

DESERTED SETTLEMENTS IN MUDFORD PARISH, YEOVIL

BY M. A. ASTON

Since 1975 an assessment of the deserted settlements in the county has been undertaken based on the existing work of Beresford (1954), Beresford and Hurst (1971), the Medieval Villages Research Group and individual workers who have done valuable work in some areas. However, although no comprehensive list of deserted settlements in Somerset is yet available, the following is offered as a sample of information collected so far on a number of sites in one parish of south-east Somerset.

Mudford parish at present has the settlements of Mudford, Up Mudford, Mudford Sock and small settlements at Hinton and West Mudford. There is also an early farm site at Stone Farm. However, it is possible to show that formerly there were at least eight separate settlements in the parish—all nucleated hamlets, except Stone, of which two have completely disappeared (Nether Adber and Mudford Sock) and two are very shrunken (Hinton and West Mudford). Furthermore there are a few earthworks, possibly indicating shrinkage, at Up Mudford (Fig. 1).

Air photographs show that most of the parish formerly had evidence of ridge and furrow generally taken to represent the open field strips of medieval arable cultivation. This has not yet been mapped in detail. Indeed, a study of ridge and furrow and the associated field systems in Somerset still awaits a researcher. In this study of deserted settlements it has not been possible to deal exhaustively with the documentary evidence for the parish. A beginning has been made by Batten

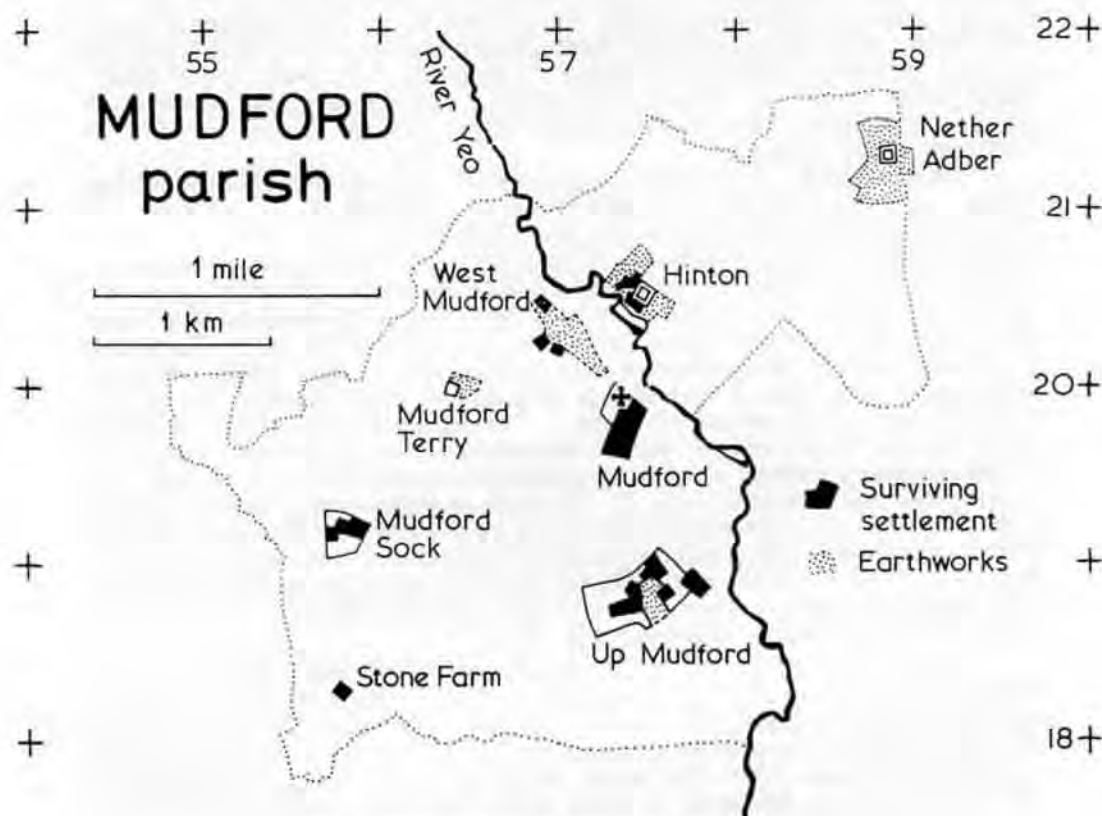


Fig. 1. Mudford Parish. Crown Copyright reserved.

(1899) and there are numerous references in standard works, but unfortunately the Victoria County History of Somerset does not yet cover this part of Somerset. The intention principally is to show that deserted villages covering substantial areas and having elaborate plans survive in Somerset and that for some sites the field evidence is good. This is contrary to what is indicated in publications so far produced on the county. In view of the disturbance to sites, principally by agricultural improvements, which is already evident in this parish, it is essential that the field evidence which does survive is recorded before all of the remains are destroyed, even if the precise historical context of the sites has to be defined later on.

