



Figure 1. Detail of the 1787 Broadlands Estate map centred on the Ashfield oval enclosure. The drawing was aligned to fit the sheet of paper, rotated 29 degrees clockwise from north.



Figure 2. Ashfield viewed on Google Maps.

The map produced in 1787 of the land belonging to the 2nd Viscount Palmerston carefully depicts the fields, roads and woodland either side of the Test. Very noticeable within the irregular layout of these features is a sub-circular area at Ashfield, defined on three sides by roads and completed on the east by a curved boundary. The relationship of the strips and patches of woodland to the fields suggests that clearance had taken place within a previously wooded area. The aerial view provided by Google Maps shows a further loss of woodland and the consolidation of the fields. The roads remain - Hoe Lane to the south and the A3057 to the west, connecting with the A27 via a roundabout occupying the centre of Ashfield Green.

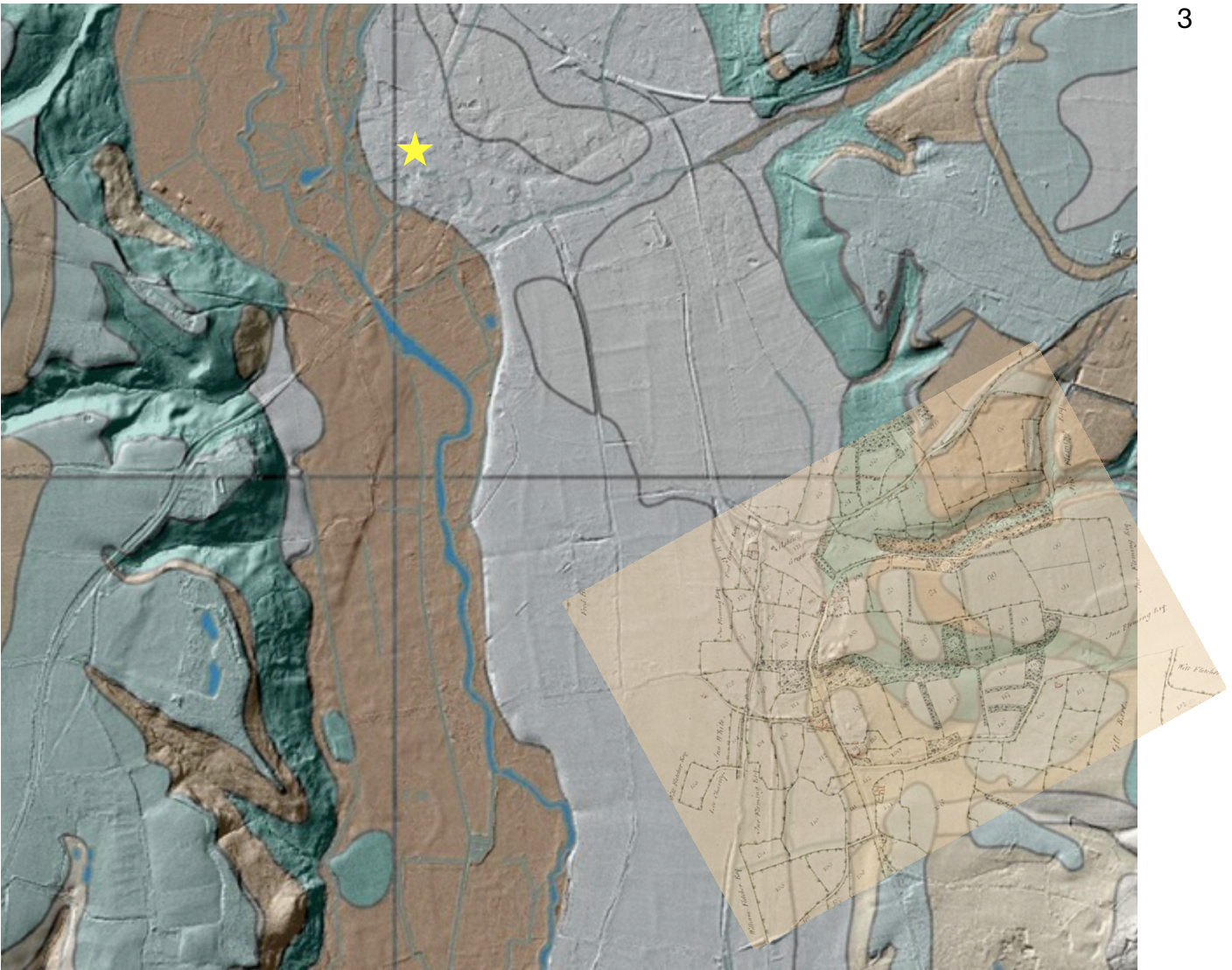


Figure 4. Geology map of the Test valley with the enclosure section of the 1787 Broadlands estate map superimposed. Brown represents the alluvium of the floodplain and grey the first river terrace. Deposits of brickearth on this terrace are outlined in black. The underlying Wittering Beds, in dark green, are exposed along the scarp edging the floodplain to the west and in the small, eroded valleys. The enclosure is on the higher ground east of the first terrace. Pale-grey areas within are remnants of the second, third and fourth terraces, bisected by the stream that crosses the enclosure. The location of Romsey Abbey is marked by a star.

