

Enclosure and Changing Agricultural Landscapes in Lindsey

By S. A. JOHNSON

ENCLOSURE has been the subject of many generalizations. Most writers have dealt with it mainly from a social and economic point of view. The geographer, however, considers it primarily as an agent of landscape modification. It is only when the varied chronology and pattern of enclosure is considered in its relationship to specific environments that some of the essentially geographical facts emerge. Although in Lindsey as a whole physical variations resulted in wide differences in the progress of enclosure, here it is only intended to trace developments in two regions. The Lindsey Heath and the Outer Marsh are two contrasting regions, and a comparison of the progress of enclosure in each reflects the fundamental physical difference.

Lincolnshire is essentially a county of younger sedimentary rocks which outcrop in belts that trend generally north-south and dip gently eastwards. The more resistant rocks have formed *cuestas* the chief of which are the Wolds, composed mainly of chalk, and the Heath, composed mainly of Oolitic limestone, whilst the less resistant clays have been eroded to form vales. The Outer Marsh lies between the Wolds and the sea, separated from the former by an undulating region of boulder clay. It is a very flat, low-lying region composed mainly of silt.

THE LINDSEY HEATH

A two-field system seems to have been general in the open-field townships of this region.¹ This reflects the extreme regularity of the Heath as a physical feature, and we shall see how in turn this gave rise to similarities in the progress of enclosure.

There is little evidence to suggest that much enclosure took place before 1600. Professor Beresford maintains that lost villages were largely the result of enclosure and conversion to pasture for sheep, and there was a considerable concentration of lost villages on the Heath.² But it would be a mistake to infer from this that the region suffered very greatly from enclosure in the second half of the fifteenth century. In all, ten villages were lost, but they were all small, for even the parishes in which they were situated are for the most part only of average size for the region. In 1600 at least thirty-one of the forty-one townships on the Heath had open fields. The glebe terriers and surveys indicate large amounts of open land with relatively small areas of enclosure, whilst sixteen of the twenty-one enclosure Acts for the region affected over 70 per cent of their individual township areas.³ In all, 45 per cent of the region was enclosed by Act of Parliament, largely in the second half of the eighteenth century. But in addition to this it is certain that during the same

¹ L.A.O. Monson 19/6/21; Parliamentary survey C.C. 47; Glebe Terriers, vol. 1, f. 88, Caenby 1577; Andr. 2; Lindsey County Council (Lind. C.C.), Clerk of the Peace, enclosure awards, Brattleby, Fillingham, Glentham, Hibaldstow, Ingham, Normanby by Spital, Bishop Norton.

² M. Beresford, *The Lost Villages of England*, London, 1954, p. 360.

³ Lind. C.C., Clerk of the Peace, enclosure awards, Bishop Norton, Brattleby, Fillingham, Glentham, Hackthorne, Hibaldstow, Ingham, Nettleham, Normanby by Spital, Owmbly, Scawby, Scothern, Spridlington, Welton; Blue Book (H.C.) 50, 1904, enclosure award, Willoughton; Blue Book (H.C.) 399, 1914, Enclosure Acts, Appleby, Broughton, Kirton in Lindsey, Waddingham, Winteringham, Winterton; L.A.O. Glebe terrier bundles, Caenby, Cammeringham, Roxby-cum-Risby; Glebe terriers, vol. v, f. 21, Grayingham 1601, f. 68, Glentworth 1602; Parliamentary survey C.C. 74; Amcotts VI/C/46; Monson 19/6/21.

century much land was enclosed by private agreement, for where the advantages of enclosure were generally desired and could be obtained without the costly procedure of obtaining a private Act, it is certain that enclosure by agreement would take place. Thus at Glentworth a pasture called Stow Hill was enclosed in 1732 "at the Expense of the said Sir Thomas Saunderson." Caenby had common fields in 1745 and was enclosed later without recourse to an Act, and numerous townships that had open fields in 1600, but were not subsequently enclosed by Act, must also have been enclosed in this way.¹ A survey of Lord Monson's lands in North and South Carlton and Burton in 1729 shows that these villages were still open at that time, yet they were not later enclosed by Act. It seems likely that they were enclosed by agreement, and a high proportion of the land was affected.² It would seem safe to assume that more than 60 per cent of the Heath was enclosed between 1700 and 1800.