Mudford lies two miles north east of Yeovil in a low lying area along the valley of the River Yeo. The soil is based on undifferentiated 'head' consisting of sandy loam with limestone gravel and clay loam with silts (Geological Survey 1958). The Geological Survey remarks that this 'head' deposit can vary from river gravel and sand to stiff yellow and brown clay (Wilson et al., 1958, pp. 197-198). At the time of Domesday five manors are listed—Mudford, Stone, Nether Adber, and two manors at Up Mudford (Round et al., 1906). It has been shown that of the three Adbers listed in 1086 one is clearly Nether Adber (Morland, 1963).

Of the eight medieval settlements, Mudford (or Mudford Monachorum), Nether Adber, Mudford Terry and Mudford Sock (or Old Sock) are recorded separately, but odd references also occur to Hinton, Up Mudford, West Mudford and Stone. A survey of Mudford and Hinton in 1554 clearly states that, although these two hamlets at least were part of the same manor, their field systems were completely separate, a factor which can probably be assumed for the other hamlets (Tawney and Power, 1924). On the ground Mudford and Mudford Sock survive with no apparent earthworks indicating shrinkage. Up Mudford looks intact but air photographs taken in 1947 do indicate earthworks within the settlement which could represent abandoned crofts and holloways (RAF vertical air photograph 3139 CPE/UK/1974 11 April 1947).

West Mudford and Hinton have extensive areas of earthworks indicating substantial shrinkage (Fig. 2). The latter has a large moated site within the area of earthworks referred to in 1838 on the Tithe Schedule as 'Court Hay and site of Cardinal Holseys Palace'. Although Wolsey had been Rector of Limington, a village west of Mudford, this was clearly a folk myth as the 1554 survey states that 'The Lord of Mudford sometime inhabited within the manor, whose mansion house was in the hamlet of Hinton, near unto the mill, in-closed with a moat . . . The house, as it should seem by the foundations, was in those days of great receipt and much stateliness. A great part of the buildings were defaced and sold within the remembrance of some of the tenants yet living . . .' (Tawney and Power 1924). Mudford Terry was only located recently, but the earthworks are very prominent. A large embanked enclosure, perhaps a manor or grange site, is accompanied by a small area of well preserved earthworks (Fig. 3). The most impressive site is however Nether Adber. This site was photographed some years ago by Professor St. Joseph (Plate 2) when it was entirely intact, and despite certain agricultural operations in the north field of the site it is still the best preserved and most impressive deserted village site in Somerset. Individual house sites can be distinguished and many of the features of the medieval landscape elucidated (Fig. 4).

As yet it is not possible to be definite about when these settlements were deserted. Documentary evidence for Hinton and Nether Adber (see below) suggests that 16th-century enclosure with changes from arable to pasture farming associated with sheep farming is a possible explanation, as it is for other areas of the country (Beresford and Hurst, 1971). The survey of the manor of Mudford and Hinton in 1554 mentions sheep belonging to many tenants but other reasons for settlement desertion are implied. It is stated that there are no commons or wastes in the manor 'but only the common fields that are in tillage'; in other words, there was no room for any settlement expansion or increased agricultural production. Indeed the lord of Mudford was said to have formerly resided at Hinton but that the demesne had been

subdivided between the tenants because the 'tenantries were so small and so little land belonging to them that no tenant was able to keep hospitality, to provide for his wife and children, and to pay the lords rent until about the year . . . 1440' when the reallocation of land took place. Enclosure and farming in severalty was clearly regarded as an answer to some of these problems 'for when the fields are enclosed every man will use a further travail and diligence with his land to convert it to the best use and purpose'. Some depletion of the land is suggested as a further possible reason for desertion—the soil of the hamlet of Mudford is not so good and apt to bear corn as the fields of Hinton are . . . The reason is unknown' (Tawney and Power, 1924). These are therefore some of the reasons why settlements in this part of Somerset could have become deserted, but it is perhaps too early in the process of research on such deserted sites in Somerset to assume that these are the only, or indeed the main reasons for such shrinkage and desertions.

GAZETTEER

The following is offered as a brief historical account of each site, as far as it has been possible to elucidate it, together with an account of the evidence on air photographs and from field evidence. There is no doubt that further historical research together with archaeological fieldwork, and in particular surveys and excavations, could add a great deal of information to these accounts.

HINTON (Fig. 2; Plate 1) ST 57482065

Mudford parish. Historic Parish — Mudford. Stone Hundred.