Enclosures with curved boundaries are common landscape features, often associated with the control of animals. A curve provides the most efficient ratio of area enclosed to length of boundary, the largest area with the shortest boundary. This minimises the cost of the initial construction of the boundary - a hedge, bank and ditch, or wall - and its maintenance. These features have been labelled 'ring-fenced' or 'oval' enclosures. The use of the former term has the disadvantage of being frequently heard in connection with financial planning. Also, the concept of a fence is too insubstantial to represent a construction that has remained visible within the landscape for many centuries. A strictly accurate description of 'curvilinearly-bounded enclosure' is too cumbersome. 'Oval' is a useful compromise. Oval enclosures and their significance are discussed in a recently published book - *The Wandering Herd - The Medieval Cattle Economy of South-East England c.450-1450* by Andrew Margetts. His investigation, centred on the Weald, was summarised in a presentation to the British Agricultural History Society, available on YouTube.

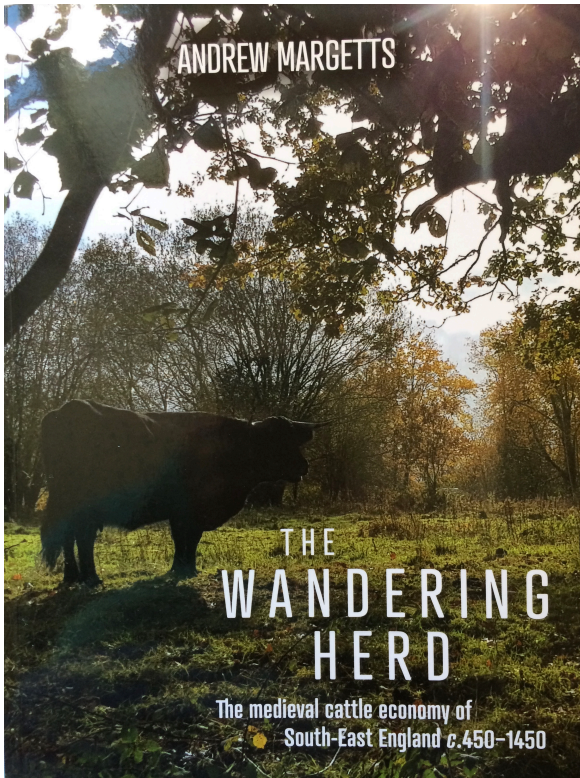


Figure 5. The cover photo of *The Wandering Herd* illustrates the connection of cattle with woodland and wood pasture.

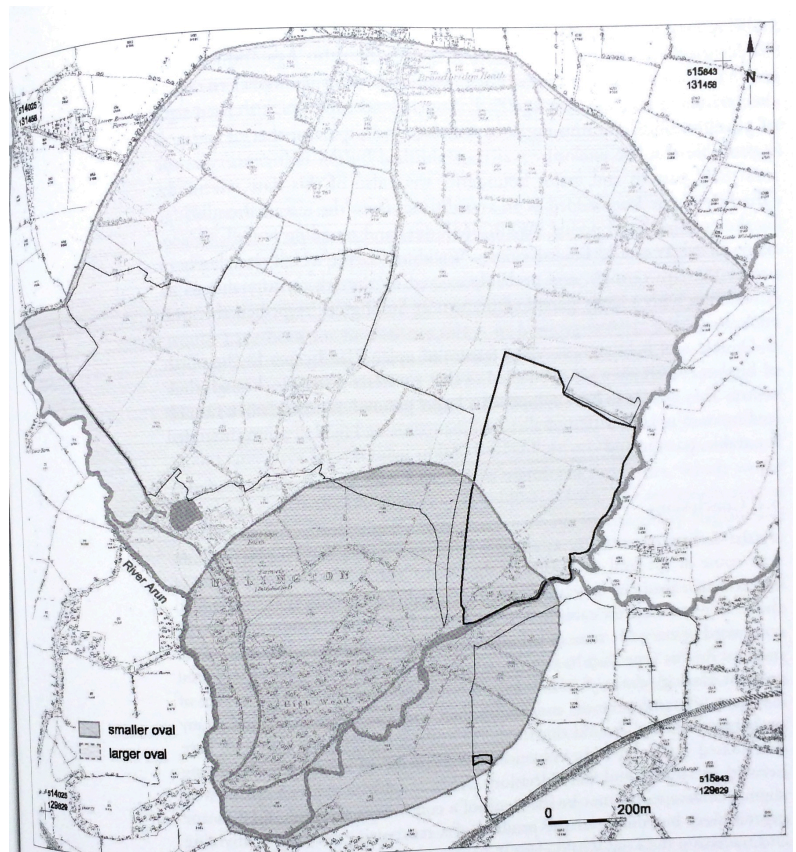


Figure 6. Map of the double oval field pattern associated with 'The Wickhurst' at Broadbridge Heath, West Sussex (Margetts 2021, 211).