In trying to assess the extent to which enclosure had affected the landscape before 1600 we must also take into account enclosure that took place in the seventeenth century. On the Heath there is evidence that Cammeringham underwent considerable enclosure between the years 1606 and 1634.³ Certainly there had also been some earlier enclosure, for the Inquisitions of Depopulation of 1607 reported a great depopulation in this township.⁴ Roxby-cum-Risby had its glebe dispersed in open fields in 1606, but a terrier of 1618 suggests that it had been consolidated and enclosed,⁵ whilst a survey of the Duchy of Cornwall's lands in 1616 indicates enclosure at Harpswell, Hibaldstow, Hemswell, and

Redbourne.⁶ However, at least one of these townships was still for the most part open as late as 1803 when the enclosure award for Hibaldstow was made. Out of a total township area of 4,557 acres, 4,232 acres were enclosed in that year.⁷ A terrier for Burton in 1663 refers to "the inclosure of the Low fields" which can be dated as being between 1594 and 1613,⁸ but the township was still largely open in 1729.⁹

The evidence points to the fact that there were only relatively small areas of enclosed land on the Heath before 1600. If any reliance can be placed on the returns of the enclosure commissioners of 1607, they would seem to support this view.¹⁰ Enclosure made some progress in the seventeenth century, but it was generally of a piecemeal nature, and even by 1700 the Heath was still largely an open region. The movement reached its height in the era of the private enclosure Act, particularly between the years 1750 and 1780.

The main reason why so much enclosure on the Heath was delayed until the eighteenth century was the large area of light soil in each township. The enclosure of light soils lagged behind that of the heavy and the damper, more inherently fertile soils, so that although much land was enclosed in the clay and silt regions of Lindsey in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, progress on the Heath was much slower.¹¹ On the heavier soils and those with a high permanent water-table, land was readily converted to good pasture and the advantages of convertible husbandry were obvious, for not only did the arable receive a much needed rest, but in times when the market for cattle and sheep was good, the pasture gave good returns. Moreover, in regions where the area

¹ L.A.O. Glebe terrier bundles, Glentworth, Caenby.

² L.A.O. Monson 19/6/21.

³ L.A.O. Glebe terriers bundle, Cammeringham.

⁴ J. Thirsk, *English Peasant Farming*, London, 1957, p. 161.

⁵ L.A.O. Glebe terrier bundle, Roxby-cum-Risby.

⁶ Cambridge University Library, Ff.4.30 (Survey of the soke of Kirton in Lindsey, 1616) cited by J. Thirsk, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

⁷ Lind. C.C., Clerk of the Peace, enclosure award, Hibaldstow.

⁸ L.A.O. Glebe terrier bundle, Burton by Lincoln.

⁹ L.A.O. Monson 19/6/21.

¹⁰ J. D. Gould, 'The Inquisition of Depopulation of 1607 in Lincolnshire', *Eng. Hist. Rev.*, LXVII, pp. 392-6.

¹¹ S. A. Johnson, 'Enclosure and the Changing Agricultural Landscape of Lindsey from the 16th to the 19th Century', M.A. Thesis, Liverpool University, 1952.

of pasture was being extended the advantages of the enclosed field for stock were readily appreciated. The light soils of the Heath could not be converted to good pasture, and the introduction of the grass ley was an attempt to improve soil fertility rather than to extend the area of grazing. The incentive to enclose, which operated in the clay and silt regions, did not carry the same weight here. We must also take into account the fact that the Heath was a region of large farms and generally small villages and thus there was no pressure of population acting as a stimulus to enclose and increase productivity.¹ With satisfactory returns it is likely that the average farmer preferred immediate gain to future prospects. In the second half of the eighteenth century the diffusion of ideas on the rotation of crops and the growing of clover, seeds, and turnips, became more rapid. Turnips were of immense value on these light soils and grew particularly well on the hills which had never been cultivated before; they provided extra winter fodder for the sheep, and as the sheep ate them off the fields the land was dunged without trouble or cost to the farmer. In a period when the more progressive farmer wished to be quite free of his more laggard neighbour, the desire to take advantage of the New Husbandry was inevitably coupled with enclosure.

