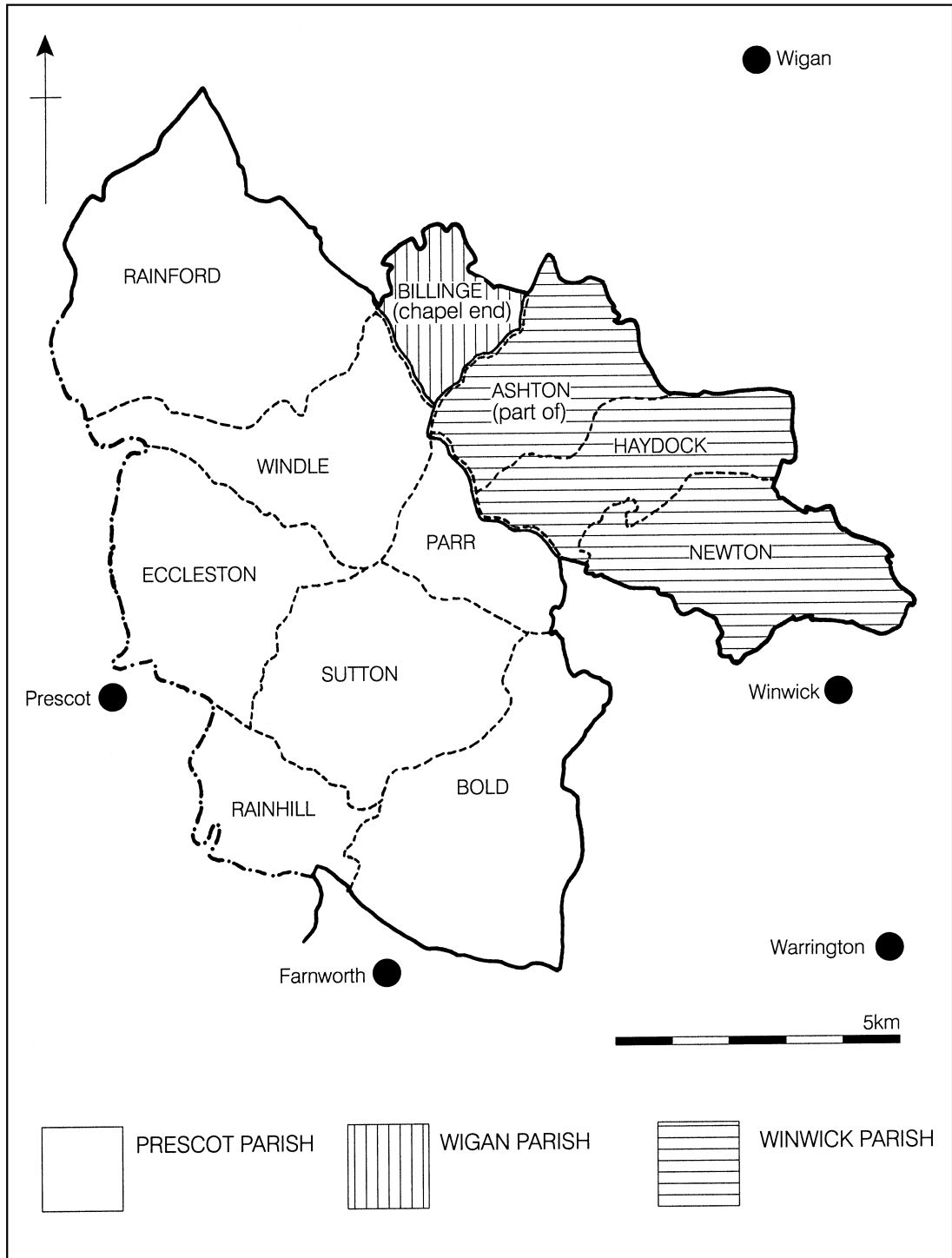


Fig. 4.1 Parishes and townships in St Helens district

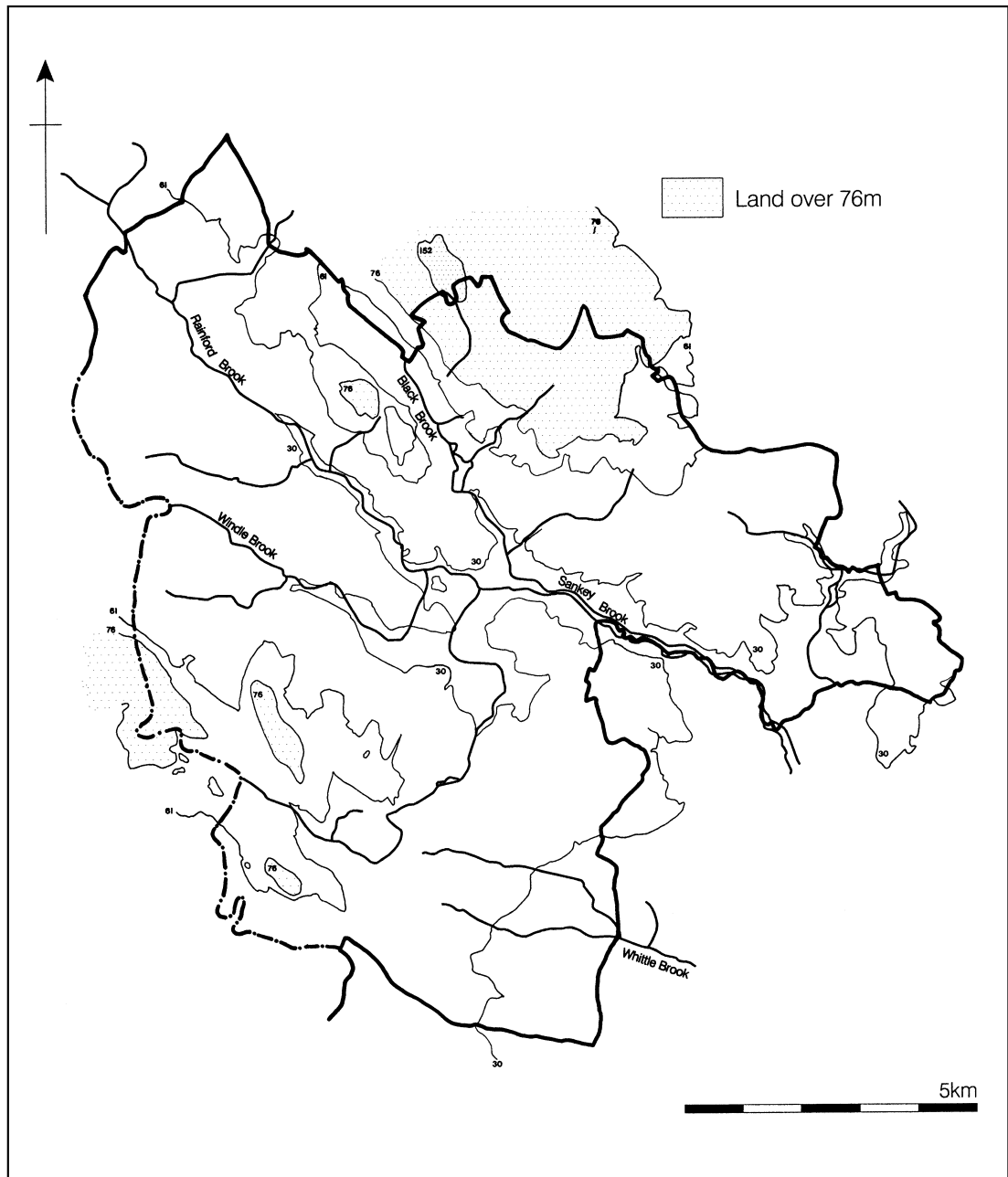


Fig. 4.2 Topography

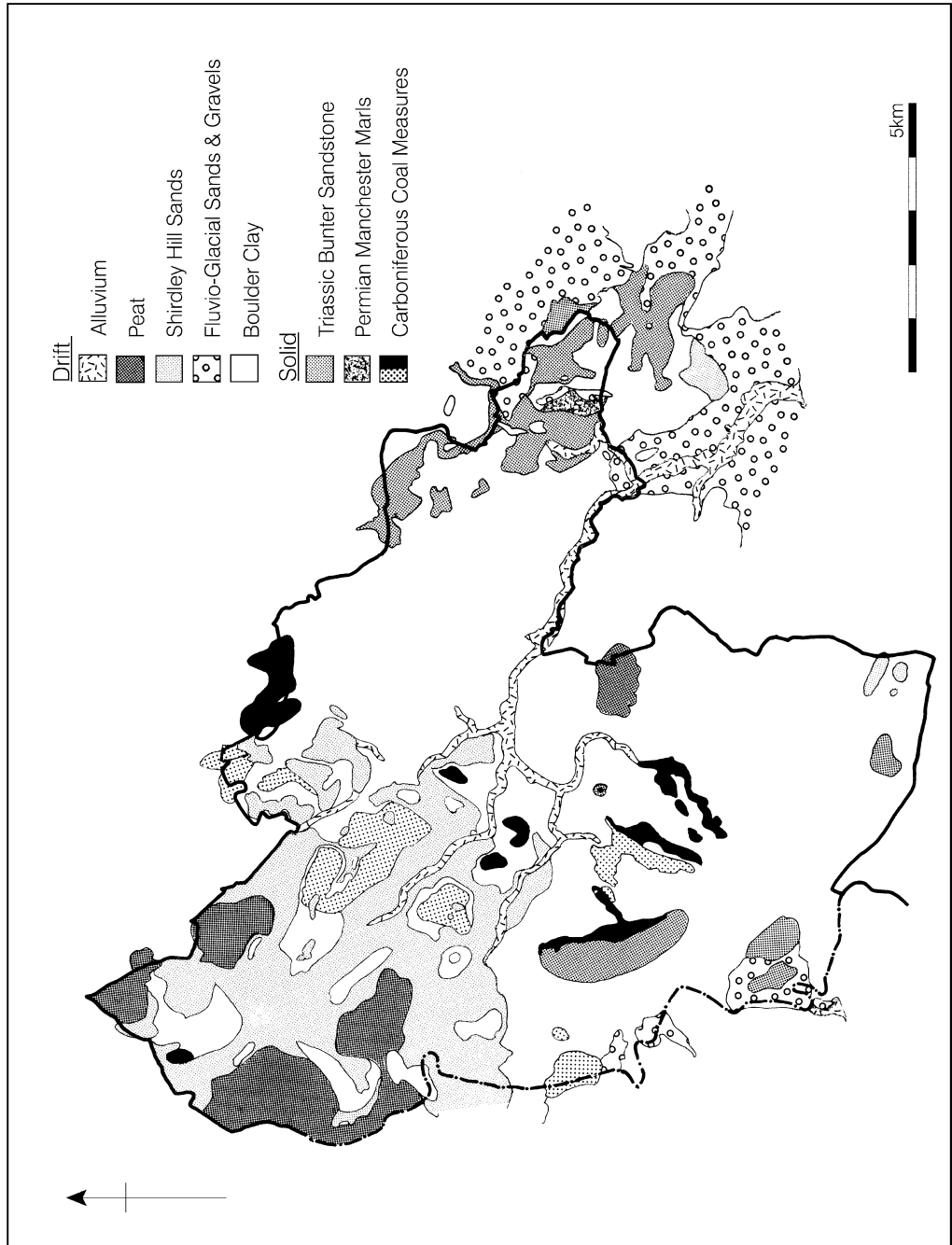


Fig. 4.3 Solid and drift geology

‘The *Morasses* are made Arable by Draining and Marling them, and bring then very Good Corn; they frequently pare off the Tops of these with Push Plows, which the (*sic*) amass together in small Heaps, when they are dry they set them on Fire, and by their alcalious (*sic*) Ashes the Ground is made very Fertile, but will not continue so above three Years, after that it is very Barren’ (Leigh 1700, 65).

The area of mossland which includes Parr Moss lies on the bounds of four townships - Parr, Bold and Sutton in St Helens district and Burtonwood, now in the county of Cheshire. The straight boundaries, marked by boundary stones, which divided the moss between the four townships in the 19th century (Ordnance Survey six inch Sheet, 108 1849) probably represent post-medieval division of the area. Pollen samples from Parr Moss have produced palaeoecological evidence for landscape history and forest disturbance from the Mesolithic period to c.2000 years BP, with major woodland clearance for mixed farming indicated in the final phase of the pollen diagram (Cowell and Innes 1994, 169-187, figs 61-62, table 15).

Post-Roman/Pre-Conquest

During the 5th and 6th centuries the north west of England lay remote from the areas of colonisation of Anglian and Saxon peoples and there seems little doubt that it remained in the undisturbed possession of the native population as a part of one of the large western British kingdoms.

For the Merseyside region, aerial photography, supported by targeted excavation and the recovery of chance finds, is now starting to indicate a strong likelihood that ‘near identical areas were chosen for settlement in the Roman period and again in the Anglo-Saxon period with no implied continuity of community’ (Philpott 1999, 201).

Following the victory in AD 614 of the Northumbrian king, Aethelfrith, against a British confederacy (Whitelock 1979, 160), English control extended as far west as the Irish Sea and over the area later known as south Lancashire and Cheshire. The subsequent history of the north of England, as detailed in the Chronicles and Bede, is the story of the struggle for supremacy between Mercia and the Anglo-Scandinavian kingdom of Northumbria. What is relevant here is the extent to which either of the two kingdoms exerted their influence over the land between the Ribble and Mersey. There is some evidence to indicate that Mercian influence may have predominated for a short period in the 7th century under Penda (Whitelock 1979, 162-3), but with the reassertion of Northumbrian control under Oswy it seems probable that the northern boundary of the Mercian kingdom was pushed back to the line of the River Mersey. By the early 10th century this was the line being fortified by Aethelflaed, with defences at Runcorn and Eddisbury (Whitelock 1979, 212-3), and by AD 927 the Mercian kingdom has established control over the whole of Northumbria (Whitelock 1979, 218).

Place-names

As far as place-names can be used to determine the influence of Mercian and Northumbrian occupation, a mixture of both cultures can be detected in dialect and names (Ekwall 1922, 232). Indeed, for the area under study the only evidence for the pre-Conquest period is that of the place-names. There are no specific historical references and virtually no archaeological sites have been identified. A full study of the place-names in this area remains to be written and, in the absence of this, the discussion which follows is based on Ekwall’s work (1922). Many documentary sources have become available since this was written which will no doubt contribute to the understanding of some names which remain obscure at present. It is unlikely, however, that the overall picture will change.

More recently the place-name evidence for the county of Lancashire, and its implications for the identification of early estates, has been discussed (Kenyon 1991, 64-75, 81-92, figs. 3.1, 4.1).

The large majority of place-names are of English origin, a very small proportion are British and only two can be ascribed with certainty to a Scandinavian source (fig. 4.4). The British place-names, with the exception of Eccleston, lie to the east of the area and form the fringe of a group of British names in and around Newton hundred (e.g. Ince, Wigan, Bryn, Kenyon, Penketh, Culcheth). Ekwall (1922, 225) has suggested that ‘in this district a British population was left in undisturbed possession for a comparatively long time. As the district is not separated by natural boundaries from the surrounding areas, the inference is plausible that it was in the old days chiefly an inaccessible forest’.