The enclosure at Ashfield displays features that are characteristic of oval enclosures (Margetts 2021, 118). The curving boundaries are their defining feature. The relationship of the enclosures to the surrounding landscape suggests that they were created at an early stage of development. Roads or trackways often follow the perimeter, and the field layout within the enclosure is unrelated to the pattern of field boundaries outside. The Ashfield enclosure appears to have been carefully sited to take advantage of the topography, utilising the terrace step on the west and the stream valley along its northern edge. The small stream flowing across the centre would have provided water for the cattle. Stock funnels aided the movement of cattle between seasonal pastures and, ultimately, to market. Examples are apparent on the map in Figure 1 on the road south of the enclosure and the road leading east from Ashfield Green.

The smaller oval shown on the map of The Wickhurst, Figure 6, is very similar in size and shape to the Ashfield enclosure. Excavations within the larger oval, prior to the construction of a housing estate, dated the first phase of the site to the mid-8th to 11th century (*ibid.*, 204). At this period the Weald was largely utilised as summer pasture for estates that were located on more productive land. Transhumance involved the droving of cattle over distances of up to 30 miles. Permanent cattle ranches or *vaccaries* developed in the centuries following the Norman Conquest. The place-name Wickhurst combines the Old English *wic*, a location associated with a specialised activity, with *hyrst*, a wooded hill. The woodland of the Weald was used for the grazing of cattle as well as for autumn pannage for swine. *Wic* place-names are associated with dairying and with medieval *vaccaries*.

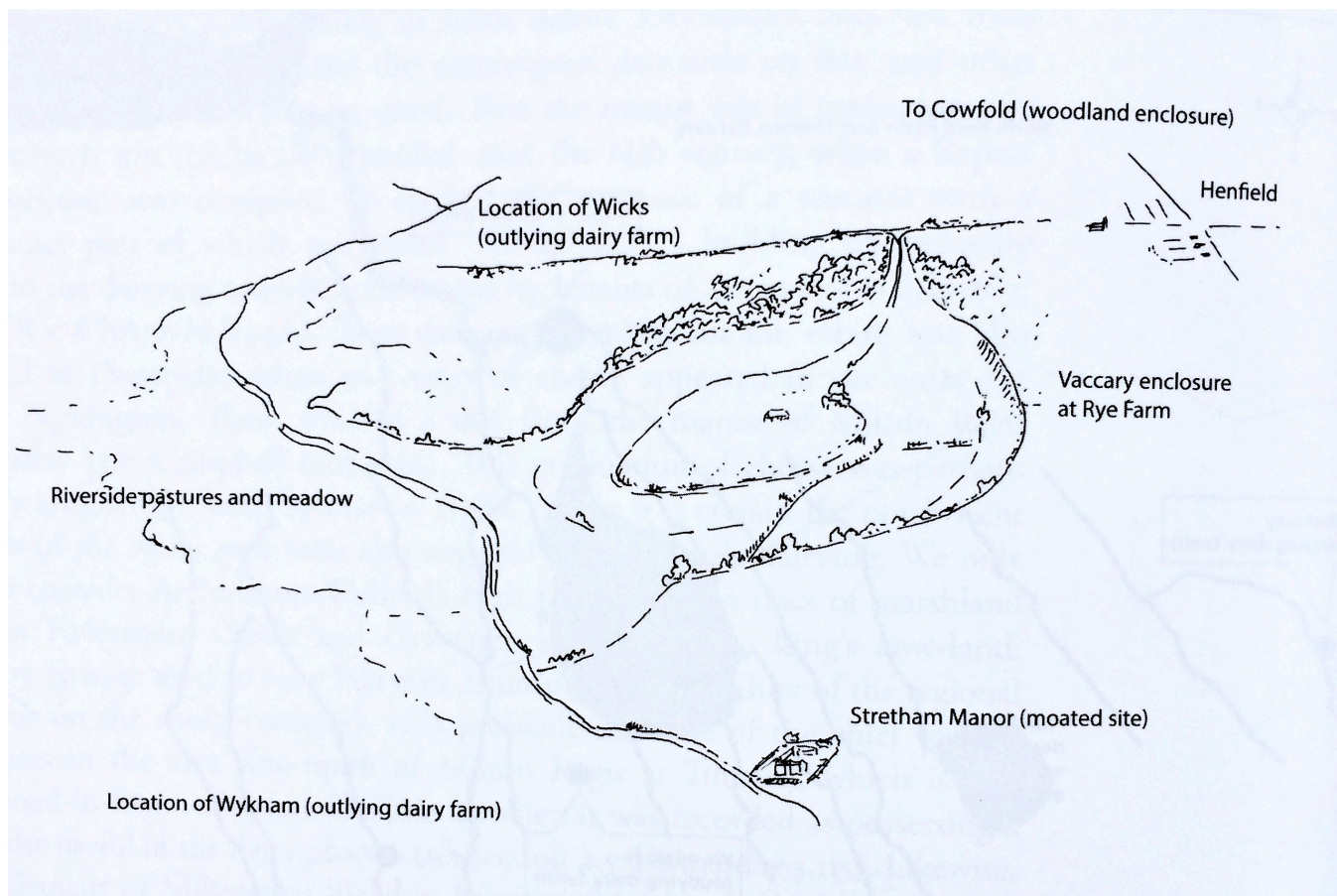


Figure 7. Sketch showing elements of the vaccary on the manor of Stretham, West Sussex (Margetts 2021, 238).