During the eighteenth century the Heath took on its dominant pattern of regular hedged fields and straight roads. The enclosed fields, new crops, and new farms in outlying parts of the parish, gave the landscape a completely new aspect. By 1850 the region had taken on an appearance much like that of the present day, with most of the land in tillage forming a general pattern of high farming.²

THE TOWNSHIP OF INGHAM

In order to trace changes in the Heath landscape in more detail, it is profitable to examine the township of Ingham which was

typical in many ways. The town lands lay athwart the scarp slope, and the village, which was a strongly nucleated settlement, was sited on the springline at the junction of the Oolitic limestone and Lias clay. Figure I shows the conditions just before 1770 when the enclosure award was made.³

The higher limestone area in the east was almost entirely common pasture, which lay in two parts. The two arable fields lay to the

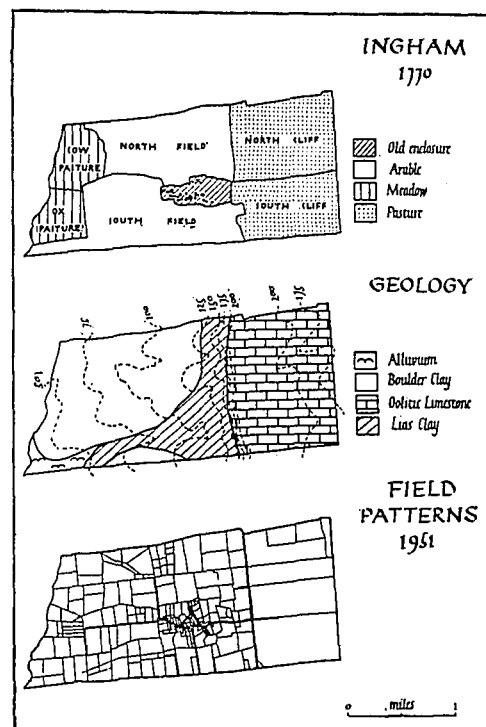


FIG. I

west of the escarpment on the north and south of the village. These fields were composed of Lias clay and the drier boulder clay. The ground slopes gently from the foot of the scarp to the western margin of the township; here, on the low-lying boulder clay adjacent to the stream which forms the western boundary of the parish, were the common meadows,

¹ J. Thirsk, *op. cit.*, pp. 167-70.

² J. A. Clarke, 'Farming in Lincolnshire', *Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society*, 1st ser., XII, part 2, 1851, pp. 338-42.

³ Lind. C.C., Clerk of the Peace, enclosure award, Ingham.

which also lay in two parts. The reason for this pattern of common fields is not difficult to see. Until the eighteenth century the thinner light soils on the limestone were considered infertile and suited only to rough grazing. The stronger soils to the west of the scarp are more inherently fertile, and therefore the higher, better drained, areas of this soil were used as arable land, whilst the low-lying damper parts were used as meadow.

Judging by the lay-out of the fields, there is no reason to suppose that Ingham worked anything other than an orthodox two-field system throughout the medieval period, one field being fallowed each year. By the sixteenth century, however, open-field practice had generally become less rigid and it was becoming common for strips in the arable fields to be put down to grass for a few years to combat soil exhaustion. The first mention of "leys" or "leas," as these grass strips were called, is in a glebe terrier for Ingham of 1671.¹ It is likely, however, that they were being used to some extent at a considerably earlier date. Despite changes of this type, the landscape of the village must have changed relatively little between 1500 and 1770, and the main characteristics of the farming persisted. With its large open fields and commons, Ingham had a predominantly arable economy closely associated with the rearing of large numbers of sheep. The large area of light soil provided grazing for sheep rather than cattle, and barley was the main crop.