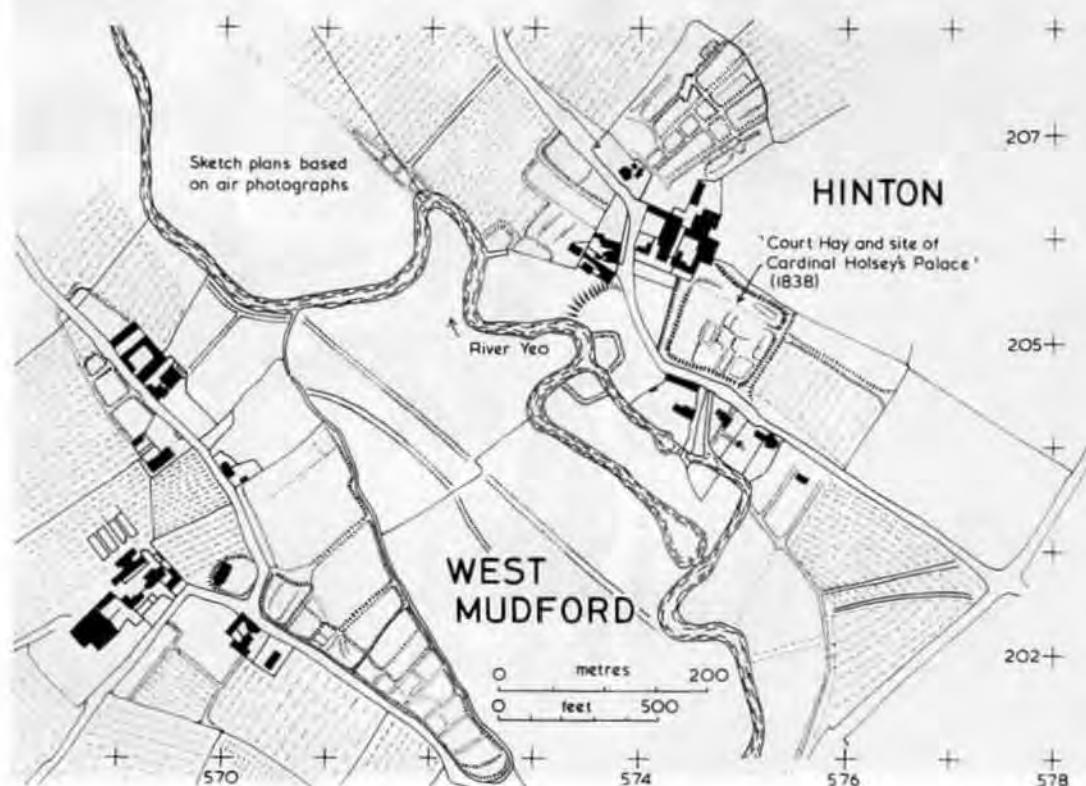


Fig. 2. Hinton and West Mudford. Based upon the Ordnance Survey map with the sanction of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, Crown Copyright reserved.



Plate 1. Hinton (foreground) and West Mudford villages, Mudford. Air photograph, Cambridge University Collection ANN 41, 28 July 1966; copyright reserved.

History

- 1086 Not separately assessed in Domesday Book.
- 1316 In the *Nomina Villarum* Hinton is not mentioned, but the editor of Kirby's Quest suggests that Estinton may represent it (Dickinson, 1889). Then it was held by Mathew de Furness of Hered de Vinon who held it of the Abbot of Glastonbury.
- 1327 In the Lay Subsidy 11 people were assessed for 10s. 3d. including Johanne atte Mulle, Johanne atte Watere and Roberto atte Northende (Dickinson, 1889).
- 1351 A chapel of Hinton was licensed (Holmes, 1896).
- 1414 The manor of Hinton is mentioned (Humphreys, 1905).
- 1440 The Survey of Mudford and Hinton in 1554 refers to the redistribution of the demesne at Hinton at about this date so that the tenants there could augment their holdings. The moated manor house was abandoned then and 'a great part of the buildings were defaced and sold within the remembrance of some of the tenants' living in 1554 (Tawney and Power, 1924).
- 1554 The survey of Mudford and Hinton refers to 3 separate open fields at each of these hamlets; 'the tenants therefore this present year intend to make division of the manor, to enclose their common fields . . . And then to assign and lot unto every of themselves as much land as pertaineth to their several tenements in one or two places, to the extent that every of them may enclose their lands severally to themselves'. Differences of opinion between lord and tenants and the poor quality of the soil are given as reasons. The moat and the site of the manor are also mentioned. (Tawney and Power, 1924.)
- 1554/5 Perhaps significantly the will of Robert Beyton of Hinton, husbandman, included money left to various people and places and 'to everyone of John Chappell's children 2 sheep, to everyone of Thomas Beyton's children of Northover 2 sheep and 4 sheep to Johan Pope' (Shilton and Holworthy, 1925, pp. 140-1).
- 1838 The Tithe Map of Mudford shows the same distribution of buildings as today but labels the field with the moat as 'Courthay and Site of Cardinal Holseys Palace'. The mill is also shown. (SRO, D/D/Rt 335 1838, Mudford Tithe Map.)

Air Photographs

RAF vertical air photograph 3372 CPE/UK/1944 23 January 1947 clearly shows enclosures and the area of the moat between present farm buildings all surrounded by ridge and furrow.

Vertical air photograph HSLUK 71124 Run 57 5689 14 July 1971 of Somerset County Council Planning Department—Huntings Surveys Limited 1971 cover, has only vague traces of earthworks around the settlement. Oblique air photograph Cambridge University Collection—Professor St. Joseph No. ANN 41 shows clear earthworks of enclosures in the settlement and ridge and furrow in the fields around (Plate 1).

Field Evidence

The moat, which has been recently scheduled as an ancient monument (AM 445), is visible. The chapel site is not known. The village is laid out irregularly along the street above the meadowland along the stream. There are no obvious back lanes or signs of boundary banks, but there are suggestions that ridge and furrow overlies old crofts.