The drawing in Figure 7 shows an oval enclosure at Rye Farm in relation to other features in the landscape that are relevant to the raising of cattle. Like the Ashfield enclosure, it is near a river, in this case the Adur. The floodplain would have provided pasture with access to drinking water and could have been managed to allow a hay crop to be produced for winter fodder. *Wic* field-names within the parish suggest the locations of dairying areas outside of the enclosure. About 1km north of Rye Farm the fields of Upper, Lower and West Wicks lie near Wick Brook (*ibid.*, 129-130, Fig. 6.9). Further north is another enclosure at Cowfold. This place-name includes the element *fald/falod* defined by Old English Translator as a fold/stall/stable/cattle-pen. *Assefold* - ash tree fold - is the earliest recorded name for Ashfield, dating from the mid-13th century. An overlap in the occurrence of *falod* and *wic* place-names in the northwestern Weald suggests the possibility 'that the two may share some symbiosis in medieval pastoral land-use' (*ibid.*, 76), a link between cattle enclosures and outlying dairying.

The Ashfield/Assefold oval might have been associated with a dairying site along the Tadburn, a tributary of the Test. The reference to 'Wicks' hasn't been preserved by any local field names, but appears within the boundary clause of the Ampfield charter (S 381) dating from 910 x 924. The clause begins: *Ærest æt ticcenesfelda wicum* - First to Ticcenesfeld *wics*. A previous examination of the charter bounds (paper available on request) placed this to the south of the probable deer park described by the charter. It seems to refer to an area where the surveyors assembled prior to traversing the boundary, rather than a landmark defining the boundary. From this location the party followed a *haga* to the north and completed the survey by heading south along a *haga*. Ticcenesfeld is also mentioned in the Chilcomb charter of 909 (S 376). This *feld* or area of open land can be identified as the present-day Baddesley Common. The Ampfield Wicks, *wicum* is plural, lay at the northwestern edge of the *feld*, alongside the Tadburn (see Figure 8). A road from Romsey to Winchester ran along the Tadburn at this point, skirting the deer park to head northeast towards Hursley.

The section of the 1588 Hursley estate map in Figure 8 shows the area south of the Ampfield deer park. At this date and earlier the road from Romsey to Winchester followed along the *haga* bounding the southern end of the park. The *haga* formed part of the eastern boundary of the estate belonging to Romsey Abbey, described in a charter of c. 972 (S 812). Romsey's boundary continued south along the Markbrooke, a tributary of the Tadburn which flows west from 'Emmoore Ponde', now Emer Bog. *Ticcenefelds wicum* would have been located in the area near the confluence of the two streams at the southern end of the deer park. A sub-rectangular feature west of the deer park has been included on the map, appropriately labelled 'Rumsey' as it is on Romsey land. This could have been an enclosure used in the management of livestock.



Figure 8. Detail of 1588 Hursley map, redrawn by Roger Harris. *Ticcenefelds wicum* was located south of the deer park.