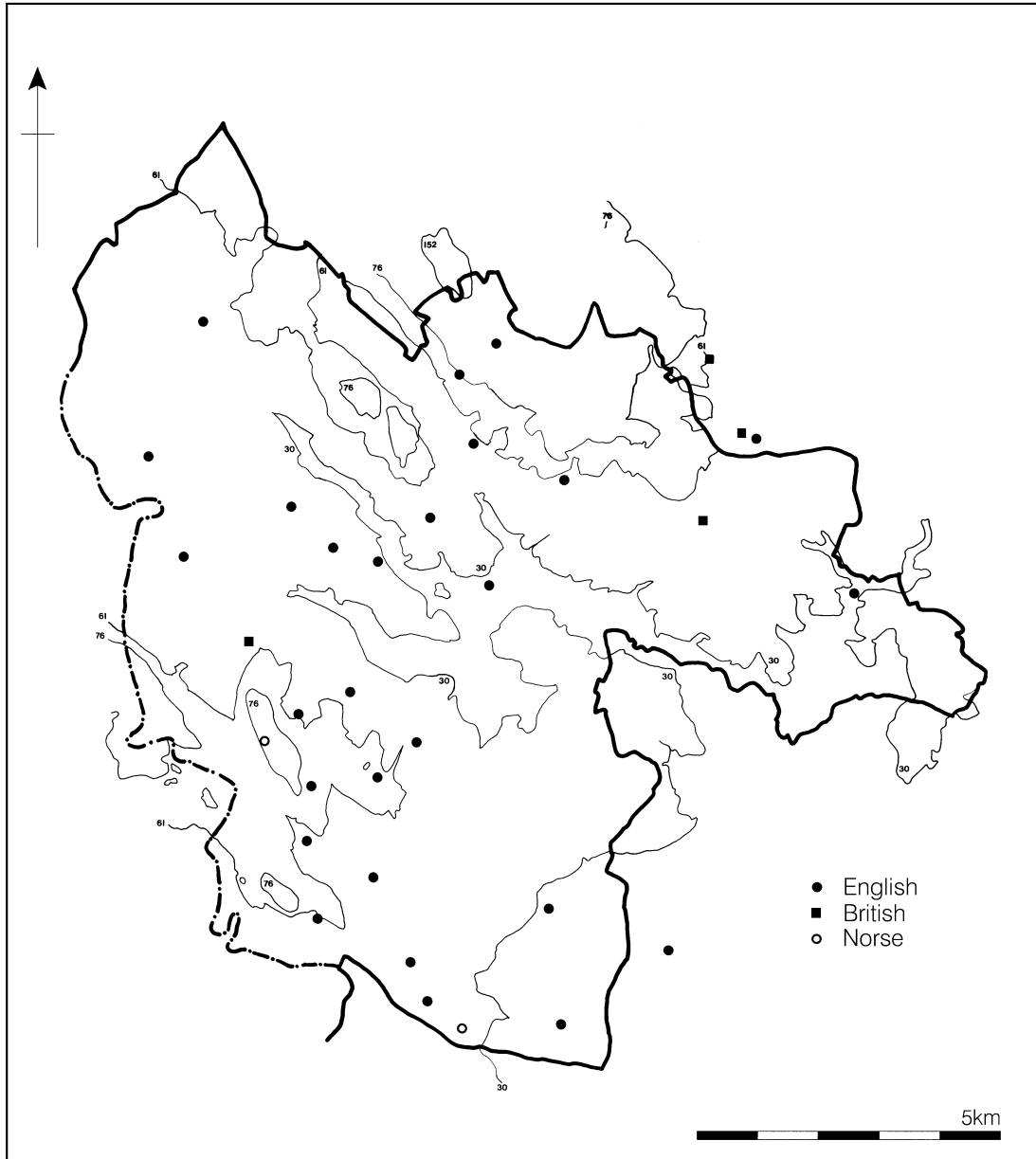


Fig. 4.4 Place-name evidence

The account of woodland given in the Domesday book fully supports this idea, which is not to suggest that the British population was displaced from the other areas and took refuge in the heavily forested district. All the evidence points to the fact that the area was very scantily populated. There would be ample land available to incoming settlers without the need to penetrate the thickly wooded areas to the east.

Wainwright makes the point (Finberg 1975, 34) that 'If the Britons survived with their place-names, they survived in areas which were very accessible', and notes that many of the British place-names in southern Lancashire, and notably the Makerfield names of Ince, Haydock, Bryn and Wigan, were close to the Roman road. The implication is that the Britons did not retreat to remote and inaccessible areas but lived in what he calls 'the more attractive areas'. The spread of Romano-British sites, identified through a combination of aerial photography and field walking, which have a distinct concentration in the Newton /Winwick area, suggests that the population was relatively dense in the part of Makerfield which later lay at the core of the parish/administrative centre. If there was any continuity of population from the Romano-British into the Anglian period - which may be implied in the concentration of British place-names - then it suggests that place-names may have survived not on account of the inaccessibility of the population here but on account of their numerical strength.

Interpretation of the English place-names within a chronological framework cannot be attempted. No forms of name save Newton are given at Domesday and the earliest recorded forms are in the most cases of 13th century or later date. Ekwall offers the opinion that *-tun* endings (e.g. Ashton, Sutton, Elton(head), Burton(head) and Eccleston) are one of the forms indicating the earliest areas of Anglian colonisation but these can by no means be certainly attributed to the 7th century. Newton, for example, must be considerably later. Billinge has often been cited as an example of the *-ingas* (patronymic) place-names indicating primary colonisation. This is not indisputable since another group of *-ing* endings in Lancashire are found as old hill or river names. It is not possible to be certain which of the two forms is the correct interpretation here since the siting of Billinge has merits in favour of both. If the name can be attributed to an early Anglian settlement then it points to colonisation from the north rather than from the Mercian kingdom (Ekwall 1922, 230).

Ekwall also asserted that Billinge probably originally took its name from the hill of the same name and that this may derive from *bill*, sword (1960, 43).

The two place-names indicative of Norse influence are Scholes (O.N. *skali*, hut) in Eccleston and Lunt Heath (O.N. *lundr*, grove) on the southern boundary of Bold. Both places lie on elevations in the Bunter Sandstone on well-drained and probably fairly open situations. Scholes, in particular, is typical of the siting of Norse settlement in Wirral (Chitty 1978, 6-10). However, this area is marginal to the main areas of 10th-century Norse colonisation to the west and the slight evidence seen in the place-names here may even be attributable to an indirect influence from Northumbria.

The evidence for settlement suggested by Scandinavian place-names in Lancashire has been considered by F.T. Wainwright (Finberg 1975, 181-228). Gillian Fellows-Jensen (1992, 40) concluded that between the Ribble and Mersey the place-name evidence suggests that Scandinavian names in the region represent in part expansion from the Danelaw and in part arrival of settlers from across the Irish Sea, including Ireland and the Isle of Man. She sees the region between the Ribble and Mersey, apart from the coastal area, as having little Scandinavian settlement, and perhaps being a kind of no man's land between the Mercian frontier between Chester and Manchester and the Viking area of Amounderness.

St Oswald's Well

St Oswald's Well in Newton is the only archaeological site in the region to which a pre-Conquest date has been attributed. It has been identified by some historians with the site of Oswald of Northumbria's death in the battle fought against Penda in 642 'at the place called in English Maserfelth' (Sherley-Price 1968, 156). The basis for this is the identification of *Maserfelth* as Makerfield, and the dedication of both the well and pre-Conquest church at Winwick, a mile to the south, to the cult of Oswald and to Bede's description of the site.

'Oswald's great devotion and faith in God was made evident by the miracles that took place after his death. For at the place where he was killed fighting for his country against the heathen, sick men and beasts are healed to this day. Many people took away the very dust from the place where his body fell This practice became so popular that, as the earth was gradually removed, a pit was left in which a man could stand ...' (Sherley-Price 1968, 156).

These words written some 90 years after Oswald's death, by a man who undoubtedly never saw the site himself, certainly fits very precisely the site known today as St Oswald's well. It is not in fact a well in the sense of a natural source of water, as are other holy wells in the area, but a deep hollow in the bottom of which is a small

stone-lined rectangular depression, generally dry and filled by rainwater in some seasons. Modern historians identify 'Maserfelth' with Oswestry on other grounds and there is no archaeological evidence apart from fragments of pre-Norman sculpture at St Oswald's Church in Winwick to support an early date for the site.

Denise Kenyon has touched on the problem and hinted that the evidence of Christian graves found in excavation at Southworth, near Winwick in 1980 could represent burials following the battle (1991, 63, 77-78). However, the alignment of over 800 graves suggested three phases of use between the 5th-11th centuries in this large, and to some degree planned, burial ground which was superimposed on a burial mound dating from the Bronze Age. A small structure, probably timber-framed, appears to have been superimposed by later graves (Freke and Thacker 1990).

This then is the meagre evidence for a period of some 600 years from the Roman occupation to the Norman Conquest. No early chapel or church sites are known within the area. Eccleston's place name, the first element deriving from the British form of the Latin *ecclesia* (church) suggests the existence of an early church site nearby but there is no direct documentary or field evidence for such a site in Eccleston itself. Within the township the field name Burying Hill may indicate an early religious site; there is reference to a small disused burial ground near the site of the medieval cross adjacent to the hill (Farrer & Brownbill 3 1907, 362), which is accompanied by a tradition that a chapel once existed here. If this is the case then it must have been abandoned at a very early date since there is not a single documented reference to it. The discovery of a previously unknown early chapel during excavations at Southworth, Winwick in 1980 (Freke and Thacker 1990) demonstrates that such sites still remain to be identified.

It is, however, perhaps more likely that Eccleston had been earlier attached to a wider area which included Prescott in Whiston. This, after all, was the head of an extremely large medieval parish and while there is no record of a pre-Norman foundation in Prescott, there is a strong probability that one existed there.

Places called *Eccles*, *Eccleshill* or *Eccleston* are found in several places in Lancashire. It is, however, unclear whether they indicate 'settlement belonging to the church' or 'settlement where the church lay' (Kenyon 1990, 95-96).

By the late 12th century a dependent chapel had been established at Farnworth to serve the southern half of the parish which suggests that the mother church in Prescott had existed for some period before this. Figure 4.5 shows the sites of the known pre-Conquest churches and chapels in the area, each of which became the centre of a large parish in the early medieval period. If an early foundation at Prescott is discounted then an enormous area, including the whole of St Helens district and a large part of Knowsley, remained remote from any church or chapel. This may indeed be the case and reinforces the overall picture of a small and very scattered population during this period. There is a possibility that a pre-Norman domestic chapel existed in Newton (Farrer & Brownbill 4 1911a, 135) for the royal manor but no archaeological evidence has been found for such a building and the earliest documentary source refers to the endowment of a chantry in 1285.

Medieval Period

For some parts of the country it is possible to employ the information recorded in the Domesday Book survey to deduce the nature of settlement and the distribution of population in pre-Norman England. Regrettably, Lancashire does not appear as a unit in Domesday and the description of the land *Inter Ripam et Mersham*, between the Ribble and Mersey, is both summary and incomplete by comparison with that for Cheshire. This is possibly a function of the history of the area and its treatment as a political no-man's land or an area of marcherland between Northumbria and Mercia. Even after the detachment of this land from Northumbria in the 10th century, it was never taken into the earldom of Mercia but remained separate as royal demesne. Thus, at the Conquest, the land changed hands from one royal overlord to another without materially affecting the local inhabitants. Its status and remoteness may have afforded some protection against the northern campaign, since there are no areas recorded as waste in this district.

Within the area between the Ribble and Mersey were six hundreds (the units of pre-Norman and medieval administration) and St Helens covers parts of the hundreds of Newton and Warrington.

It seems likely that Newton hundred was taken out of a much larger region, probably the hundred of Warrington, since lands which belonged to that Hundred wrap the west, south and east bounds of Newton.

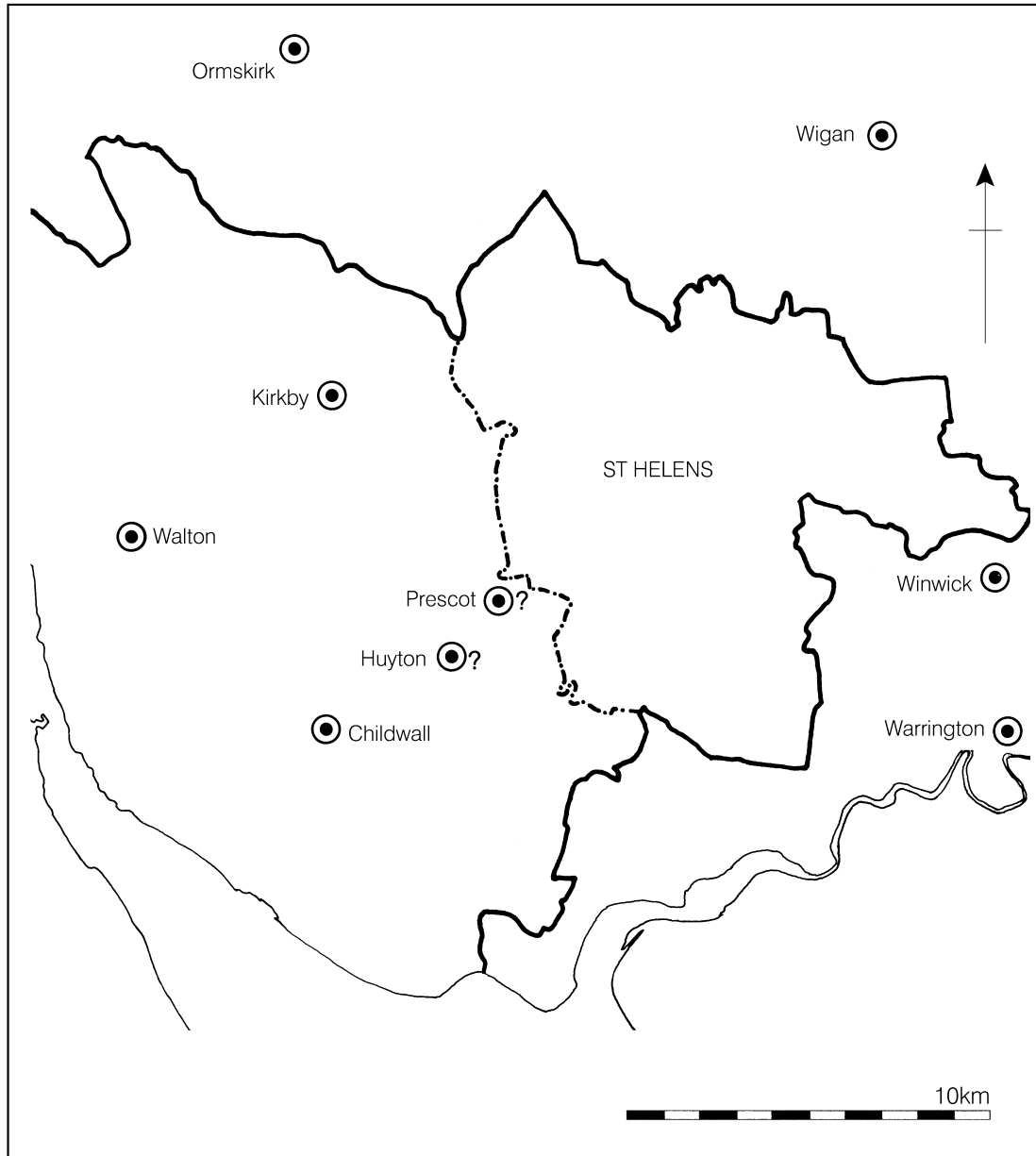


Fig. 4.5 Pre-conquest churches and chapels

The division between the two hundreds was probably more or less coterminous with the boundary between Prescott parish and the parishes of Wigan and Winwick (figs 4.1, 4.2), along the Black Brook and Sankey Brook. With the exception of West Derby hundred, which receives a more detailed treatment, the other hundreds are assessed and appear to have been treated as large royal manors. None of the berewicks held as subsidiary manors is named, nor were any details given except for the land held in demesne (i.e. for the use of the king or lord himself). Only very general conclusions can therefore be drawn from the information available.