MUDFORD TERRY alias WOOD COURT (Fig. 3) SY 565201
Mudford Parish. Historic Parish—Mudford. Stone Hundred.

History

- 1086 Not mentioned separately in Domesday Book.
- 1316 In the Nomina Villarum Walter de Romeseye and Galfridus de Romeseye held Mudford Terry of Alan de Plukenet and the same Alan held it of the king in chief (Dickinson, 1889, p. 57).
- 1327 In the Lay Subsidy eight people were assessed under Mudford Terry (Modiforde Terry) for 4s. 3d. (under the Hundred of Stone and Yeovil) (Dickinson, 1889, p. 211). In the time of Henry VI lands at Modford Terry late of Walter Romesey are mentioned and in Elizabeth I's time John Lyre and Edmund Hoddy were involved in the manor of Woodcourte alias Muforde Tyrry (Humphreys, 1905, pp. 496-497).
- 1374 The Feet of Fines mention Walter de Romesey chivaler and Alice his wife querents and John Smyth . . . deforciant . . . for a third part of the manor of Mudford Terry (Green, 1902, p. 86).

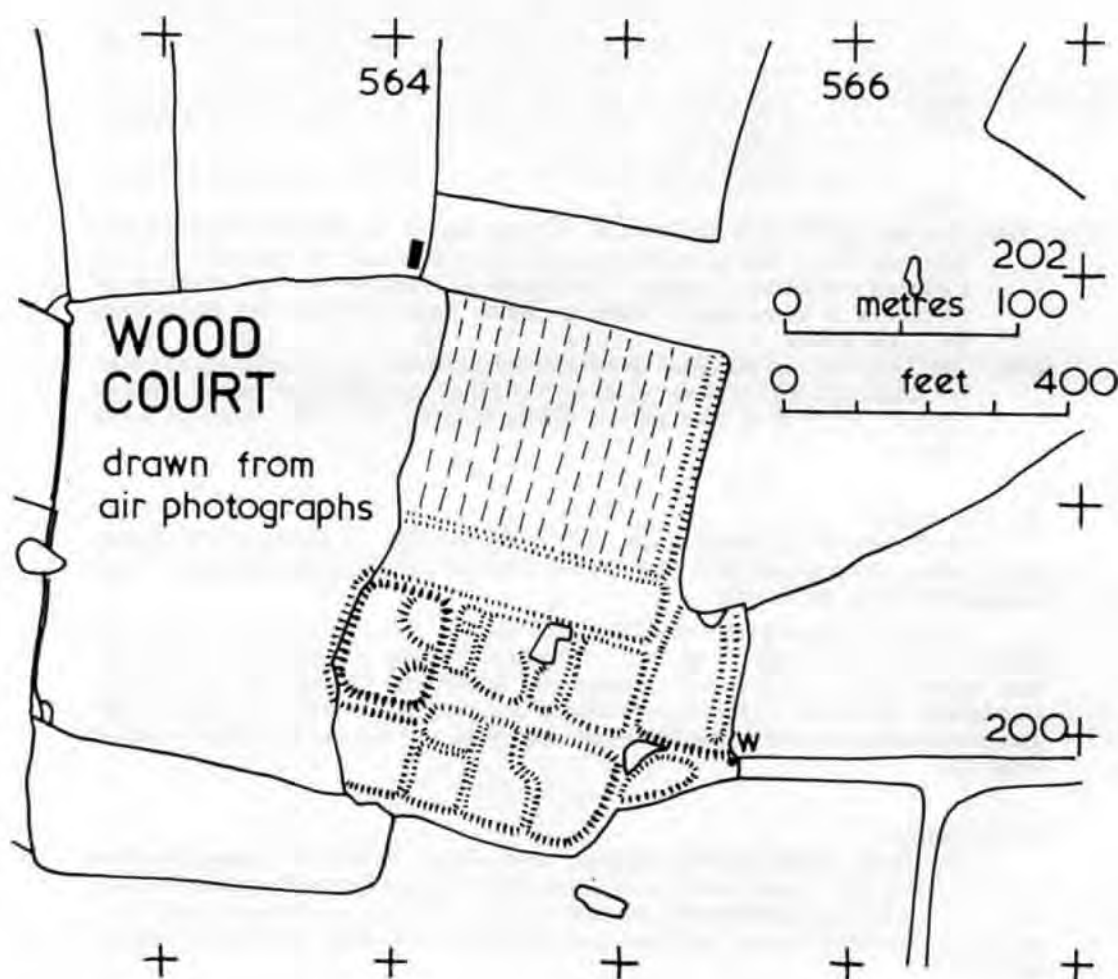


Fig. 3. Wood Court. Crown Copyright reserved.

- 1401-2 The Feet of Fines mention John Fauntleroy and John Wykng and John Toper chaplain querents and Walter Romesey chivaler and Alice his wife deforcians ... for the third part of the manor of Mudford Terry (Green, 1906, p. 166).
- 1443-4 The Feet of Fines mention Henry Champereys and Elizabeth his wife querents and Thomas Payn and Joan his wife deforcians ... for a third part of the manor of Mudford Terry (Green, 1906, p. 105).
- 1838 The Tithe Map shows two fields called Wood Court and a small 'squatter' cotage in a long garden (SRO, D/D/Rt. 335, 1838 Mudford Tithe Map).