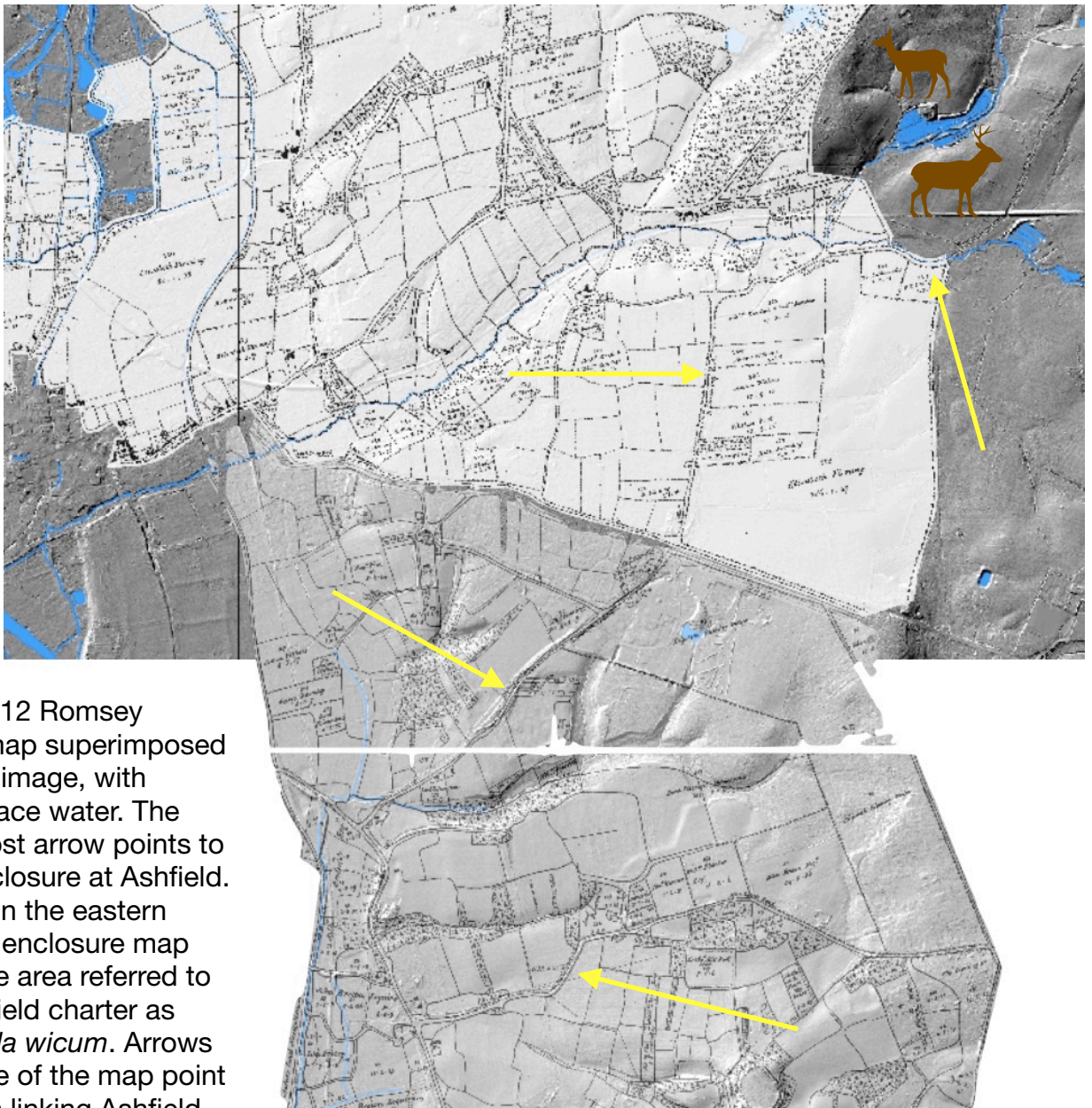


Figure 9. 1812 Romsey enclosure map superimposed on a LiDAR image, with current surface water. The southernmost arrow points to the oval enclosure at Ashfield. The arrow on the eastern edge of the enclosure map points to the area referred to in the Ampfield charter as *ticcenefelds wicum*. Arrows at the centre of the map point to the roads linking Ashfield and the Ticcenefeld Wicks.

The Romsey enclosure map of 1812 (Figure 9) shows roads heading from Ashfield, to the northwest of the enclosure, towards the Tadburn. These are visible on the LiDAR map (Figure 10).⁷ Luzborough Lane climbs from Ashfield Green on the first river terrace to a plateau at the level of the fourth terrace. Highwood Lane continues north, then turns west towards the valley of the Tadburn. Green Lane heads east off the plateau and runs alongside the Tadburn, then crosses the stream to continue along the east side of the deer park towards Hursley. The roads mark the likely route of the drove or driftway for moving cattle the short distance between the Ashfield enclosure and the grazing land on Ticcensfeld, Baddesley Common, as part of the seasonal management of the cattle.

The area alongside the Tadburn referred to in the Ampfield charter as Ticcensfeld Wicks would have been a very suitable location for dairying. The open *feld* grassland provided pasture with an ample supply of drinking water available from streams and springs. The water would also have been used to wash the dairy utensils and to keep the milk cool. Butter, milk and cheese could have been sold to travellers passing along the road or taken to Romsey, only a short walk away.