Before 1770 enclosure was a very inconspicuous element in the landscape of Ingham, for out of a total township area of 2,126 acres 2,000 acres were enclosed under the award of that year, the Act of Parliament having been passed the previous year. There were only ten people who received land, but three quarters of it was shared between Sir Cecil Wray and Christopher Nevile who was lord of the manor. The result was that the open lands were replaced by a regular pattern of large

fields and straight roads (Fig. I). The common pasture was nearly all divided between three proprietors, and the very large rectangular fields to be found in this area today show that the original allotments were not subsequently sub-divided to any great extent. Along with these changes the introduction of new crops altered the agrarian scene, and subsequent years saw the building of farms away from the village, whereas previously this had not been possible. However, despite such revolutionary changes in the landscape a few fossil features remained. The old pre-Parliamentary enclosure around the village and between it and the scarp slope still shows as an area of small irregular fields, and the road running eastwards from the village proved to be one of the few stretches of road that the enclosure commissioners were unable to straighten, because it ran through an area of old enclosure. It is also interesting to note how the original boundary between the South Field and the Cow Pasture, which continued as the boundary between the two arable fields, can be picked out as the one long curving line in the present-day pattern of fields.

THE OUTER MARSH

Both the pattern and chronology of enclosure in the Outer Marsh of Lindsey make a striking contrast with those of the Heath. In this region the movement started early, and there are references to enclosure in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.² Progress seems to have been fairly continuous up to 1600, by which date there were large areas of enclosed land. A survey of the manor of Croft in 1576 reveals a great deal of enclosure and there is no suggestion that any open field remained. It also shows that there was a considerable area of enclosed pasture in Thorpe St Peter.³ In 1618 the townships of Anderby and Sutton-le-Marsh were enclosed to a considerable extent,⁴ and glebe terriers suggest that such conditions were general at this

¹ L.A.O. Glebe terrier bundle, Ingham.

² L.A.O. 2 Anc. 1/10/1, 1/12/6, 1/12/18; F. M. Stenton, *Danelaw Charters*, Nos. 14, 536, 547.

³ L.A.O. Monson 8/8. ⁴ L.A.O. Misc. Don. 73.

time.¹ Despite the progress of enclosure, however, the great majority of townships in the region still had open fields in 1600.²

Much of the land enclosed before 1600 was pasture, and enclosure continued in the seventeenth century with progressively greater emphasis on grass farming. There was considerable enclosure of glebe in Saltfleetby St Clements between 1606 and 1712. An indenture of bargain and sale of land in this township in 1662 refers to "all those three Acres of Land Arrable lately-converted into pasture."³ Two years later there is reference to five selions of "late converted pasture lying in the said North field."⁴ This tendency is in keeping with the findings of Dr Thirsk, who has noted the increase in numbers of sheep kept by the larger farmers in this period.⁵ In some townships, if changes in the glebe lands were any reflection of changes in other holdings, there appears to have been a slowing down in the progress of enclosure between about 1630 and 1700.⁶ This may reflect the general depression in the seventeenth century, when not until 1690 did numbers of stock approach their late sixteenth-century level on the average peasant farm in the Marsh.⁷ Under these conditions one would not expect such farmers to embark on so many schemes for enclosure.

It seems likely that enclosure took place in the Outer Marsh throughout the eighteenth century. Part of the glebe in Theddlethorpe St Helen lay open in 1664, but it was all enclosed by 1822; whilst the open lands of Gayton-le-Marsh were enclosed by agreement in the early years of the century.⁸ The result of all this early enclosure was that only 15 per cent of the region remained to be enclosed by

Act of Parliament. Although many townships were affected by Acts, they usually only applied to a very small proportion of the township area, and were merely rounding off the work of several centuries by enclosing a small area of common field or pasture that had survived. It is significant that most of the awards were late, particularly between the years 1825 and 1850, there being only four prior to 1800. Many of them were made under the General Act of 1836 which obviated the necessity of a more costly private Act. Here, therefore, Parliamentary enclosure was considerably later than on the Heath and most other regions, and can be explained in terms of the facility with which piecemeal enclosure took place. The more progressive farmers could take advantage of favourable agricultural trends whether small areas of open field persisted or not. Moreover, the improvement of the light soils for arable farming gave the main impetus to Parliamentary enclosure in the eighteenth century, but this carried little weight in the Outer Marsh where grass farming was all important.