Air Photographs

RAF 1947 vertical air photograph 3135 CPE/UK/1974 11 April 1947 shows only vague marks and the outline of a large enclosure. There is no evidence of earthworks on vertical air photographs HSLUK 71124 14 July 1971 Run 57 5689 of Somerset County Council Planning Department—Huntings Surveys Limited 1971 cover. There is however a great deal of ridge and furrow in the fields around.

Oblique air photographs 19 May 1977 M. Aston: the site was overgrown but low sunlight in the evening, from the west, showed a large rectangular embanked enclosure on the west side with an east/west street running east from it with rectangular enclosures to north and south. A boundary bank is evident on the north, south and east sides and under a field boundary on the west side, with ridge and furrow to north—running north/south. There are further earthworks to the east.

Field Evidence

A field visit with John Hurst of the Ancient Monuments Inspectorate was made on 14 March 1977, following a report of earthworks noted in the field by W. T. J. Chapman of Yeovil Archaeological Society. A large embanked enclosure on the west side was noted, with earthworks up to two metres high—looking like a manor site or grange. Earthworks of enclosures, holloways and boundary banks were noted elsewhere. John Hurst was of the opinion that this site was more like a grange than a deserted village. Montacute Priory owned land in Mudford but the references seem to refer to the present main village (Members of the Council, 1894, and Batten, 1899). The site is very regular in plan suggesting some deliberate arrangement of plots and properties. In view of the references to Wood Court from the 16th century onwards some of the earthworks may be of post-medieval date.

NETHER ADBER (Fig. 4; Plate 2) ST 587213
Mudford Parish Historic Parish—Trent. Later Mudford? Stone Hundred

NOTE. There is a slight possibility that this site was called *Thorny*, or perhaps more likely that there was another site nearby, or even part of this site, which was called *Thorny*. The present cottage on the site is called *Thorny House* and the lane running through the site is called *Thorny Lane*, a name it has had since at least the 1838 Tithe Map. The present farm to the south of the village earthworks is called *Thorny Lane Farm* and on the Tithe Map there is *Thorny Plot* on its site. In the Lay Subsidy of 1327 there is a *Thorne* recorded but this is almost certainly *Thorn Coffin* nearby. Finally the Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map published in 1976 includes a survey of the earthworks of *Nether Adber* but mistakenly labels them '*Medieval Village of Thorney (site of)*'.