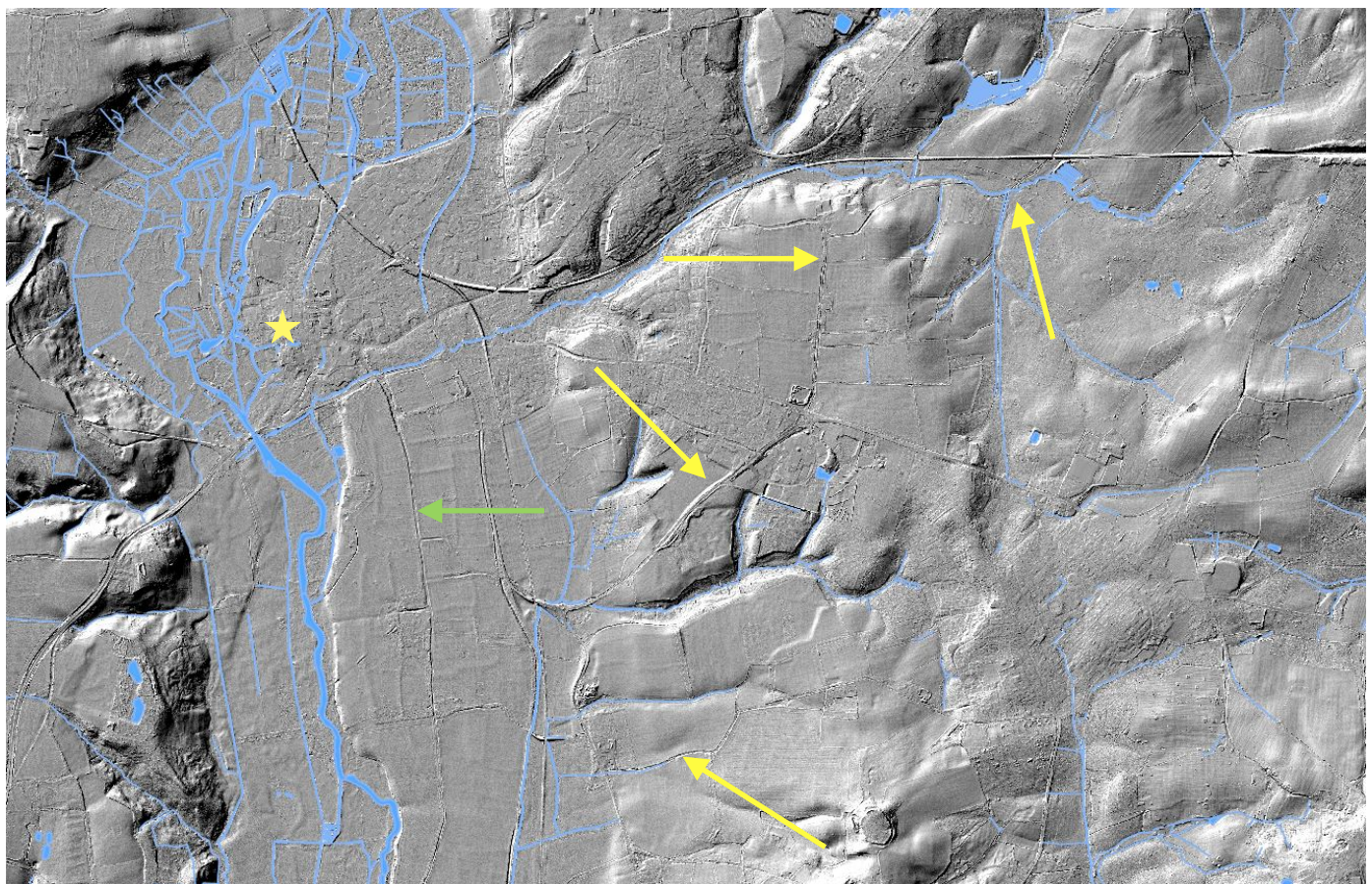


Figure 10. LiDAR map with surface water. The arrows point to the Ashfield enclosure in the south and the road heading north towards *ticcenesfelda wicum* (see Figure 9). A star marks the location of Romsey Abbey. A road, green arrow, runs south from the town along the centre of the first terrace towards Southampton, lined either side by field banks.

The topography reflects the varied resources available to the farming communities on the east side of the Test. The LiDAR hillshade image above (Figure 10) shows a landscape divided into four parallel zones. The floodplain would have provided grassland suitable for pasture and the production of hay. The adjacent flat, broad river terrace was ideal for arable farming. The plateau of higher ground would have been wooded, suitable for grazing as wood pasture. Access to water was limited on both the plateau and the terrace. Further east the underlying clay geology ensured ample moisture for summer grass and spring-fed streams. The management of these resources would have evolved over time to meet the needs of a growing population and a developing economy. Cattle were of key importance, not only for dairy products, meat and leather. Oxen were the primary draught animals, pulling the ploughs to grow grain and the carts carrying it from the fields.

The construction of the Ashfield oval enclosure probably dates to an early phase in the development of the landscape. It could have been in use from the early to middle Anglo-Saxon period, contemporary with the first ecclesiastical settlement, or minster, at Romsey. Hamwic, a major centre for trade from the early 8th to the mid-9th century, would have provided a market for the cattle, meat delivered on the hoof, with bone, horn and leather utilised by craft industries. Arable farming would have gained in importance as the population of the Test Valley increased, shifting the role of cattle from a direct source of food to being involved in its production. Domesday Book recorded land for 18 ploughs in Romsey, along with 4 mills for grinding the grain. Water was managed to power the mills; cattle were the power-source for working the land. A plough team was made up of 4 to 8 oxen, yoked in pairs. Each animal needed to be trained to work as part of a team, beginning work at age 2 and continuing for about 4 years. The management of breeding herds would have been essential to ensure the availability of replacements. Draught and breeding animals would have to be fed over the winter, probably within the oval enclosure, on hay from the floodplain and tree-hay, leaves and branches, from the woodland.

