Historic landscape character and sense of place

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ABSTRACT

Most studies of landscape character within archaeology and historical geography have focussed on morphological features such as whether settlement patterns were nucleated or dispersed, but this paper discusses how adding depth to this, for example by studying place-names, vernacular architecture, and the territorial structures within which a landscape was managed in the past, gives us a far greater understanding of its texture and meaning to local communities. In two case-studies in southern Essex, for example, it is shown how the connections that once existed between inland and coastal communities can be used today to promote public access to the countryside. A further case study, in South West England, shows how field-/place-names and vernacular architecture also make an important contribution to our appreciation of the time depth and complexity of landscape character.

KEY WORDS

grazing marshes

Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC)

place-names

vernacular architecture

wetland reclamation

Introduction

Our libraries are full of books that discuss local and regional variation in landscape character, although what distinguishes most is their focus on a very limited range of evidence: Gelling's (1984) *Place-Names in the Landscape*, for example, discusses place-names; Penoyre and Penoyre's (1978) *Houses in the Landscape: A Regional Study of Vernacular Building Styles in England and Wale* looks at standing buildings; and Roberts and Wrathmell's (2000; 2002) *Atlas of Rural Settlement in England* is at its heart an historical geography of settlement patterns across England as mapped in the 19th century. In the 1990s, however, archaeologists recognised that there was a need to develop a more holistic approach towards understanding the character of our countryside, and the term 'historic landscape' was developed by archaeologists to inform planners and countryside managers of the time-depth that is present all around us, including in modern-day settlements, field systems, and patterns of land-use (Rippon, 2004). In Wales, for example, Cadw and the Countryside Council for Wales embarked upon the creation of a register of the most important cultural landscapes (Cadw, 1998; 2001) alongside a detailed study of one particular area – an extensive reclaimed wetland known as the Gwent Levels (in South East Wales) – which served as a pilot project for subsequent work in each of the landscapes included in the Register (*The Gwent Levels Historic Landscape Study*: Rippon and Turner, 1993; Rippon, 1996). In England a different approach was adopted with English Heritage sponsoring a series of county-wide 'Historic Landscape Characterisations', the earliest of which was in Cornwall (Cornwall County Council, 1994; Herring 1998; 1999), with Historic Scotland soon following suit with their own version known as 'Historic Land-Use Assessment' (Stevenson and Dyson-Bruce 2002).

'Historic Landscape Characterisation' (HLC) is, however, not without its critics. A paper by Williamson (2006) and an editorial in the journal *Landscapes* (Austin and Stamper, 2006) highlighted some of these concerns, including that HLC was based mostly on the two

dimensional morphology of field boundary patterns and so fails to take into account other facets of landscape character. A session organised by the author and David Austin at the 2006 *Theoretical Archaeology Group* Conference held at Exeter in 2006 led to lively debate, and publication of those conference contributions, along with a number of additional papers, highlighted both support for and criticism of HLC (Austin *et al*., 2007). This author's contribution (Rippon 2007) was an attempt to tread a middle line between scholars who have been extremely critical of HLC and those who are proponents (and see Belcher, 2008; Martin and Satchell, 2008; Rippon, in press), and although it is time to move on from the debate over the value of the early English Heritage sponsored HLCs it should be stressed that Historic Landscape Characterisation ≠ historic landscape characterisation: HLC is just one approach to studying historic landscape character, and the aim of this paper is to show the value of some additional lines of enquiry.

Landscape character and a sense of place

Distinctiveness in local and regional variation in landscape character can make an important contribution to a modern community's sense of place and belonging. Indeed, research has shown that an understanding of heritage can help develop individual pride and self esteem through association with the past (Hawke 2010). In some areas it is physical features that dominate landscape character, such as the visually striking granite tors of Dartmoor in Devon, while elsewhere it is the patterns of land-use: a drive through the Weald of Kent, for example, reveals place-names such as Bethersden, Tenderden, Biddenden, and Curtisden Green, which reflect the long tradition of wood-pasture in that landscape (hence the '-den' and 'green place-names). Historical geographers use the term *pay*s for districts such as these with distinctive, even unique, characters (e.g. Everitt, 1977; 1979; 1986), and that individual landscapes had particular identities has been clearly recognised from at least the early