The origins of the royal estate probably date from at least the opening years of the 11th century when Wulfric Spot owned all the land between the Ribble and Mersey, together with Wirral (Sawyer 1979, xvii-xxiv; Whitelock 1930, 46-51, 151-160). Wulfric's will shows that he was of very high rank and the bequests to his sons indicate that the lands were to pass to them as his heirs. The region may have been considered as a buffer zone between Mercia and Northumbria but, after 1002-04, the land between Ribble and Mersey was to revert to the Crown to be held by Edward the Confessor as a massive royal estate in 1066 (Lewis 2000, 15-16, 22-29). After the Conquest Roger of Poitou, third son of Roger of Montgomery, earl of Shrewsbury, whose estates lay on the Welsh marches, received the Confessor's estate in south Lancashire. Like his father, perhaps Roger of Poitou was given especial responsibility for control of this outpost of royal land. The special status of the region may go some way to explaining the summary nature of the Domesday record and also be the reason for its escape from deliberate wasting after the Conquest.

In NEWTON Hundred

Before 1066 there were 5 hides in NEWTON, of which 1 was in lordship. The church of the manor had 1 carucate of land. St Oswald's of the village had 2 carucates of land exempt from all (payments). 15 of the men whom they call *drengs* held the rest of the manor as 15 manors, but they were outliers of this manor. They paid 30s. between them. Woodland 10 leagues long and 6 leagues and 2 furlongs wide; hawk's (*sic*) eyries. All but two of the free men of this Hundred were subject to the same customs as the men of [West] Derby, but they reaped for two days more in August in the King's fields. These two had 5 carucates of land, the fines for bloodshed and violence to women, and the pasturage of their men. The King had the other [fines]. The whole manor paid £10 10s in revenue to the King. Now there are 6 *drengs*, 12 villagers and 4 smallholders; between them they have 9 ploughs. Value of this lordship £4. (Morgan 1978, R2).

In the entry for West Derby we are told that there were 6 carucates in each hide. Accordingly, the distribution of Newton's landholdings can be analysed as follows:

<i>Lordship/demesne</i>	<i>Church of the manor</i>	<i>St Oswald's</i>	<i>15 drengs/15 manors of which</i>	<i>2 drengs</i>
1 hide/6 carucates	1 carucate	2 carucates	3.5 hides/21 carucates of which [3hides/18 carucates]	5 carucates

It is perhaps no coincidence that, in the 13th and 14th centuries, Newton Hundred is found to contain 18 townships. Of these, two were held by the church, nine were attached by military service to the fee of Makerfield and nine, held in thanage, had been granted to the lord of Makerfield. The distribution pattern shows that the church lands lay at the north and south end of the Hundred. The military holdings lay at the core and the thanage lands lay in a continuous belt of townships along the north and western sides of the Hundred (Lewis 2000, 33-34, 50-64, figs 26, 27).

<i>Makerfield Fee</i>	<i>Marsey Fee</i>	<i>Thanage</i>	<i>Church</i>
Abram	Haigh	Ashton	Wigan
Arbury		Billinge	Winwick
Golborne		Haydock	
Kenyon		Hindley	
Lowton		Houghton	
Newton		Middleton	
Southworth		Ince	
Croft		Pemberton	
		Winstanley	

(**Emboldened** places are in St Helens Borough)

In WARRINGTON Hundred

King Edward held WARRINGTON with 3 outliers. 1 hide. To the manor itself belonged 34 *drengs* and they had as many manors, in which there were 42 carucates of land and 1½ hides. ST. ELFIN'S held 1 carucate of land exempt from all customary dues except tax. The whole manor with the Hundred paid £15 less 2s in revenue to the King. Now 2 ploughs in lordship; 8 men with 1 plough. These men hold land there: Roger 1 carucate of land; Theobald 1½ carucates; Warin 1 carucate; Ralph 5 carucates; William 2 hides and 4 carucates of land; Aethelhard 1 hide and ½ carucate; Osmund 1 carucate of land. Total value £4 10s; value of the lordship £3 10s (Morgan 1978, R3).

The situation in Warrington Hundred is more complex than in Newton. The amount of assessed land (carucates and hides) and number of manors or estates cannot be easily correlated and it seems that, perhaps, adjustments were made between 1066 and 1086. All the same, the record for 1086 identifies 32 carucates distributed between 7 named individuals and 32 townships or hamlets can be easily identified in the post-Conquest period. These include Warrington itself and the so-called Domesday outliers which were, possibly at Ditton, Bold and Bedford. The Domesday carucate which belonged to the church seems to be lost from view.

Warrington Fee	Widnes Fee	Marsey Fee	Forest Fee	Thanage	Shrewsbury Abbey	Crown
Atherton	Astley	Westleigh	Parr	Bedford	Poulton	?Rainford
Culcheth	Appleton		Whiston	Bold	Fearnhead	Burtonwood
Glazebrook	Cronton		Prescot	Ditton	Woolston	
Great Sankey	Cuerdley				Martinscroft	
Little Sankey	Eccleston					
Penketh	Rainhill					
Pennington	Sutton					
Rixton						
Tyldesley						
Shakerley						
Warrington						
Windle						

(**Emboldened** places are in St Helens Borough)

Twelve estates which went to the fee of Warrington were clustered along the Mersey and in the eastern part of the Hundred, with an isolated township, at Windle, in the west. Seven townships, all but one in the west of the Hundred, went to the fee of Widnes. Three, perhaps the outliers of 1066, were scattered and held in thanage (Lewis 2000, 30-39, 50-64, figs. 24-25, 27).

A characteristic feature of the entries is the use of a dual system of land assessment comprising the Anglian/Mercian hide and virgate and the Northumbrian/Scandinavian carucate and bovate. The same cultural hybrid is evident in the terms used to describe the tenants of the subsidiary manors.

The hide (which usually comprised four virgates, each of between 15-60 acres) and carucate (which contained eight bovates or oxgangs, each of between 7-32 acres) represented the amount of land which could be ploughed in a year. Whilst the hide and carucate are considered to relate to an area of cultivated land needed to support a family, in fact the actual area of under the plough probably varied according to the quality of the soil (Richardson 1974 10-11).

The entries concerning plough-teams are not sufficiently consistent to permit an assessment of the extent or distribution of arable land. Some attempt to calculate the total number of plough-teams of the area has been hazarded (Farrer 1898) and while such calculations must be considered with caution, it is clear that by 1086 the area was settled, if only sparsely, and farmed. Farrer's calculated population 'implies a density of about 2 people per square mile. This density is that of a possible recorded population for other counties, must be multiplied by a factor of say 4 or 5, for the actual population' (Terrett 1962, 407). In areas of mossland or densely wooded land this density would naturally be lower.

Woodland in the 11th century

The Domesday survey provides little more conclusive information with regard to the extent of woodland. In Warrington hundred no woodland is recorded. This may be an oversight or, more probably, because the assessment included Newton where an enormous area, estimated as between 130 and 140 square miles, almost double the area of the hundred, is entered. It is probable that this was a global figure including uncleared forest extending into the adjacent hundreds of West Derby, Warrington and Salford. Nonetheless it emphasises the nature of the land in this area. According to Farrer's very approximate calculations, something less than 7% of the land in Newton hundred was under cultivation and less than 10% in Warrington hundred (Farrer 1898, 22-

26). The extent of the woodland recorded suggests that the remainder of this land remained largely uncleared forest in the 11th century. This is reflected in the place-names, most of which are found fairly late in written form in the 13th century. Almost half the early names consist of descriptive elements relating to woodland or forest clearance, e.g. Windleshaw, Hardshaw, Cranshaw (O.E. *scaga*, -shaw, thicket, grove), Shirdley, Birchley (O.E. *leah* tract of open land, clearing) Barrow and Lunt, deriving from the O.E. and O.N. for grove; and more obviously, for example, in *Ashton*, *Garswood* and *Woodfall*.

Major and minor place-names within the Hundred suggest that the woodland may have been most dense in the thanage-held villis (Lewis 2000, fig. 4).

The Medieval Landscape and agriculture

If the evidence for the 11th century reflects a true picture of the settlement of the area, then by the 13th century a very rapid growth of population and great inroads into the uncleared landscape had taken place. The environmental evidence from zonule PMB-9 (0-550mm depth) of the Parr Moss/Burtonwood soil profile suggests major forest clearance together with cereal-type pollen and herb flora indicating that a mixed farming economy was well-established at this time which could, tentatively, relate to the period around the Norman Conquest (Cowell and Innes 1994, 176, 179, table 15).

To some extent the agricultural development of the area will have been affected by the existence of the Royal Forest of Lancashire. None of the area under study fell within the bounds of the forest proper, but a wide belt of land beyond this constituted the forest purlieu and was subject to forest law. The Forest Eyre of 1334-6 indicates that the villis of Bold, Rainhill, Eccleston, Sutton and Parr lay within the area of Forest jurisdiction (Cunliffe Shaw 1956, 13).

In medieval England the term Forest implied an area of land subject to a special legal code and under the direct control of the king through his appointed officers. The object of Forest law was the preservation and protection of animals for hunting purposes and of the woodlands in which they lived. Within the Forest itself such restrictions may have been onerous on local people but in the purlieus it is unlikely that the law was strictly applied. At the end of the 12th century King John granted a charter allowing greater freedom in the use of land within the bounds of the Lancashire Forest. This was given in return for a large fine of five hundred pounds of silver which in itself suggests that the area was fairly prosperous. Outside the areas specifically designated by the Crown for hunting purposes, of which none are known for St Helens, the impact of the Forest legislation on the development of agriculture and spread of settlement does not appear to have been very significant. All the same, some distinctions should perhaps be made between those villis for which there is good evidence for the development of an organised system of open-field cultivation, and those where the arable is less-easily identified.

Offences recorded in the Forest Eyre of 1334-36 give some indication of the situation and suggest that, in return for a sum of money, it was possible to make enclosures. 'It is presented by the foresters and verderers that Richard of Bold enclosed 20 acres at the Bolde to the damage of the deer. And the master forester has ordered that the same enclosure be thrown down And upon this comes the aforesaid Richard and gives a fine that the 20 acres may be enclosed and he gives the Earl 66s 8d.' (Cunliffe Shaw 1956, 153).

Richard of Bold's 14th-century enclosure can, perhaps, be identified in the 19th century as a group of fields called Peel⁵⁶ Hough which lay to the south of Bold Old Hall (Lancs. R.O. DRL 1/11). The enclosure may have been defined by watercourses. The Lower Park, which lay beyond these fields, may have been 'wasted' by 1603. At this time it was claimed that the husband of Jane, widow of a later Richard Bold, had killed and worried many of the deer (Farrer and Brownbill 3 1907, 406, n.5). Charters relating to grants of land to Cockersand Abbey contain useful descriptions of land in Eccleston, Billinge, Bold, Sutton, Rainford, Parr and Windle which assist an understanding of the medieval landscape at the beginning of the 13th century (Farrer 1900, *passim*). Although it is likely that at least in some of these townships the land was no longer dominated by woods, the importance of the woodland in the economy cannot be overlooked. Examples can be cited as a useful insight into contemporary land use. In a grant in Eccleston the land is given 'saving to the grantor and his heirs riddings⁵⁷ made or to be made; together with housebote of oak trees and haybote⁵⁸ and acquittance of pannage in Eccleston wood for the pigs of two men who shall hold that land.' (Farrer 1900, 603).

⁵⁶ Palisaded, fenced enclosure.

⁵⁷ Clearance of woodland, assart or land taken in from the waste to be cultivated.

⁵⁸ The right to take wood from the common lands for the repair of buildings and fences.

Other grants from the late 12th and early 13th centuries provide evidence for boundaries circumscribed by mosses (carr), riddings and fellings, woodland and streams. In Windle, for example, the boundary around arable land ran ‘to wit, *Herthefelling* (Earthfelling), by these bounds, on the eastern side of Fell Clough to the deep Moss leach at Windle, below the head of Moss leach wood, through the valley by a straight line to the east again, and so to the boundary of Parr’ (Farrer 1900, 608). In Billinge ‘a portion of land called *Leuerich-ridding*, to wit, within the carr and *Hennercroft*; and all his share of *Crockhurst* within these bounds from the dyke on the northern side of *Roemenh-ridding* across to *Woodwall-syke* going down by the woodland-well syke to the ford syke to the ford next the house of Thomas Cut which was burnt thence from that ford across towards the south to the dyke by the *Dock Butts* and so along to the boundary between the land of Cockersand and the land of the Hospital of Chester and so by that boundary to the dyke on the south side of John’s ridding thence going up by that brook to the *fernyvale* by *Leuerich-ridding* ...’ (Farrer 1900, 667-8).

Within the natural constraints of the landscape the agriculture of the area appears to have developed in a recognisable pattern of fields worked in common, and divided into furlongs and selions (strips of cultivated land within the furlongs). For example, there is a ‘Grant from Hugh of Eccleston of 3 selions of land in Eccleston, to wit, the headland of the furlong which is called *Bothum* and the furthest sellions (*sic*) in the same furlong abutting upon the said headland ...’ (Farrer 1900, 600).

There is clear evidence for open-field cultivation in Newton and in Haydock it was particularly extensive. The arrangement of furlongs in Haydock’s common field has been suggested and Philpott has attempted a reconstruction of the fields in Newton (Legh MS 1466, 10.1 - 13.2, 17.1-19.14; Philpott 1988, 51-58, fig. 19).

In some villis the evidence for open-field cultivation is, however, less clear and enclosure of the land appears to have taken place early. Descriptions of land in the medieval documents indicate that a large number of small fields rather than a few large common fields was the rule. Grants of land suggest that, even in the 12th century, farming in closes was favoured. *Croft* occurs frequently in most descriptions of land. It is unclear whether these are separate enclosures, perhaps from assarts, or possibly enclosed furlongs within a large common field (Cunliffe Shaw 1956, 345). Some documents indicate that ‘crofts’ were held in severalty, for example ‘all his part of the land called *Roundicroft* within these bounds ...’ (Lumby 1939, 207) while some are clearly farmed by a single tenant.

What is evident is that by the mid-13th century the landscape is predominantly agricultural and the bounds of each township are quite precisely defined (e.g. Hawkes 1936, 690). Throughout the 13th century the Assize Rolls attest the encroachment on to the common pasture for arable. ‘Richard de *Wulcrofthead* (in Eccleston) accused Robert de Eccleston and others of razing his dyke, so that their cattle entered and destroyed his corn. The defendant alleged that he wished to improve to himself a part of the common pasture of the vill of *Wolscroft*; whereupon Robert de Eccleston caused this encroachment to be removed’ (Farrer and Brownbill 3 1907, 363).

By the 14th century the continued expansion of agriculture was having its effect on the once apparently inexhaustible woodlands. In 1327 Eccleston wood, referred to above in a mid-13th century charter (Farrer 1900, 603) was the subject of a dispute regarding manorial rights between Alan de Eccleston, lord of Eccleston, and his ‘charterers and freemen ... in default of the estover⁵⁹ which they were accustomed to have in the wood of Eccleston which now begins to decay’ (Hawkes 1936, 72).

An early 16th-century rental of Eccleston demonstrates that virtually the whole township, both demesne and land of the free tenants, was in ‘closes’ at this date (Lancs. R.O. DDSc 25/3; see Appendix below) which is in marked contrast with the situation in Newton and Haydock though admittedly the evidence for these townships is some forty or so years earlier. But

‘the normal manorial plan never developed between the Ribble and the Mersey and it is particularly interesting that demesne cultivation and bondage works played only an:

insignificant part in the tenurial system of the area, since it implies that the economic life was by no means dependent on servile labour. Hence there was no fundamental reason why the

⁵⁹ The term supersedes that of ‘bote’ and includes the right to carry wood for use as fuel.