The long-standing and widespread acceptance of individual enclosure arose from several closely related factors. In the first place, there was the early recognition of the advantages of enclosure for stock rearing, whilst the piecemeal reclamation of salt-marsh was automatically coupled with enclosure. Furthermore, the abundance of good grazing that was available made the loss of shackle, that resulted from the encroachment of enclosures on the open fields, much less serious. On the Heath, where common grazings were highly prized, piecemeal enclosure met with more resistance. Even in

¹ L.A.O. Glebe terrier bundles, Conisholme, Saltfleetby All Saints, South Somercotes; Glebe terriers, vol. II, f. 417, Saltfleetby St Clements, 1577; vol. VI, f. 294, Addlethorpe, 1612.

² Lind. C.C. Clerk of the Peace, enclosure awards, Anderby, Burgh-le-Marsh, Great Carlton and Castle Carlton, North Coates, North Cockerington and South Cockerington, Conisholme, Grainthorpe, Hogsthorpe and Mumby, Huttoft, Mablethorpe, Markby, Marsh Chapel, Orby, Saltfleetby St Peter, Skidbrooke-cum-Saltfleetby, South Somercotes, Sutton-le-Marsh, Trusthorpe and Hannah-cum-Hagnaby, Withern with Stain; L.A.O. Glebe terrier bundles, Gayton-le-Marsh, Saltfleetby St Clements, Theddlethorpe St Helen.

³ L.A.O. Glebe terrier bundle, Saltfleetby St Clements; Emeris 12/11.

⁴ L.A.O. Emeris 12/12.

⁵ J. Thirsk, *op. cit.*, pp. 152-53.

⁶ L.A.O. Glebe terrier bundles, Anderby, Conisholme, Huttoft, South Somercotes, Sutton-le-Marsh.

⁷ J. Thirsk, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

⁸ Glebe terrier bundles, Theddlethorpe St Helen, Gayton-le-Marsh.

early times the Outer Marsh adopted a pastoral economy closely adapted to the physical conditions, and this was an important influence on the enclosure movement. A series of twelfth-century charters, relating to Huttoft, Sutton-le-Marsh, Grainthorpe, and Saltfleetby, point to an economy based on meadow and pasture rather than arable land.¹ This continued with increasing emphasis, which was in part related to a growing tendency to let Marsh grazings to upland farmers,² until the final disappearance of common fields in the nineteenth century. Thus we find in 1794 Arthur Young praising the rich grazing lands of the region which would let for thirty to forty shillings per acre and would carry a cow or a bullock to two acres and two sheep to the acre.³ As a result of this concentration on grass farming, arable farming seems to have been in a backward state, and there was little attempt at systematic cultivation.⁴

The distinctive farming and enclosure history of the Outer Marsh has imposed upon the region a characteristic landscape. Large areas have an irregular pattern of fields as a result of piecemeal enclosure, and ditches and drains are an important element in the field boundaries. The pattern of roads is also irregular, some of them marking the line of old embankments, whilst early enclosure gave rise to an early dispersion of settlement that is still marked today. All this stands in contrast to the Heath.