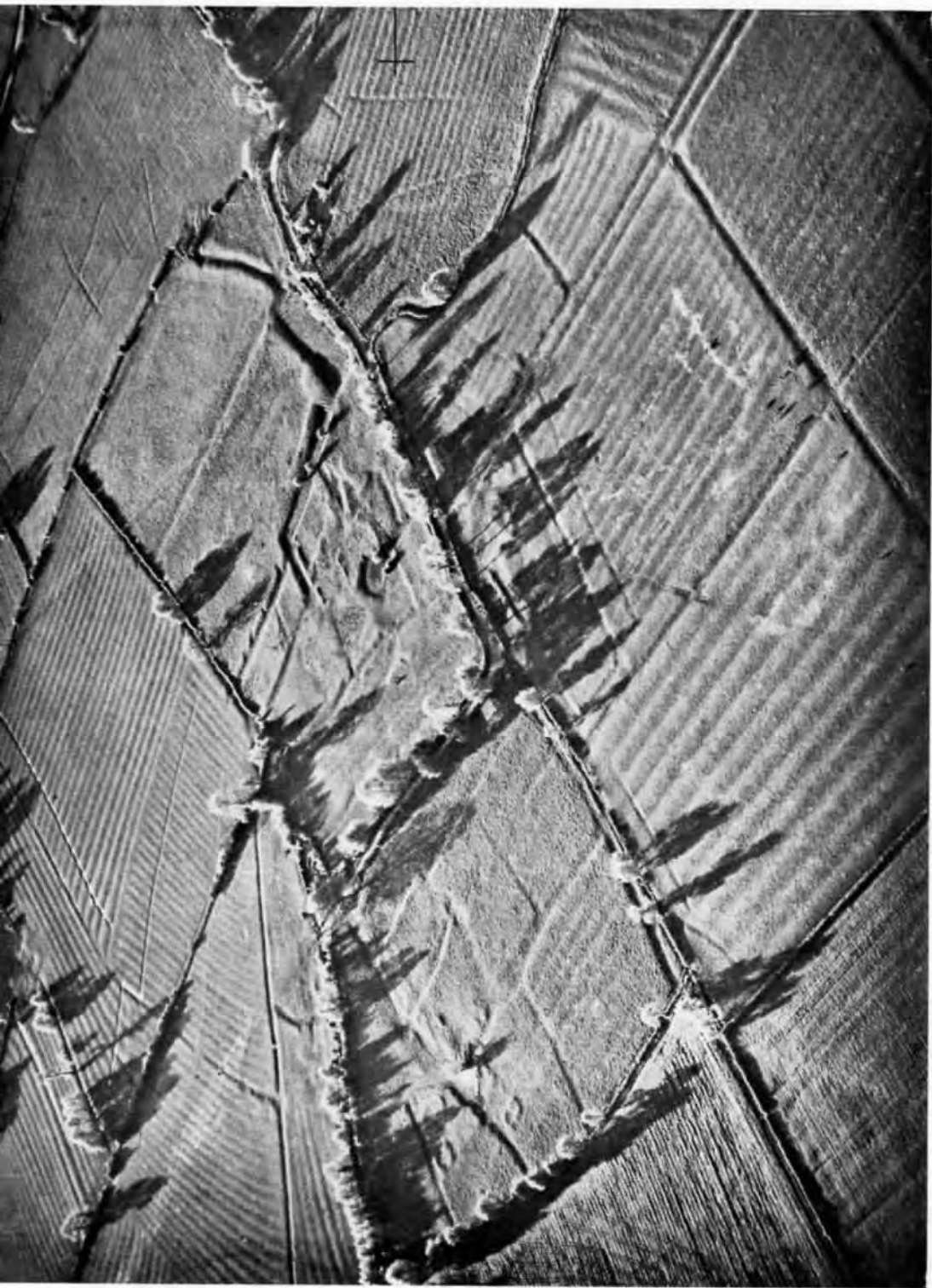


Plate 2. Nether Adber deserted medieval village, Mudford. Air photograph, Cambridge University Collection ANN 33, 28 July 1966; copyright reserved.

NETHER ADBER

Sketch plan based on full survey and air photographs

A Cribhouse
and Barton
in 1838

B Thorny House

'Chapel Hay with
ancient ruins' (1838)

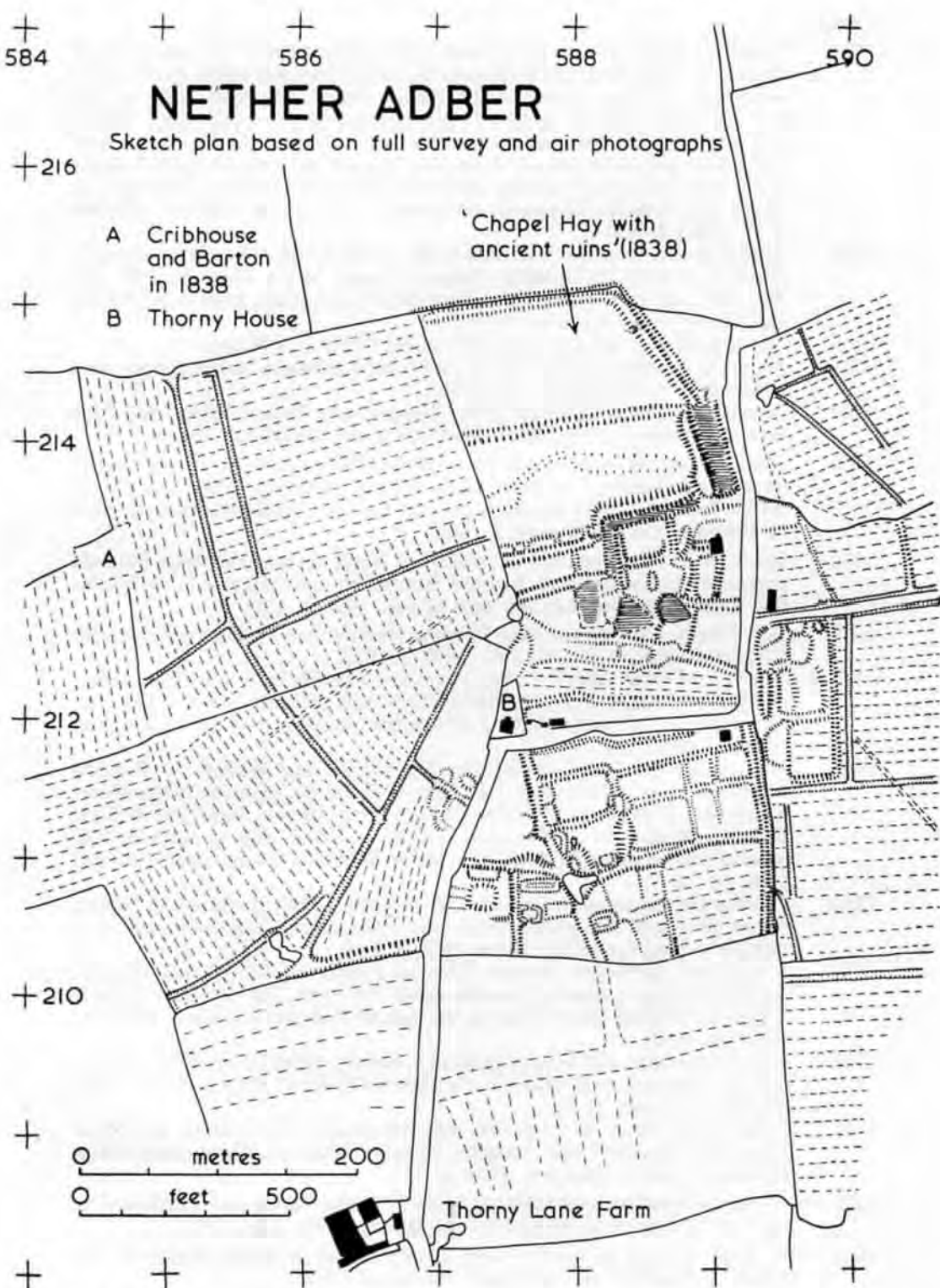


Fig. 4. Nether Adber. Based upon the Ordnance Survey map with the sanction of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, Crown Copyright reserved.