medieval period. Romney Marsh, for example, was recognised as a discrete landscape in AD796 when the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records that King Ceolwulf of Mercia ravaged the kingdom of Kent and reached 'as far as the Marsh', and in AD838 it is recorded that 'this year alderman Herebryth was slain by the heathens, and many men with him, amongst them the Marshlanders' (Swanton, 1996, 57, 62). It is clear that 'the Marsh' was a well known region that did not need further explanation, and that 'the Marshlanders' were seen as a distinct community who lived there. The perception of communities living in wetlands was not, however, always positive. In the late 16th century, for example, William Camden described the district known as the Norfolk *Merselonde* (Marshland) as 'a low marshy … tract (as the name implies) everywhere parcelled with ditches and drains to draw off the waters' that was occupied by 'a sort of people (much like the place) of brutish uncivilised tempers, envious of all others whom they call upland men' (Gibson, 1695, 391, 407). The view that people living in marshland landscapes were different to those occupying adjacent dryland areas survived into the twentieth century: Rudkin (1955, 389), for example, tells a story of how she asked members of a community on the Lincolnshire Wolds whether they were aware of a Fenland custom and got the reply '*We* wouldn't know that: *they* are strangers'.

One of the most distinctive features of the British landscape is the diversity in its character. One example of this is the landscape on and around the Blackdown Hills, on the borders of Devon, Dorset, and Somerset, that mark the boundary between the central zone of Britain that in the medieval and post medieval periods had landscapes characterised by nucleated villages and open fields, and areas to the west that had more dispersed settlement patterns (e.g. Robert and Wrathmell 2000; 2002; Rippon 2008). Although both Devon and Somerset have been subject to English Heritage sponsored HLCs (Aldred 2001; Turner 2005), these were carried out at different times and using different methodologies, with the

result that when they are combined a major discontinuity in landscape character appears along the county boundary which partly runs through the Blackdown Hills (see Rippon in press, fig. 6.3). Others have observed the same elsewhere (e.g. East Anglia and the South East Midlands: Martin and Satchell 2008, fig. 19). As a result of these problems, a new analysis of the historic landscape has been carried out for a study area that straddles the Blackdown Hills with a consistent methodology used across the entire area (see Rippon in press for a detailed description and illustration of the methodology). This characterisation was used to prepare Figure 1 which shows what the landscape may have looked like in the medieval period (*c.*1300), and although the open fields have now disappeared, differences in the settlement patterns remain very evident even today with villages being characteristic of areas to the east of the Blackdowns in the lowlands of central Somerset, and more dispersed settlement patterns to the west.

The contribution of language to landscape character

There are, however, many other very distinctive aspects of landscape character in these areas that are not included in the Devon and Somerset HLCs (as these were rapid characterisations, rather than detailed historic landscape analyses). One aspect of this is the language of landscape: the place- and field-names that reflect both the different histories of particular locales, and the way that past communities expressed their identities through the language with which they chose to call familiar places. In the lowlands around the Blackdown Hills, for example, there are large numbers of '-ton' place-names, derived from the Old English *tūn*, that originally seems to have referred to an estate, and then simply a farmstead (Figure 2; Cameron 1996, 143). These are found in areas that form the agricultural heartlands of Devon and Somerset, and as such it is not surprising that their distribution correlates with what in the

medieval period were either predominantly closes that always appears to have been held in severalty, or former open fields (Figure 1).

Large numbers of these '-ton' names refer to what are now major settlements – villages and hamlets – which in the lowlands of central Somerset make up the vast majority of settlements. On the Blackdown Hills and areas to the west, however, settlement was far more dispersed and this is reflected in distinctive suite of farmstead names such as Barton (the local term for the 'home farm' of a manor: Turner 2006, 64-7), and '-hayes'/-hayne'. The latter, possibly derived from the Old English *(ge)haeg*, meaning 'enclosure', are hardly represented in Domesday but are recorded in large numbers from the late 12th century. They are mostly compounded with Middle English personal names and so are likely to be of post-Conquest date by which time the place-name element meant little more than 'farm' or 'holding' (Gover *et al*. 1931, 129; Fox 1972, 89). This personal name +'-hayes'/-hayne' tradition of naming settlements was, however, only found on the Blackdown Hills and in areas further west: this landscape of individual endeavour is quite separate from the communal landscape of villages (-ton place-names and former open field). The significance of place-names in expressing local identity is particularly seen in the parish of Bradnich, where a third of the settlement-names end in '-haies'. This is a local variant of the common '-hayes' place-name that emerged in the post medieval period in just this parish, and it reflects the subtle ways that place-names add to the character of landscape and reveal community identities within it.