11th-century system should not be replaced by leases to tenants-at-will, and the small services be commuted for money rents and these changes were in fact very rapidly brought about after the conquest. ... The tenure of this new class of tenants-at-will was one of great freedom and had a definite contractual basis which freed them from the more irksome aspects of the manorial system and allowed a free exchange of holdings' (Walker 1939, 49-50).

All the same, in the 16th century the free tenants of Eccleston continued to pay a money rent in respect of carrying service.

This pattern of land use probably accounts, at least in part, for the dispersal of settlement and population. Its origins may lie in the availability of land for an expanding population which led to extensive rather than intensive development of arable agriculture. It is possible that there are much less easily defined historical factors linked to the pre-Norman status of the area.

Medieval Settlement

From a strict archaeological point of view, the purpose of a study of the medieval landscape is to aid an understanding of the location and nature of medieval settlement, to identify sites and interpret land use. The earliest maps of this area to actually show the location of buildings come from the 18th and 19th centuries, and these show an extremely scattered settlement pattern. The question that remains is whether this pattern was typical also of the medieval period.

The first comprehensive maps to provide consistent cover across the whole area are the surveys carried out for the Tithe Commissioners between 1836 and 1845. Both nucleated and linear settlements are shown and these fall into three categories. In St Helens, there are those - a large proportion - which owe much of their growth to fairly late industrial development around collieries, works, railways and canals in the 18th and 19th centuries. There are also small hamlets (such as Seneley Green, Peasley Cross, Rainhill Stoops, Moss Bank, Dentons Green) which are certainly of post-medieval, and probably earlier, date. Finally there are three settlements, Rainford, Billinge and Hardshaw, which might be classified as villages since they are, or were, linear developments around pre-Reformation chapels. To the latter three it may be possible to assign a medieval origin, if it is assumed that the chapels were built in pre-existing centres of settlement, but it is difficult to prove the same for the smaller hamlets.

Virtually all the known medieval moated and manorial sites lie in isolation from these settlements but there is little archaeological or documentary evidence for their existence in the medieval period. A dispersed pattern of settlement seems to predominate and, even in the mid-19th century, in every township a very large proportion of the rural population lived in scattered farms and cottages. It has already been noted that enclosure of the land appears to have taken place early and it would appear that the pattern of dispersed settlement is not a function of the parcelling out of common land. The comparative freedom of those who lived in the region appears to have allowed the development of relatively independent land management in small 'estates' within each manor or township.

Using moated sites and ditched enclosures as a basis of study, an examination of medieval estates in southwest Lancashire has shown that the majority were in peripheral areas of their townships. As the homesteads and farms of free men, they seem to have had access to a varied land resource. Animal husbandry and arable cultivation were practised side by side (Lewis 2000, 65-74).

Where it has been possible to confirm the medieval boundaries of the eleven townships within the study area from contemporary accounts (e.g. Sutton, early 13th century; Hawkes 1936), they approximate closely to their medieval counterparts, the vills (fig. 4.6). Most of the vills comprised a single manor or estate.

Though probably originally defined at a considerably earlier date, the bounds of Bold were described in 1254. Careful reconstruction has shown that they changed very little for over 700 years (North 1995). A slight change in the eastern boundary is suggested, however, for the area around Barrow Old Hall. As early as 1330 it seems to have been considered to lie in Bold but in the 15th century it was quite clearly attached to the adjoining vill of Great Sankey, as a possession of Sir Peter Legh (Legh MS., 1466, 4.7). However, in 1537, it was assigned as dower to Elizabeth, daughter of Sir Thomas Gerard, on her marriage with Richard Bold (V.C.H. 3 1907, 408) and the 19th-century township boundary clearly includes Barrow within Bold township.

These units of land are very large when compared with Wirral, for example, where there are 39 townships in an area of similar size. Wirral was relatively densely populated during the early medieval period and there can never have been the same pressure on the land in St Helens. With its large areas of moss and heathland, it was

not capable of supporting a large population dependant on intensive arable farming. The size of the large townships in St Helens is probably, then, related to the low density of population. However, as mentioned above, in the medieval period many small estates developed within the vills and were sometimes styled 'vill' in their own right (e.g. *Wolfscroft*; *la Quick* in Bold); some of which had achieved separate manorial status (e.g. Hardshaw in Windle, which was probably the estate granted to the Hospital of St John as early as 1292).

Though the documentary evidence is, for the most part, lacking until the Great Survey of 1212 (Farrer 1903), some of these small estates may well have been created before the Conquest. In Bold at least five such named *lands* are known to have developed moated sites (fig. 4.7). The pattern of settlement seems to be related to these smaller *lands* rather than to the large vill and manorial units. Burtonhead in Sutton is an example for which an estate plan probably dates from c.1580 (fig. 4.11; Lancs. R.O. DDSc 32/1). The estate was granted as half a ploughland to Gilbert of Haydock in the early 13th century when its bounds were described in detail (Farrer & Brownbill 3 1907, 358, n. 5). The plan shows the hall, three named houses and three other buildings which may be cottages or farm buildings. These are loosely grouped around a central area of hedged closes, forming a discrete and isolated hamlet. However, it is now difficult to assess how compact this settlement may have been as the scale of the drawing is rather idiosyncratic; the distance between the hall and Peasley Cross is, for example, well over half a mile.

The arrangement is now considered to be typical of many small estates in southwest Lancashire (Lewis 2000). The owner of the estate would occupy the principal house and together with his tenants, or members of his extended family, would farm the land attached to the estate. With access to a variable land resource an economy based on mixed farming seems likely. This might even allow such estates to survive times of difficulty and downturns in the economy. It could also help to explain the reason for dispersed settlement within the region.

Dispersed settlement of this kind is far more difficult to identify than places with recognisable buildings *foci* and formal or semi-formal patterns of roads. The immediately available building material over much of the area will have been timber which leaves few traces. Only in parts of Rainhill, Eccleston and Billinge was building stone more readily accessible though, as foundation courses and roofing material, this would probably be used only to a limited extent in the medieval period. Intensive arable cultivation which is practised on the mossland and boulder clay areas has not, as yet, revealed cropmarks of such slight, isolated clusters of buildings as are likely to remain.

It has already been noted that aerial photography and targeted excavation in Merseyside is showing evidence for Romano-British and post-Roman settlement sites, where there is some slight migration as places were re-occupied, in fairly close proximity to post-medieval farmsteads. Since 1981 aerial photography has produced evidence for enclosures which bear little or no relationship to the post-medieval and modern patterns of fields; and material from field walking in such areas is suggesting good reason to suppose that sustained study can identify some of the early isolated settlement areas.

Newton

The exception to the general pattern of agriculture and settlement discussed above is found at Newton-le-Willows which developed into a town in the medieval period. The archaeology of the borough forms the subject of a separate study and is considered in general terms here within the context of the whole area.

Rob Philpott's study of Newton (1988, 8-21, 51-58) has been augmented by further fieldwork. The line of the Roman road has been confirmed in excavation as has the moat at Newton Hall and the site of Newton Mill (Philpott 2000a 19-32, 33-44). Several timber-framed buildings have also been identified in the town.

All the archaeological and historical evidence points to the existence of an important settlement at Newton from an early period. It may be supposed that the town developed close to the Roman road from Wilderspool for good reason although there is no other evidence for a Roman settlement here.

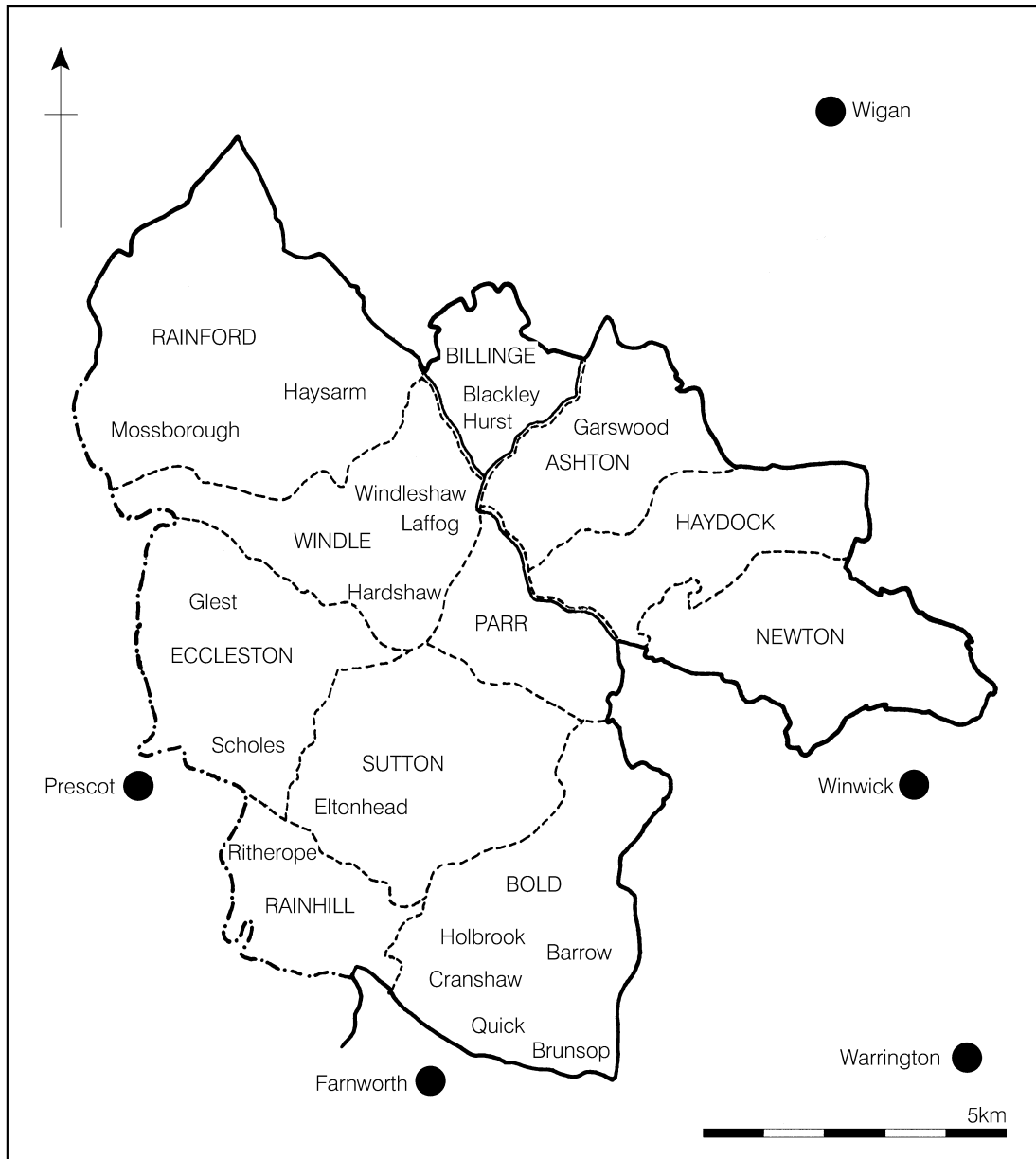


Fig. 4.6 Medieval villis and named lands

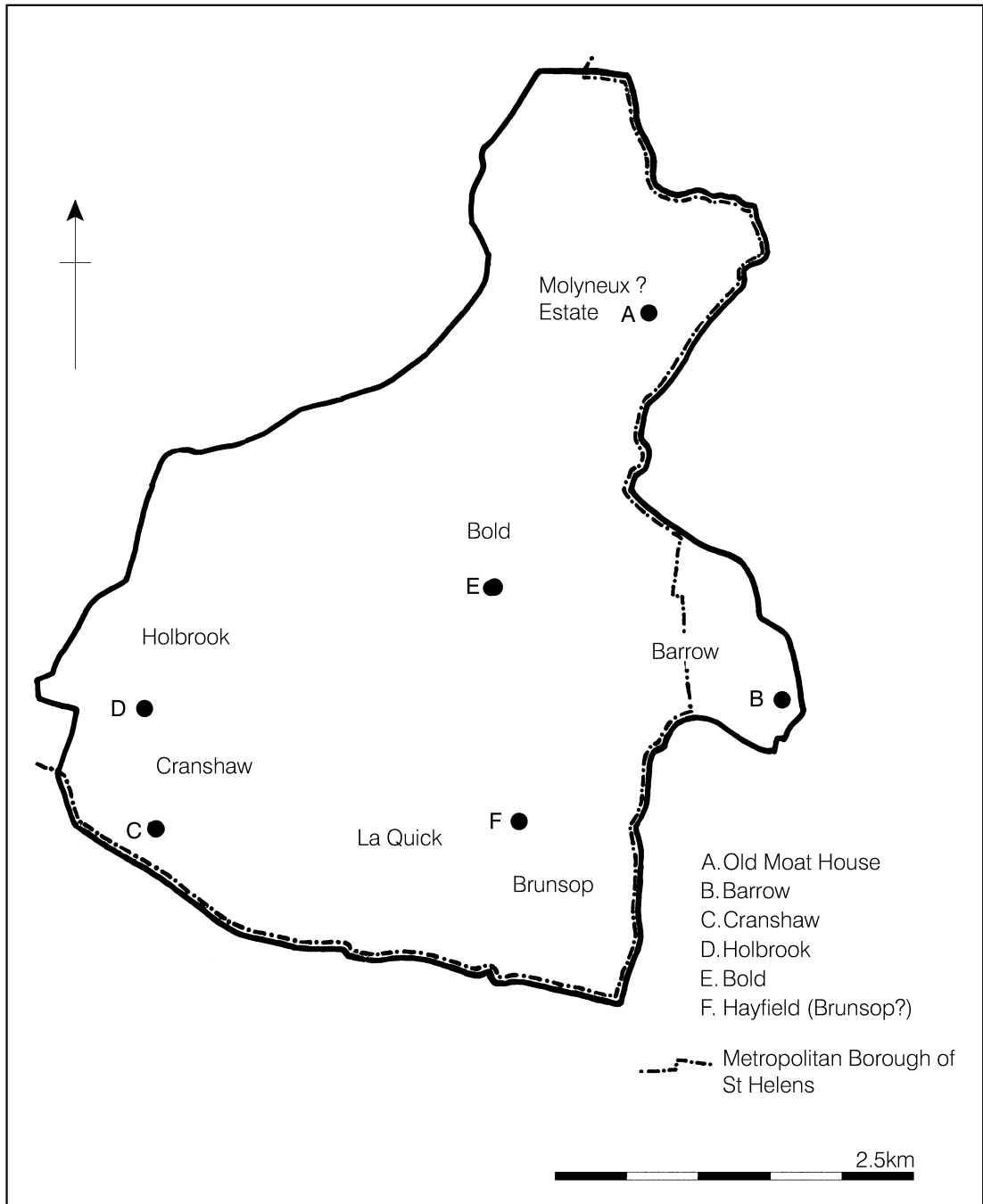


Fig. 4.7 Moated sites in Bold township

The role of the Roman road in the later period has been discussed (Philpott 2000a, 30-31) through the field name *Chestirsyde*, which appears in Peter Legh's 15th-century survey (Legh MS. 1466, 10.9.3, 11.1.8, 11.1.10-12), and the probable Roman pottery from Castle Hill (see below) there are also now hints of Roman settlement in the area.

Newton is named as the head of the hundred in the Domesday survey and can therefore be assumed to have a pre-Norman origin. The siting of the town itself is favourable, positioned on the Bunter Sandstone on the south east slopes of a small valley with light fertile soils on a mixture of sands, gravels and marl.