History

- 1086 There are three Adbers mentioned in Domesday Book, but one of them, Ettebere or Eattebera held by Siward the fowler then and before the Norman Conquest, has been shown to be Nether Adber (Morland, 1963, p. 95). It is described: 'there is land for $1\frac{1}{2}$ ploughs and they are there with 2 villeins and 3 bordars. In demesne are $\frac{1}{2}$ a hide and 1 plough, and the villeins have half a hide and half a plough. There are 7 beasts and 13 swine and 62 sheep. There (are) 6 acres of meadow and 1 furlong of wood(land), reckoning in length and breadth. Formerly and now it is worth 20 shillings.' (Round et al., 1906, p. 523).
- 1303 By this date the Feudal Aids record that Little Adber was held by Geoffrey de Moyn of John de Hastings (Deputy Keeper of the Records, 1906, pp. 299, 316), one of three manors called Adber (the others were Over Attebar and Atebere [with Mudford Terry]).
- 1316 Not apparently assessed separately in the Nomina Villarum.
- 1327 In the Lay Subsidy under Stone and Yeovil hundred, seven people were assessed for 7s. 6d. (Dickinson, 1889).
- 1349 Annette Sandison (Sandison, 1969) suggests that Nether Adber may have been depopulated by the Black Death, without quoting any source.
- 1351 The lord granted licence to the vicar of Mudford to celebrate divine services on alternate Sundays and feasts in the chapels of Nether Adber and Hinton till the feast of Trinity 'although he shall have first celebrated in the church of Mudford' (Holmes, 1896, p. 661).
- 1388-9 The Feet of Fines mention the manor of Netheratebere and John Reynold parson of Limington and Richard Hunteleigh and Alianore his wife—the first reference to the Huntleys here (Green, 1902, p. 136).
- 1428 The Feudal Aids record that Thomas Huntele was holding Little Adber (Deputy Keeper of the Records, 1906, p. 376).
- 1484-5 The Feet of Fines record Richard Hattferd and Christina his wife querents and Ludovic Appe Henry and Margaret his wife deforciant, for a third part of the manor of Netherattebere with appurtenances in Over attebere and Homer (Green, 1906, p. 155).
- 1549 A mortgage between Edmund Huntley and his son William to Richard Adams of Over Atbere (sum repayable at Richard's mansion house there) mentions 8 acres of arable in Over and Nether Adber in Trent, and William Barbor's 20 acres in Atberesmede (named on Tithe Map of 1838) and 40 acres of pasture called East Field in Nether Adbere in Queen Camel (Harbin, 1936, pp. 36-7).
- 1550s Thomas Gerard noted in 1633 that the 'Huntley family flourished in Nether Adber even until our grandfathers days when all of a sudden it sunk' (i.e. probably about the 1550s) (Bates, 1900, p. 174).
- 1553 A mortgage agreement between Edmund Huntley of Bruton and Thomas Rodde mentions a close of pasture called Pytchards (20 acres) in Nether Adber in Mudford (now or late in the tenure of Richard Adams) (Harbin, 1936, pp. 36-7).
- 1556 A sale is recorded of 8 acres of pasture in Nether Adber in Mudford Northfyld by Edmund and William Huntley to Thomas Rodde of Ilchester (Harbin, 1936, pp. 52-3).
- 1562 A rental and survey of Trent lists only one person, Giles Penny, in Nether Atber and it is stated that 'there the common fields had disappeared before any record exists' (Sandison, 1969, p. 32).
- 1607-10 12 acres of pasture with appurtenances in Nether Adber are mentioned as held of the king as of his earldom of Salisbury (Hawkins, 1965).
- 1613, 1618, 1619 8 acres of pasture with appurtenances in Nether Adber in the parish of Mudford are mentioned (Hawkins, 1965).

- 1635 A detailed survey lists land and tenants but significantly all the land is pasture and meadow (Hawkins, 1965; Batten, 1899, p. 182).
- 1838 The Tithe Map has Pound Close for the south field and Chapel Hay with ancient ruins for the north field; Adber mead is to the north of that. The area around the village is described as the Tithing of Nether Adber (SRO, D/D/Rt. 335, 1838 Mudford Tithe Map).

Air Photographs

The RAF vertical air photographs 3370, 3371, 3372 CBE/UK/1944 23 January 1947 show the two main fields of earthworks clearly, with holloways, crofts and even house sites showing up in detail. The surrounding fields have ridge and furrow over a wide area.

Oblique air photographs, Cambridge University Collection—Professor St. Joseph, Nos. AJK 78, ANN 35 and ANN 33 all show the village earthworks clearly before the recent disturbances to the north field (Plate 2).