Another aspect of the language of landscape that adds so much to its character is that of field-names which, not surprisingly, are markedly different across the Blackdown Hills and adjacent areas (Figure 3). 'Park', for example is a very common field-name in Devon for an enclosed field, and their distribution is very similar to the 'Barton' and '-hayes/-hayne' settlement names. The terms arrish, eddish, and errish, in contrast, were most common on the

Blackdown Hills with just a small number found to the west and almost none to the east. Arish and its variants literally means ‘stubble’ (Williams and Jones 1872, 13) and within the study area is often found in combination with the name of a crop (e.g. Oat, Peas, and Rye Errish in Membury). Other forms of the arrish name, however, suggest that it was not simply used to refer to current land-use but had become the permanent name of a field (e.g. Townhays Errish in Awliscombe, and Higher and Lower Arrish in Payhembury). Its distribution is suggestive of upland assarting. The field-name ‘furlong’, not surprisingly, was a distinctive feature of landscape that once had significant amounts of open field. Once again, these names add a time depth and richness to local variations in landscape character.

The contribution of vernacular architecture to landscape character

Another important aspect of landscape character that was overlooked in early HLC is vernacular architecture, although this has now started to be addressed (e.g. Lake and Edwards 2006a; 2006b). One obvious aspect of this is the use of different building materials (e.g. Brunskill 1971; 1992; Penoyre and Penoyre 1978), but another is the use of space within a house. Until the late medieval period, lower status houses across this region appear to have been of insubstantial build, and very few examples have survived, although this changes from the 15th century. Across the whole study area the dominant layout of these surviving late medieval to 16th century houses was the same, with three rooms in a line: a hall and inner room (bedroom) to one side of a passage-way, and a service room (pantry etc) to the other (Figure 4). In medieval buildings all these rooms would have been open to the roof and heated by an open fire in the hall, although from the 16th century chimney stacks were inserted and here we do see a significant local variation in style: on and to the west of the Blackdown Hills the stack was often built onto the outside front wall (a ‘lateral stack’), whereas to the east the stack was typically within the house, usually beside the cross-passage

(an ‘axial stack’) (Figure 5). The plan of these late medieval houses was asymmetrical with a far larger area to one side of the cross-passage (the hall and inner room) than the other (the service end). When viewed from outside this asymmetry is readily apparent, with axial stacks protruding through the apex of the roof to one side of the door (reflecting its position against the cross-passage.

What do these differences in the development of domestic architecture tell us? Choosing a lateral stack, especially if it was on the side of a house facing a road, would have made a visible statement about adopting new technology, but conversely it may also reflect a greater degree of conservatism as placing the stack externally retains the integrity of the hall as an open space, perhaps reflecting a desire to hang on to this traditional feature of house design and its associated communality. The way that new styles of symmetrical house design came into fashion in Somerset during the 17th century is certainly in sharp contrast to areas west of the Blackdown Hills where old style asymmetrical plans were still being created as late as the 18th century. Continued adherence to asymmetrical house layouts may once again reflect a desire in the South West to retain the traditional three-room cross-passage plan (Child 1978; 1990, 40–4). So why were communities in the South West so conservative in the way that they designed their houses? Although many have argued that the drivers behind patterns of building and rebuilding within a region were primarily economic, such as increasing population, improvements to communication and marketing networks, and the consolidation of small farms into larger, more efficient holdings, Johnson (1993, 120–1; 2010, 3), suggests that we should also consider non-economic factors such as systems of belief with regard to how a household should be ordered, and the relationships between family, servants and the wider community. Longcroft (2007) emphasised how buildings form part of a community’s sense of place, and Austin and Thomas (1990) provide an example of this illustrating how the arrangement of space within medieval houses on Dartmoor shows a

precise repetition of detail suggesting that 'the internal arrangements of these longhouses were carefully constructed to be familiar, not just to the … inhabitants of the house but also to anybody working and living in that region'. The conservatism of the South West vernacular architecture appears to be another example of this: asymmetrical plans and elevations were the South West way of building houses and one which familiar to its population.