The date of Newton's borough charter is not known but licences for a market and fair were granted in 1257 (Tupling 1937; Philpott 1988, 12). There is evidence that large 'townfields' existed around the town and remained unenclosed and worked in common much later than elsewhere in the area. A survey of 1466, which remains to be studied in detail, gives a wealth of information regarding the tenants and management of the land (Legh MS. 1466).

In fact, Sir Peter Legh's manuscript has recently been transcribed and translated (Legh MS. 1466). It includes important information not only about the size of individual landholdings and names of the tenants but contains much detail about the nature of land use, particularly of the arable. It shows, moreover, that on many of south Lancashire's estates enclosed fields used for arable were just as frequent as open-field cultivation.

Messuages and property adjacent to a road called Newton Enes (*sic*) lay on the bounds of Newton and Haydock and are recorded in the survey (Legh MS, 1466, 10.2.3., 10.3.1., 12.2.2., 12.4.1., 16.1, 17.2.2., 17.4.1., 56.1), supporting the view that some hamlets on the margins were in existence at least as early as the mid-15th century. Medieval pottery has been recovered from two separate sites on the High Street, Newton, one in a watching brief, the other through formal excavation (R.A. Philpott, pers. comm.).

The full development of townfield agriculture and its existence at a period when elsewhere in the area enclosure appears to be well-advanced must be related to the existence of the town and the type of tenancies on the land. The population was probably never much larger than that of other townships. The Lay Subsidy Roll of 1332 (Rylands 1896) shows an average number of persons assessed for Newton which is considerably less wealthy, in terms of those inhabitants who qualified for assessment, than townships such as Bold, Sutton and Ashton. If the medieval population of Newton was similar in size to that of other townships then perhaps the significant factor in its agricultural development was the concentration of most of its population in one large settlement.

The 1332 Lay Subsidy gives important information not only about the relative wealth of different townships but also the names of those assessed on their portable property. The goods of those who lived in Newton were assessed, as in other rural townships, at one-fifteenth of their total value. This suggests that, although Newton had a market and fair by this time, the place had not attained the formal status of a town.

<i>Township</i>	<i>No. of people assessed</i>	<i>Average Township payment</i>	<i>No. of people</i>	<i>Average assessed</i>	<i>payment</i>
Bold	9	6s 8d	Rainhill	6	4s 2d
Ashton	11	3s 11d	Eccleston	7	3s 9d
Rainford	8	3s	Sutton	9	3s 9d
Billinge	8	2s 2d	Windle	8	3s
Haydock	7	1s 6d	Newton	10	2s 10d
			Parr	8	2s

Castle Hill, Newton

A motte and bailey castle site (few traces remain) existed to the north west of the medieval town, commanding a strategic position at the northeast corner of the elevated land between the deep valley of the River Dene in the north and a lesser stream, now dammed, on the west. The castle can be attributed to the 11th century and suggests the deliberate planting of Norman overlordship only matched elsewhere in the County by the castle at West Derby, head of the adjacent hundred. It is probable that such a site would be chosen to dominate the established chief manor of the hundred and the old territorial name of *Makerfield* suggests an early origin for settlement in this area.

Only the mound survives at Castle Hill. It lies at the confluence of Dean and Newton Brooks and occupies the highest point in the township. On the township boundary itself, it also overlooks the neighbouring townships of Golborne and Lowton. They, after Newton which may have been held by the Crown in 1212, were probably the most important estates in the hundred. Known as Castle Hill in 1745, this is the earliest known documentary record for the site. Although thought to have been included by Peter Legh in his survey in 1466 (Beaumont 1849, 57), recent study of the manuscript now shows that this was not so. Indeed, although Peter Legh had a considerable amount of land in Newton as heir by marriage to the Haydock family and by purchase of property which had formerly belonged to the Holland family, the Langton family were lords of the fee of Makerfield. As successors to the Banastres, first lords of the Fee, their main place of residence seems to have been at Walton-le-Dale on the south bank of the Ribble, near Preston (Farrer and Brownbill 6 1911b, 291-3) though Henry Langton still had property in Newton in 1466. Amongst other landowners at that time were the Serjeants (who are probably first heard of in 1212) and Perpoints (Perpunts) (Legh MS. 1466, 10.1-13.2 *passim*).

The mound was first investigated in 1843. A drawing, probably made at this time, shows trees growing on the top (Sibson 1846). Though quite clearly it was artificial and raised on a buried turf layer, the only artefactual evidence for its date was a single rim sherd, possibly from a Roman mortarium. A rock-cut ditch surrounded the mound. Sibson concluded that the mound was a burial place of 'Celtic' kings.

With construction of the M6 in the 1960s, Castle Hill was effectively severed from the town of Newton. Severe erosion on the north and south sides of the mound were thought to relate to Sibson's excavations and led to further archaeological work in 1987 in advance of consolidation. Roughly circular around the base with a diameter of c. 34m., the mound rises some 6.3m. above ground level; the top is oval in plan and has a flattened surface measuring c.11m x 8m. Trenches some 4m wide were opened in the areas of worst erosion and, for reasons of safety, were excavated as a series of steps. No evidence was found for any internal structures though the excavations did not penetrate the mound for more than a couple of metres nor did they extend on to the summit itself. They did show evidence, however, for soil creep and a single sherd of 17th-century pottery was found buried on an earlier turf surface.

It was also shown that the rock-cut ditch was only about 1m. deep and c. 5.8m wide across the bottom. It did not extend all the way around the mound but was absent on the south side where the ground falls steeply down to Newton Brook. It was also clear that the mound had been considerably damaged by modern machinery with JCB bucket and tooth marks cutting into the base. Since it was found that the whole of the remaining area of the field had been extensively stripped of topsoil down to natural boulder clay and recovered with modern rubble, it seems likely that the mound had been damaged at the same time - probably during motorway construction. Effectively, therefore, any archaeological context for the mound has been entirely lost (Lewis 1994).

Nonetheless, it seems that if the mound does represent the remains of a motte and bailey castle then this was a very small structure. Even allowing for the loss of some topsoil from the mound there was no great accumulation of such material around the base. The ditch itself was fairly shallow and it is more likely that it resulted from quarrying for material to build the mound rather than from serious intention to provide a defensive ditch. The mound could have carried a structure and Sibson's work had hinted at timber work within it. No evidence for quarried stone was found, however, and given the small area of the platform, this is unlikely to have supported a building of any size. A place from which to observe and, perhaps, control the road from Warrington to Wigan as passed through Newton seems plausible and comparisons can be made with the mound at Watch Hill, Bowden in Cheshire (Brown and Johnson 1985).

Moated Sites

Moated sites are the most common surviving earthwork feature of the medieval landscape in St Helens. Twenty such sites had been identified by 1981 (fig. 4.8).

Further study (Lewis 2000) has shown that 18 sites can with confidence be identified in St Helens. Two further sites are probably moated, four are possibly so but two are doubtful candidates.

Where moats have been identified, most townships contain more than one site - Eccleston, Newton and Rainford being the exception. To some extent, but by no means always, the number of sites relates to a comparable number of medieval estates within the township but the picture is still far from clear. Nonetheless, whether of medieval date or not, it is clear that a moated homestead permits some indication of the status of its owners. An ability either to draw on a labour force or sufficient resources to pay for the work is also indicated. It is now thought that the product from moat digging - the clay - could be used either as walling material for timber-framed buildings or to improve the quality of the soils, particularly on the mosslands as they were brought into cultivation (Lewis 2000, 153). Fishponds, such as those at Rainhill Hall Farm and, probably, at Eccleston Hall, are a further indication of the status of their owners.

In Bold the association between the moated sites and the medieval lands to which they relate is particularly well demonstrated. The capital messuage of Bold Old Hall lies in the centre of the township and is surrounded by a moat which is larger than those elsewhere in the township. Five smaller 'satellite' moats lie in the peripheral areas of the township and conform to a very similar size and shape. Three of these, at Holbrook, Cranshaw and Barrow, can be identified with some certainty as the 'chief messuages' of the medieval lands which bear the same names (fig. 4.8).

The moat at Eccleston Hall has been confirmed by excavation and timbers recovered from the site have produced tree rings that span the period 1121-1301 (Tyers *et al.* 1997, 157). Pottery of 13th to 14th-century date was recovered together with 15th to 16th-century material from the upper fill of the ditch (R.A. Philpott, pers. comm.). In contrast, pottery and other finds from Barrow Old Hall and St Michael's House were almost exclusively of 17th-century date and later.

Seven additions to the number of moated sites since 1981 are emboldened and information (italicised) regarding their status is given as follows				
<i>Township</i>	<i>Site</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Source of information</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Ashton ⁶⁰	Garswood Old Hall	<i>certain</i>	<i>confirmed by map</i>	<i>?meeting place of Garswood conspirators, early 14th century (Tupling 1949)</i>
Ashton	Garswood Hall Farm	<i>probable</i>		
Ashton	Stanley Bank	<i>certain</i>	<i>confirmed by map</i>	
Billinge	Birchley Hall	<i>possible</i>		
Billinge	Blakeley Hurst	<i>possible</i>		
Bold	Old Moat House	<i>certain</i>	<i>confirmed by map, survey</i>	
Bold	Barrow Old Hall	<i>certain</i>	<i>confirmed by map, survey, excavation; Legh MS. 1466, 4.7</i>	<i>no reference to palisade, 1466</i>
Bold	Cranshaw Hall	<i>certain</i>	<i>confirmed by map; Legh MS. 1466</i>	<i>no reference to palisade, 1466</i>
Bold	Holbrook Hall	<i>certain</i>		
Bold	Bold Old Hall	<i>certain</i>	<i>confirmed by map, survey, documents</i>	<i>16th century or earlier</i>
Bold	Hayfield Farm	<i>probable</i>		
Bold	Further Mear Hey	<i>possible</i>	<i>aerial photography site</i>	
Eccleston	Eccleston Hall	<i>certain</i>	<i>confirmed in excavation</i>	<i>medieval; probable fishpond</i>
Haydock	Bruche Hall	<i>certain</i>		
Haydock	Peel Hall	<i>certain</i>	<i>Legh MS. 1466, 17.6</i>	<i>no reference to palisade, 1466</i>
Haydock	Hall of Haydock	<i>certain</i>	<i>Legh MS. 1466 19.3</i>	
Haydock	Walshemonshouse	<i>certain</i>	<i>Legh MS. 1466, 17.8</i>	<i>palisaded wood 1466</i>
Newton	Newton Hall	<i>certain</i>	<i>confirmed in excavation</i>	
Rainford	Mossborough Hall	<i>certain</i>	<i>confirmed by survey; possibly late</i>	
Rainhill	Rainhill Hall Farm	<i>certain</i>	<i>confirmed by survey</i>	<i>15th or early 16th-century house on platform; fishponds</i>
Rainhill	Moat Lands	<i>doubtful</i>		
Rainhill	Rainhill Manor Farm	<i>certain</i>		
Rainhill	Heyes Farm	<i>possible</i>		
Sutton	Sutton	<i>certain</i>	<i>confirmed in excavation</i>	<i>late 16th-century at earliest</i>
Sutton	Moat Meadow	<i>doubtful</i>	<i>possibly same as St Michael's House</i>	
	Lea Green Big Lea	<i>certain</i>	<i>confirmed by field visit</i>	

All moated sites in this area have been attributed to the medieval period on the basis that a few of them can be shown to be of that date. For example, at Rainhill Hall the late medieval hall still stands within the remains of the moat. However, the date of construction of the moats themselves, rather than the buildings they surround, is difficult to substantiate. The major period of moat building nationally is considered as being between the mid-12th to 14th centuries, continuing into the 16th century. Very few moated sites in this area can be documented to the early period and indeed for some virtually no documentary evidence has been found at all. There is a degree of similarity, almost standardisation, in their form which suggests that some may be comparatively late. This, however, is difficult to prove.

At Newton Hall a rock-cut moat was described by 19th-century historians (Baines 1870, 217) and the hall is recorded in Thomas Blackburne's diary as under construction in late 1634 (Lane 1919, 52). It was thought to have been rebuilt on the site of the medieval Newton Hall for which the moat had been constructed but it is clear from a deposition taken in 1773 that the medieval building, also moated, was on a different site altogether.

'... a very large capitall or Mannor house in Newton now called the Hall Courts which is about forty Roodes or Perches distant from the present Chapell in Newton. That part of the ruins or remains of the said old Hall were standing within this deponents memory (John Unsworth, over 64 years of age) from whence the said Hall appeared to have been a spacious Building whereof the whole thereof was standing and that it had antiently a mote about it. The parlour, kitchen and chapel were standing in the deponent's lifetime.' (JRL Legh Deeds, Annesley vs Legh 1733).

It appears, therefore, that a new moat was constructed for the hall built in the 17th century and that the practice of moat building continued into the post medieval period.

⁶⁰ Ashton has two more moated sites, at Old and New Bryn, which lie outside St Helens Borough.

Though undoubtedly some of the district's moated sites have their origins in the medieval period, field survey and excavation elsewhere have shown that moats around important houses such as Speke Hall, near Liverpool, and Bewsey Old Hall in Burtonwood, near Warrington, may be post-medieval creations, albeit perhaps as modifications of medieval antecedents. The moat at St Michael's House in Sutton certainly dates from no earlier than the late 16th century and, like Speke and Bewsey, seems to show a fashion or continuing practice for the creation of a water-filled enclosure around the homestead (Lewis 2000).

The existence of a moat at Bold Old Hall can be inferred from a deposition of 1582 which refers to a drawbridge, '... he never saw the said preist but one tyme and that was as he came over the dam heade at Boulde ... and was coninglye conveyed in at a bak gate in to the gardene, and so ower the drawe bridge into the house ...' (Lemon 1865, cliii, 62).

Surveys and inventories show that the more important manorial sites supported a large household and that numerous ancillary and farm buildings will have surrounded the moated site. An early 17th-century inventory for Bold Hall (1612) describes the range of buildings (table 4.1).

garners	wrights workhouse	buttery
kilne	tower	little buttery
Lyme house	great barn	inner larder
master's stable	little barn	outer larder
middle stable	brewhouse	kitchen
water mill	inner and outer dairy	porter's ward
work house and its stable	store house	Hall

Table 4.1: Rooms at Bold Hall, 1612 (Lancs. R.O. WCW Sir Thomas Bold, 1612)

Two years earlier in 1610 a special commission for the Duchy of Lancaster, the state of the 'Manor or Mansion house of Bold' also mentions the slaughterhouse, cowhouses, oxehouses, a tan house and tan pits, as well as the other buildings. These were clearly outside the moat since the commissioners were able to inspect them while the 'Manor house beinge watered about with a moat and haveinge a Stronge gate uppon the Bridge which was faste locked or Barred soe wee Could not enter ...' was not accessible and they were forced to view from 'the outside of the south mote unto the Hall and Chambers within the same' (Duchy of Lancaster Special Commissions, P.R.O., DL 44/733).

Richard Bold's probate inventory of 1635 (Lancs. R.O. WCW Richard Bold, 1635) includes the following buildings and rooms within them.