Vertical air photograph HSL UK 71 124 Run 59 5663 14 July 1971 of Somerset County Council Planning Department—Huntings Surveys Limited 1971, shows evidence of earthworks north and south of the road surrounded by enclosures and ridge and furrow. The earthworks in the north field appear to have been recently bulldozed and infilled.

Oblique air photographs in low sunlight from the west (19 May 1977, M. Aston) show earthworks clearly, including additional probable house sites.

Field Evidence

The site was visited on 4 April and 10 June 1976 with Professor M. W. Beresford and on 12 July 1976 and 14 March 1977 with John Hurst.

Some time in the late 1960s or early 1970s the north field of the site was badly disturbed. Many of the earthworks were flattened and hollows infilled. The south field, which is in different ownership, was not affected. The air photographs of Professor St. Joseph provide the best record of the site before its disturbance (Plate 2).

In May and June 1976 Mr. J. Dowson of Somerset County Council Surveyors Department carried out a survey of the earthworks and produced a plan at 1 : 500 showing hachures and 1 metre contours. The site is now scheduled as an ancient monument (AM 450) and is one of the most impressive sites in the county (Fig. 4).

The north field: formerly this field contained remains of three sides of a moated manor site with adjacent fishpond with supply and overflow channels. The rest of the field had linear ditches and irregular areas of earthworks, one of which must have represented the site of the chapel. Boundary banks seem to have separated the village closes from the fields on the north, west and north-east sides. No house sites are visible but there are probable crofts on the west and south sides.

The south field: This field contains regular rectangular enclosures demarcated by ditches and banks. A prominent boundary bank marks the east side of the site whereas the present road seems to occupy the ditch of the western boundary. The south boundary of the field is of post-village date as it crosses the village street—marks on air photographs to the south may indicate its course in the field beyond. The village street remains as a holloway in the field, running north-south, and along it there are the remains of rectangular buildings with opposing doorways, mostly aligned side-wall on to the streets. At least four buildings are well preserved, but the remains of six or so others can be distinguished. They were probably turf or clay-lump built.

The plan is loosely based on regular north-south, east-west boundaries and linear ditches and banks. Some ridge and furrow appears to occupy old crofts.

The fields to the east and west also had platforms (the east field is now ploughed), but no house sites can be distinguished there. Beyond, extensive areas of ridge and furrow, visible on earlier air photographs, have now been removed by

ploughing but there is enough of a record to enable reconstructions of the medieval topography of the place to be attempted.

WEST MUDFORD (Fig. 2; Plate 1) ST 56402003
Mudford Parish. Historic Parish—Mudford. Stone Hundred.

History

- 1086 There is no separate mention in Domesday Book.
1271 In the Somerset Pleas it is noted for West Mudford 'that the assize comes to recognize whether Denyse who was the wife of Stephen de Romesye and Walter sone of Stephen unjustly . . . deseised Robert de la Mare of his common of pasture in West Mudford which belongs to his free tenement in that town'. There is mention of a third field in their demesne. (Landon, 1921, p. 156).
1316 In the Nomina Villarum West Mudford was not separately distinguished (Dickinson, 1889).
1327 In the Lay Subsidy it is not separately mentioned (Hundred of Stone cum Yeovil) (Dickinson, 1889).
1838 Mudford Tithe Map shows a number of houses in crofts and the regular field pattern which is still in evidence (SRO, D/D/Rt. 335, 1838 Mudford Tithe Map).

Air Photographs

RAF Vertical Air photograph 3372 CPE/UK/1944 23 January 1947 clearly shows earthworks of crofts and enclosures to the north of the present east/west road with ridge and furrow in fields to the south and further enclosures to the west.

Vertical air photograph HSLUK 14 July 1971 Run 57 5689 Somerset County Council Planning Department—Hunting Surveys Limited 1971, shows only vague earthworks around the hamlet.

Cambridge University Collection—Professor St. Joseph, oblique air photograph No. ANN 41 of West Mudford (Plate 1) clearly shows rectangular crofts and ditch boundaries surrounded by ridge and furrow on the west and south sides and the meadows of a stream on the north side.

An oblique air photograph in low sunlight taken on 19 May 1977 by M. Aston shows crofts along the present village street with embanked enclosures behind, i.e. to the north, with possible ridge and furrow in larger enclosures and ridge and furrow to the south-west and south-east.

Field Evidence

A field visit with John Hurst was made on 14 March 1977. Clear evidence of earthworks was noted but no definite house sites. The impression is of platforms laid out between the river valley and the road. To the south it appears that crofts utilized areas of ridge and furrow or more likely ridge and furrow was developed over abandoned croft sites. It is not clear how much of the area of earthworks is of post-medieval origin.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to Dr. R. W. Dunning for his advice on documentary sources, to Mr. J. Dowson for his survey of Nether Adber, and to the Colt Fund of the Society for Medieval Archaeology for a grant towards the cost of air reconnaissance flights, which enabled additional information to be gained on the sites mentioned here. The photographs are reproduced by kind permission of Professor St. Joseph and the Cambridge University Collection: copyright reserved.

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