THE TOWNSHIP OF MARSH CHAPEL

This township is situated in the Outer Marsh region and the land is almost entirely silt. Figure II shows the lay-out of the open fields just before enclosure in 1846, the award being made under the General Enclosure Act of 1836.⁵ By this date the open fields and commons represented only a small propor-

tion of the total township area, the greater part being enclosed. It would seem that piecemeal enclosure had proceeded steadily in Marsh Chapel during the previous three centuries. A map of the township in 1595 shows considerable areas of enclosed pasture immediately east of the sea-bank along which

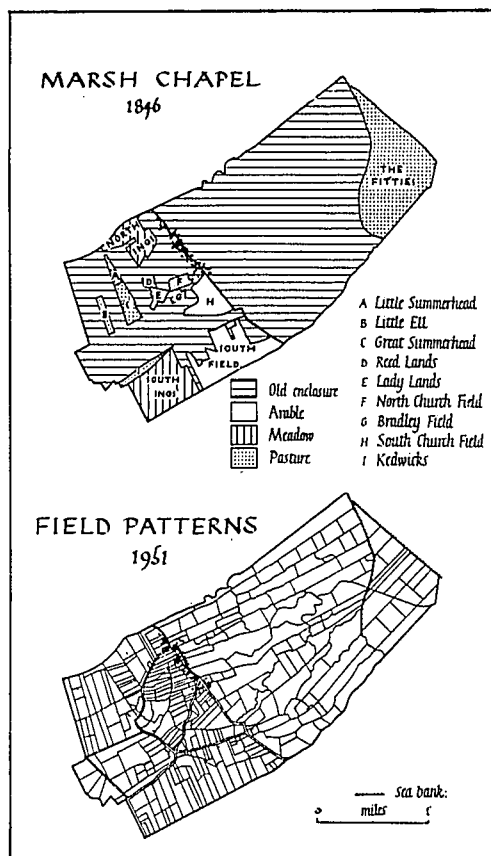


FIG. II

the present main road through the village runs.⁶ Today this is still an area where the field patterns are very irregular as a result of piecemeal reclamation and enclosure of the

¹ F. M. Stenton, *Danelaw Charters*, Nos. 56, 57, 170, 541, 542, 544, 545, 546, 549.

² J. Thirsk, *op. cit.*, p. 237.

³ A. Young, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Lincoln*, Report to the Board of Agriculture, London, 1799, p. 179.

⁴ T. Stone, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Lincoln*, Report to the Board of Agriculture, London, 1794, p. 47.

⁵ Lind. C.C., Clerk of the Peace, enclosure award, Marsh Chapel 1846.

⁶ G. B. Walshaw, 'An Ancient Lincolnshire Map', *Lincolnshire Magazine*, II, No. 7, 1935, pp. 199-201.

salt-marsh. The original winding streams have remained as an important element in the field boundaries.

Reclamation of the salt-marsh seems in some instances to have been closely connected with salt-making. Two of the most easterly of the enclosures on the map of 1595 contained houses; and in a survey of part of the Holywell estate made in the mid-seventeenth century, there is reference to "a Maure called Middlecotholme (with 2 Saltcoats)" and "a Maure (with a Saltcoat)."¹ It is quite possible that these "Saltcoats" are the buildings on the map. The "maures" were round islands in the marsh where salt was made, and they were created artificially by embanking part of the marsh. The precise methods used for obtaining the salt are somewhat obscure, but it seems that the islands gradually grew in size as a result of the accumulation of mud from which salt had been extracted, until they became too large for the saltmakers' purposes. At this stage they were abandoned and used as pasture.²

That part of the township to the west of the sea-bank was largely in open field, common, and meadow. Although much of this land was pasture it seems to have been the practice to have it divided into strips and furlongs in a fashion that is usually associated with open arable fields.³ The strips were, however, generally larger than the arable strips. As much of the pasture was divided in this way, but not enclosed, considerable numbers of stock must have been tethered.