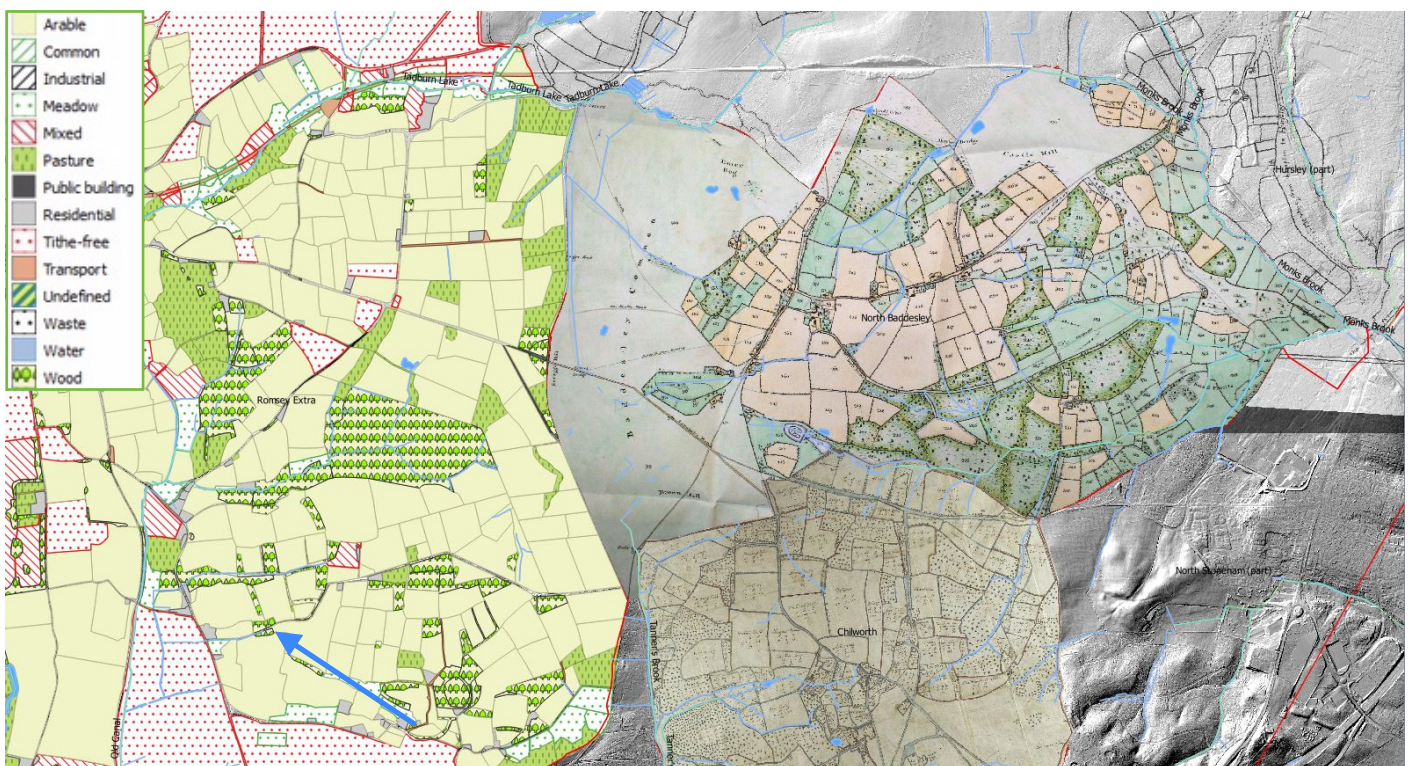


Figure 11. Compilation of historical maps superimposed on LiDAR hillshade. Left - 1845 Romsey tithe map showing land use. Lower centre - 1755 Chilworth estate map. Centre right - 1826 Baddesley estate map. Top right corner and centre top - outline version of 1588 Hursley estate map, redrawn by Roger Harris. The estates surround Baddesley Common in the centre of the image. The blue arrow points to the southern edge of the Ashfield enclosure.

A mixed-farming economy required a careful balancing of resources. The land available for arable production would have been increased by converting pasture and woodland to plough-land, which would then have required larger numbers of oxen to pull the ploughs. The management of meadow for the production of hay would have been necessary to compensate for the loss of grazing land. There is evidence for water management on the Test floodplain north of Romsey at Fishlake Meadows in the 10th century, possibly, in part, for growing hay. With restricted grazing on the floodplain in the summer months, the grassland on Baddesley Common, Ticcensfeld, would have been a particularly valuable resource. It was probably shared by the estates that surrounded it - in the absence of fences, animals would have been unrestrained by notional boundaries. The open area of the *feld* is apparent in the composite map above (Figure 11).