Decedent's Stable	Garners	Hall	Nearer New worke	Beere Cellar
Stable Chamber	Kilns	Dining room	Midle newe worke	Buttrey Cellar
Coach Stable	Mill	Little Dining room	Ground chamber	Buttrey
Coach House	Porter Lodge	Withdrawing chamber	Steward chamber	Nearer deyrrie howse
Workehorse Stable	Tower chamber	Matted chamber	Wilkinson chamber	Further deyrrie howse
End Stable	Brewer chamber	Baron chamber	Foulding chamber	Old Dairie
Workehorse Stable Chamber	Lodge in the park	Inner chamber	Maids chamber	Cheese Chamber
End Stable chamber	Brewhouse	Utter chamber	Greate Nurserie	Further Storehowse
Cloathes Yard	Wash howse	Mr Hill chamber	Litle Nurserie	Nearer Storehowse
Joyners Workshop	Kitchen	Further stone chamber	Gentlewomen Closett	Flaxhowse
Hall Roof	Pantry	Gallerie chamber	Decedent his chamber	Lower Closett
Barnes	Larder	Gallerie	[Marthe] Cellar	

The site became a farmhouse after Bold New Hall was built in 1730. By 1840 there were two buildings only on the platform. A photograph of the house, taken between 1888-1921, shows a three-storeyed stone structure. A lower, two-storeyed building is attached to the rear (Waite 1888-1921, 39-41). The building is similar in appearance to the brick-built Bewsey Old Hall in Burtonwood. Supposing that the gatehouse lay along the west arm of the moat, the stone house would seem to have been a surviving element of the hall range. It has, however, been demolished and only part of the moat and mill leat and a pair of 17th-century gate piers are witness to the former importance of the place.

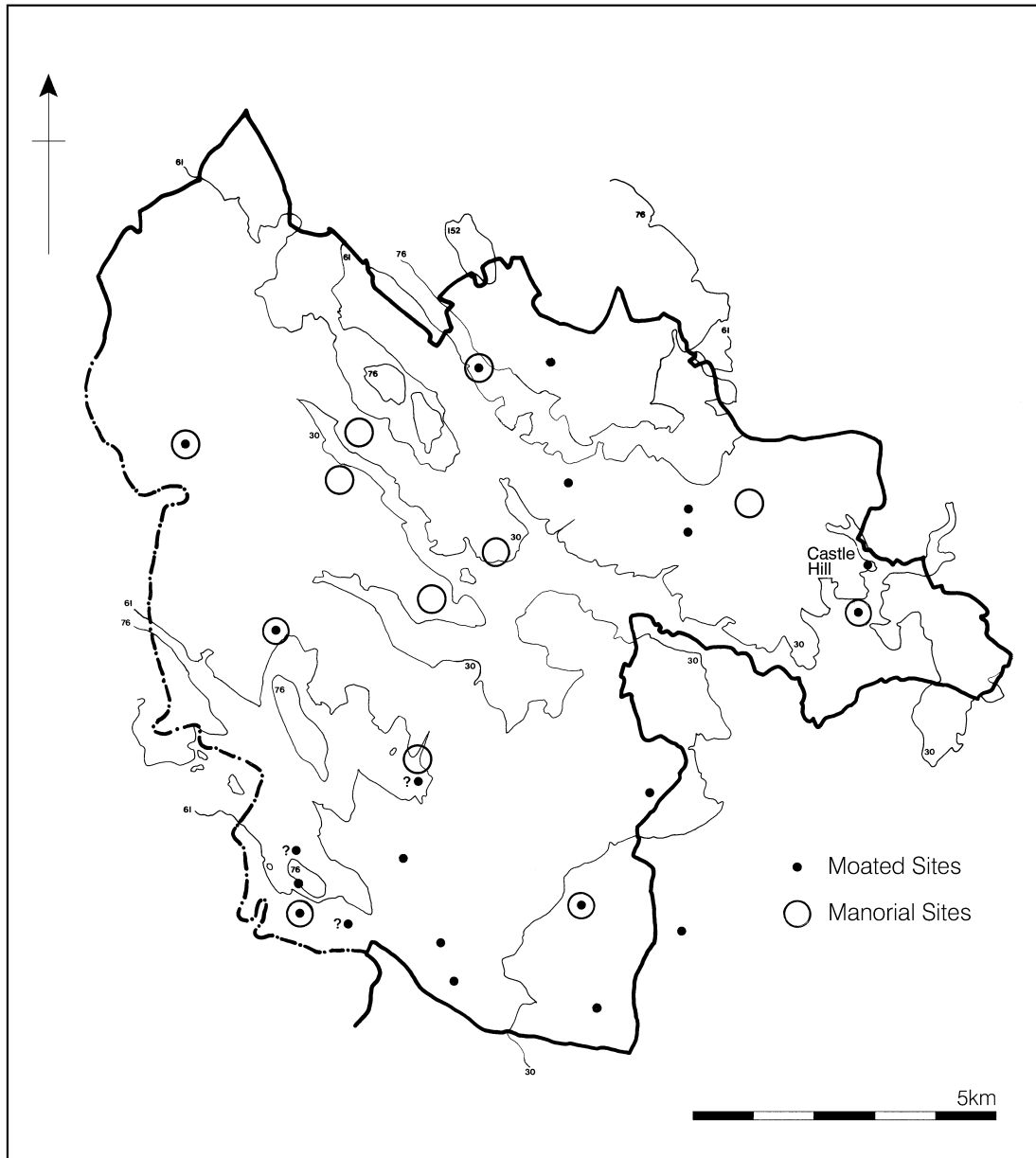


Fig. 4.8 Moated and manorial sites
The foci of primary or principle estates are indicated as 'manorial sites'.

Chapels, Crosses and Holy Wells

During the medieval period St Helens was divided between three large parishes but none of the parish churches lay within the Borough (figs. 4.1, 4.9 and table 4.2).

Parishes	Townships
Prescot	Bold, Eccleston, Parr, Rainford, Rainhill, Sutton, Windle
Winwick	Ashton, Haydock Newton
Wigan	Billinge (Chapel End)

Table 4.2: Parishes and townships

Chapels and chantries

Although a chapel at Newton was in existence in 1285 when a chantry was endowed in the 'chapel of Rokeden' the only ecclesiastical building to survive is St Thomas's chapel, Windleshaw, just north of the modern town of St Helens. A chantry at Jesus chapel is mentioned in 1535 (*Val. Eccl.* 5, 220) but its position is not known. It was founded by Sir John Bold, probably in the early 15th century, and may have been either in Bold or Windle (Farrer and Brownbill 3 1907, 376).

The site of Newton's medieval chapel is not known and a new chapel was built in 1684 probably on a different site.

Rob Philpott has argued more recently that Newton's medieval chapel lay at the site of the later structure. Documents continue to note *Rokeden* chapel as late as 1404 and, in the Legh Survey, it is clear that the chapel lay at the site of the present church. Furthermore, by this time there was a green on its northern side (Legh MS. 1466, 10.9.1; Philpott 1988, 10-11).

Depositions of 1733 relating to Newton Hall include reference to a chapel at the old hall and there are depositions relating to the 'old chapel' which had been taken down for the new one. The old chapel is variously described by different deponents. 'It seemed to have rather been designed originally for a barn than a chapel; it was wooden, with a flagged floor, and had a 'ridged roof' with a loft over. There was a gallery at the west end where the Leghs held courts. It was between five and eight yards wide with a central 'ally' and forms on either side and there was 'an old stone font'. Part of the new chapel was built over it' (J R L Legh Deeds, *Annelsley vs Legh* 1733). However, these depositions were furnished almost fifty years after the building was demolished and by people who had been children at that time. Some of the descriptions are quite contradictory and it is not possible to be certain whether this is the same chapel as that of the 13th century. It is of considerable interest, however, that it was a timber rather than a stone building.

In 1391 John de Rainford was granted a licence for services in his oratory in the manor house at Rainford (Farrer & Brownbill 3 1907, 383) and domestic chapels probably existed at other manor houses. This is scarcely surprising when it is considered that no place of worship existed between Prescot in the west and Newton in the east (12 miles apart) and Wigan in the north and Farnworth in the south (18 miles apart) until the 15th century or later. It suggests, furthermore, that the local population lacked both the numbers and means to improve the situation.

The parish church at Winwick which served Newton, Haydock and Ashton, was, however, but two or three miles south of Newton.

Despite the long distances to be travelled to the parish churches, Chapels of Ease, at Rainford (pre 1541), Billinge (pre 1534) and St Ellin, Windle (pre 1552) were not founded until relatively late and all have now been rebuilt.

Wayside crosses

It was perhaps the large size of the parishes which gave rise to the building of wayside crosses throughout the area, many of which, though they no longer exist, have given names to districts such as Peasley Cross and Marshalls Cross. The exact purpose of such crosses is not known; some may have been used as preaching crosses, for devotional purposes, and also as stopping places for funerals on the long road to the nearest parish

church (Taylor 1899, 44-47). The land around the crosses was customarily green or common, often with a pinfold nearby (Duchy of Lancs, Dep. 9 Charles no. 34). The juxtaposition of the cross and chapel at Windleshaw suggests that the former may pre-date the building of the place of worship but none of the crosses is securely dated. Only Windleshaw and Blundells Hill crosses (the bases only) have survived relatively intact. A line of four crosses has been identified along the road to Prescott through Bold and Rainhill (see fig. 4.9) and all the others known also lie within Prescott parish.

The places named as Peasley Cross and Marshalls Cross should probably be included as cross sites since they lay on the route which ran, perhaps, from the chapel at Windleshaw to Farnworth Chapel at Widnes. At least part of this road was, and south of Marshalls Cross is still, called Chester Lane (Farrer and Brownbill 3 1907, 374, n.5). The name is ancient and appears in boundary charters for Bold in c.1264 (North 1995, 65-70), Burtonhead in Sutton in c.1220-1230 (Farrer and Brownbill 3 1907, 358, n.5; Hawkes 1936, 67-70) and Eccleston in 1384 (Farrer and Brownbill 3 1907, 363, n.4). An important road is indicated but whether it is the same as that suggested by *Chestirsydes* in Newton in 1466 (Legh MS. 1466, 10.9.3, 11.1.8, 10-12) is unclear.

Boundary crosses

Crosses are mentioned as boundary markers in the Cockersand charters. For example, ‘... the whole land of *Hertfelling* with the crosses placed around the same ...’ (Farrer 1900, 609) and ‘... a portion of land in Sutton called *Cockshoot-head*, by these boundes, to wit, from the King’s highway southward where the cross was placed into the valleys, as the marks, crosses and ditches of Simon de *Cockshoot-head* indicate the same, thence following the brook down to *Colt-snape*, and ascending *Colt-snape* by marks and crosses to the King’s highway, thence following the same to the aforesaid cross ...’ (Farrer 1900, 597).

The cross on the ‘King’s highway’ may be Marshalls Cross but in many townships where the abbey owned lands, ‘cross’ field names may be related to these boundary markers rather than to wayside crosses. No boundary crosses have been identified in fieldwork.

Holy Wells

Two holy wells are attributed to the medieval period. St Thomas’s Well, close by the chapel at Windleshaw, has been altered and bears an 18th-century datestone but St Anne’s Well, in Sutton, appears to be of medieval date. It is a substantial square structure of sandstone blocks with steps on one side. A mid-19th century description and sketch gives details of other stone structures which were associated with it (Owen MS. M.P.L. vol. 26, 77-8). Medieval pottery has been found close to the site (Davey 1978) and local tradition associates it with a chapel and burying ground. The well lies within the medieval lands of Eltonhead and may be part of the grant to Cockersand Abbey in the early 13th century (Farrer 1900, 600).

Post-Medieval Settlement and Industry

For the study of this period (post 1500) there is a wealth of documentary material: parish and probate records, court rolls, estate surveys and rentals, leases, title deeds, taxation records and so on. For the purpose of this survey only those available in published form or in local record offices have been consulted and the extensive sources in the Public Record Office in London, including records of the Duchy of Lancaster, have remained largely unexamined. For the first time the documentary evidence for this period allows identification of sites and buildings on the ground and provides detailed information concerning individuals, their material circumstances and the trades and occupations which they pursued.

With the increased political and economic stability of the 16th century the agriculture of this area continued to expand and until the later 18th century the landscape remained predominantly rural. The St Helens part of William Yates’ map of Lancashire of 1786 (fig. 4.10), although rather later than the period of this study, depicts the final expansion of the late post-medieval rural population just before the full development of industry in the area. St Helens is the major centre of population although its identity as a town was not long established. It comprised part of the old manor of Hardshaw with parts of the townships of Parr, Sutton and Eccleston, taking its name from the late medieval chapel of St Ellin in Windle.

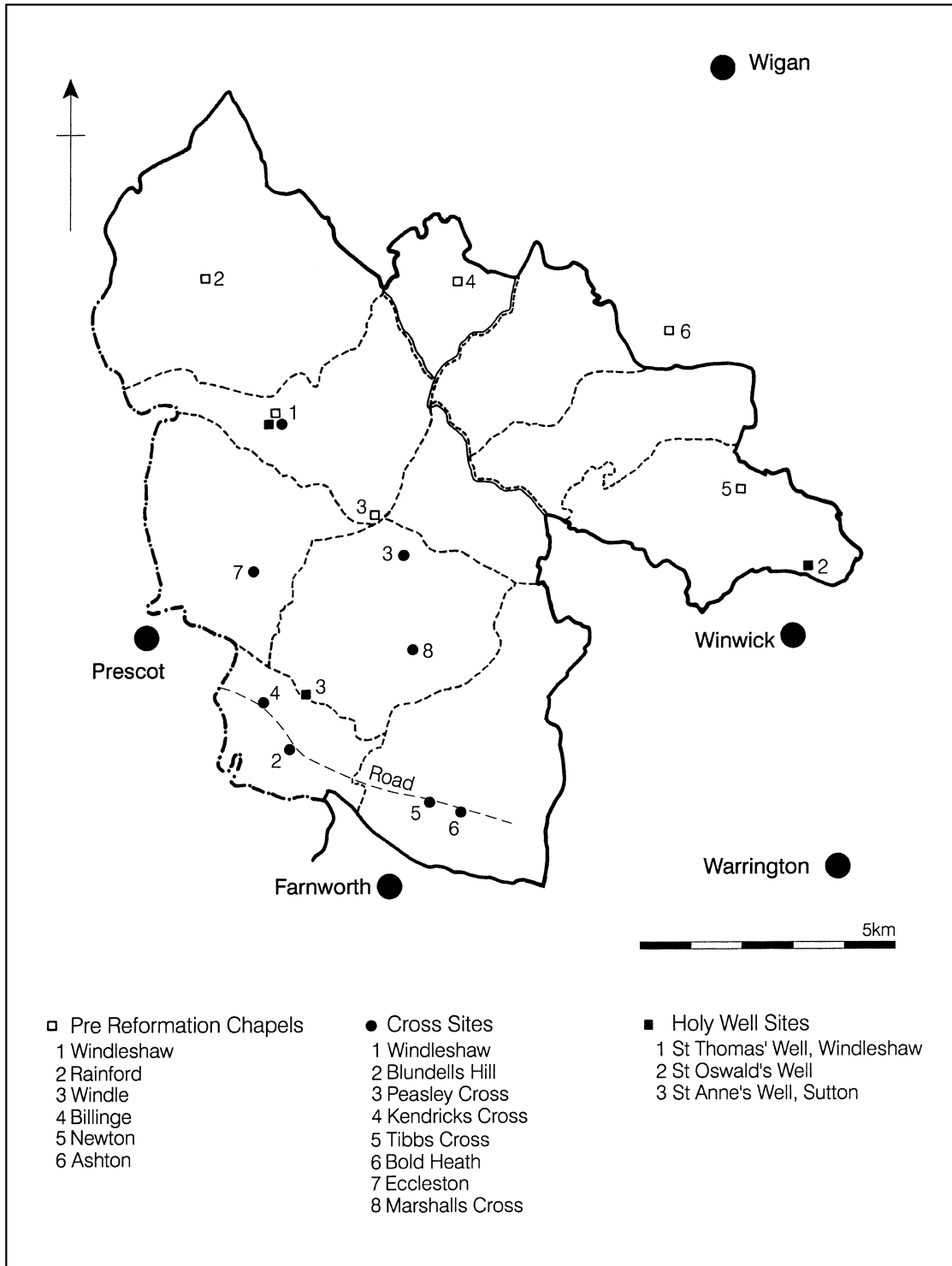


Fig. 4.9 Ecclesiastical Sites: Pre-Reformation Chapels, Crosses and Holy Wells

At this time, the whole district, though well-populated apart from its mossland areas, retained a very scattered settlement pattern. This is a feature of the remaining undeveloped rural areas today and in some places there has been a noticeable shrinkage in settlement as populations were drawn to the industrial towns during the 19th century. On Yates' map (fig. 4.10) the road from Prescott through Rainhill towards Warrington, for example, has a string of settlement along its length apparently in many places where none exists today. Extensive coal mining has also destroyed areas of formerly well-populated arable land in, for example, the vicinity of Sutton Manor colliery. But, in the late 18th century, the more densely occupied district presented a striking contrast to the thinly-settled adjacent areas of Knowsley, immediately to the west, and the small and widely separated hamlets and villages of Sefton.