The arable fields which lay entirely to the west of the village were much smaller in area than the pasture and enclosed land, but considerably more extensive than those shown on the award plan of 1846. It has not been possible to ascertain whether Marsh Chapel worked a two-field system in 1595, but certainly this system was common in the rest of the Marsh. By the time of the enclosure

award the arable fields were six in number, but relatively small. This fragmentation of the original fields was due to the gradual encroachment of enclosures. There were still two areas of common meadow, but apart from four small pieces, the land that had previously been open pasture was enclosed. After the enclosure in 1846 the open lands were divided into regular fields much smaller than the fields to the east of the village, which had their origins in the reclamation of the waste. The former pattern reflected the large number of people owning small areas of common land, the latter the work of larger land-owners or joint enterprise. It is interesting to note that because the open lands were bounded on all sides by old enclosure, their outline had been almost perfectly fossilized in the present-day field pattern (Fig. II).

There was still one area that remained unenclosed after 1846. The Fitties was a region of salt-marsh, lying to the east of the outer sea-bank, which was subsequently reclaimed and enclosed by a separate award in 1857.⁴ The resulting field pattern was much more regular than that immediately to the west because of the systematic reclamation and enclosure of the area. The reclamation resulted in straight drains and ditches and the erection of the most easterly embankment.

Enclosure in Marsh Chapel was a long and gradual process that began in the medieval period. The enclosure Acts of the nineteenth century were merely a convenient way of enclosing the small areas of open land that remained at this time. Coupled with this long enclosure history was a predominantly pastoral economy, for we have seen that there were large areas of pasture in 1595, and it is certain that a pastoral economy was well established much earlier. During the medieval period gifts made to the Cistercian foundation of Louth Park were chiefly sheep-gates.⁵ Such an economy helps to explain the

¹ L.A.O. H 97/2.

² M. Beresford and J. K. S. St Joseph, *Medieval England*, Cambridge, 1958, pp. 238-42.

³ L.A.O. H 97/2.

⁴ Lind. C.C., Clerk of the Peace, enclosure award, Marsh Chapel and Grainthorpe 1857.

⁵ D. M. Williamson, 'Some Notes on the Medieval Manors of Fulstow', *Lincolnshire Architectural and Archaeological Society Reports and Papers*, IV, Part 1, New ser., 1948-51, p. 45.

facility with which land was enclosed, for the advantages of enclosure for stock farming were obvious at an early date. Specialization seems to have become more pronounced as time went on, so that the tithe award made in 1839 shows that there were 883 acres of arable, 1,681 acres of pasture and meadow, and 127 acres of common grazing in Marsh Chapel.¹ Added to this, however, is the fact that some of the land recorded as arable would be in ley. By the nineteenth century open-field practice had become very flexible, strips being put down to grass probably without even the necessity for any sort of agreement. Thus a schedule of the lands of James Kirby in 1808 mentions one ley in Lady Lands, three leys in Reed Lands, and thirty-four leys in the South Church Field. A very high proportion of the township must have been in grass.²

The agricultural landscape of Marsh Chapel, unlike that of Ingham, was changed slowly by piecemeal enclosure. This process reflected the nature of a physical environment that allowed pasture of good quality to be developed, and it has left its mark on the field patterns of the township. Early enclosure also facilitated a spread of settlement away from the village at times when most of the Heath villages were still strongly nucleated. At the same time, irregular enclosure

gave rise to an irregular pattern of roads.

CONCLUSION

Enclosure was the physical manifestation of changing farming conditions and has been one of the main agents in changing the landscape. We have traced its progress in two very different physical regions and have seen how it gave rise to contrasting landscapes. At any point in historic time, the landscape represents an adjustment between man and his environment, and the precise nature of this adjustment depends on the availability of techniques by which the physical environment can be modified and the economic exigencies of the time. The agricultural landscapes of the Heath and Outer Marsh of Lindsey at times changed rapidly and at others remained much the same for long periods, but the processes that modified the face of the land never completely obliterated the conditions which preceded them. Just as the siting of the open-field townships was influenced by the nature of the terrain, so the progress of enclosure was influenced by the disposition of the open fields and the type of agriculture practised. Enclosure has never been able to destroy every vestige of the open fields, and by its very nature it provides us with a document from which the pre-enclosure landscapes can be reconstructed.

¹ L.A.O. Tithe award, Marsh Chapel E196.

² L.A.O. B.R.A. 898/x1/2.

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