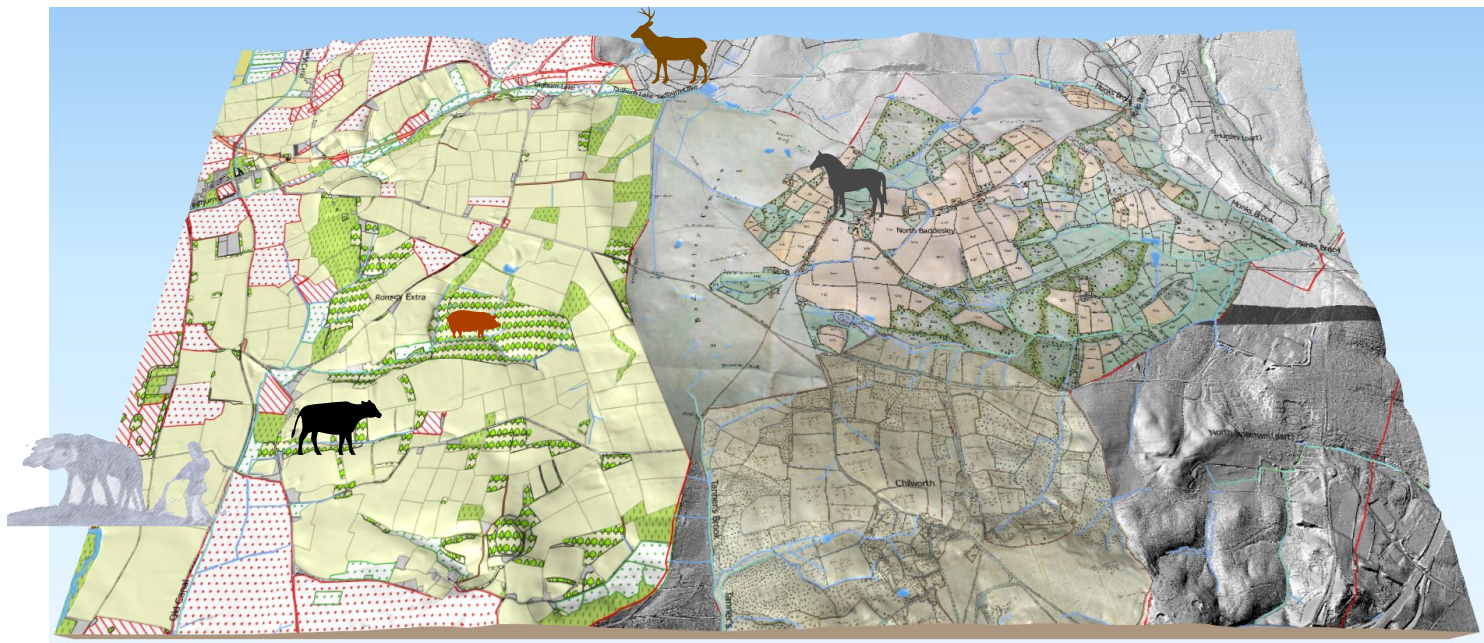


Figure 12. 3D version of composite map in Figure 11. Symbols represent land use.

Combining topographic analysis with the evidence from charter boundary clauses, it is possible to visualise the working lives of Anglo-Saxon farmers within the landscape. In Figure 12 a ploughman walks behind his oxen, tilling the fertile brickearth on the river terrace. A black cow stands within the Ashfield oval. Dairying would have been undertaken along the Tadburn at *Ticcensfelda wicum*, south of the *haga* bounding the deer park, represented by the brown stag. The boundary clause of the early 10th century Ampfield charter (S 381) included the *holding stowe* as a landmark on the east side of the park. Literally a ‘corpsing place’, the hill at this point was likely the site of the end-of-hunt ritual of the ‘unmaking’ of the deer. The contemporary road from Romsey to Winchester passed along the outside of the deer park, through the dairying area and headed east from the *holding stowe* towards Hursley, the ‘horse lea’. The Chilcomb charter of 909 (S 376) includes another reference to horses, *stodleage*, ‘stud lea’; the black horse on the map marks the location of the horse stud on the higher ground east of Baddesley Common. Herds of horses still graze the grassland. The pig on the map is placed within woodland, used for autumn pannage. The Domesday Book entry for Romsey assessed the value of woodland at 40 pigs, a measure of the render, perhaps an eighth of the total. The majority would have been pastured in the larger areas of woodland northeast of the town.

This investigation of the Ashfield oval enclosure started out as an attempt to explain an anomaly on an 18th-century map, a circular feature standing out in the landscape. Research has identified it as a Saxon cattle enclosure. It seems appropriate that the raising of cattle by the Anglo-Saxons has left an imprint within the layout of the fields that is still visible today. Most surviving monuments are connected with high status projects. The *haga* on the western side of the Ampfield deer park, described in the Romsey charter of c. 972 (S 812) as the Bishop’s boundary, *bisshopes marke*, can be traced in local woodland. The bank, probably topped with a fence or hedge, along with the internal ditch would have contained the deer for the benefit of the top-ranking members of society. The population as a whole was dependent on farming. Cattle provided meat and dairy products and also enabled arable agriculture. Cattle enclosures are unlikely to be afforded protection as ancient monuments, but locating one within the landscape does, at least, focus attention on the agricultural production that underpinned Anglo-Saxon society.

Sources:

Banham, D. and Faith, R. 2014 *Anglo-Saxon Farms and Farming*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Margetts, A. 2021 *The Wandering Herd - The Medieval Cattle Economy of South-East England c.450-1450*, Oxford: Oxbow Books.

Old English Translator - www.oldenglishtranslator.co.uk