This well-populated landscape has its origins in a period of expansion in the earlier post-medieval period. During the 15th century and throughout the 16th century, there is considerable evidence in southwest Lancashire for the increasing importance of grassland in the agricultural economy. In summaries of land holdings there is a striking jump upwards in the proportion of pasture and meadow. This does not appear to be the result of the enclosure of arable fields, since enclosure appears to have been thoroughly established by this date, nor can it be attributed to the conversion of arable land to pasture since the acreages of arable remain constant or even increase. It represents the expansion of agricultural activity on to the hitherto unexploited marginal heath and mossland. Walker illustrates this convincingly by means of the global figures for arable, pasture, meadow, wood and mossland given in the final concords for the county (Walker 1939, 39-40, 55-57). Extensive areas of under-used, poorly-drained or inferior quality land were available for grazing and had been used as such in a non-intensive manner for centuries. A mixed agricultural economy in which cattle played a prominent role evolved during this period and brought a new prosperity to the area. Large areas of land, however, still remained unimproved. A document of 1588 typifies the characteristics of a small estate - '5 messuages, a cottage, a dovecote, 6 gardens, 200 a. land (arable), 40 a. meadow, 100 a. pasture, 10 a. wood, 200 a. moor, 200 a. furze, and heath and a mine of coals in Sutton, Windhyll and Eccleston' (Farrer 1910, 146).

In some vills, particularly Rainford and Eccleston, large areas of unimproved wasteland remained to a relatively late date and, as will be seen below, this bears a direct relationship to the development of non-agricultural pursuits. On the Stanley estate in Rainford in 1652 there was '... al yt ye wast of comon mosse and turbary ... belonginge to ye mannor of Raineford ... conteyning by estimacon in ye whole 760 acres ...' (Stanning 1892, 235). And, in 1620, the Mossborough estates held by the Lathom family outside the manor contained 380 acres of moor, moss, heath, and briar (Rylands 1887, 205) so that well over 1,000 acres remained waste within the township despite the encroachments which had already been made onto the mosses (Stanning 1892, 234).

The enclosure of mossland and the development of settlement in these areas appears from the documentary evidence to develop on a large scale from the mid-17th century. The rents for this type of land were low but despite the discouraging nature of the land the financial returns could be high. It offered the opportunity to the less prosperous labourers and husbandmen to establish themselves in an independent holding. For example, from the Scarisbrick leases in Eccleston in 1663 'a messuage ... in Eccleston being newly erected ... with two acres of ground of large measure not yet enclosed but lying abroad upon the common in Eccleston called *catchall moss*' was rented at 2s. per year while in 1659 a tenancy of better arable land, a messuage and 1½ acres of land, averaged a yearly rent of 12s. 6d. (Lancs. R.O. DDS 12/19 and 26).

Buildings

A few buildings in the district retain some late medieval fabric, notably Rainhill Hall Farm and Rainhill Manor Farm in Rainhill township and Scholes Hall in Eccleston township. Many others, however, have either been demolished or undergone rebuilding at various periods from the end of the 16th to 19th century. Frequently, as at Crank Hall and Birchley Hall in Billinge, for example, this rebuilding has been done in such a way as to disguise any early fabric that may remain. In the post-medieval buildings it is evident that a great conservatism existed with regard to building styles which creates some problems in dating buildings purely on stylistic criteria, particularly timbered structures which have been altered or to which additions have been made.



Fig. 4.10 The St Helens area in 1786 (Yates, 1786)

Of the homesteads surrounded by a moat or ditch in southwest Lancashire, it has been shown that even in the middle years of the 19th century, 81% of all sites still had a domestic building on, or in very close proximity, to the platform. Of these buildings, however, the number still standing at the end of the 20th century had fallen to 52% (Lewis 2000, 125, tables 41a, b).

Few buildings in the district have been dated scientifically. Three timbers found in excavation at Eccleston Hall, including one roof timber, spanned the period from 1121 to 1301 and indicated felling dates after 1278, 1284 and 1326 (Philpott, pers. comm.; Tyers *et al.* 1997, 157). This building, however, seems to have been dismantled in c. 1567 and replaced by a new Great Hall.

In the post-medieval period, while the labouring classes of the rural community were finding some improvement in their prospects, the yeoman farmers were also reaching a new prosperity. The rise of a wealthier yeoman class is evidenced in several substantial 17th-century farmhouses which survive today such as Wood's House in Rainhill, Sherdley Hall Farm in Sutton and Great Houghwood in Billinge. Many farms, such as Guild Hall, Maggots Nook, Reeds Brow and Hydes Brow, all in Rainford, were set on the edge of the mossland with lands extending over much of the newly-enclosed waste. They are evidently the result of new-found prosperity derived from pastoral farming and dairying. A study of the development of agriculture in Eccleston, a township with large areas of mossland in the north, illustrates this point in documentary sources (e.g. Inventory of Henry Blackburn, 1727; see Glynn and Meredith, this volume). The movement of population on to the moss and heathland is to a large extent responsible for the pattern of isolated farmsteads which characterises the area today.

Whilst this might be so for many of the post-medieval farms which lie on and around the mosslands, it has already been noted that dispersed settlement was also a characteristic of the medieval period.

Most of the new enclosure farmsteads are of early 18th or 17th-century date and documentary work can place a few in the 16th century though no buildings survive of this date. Many of the farmhouses were rebuilt in the late 18th and 19th centuries but some excellent earlier houses and many good early post-medieval farm buildings remain. A survey of Eccleston in 1720 (Lancs. R.O. DDSc 25/9) indicates that almost every tenement would have a shippon of 3-6 bays and a barn of 2-6 bays accompanying the house or cottage which may only be 1 or 2 bays in size. It is likely that most of these farm buildings will have been of timber but regrettably few of this type now remain. Newton Park Farm barn is an excellent example of a 17th-century seven-bay box-framed barn now unique in Merseyside. At Rainhill Hall a similar sized, but cruck-framed, barn was demolished some years ago.

Newton Park, at the east side of Newton township, had been established by 1322 and further reference to the park was made in 1412. Clearly, it belonged to the lords of Makerfield, the Langton family. Remains of the park boundary are thought to be represented in a bank and hollow-way north-east of Red Bank, close to the township boundary with Winwick.

A detailed historical assessment and study of the farmhouse and barn at Newton Park Farm have been undertaken. Gill Chitty surveyed the barn in 1981 and further work was carried out in 1986 (Lewis 1988; Philpott 1988, 57-8). The domestic buildings here show an interesting progression through one or more relatively humble brick farmhouses to a fine, late 18th-century 'polite' Georgian house. The barn, however, almost certainly predates all the remaining buildings at the farm.

From Bold Hall in 1609 comes another description of a barn

'... And the Manie Silles and timbers of one greate Barn is in verie greate ruyne and decaye. Which barn is a verie faire greate Barne of large height wydnes and length built with verie greate timber covered with slates and walles with bordes and of good value and in greate Danger withouten rearacons of the said Silles to bee over throne and ruined' (PRO DL 44/773).

It is of interest that the barn appears to have had weather-boarded walls, which are suspected to have existed at Newton Park Farm where they have been replaced by brick. It was also slated unlike the other farm buildings described in the survey which were all thatched. The state of decay of the barn following only ten or so years of neglect of the hall after Sir Richard Bold's death indicates how quickly such a building could become dilapidated. Frequently such buildings might be moved from site to site. For example we note 'concerning a barn of 5 bays standing in Bold carried away bie old Mr Bold' (Bailey 1937, 26). Elements of an older structure were also reused in new buildings such as Moss Bank Cottage, Windle in a mud-and-stud partition.

It is evident from documentary sources that thatch was by far the most common form of roofing until the later post-medieval period except in the northern part of the district in Billinge and Rainford where the local Carboniferous sandstone lends itself to splitting for roof slates. Brick buildings are not mentioned in documents before the 17th century but given the suitability of local clays and their abundance, it is likely that brick-making

will have begun earlier. Brickwork is mentioned in the 1609 survey of Bold Hall but no workman is referred to unless the 'wallers' are perhaps bricklayers:

'And that we should call before us such Masones Carpenters Wallers Slaters and other workemen ... and survey all and singular the Spoyles Wastes Ruines and Decaies ... and other timber workes stone slate brikeworke thatch dowbe and other like wastes ... in and upon the premisses ...'
(PRO DL 44/773).

The field names Brick Field and Brick Kiln Field occur frequently in every township on the boulder clay and attest the local manufacture of bricks, but no sites earlier than the 18th century have been identified in fieldwork.

Two building types are poorly represented in the stock of post-medieval buildings which remain today - the large timbered halls of the land owning classes and, at the other end of the scale, the cottage dwellings of the husbandman class. Many very fine timbered halls formerly existed, amongst them Newton Hall in Newton and Bold Hall and Cranshaw Hall in Bold, but have been regrettably destroyed. Others, such as Crank Hall in Billinge, have been altered beyond recognition. By contrast some good stone-built examples do survive - for example Birchley Hall and Blakeleyhurst, both in Billinge - but only in those areas where building stone was available. Of the other building group, two single-storeyed longhouse-type cottages remain in Otters Swift in Billinge and Moss Bank Cottage (enlarged) in Windle although their attached byres have been demolished.

Industry

The prosperous post-medieval landscape depicted by Yates (1786) (fig. 4.10), and reflected in the buildings which remain, has its origins not only in the continuous growth of the agricultural economy but also in industrial pursuits. The exploitation of coal must have begun early, perhaps even in the pre-Conquest period.

Exploitation of coal in the Roman period is demonstrated in the Roman settlement (possibly fort) at Wigan where quantities of cannel coal were recovered alongside evidence for industrial activity (Jones and Price 1985, 27-30), on rural sites such as Court Farm, Halewood and Ochre Brook, Tarbock (Knowsley district) where evidence for small-scale metal-working has been found in excavation, and is suggested in the area around Billinge (Cowell and Philpott 2000, 188, 200).

While it seems likely that open-cast mining took place in the 16th century there is also good documentary evidence for different scales of exploitation. The Burtonhead estate plan of c.1580 (fig. 4.11) shows 'Pembton's cole myne' and, during the latter half of the 16th century, there are frequent recorded disputes concerning the right to dig coals on the common lands. Two examples from the same pleadings in 1588 provide some indication of the situation.

'Willaim (*sic*) Raynforte says that he knows the land called Suttton Heath ... he knows many coal pits to be sunk upon the said Common ... and that he had dug coal from a marl pit there for Bold hall.'

'Oliver Cowper of Penketh husbandman (89) says that about 40 year ago he lived at Bold Hall ... and there were at the time several coal pits sunk on Sutton Heath for use at Bold hall ... and that he did fetch coals sundry years together from the pits unto the hall of Bolde ...' (Pleadings and Depositions, 1588).

'Colliers' first appear in the 17th century and by this date the right to dig coals is common in leases for most townships on the coal measures, for example, in the sale of Denton's tenement in Scholes, Eccleston, in 1665, with rights of 'Free liberty to make pitt or pitts and to digg and gett coals in the said tenement' (Lancs. R O DDWi 1665). Although the existence of coal mining is of interest it is not likely to have left traces which are archaeologically significant. Since early mining consisted of digging shallow pits, much of this would have been obliterated by later open-cast workings. The presence of coal was undoubtedly, however, a key factor in the later development of industry in the area.

Cottage industries

In his analysis of the growth of industry in southeast Lancashire, Walker has suggested that the economic spur to, initially, cottage industry was the comparative poverty of agricultural resources and the availability of time within a pastoral or non-intensive agricultural community. 'We may contrast the position in southeast Lancashire with that in the rich agricultural south west, where there was not the economic urge to find additional sources of

income and where geographical conditions and the arable scheme of cultivation did not lend themselves to the combination of textile manufacturing and farming. Moreover this fundamental distinction between the two regions was emphasised at the end of the medieval period by the fact that the greater prosperity of the south west had produced in its economic life a degree of rigidity which tended to preclude new developments' (Walker 1939, 59).

This model for the development of the textile industry in east Lancashire is appropriate to the development of cottage industries in the St Helens area. Here the economy was not based wholly on pastoral farming as, for many of the poorer husbandmen farming small holdings on the mosslands, there was a need and an opportunity to supplement their incomes from other sources. The distribution of early clay industry sites supports this and is a more likely explanation than that such sites were deliberately selected for industrial activity.

In order to examine the relationship between agriculture and this type of cottage industry, a detailed consideration of the documentary evidence for one township, Eccleston during the period 1600-1750, was carried out (see Glynn and Meredith, this volume). The occupations which appear in the Scarisbrick leases and rentals for Sutton and Eccleston in the 17th and first half of the 18th centuries include those working in aspects of the cloth trade (spinning, weaving, hosiers), leather work (cordwainers, shoemakers, tanners), carpenters, smiths, potters, pipemakers, whitesmiths, colliers, as well as yeomen and husbandmen. A glassmaker appears only once, in 1708. By contrast the occupations given in the registers of St Helens chapel between 1713 and 1812 demonstrate a change in emphasis towards heavy industry at the expense of 'cottage' industry. While there are still large numbers working in the clay industries, a very large proportion of the population are employed in the glass industry (over 200) and in various foundries (over 120). Textiles and leather working disappear as a part of the industrial economy.

Potters, pipe-makers and glass-makers

From an archaeological perspective, early post-medieval development of three industries - potting, pipe making and glass making - are of particular interest. Unlike the textile and leather industries, these leave copious material traces. The products of these trades are found on archaeological sites and can be used to provide dating evidence. In studying the development of these occupations, it has, therefore, been important to identify sites of this type of the 18th, and principally, the 16th and 17th centuries (fig. 4.12).

In the post-medieval period the early clay industries are particularly significant and identification of 17th-century or earlier pottery or pipe kiln sites for excavation is a priority. Sites associated with the clay industry have been identified through fieldwork and documentary sources in Eccleston and Rainford⁶¹, the two townships which have received detailed study. Only those producing kiln waste material have been included herein unless a potter or pipe-maker is conclusively documented. Two excavations carried out to date in Rainford have only recovered large groups of kiln material without locating kiln structures.

Fieldwork followed by excavations in Rainford in 1979-1980 led to the recovery of a 17th-century clay tobacco pipe kiln group and a contemporary pottery kiln dump (Davey 1982; 1991, 121, 127-132, figs. 5-7a-b). A study of Rainford clay pipes produced in the period 1650-1750 has been published (Davey 1978a) and, in 1999, excavations were undertaken at the site of an 18th to 19th-century pipe works (Dagnall 2001).

The sites lie around the mossland fringes: Rainford Moss, Holiday Moss, Kings Moss, and Moss Nook in Rainford and Catchdale (Catshaw) Moss in Eccleston. Evidence for the concentration of 17th-century sites in Eccleston may be a consequence of the survival of detailed estate records rather than a true picture of the distribution of the industry at this date. Reeds Moss and Windle Moss have, as yet, produced few or no sites and this should be an area for future study. Although there are early documentary references for clay industry sites in Windle, Parr and Sutton, mining and later development are likely to have removed most of the evidence.

Though the documentary approach to identifying these sites is not straightforward for the earlier periods, by the time of the Census in 1841 potters and pipemakers are clearly employed full-time in this industry. But during the 17th century the industries represented part-time occupations which supplemented farming and other activities.

⁶¹ I am greatly indebted to Peter Davey of the then Institute of Extension Studies, The University of Liverpool and the Rainford Extra-mural class, in particular Mr F. Pope and Mr R. Dagnall whose extensive documentary work enabled the identification of many sites in Rainford (G.S. Chitty).

For example, in 1720 James Atherton of Eccleston leases a house with a barn and shippon, a smithy, hempyard and pipe house and is evidently concerned chiefly with farming rather than pipe manufacture. In probate records, parish records and estate deeds, the occupation of the individual is not always stated and need not be consistent. In 1708, Thomas Pyke of Sutton, clay potter, leased a messuage in Eccleston (Lancs RO DDSc 12/103) but in the 1720 estate survey (Lancs RO DDSc 25/9) the same tenement has a pipe shop, barn and shippon but no mention of potting. In a lease of 1659, Henry Webster of Eccleston is named as a clay potter and 22 years later in another lease, is called a husbandman (Lancs RO DDSc 12/18 and 12/52). Although some probate records do give excellent details concerning the equipment and materials of potters and pipemakers, referring to the clay chamber or kilns, this is not consistent. Some individuals, named as potters in other documents, are not indicated as such in their will or inventory.

It will be clear then that, since the documentary coverage for these occupations is variable and inconsistent and only approximately 25% of the known potters and pipemakers have identifiable sites, many still remain to be discovered. The nature of the industry, until the establishment of the large potteries at the end of the 18th century, was probably seasonal and combined with other occupations, including pipe-making, on the site.

During the later 18th and 19th centuries the pottery industry developed into large-scale production with centres in Sutton (Marshalls Cross, Sutton Heath) and in St Helens and Prescot (McNeil 1989), drawing on the tradition of the earlier potters and their skills. By contrast the pipemaking trade remained dispersed and continued in Rainford and Eccleston into the early 20th century in small centres of production within the family tradition of the area. The 'cottage' potting industry, however, appears to have ceased production by the late 18th century.

Evidence of early glass-making in documentary sources and in the field has been disappointing. Glass House Farm, Sutton, where the Leaf family worked in the late 17th century remains a potential site but fieldwork in the surrounding area has not produced any material evidence.

Glass House Close Wood lay in the south west part of Ashton-in-Makerfield close to the boundary with Parr (Ordnance Survey six inch Sheet 101, 1849).

Conclusions

With regard to documentary sources, this survey has only covered the most basic and immediately available material and very much more work could be still be carried out to great effect. In particular Ashton, Billinge and Haydock could fruitfully receive further research.

Archaeological evidence for the period following the end of the Roman period until the Norman Conquest remains elusive. A possible approach to this, which the place-name and environmental evidence alone demonstrate is not a complete blank, may be through the identification of early medieval sites. Documentary work and aerial photography, with all their limitations, have been suggested and Bold and Ashton are two areas where this approach might be applied effectively. Newton-le-Willows offers the most convincing potential for pre-Norman settlement, and it remains to be seen whether the detailed study of the medieval town will contribute towards identifying the area of earlier habitation which, it has been suggested (Lane 1919, 109), lay further north in the Dene Valley.

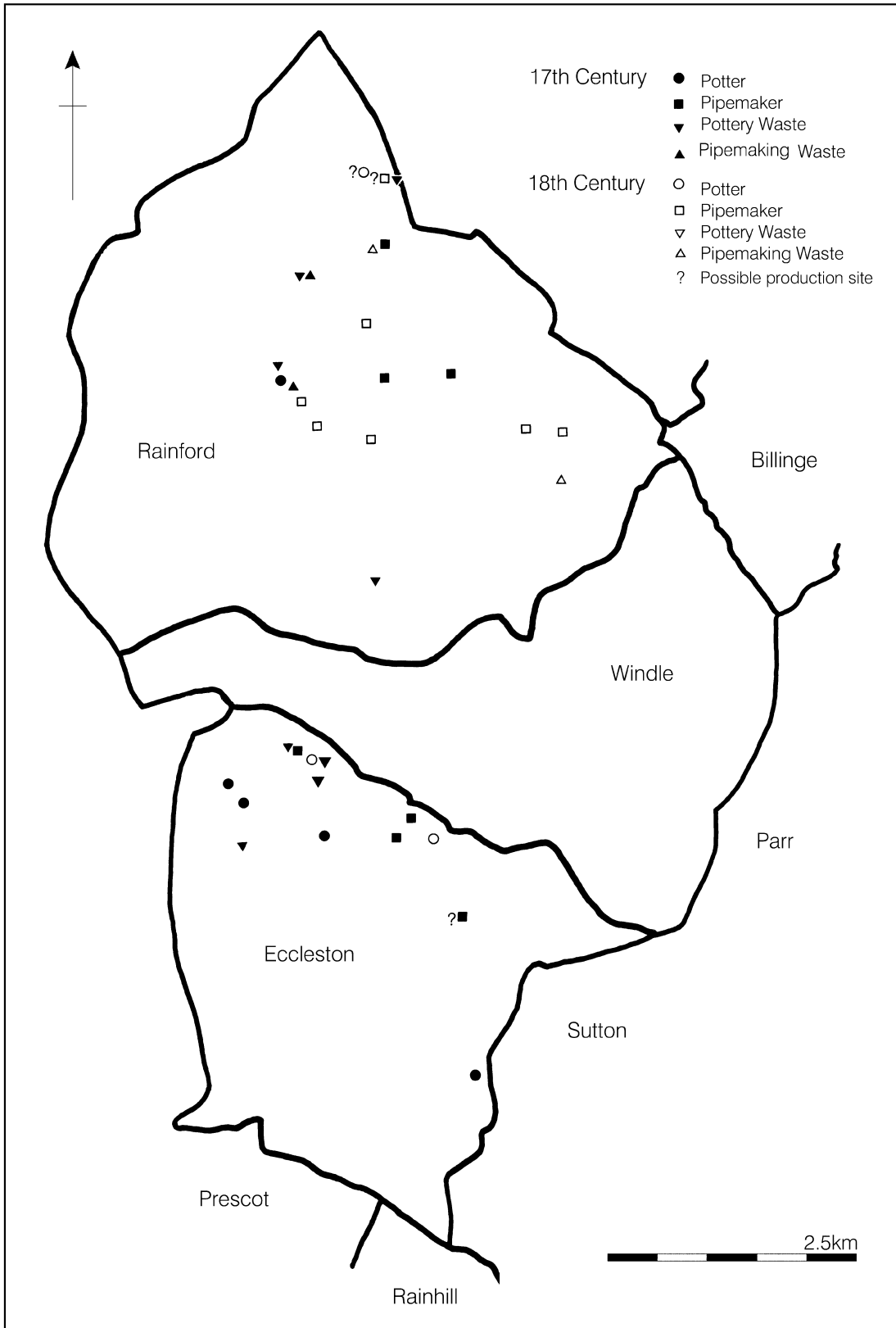


Fig. 4.12 Clay Industries: Rainford and Eccleston

When Gill Chitty's report appeared in 1981, fieldwork had been restricted to that necessary for the creation of the Sites and Monuments Record. Since then, aerial photography, field walking and excavation, by Rob Philpott in particular, has made a valuable contribution to our understanding of the district's archaeology. However, although there is an increasing body of evidence for occupation in the Roman period, excavation has still failed to provide clear evidence for settlement in the centuries leading up to and immediately following the Norman Conquest. All the same, the results from excavations elsewhere in Merseyside are starting to suggest that the Anglo-Saxons chose to settle on or close to sites occupied in the Roman period. Excavation on burgage plots in Newton town has produced some later medieval material and the moat at Newton Hall has been confirmed, but the greatest amount of evidence for medieval occupation has come from the important moated site at Eccleston Hall. By contrast, medieval evidence for occupation of other moated platforms such as St Michael's House in Sutton and Barrow Old Hall, in Bold was elusive and study of Sir Peter Legh's 15th-century survey does suggest that at least some of the district's known moated sites may not have been created until after 1466. Indeed, the Legh survey also has considerable potential for interpretation of the structure and organisation of the late-medieval agricultural landscape of Haydock and Newton, in particular, and Rob Philpott's work in Newton has shown that many of the township's late medieval fields and estates survived at least until the middle years of the 19th century.

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Abbreviations

Chet Soc	Chetham Society
J R L	John Rylands Library, Manchester
Lancs R O	Lancashire Record Office
M P L	Manchester Public Library
P R O	Public Record Office, London
Rec Soc Lancs Ches	Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire
THSLC	Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire

Appendix: Eccleston Rental

translated from the Latin, but field and topographical names and amounts remain as in the original.

Rental of Ralph Eccleston lord of Eccleston by Prescott in the County of Lancashire Esquire of the aforesaid Manor of Eccleston with all its appurtenances messuages tenements hereditaments belonging to it being in the said County made on the [?] 10 January in the 27th year of the reign of Henry VII after the conquest of England [1509].

First the manor of the same with its gardens and orchards and with one close adjoining called <i>le p[ar]ke</i> containing in itself by estimation four acres and valued per year at	}		
	}	xl ^s	
Item two closes called <i>Norley</i> with one <i>le Carr</i> in the north west end containing in itself by estimation over xij acres with one <i>le pnggel</i> from the south east side and valued per year at	}		
	}	xlvi ^s	viiij ^d
Item one parcel of meadow containing by estimation half an acre lying from the north side of the two closes called <i>Gibbe medow</i> and valued per year at	}		
	}	vj ^s	
Item a close of land called [?] <i>Twynley</i> containing by estimation vij acres lying between the wood called <i>derebought</i> and the former lane called <i>gall lane</i> and valued per year at	}		
	}	xx ^s	
Item one close called <i>lambesley</i> containing by estimation over ij acres lying between <i>Wynley Clause</i> and <i>le Sheponcroft</i> valued per year at	}		
	}	viiij ^s	
Item one close called <i>le bere croft</i> containing by estimation six acres and valued per year at	}		
	}	xiiij ^s	iiij ^d
Item ij neighbouring crofts called <i>le Sheponcroftes</i> containing i acre by estimation and valued per year at	}		
	}	iiij ^s	iiij ^d
Item one close of land called <i>le out pasture</i> containing in itself by estimation x acres and valued per year at	}		
	}	xxx ^s	
Item one close of land called <i>le breche Croft</i> containing by estimation iiij acres and valued per year at	}		
	}	ix ^s	
Item one meadow called <i>derebought medow</i> containing iiiij and a half acres and valued per year at	}		
	}	xv ^s	
Item one close of land called <i>le litle pit greve</i> by estimation one and a half acres and valued per year at	}		
	}	iiiij ^s	vj ^d
Item ij closes of land called <i>dereboughte fildes</i> containing xx acres lying between <i>derebought Wodd</i> from the west and <i>le highe fild</i> from the south and valued per year at	}		
	}	xxx ^s	
Item a former parcel of land called <i>le pit grave</i> containing ij and a half acre and valued per year at	}		
	}	vj ^s	viiij ^d
Item one close of land called <i>legerr pit greve</i> containing in itself viij acres and valued per year at	}		
	}	xx ^s	
Item one close with one meadow at the western end part called <i>le grene leyes</i> containing viij acres lying between the brook next to the --- <i>fild</i> from the west and <i>le hieghe fild</i> from the east and valued per year at	}		
	}	xxvj ^s	viiij ^d
Item one close of land called <i>le Whitefild</i> containing in itself by estimation eight acres and valued per year at	}		
	}	xxvj ^s	viiij ^d
Item one close of land called <i>le Saundersone</i> hay containing in itself four acres and valued per year at	}		
	}	xiiij ^s	iiij ^d
Item j close of land called <i>Crawfild</i> containing in itself vij acres with its two under woods growing on it lying between the brook next to <i>le Greneleighes</i> aforesaid from the eastern side and the lane leading from <i>borons gowse</i> in the direction of <i>le Wodd gowse</i> also called <i>pemberton gowse</i> from the western part and <i>le derebought Wood</i> from the Northerly side and the great [?] grassy lane from the southerly side and valued per year at	}		
	}	xlvj ^s	viiij ^d
Item one close of land called <i>le grette brandeyerthe</i> containing in itself viij acres and valued per year at	}		
	}	xxx ^s	
Item i close called <i>Powers medow</i> containing in itself by estimation ij and a half acres and valued per year at	}		
	}	vj ^s	viiij ^d
Item three closes of land with all the woods and underwoods growing on them called <i>Fetherbre hay farmerley</i> and <i>black-hurst</i> containing in themselves by estimation xl acres and valued per year at	}		
	}	x ^{li}	

First Thom ^{as} Stanley Earl of Derby free tenant of the aforesaid Thomas Eccleston in socage one messuage with all the adjacent land rendering per year xijd and paying Court and double rent after death		xijd
The same Earl holds one messuage with all the land perquisite of Jacob prescott for an annual rent of	ijs	ob (½)
The same for carrying-service		vj ^d
The same Earl holds one messuage formerly held by Agnes Stanyhurst for an annual rent of		vijd
The same for carrying-service		iiijd
Item Thomas Gerard de brynne soldier holds the whole of the parcel of land called formerly hinderlandes rendering per year and paying court		ixd
The same for carrying-service ijs as appears more fully elsewhere	ijs	
The same for carrying-service for a holding in the tenement of Henry Webster yeoman per year	ijs	
The same for carrying-service in the tenement of John Coweper per year	ijs	
The same Thomas for carrying-service as shown more fully elsewhere per year		viijd
Item Henry Standishe formerly rendering xls from the benefits of the land of Scolles for those closes etc	xls	
Also from those for carrying-service ijs per year	ijs	
Item henry de Scolles holds one tenement and renders for its carrying-service per year	ijs	
Item henry Webster yeoman holds two messuages and the whole of a parcel of land for an annual rent of	iijs	ijd
The same for carrying-service per year	ijs	
Item John Cann' holds one messuage and all [its] land for an annual rent of jd and for carrying-service ijs	ijs	jd
Item Ralph dawne holds one messuage for an annual rent of		xviijd
The same for carrying-service per year	ijs	
Item Thomas Baker holds one messuage and land at an annual rent of		xvd
The same for carrying-service per year	ijs	
James glest holds one messuage and land at an annual rent of		xjd
The same for carrying-service per year	ijs	
Ralph Kenwryght holds one messuage at an annual rent of	iijs	vjd
The same for carrying-service per year	ijs	
The same holds the whole of a close called longebaron fild per year		viijd
The same holds a close called le ball filde per year		xijd
Robert lyon holds one messuage at an annual rent of	ijs	
The same for carrying-service per year	ijs	
John Wodfall holds one messuage at an annual rent of		jd
The same for carrying-service per year	ijs	
Edward prescott holds one messuage at an annual rent of		vjd
The same for carrying-service	ijs	
Richard Bower for a tenement at an annual rent of	iiijs	iiijd
The same for his carrying-service per year	ijs	
Nicolus Colley for a tenement and all the land pays vjd per year for carrying-service ijs	ijs	vjd
Item for holding in a tenement homfre Stanyhurst per year vjd and for carrying-service ijs	ijs	vjd
Roger Ascheton for a tenement and land per year ijd and for carrying-service ijs	ijs	ijd
John Houghton holds one messuage and the whole of a parcell of land at an annual rent of	ijs	

[End of document. No total given.]