Overall, the distinctiveness of these suites of place- and field-names, and the patterns of vernacular architecture, is such that they form an important part of the local landscape character that would be missed if analysis is based purely upon field boundary patterns. The reasons why these landscapes came to have their different characters, including their suite of place- and field-names, and architectural styles, are explored elsewhere (Rippon, in press), and what is important here is simply that they show how particular areas of landscape were occupied by communities whose sense of distinctiveness and identity went beyond whether they lived in communal villages or isolated farmsteads, or farmed the land in open or enclosed fields, but is reflected in what they called those settlements and fields, and how they used space in their buildings.

Raising the Profile of the Historic Landscape in Planning and Countryside Management: The South Essex Marshes Project

Understanding historic landscape character is an increasingly important part of planning and countryside management. That consideration must be given to archaeology when determining a planning application has been embedded within government guidance since the early 1990s in the form of *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16) and its successor *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment*. There are now a wide range of techniques whereby archaeologists can map evidence for past human

activity that survives above ground (e.g. as earthworks) along with a proportion of what is now buried beneath plough soil but which can be revealed through methods such as geophysical survey (e.g. Bowden, 1999). This below-ground archaeology is often extensive, forming entire 'buried landscapes', as is sometimes the case with the upstanding earthworks of 'relict landscapes' (the remains of past settlements, agriculture, and other land-uses such as industry that, while having gone out of use and so no longer performing their original function, are still visible and so form part of today's landscape character). The importance of these buried and relict landscapes is now well-known, but there is a third component of the historic environment that until recently has been neglected: features of post-medieval, medieval, Roman, and even prehistoric origin that are still functioning today but which are often afforded less protection than features of these periods that have been abandoned and are now regarded as 'archaeology' (whilst academics such as Hoskins (1955) and Beresford (1957) were far ahead of their time in recognising the value of studying what we now called the 'historic landscape', it was only in the 1990s that planners and countryside managers started to recognise that the whole historic environment was of importance, as opposed to just individual archaeological sites).

One particularly distinctive historic landscape – the South Essex Marshes on the north bank of the Thames, east of London – provides a case-study (Figure 6). This was the subject of a collaborative project funded as an Arts and Humanities Research Council Knowledge Transfer Fellowship (AHRC KTF) that brought together University-based academic research and the expertise of Essex County Council Historic Environment Service (ECCHES) in order to inform the development of an extensive nature reserve being created by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB). The development of this reserve was part of the Thames Gateway South Essex Greengrid Strategy (http://www.greengrid.co.uk/strategy.cfm) which, within the general scope of the Thames Gateway Parklands Vision (DCLG 2008), is

focussing on creating high quality green space within and between the extensive urban areas on the north side of the Thames Estuary. The AHRC KTF sprung from concerns on the part of ECCHES and the RSPB that the historic landscape was potentially of great significance to the creation, management and public appreciation of the new reserves, and a more complete understanding of the historic landscape in its wider context was required. The result was that they approached the author of this paper, who had previously undertaken academic research on coastal wetlands within Essex (Rippon, 2000), in order to explore how a better understanding of the historic landscape could be achieved. The key issue that immediately arose was that the proposed RSPB reserve comprised a series of scattered land-holdings (Figure 6), but that the history of a complex landscape could not be reconstructed from these fragments alone. A study was therefore needed that embraced the whole of the South Essex Marshes *pays*, and that this required work to be carried out not just on those areas scheduled to become part of the nature reserve, but also the adjacent areas that were not. The result was the AHRC KTF titled 'Our Wetland Heritage' that was undertaken from 2009 to 2011 and which had five objectives and a series of specific outputs (Table 1).

The report into the history of this landscape had an immediate impact, influencing of the design of features within the RSPBs new reserve at Bowers Marsh, and will be available to inform future policy advice from the Historic Environment Service of Essex County Council and decisions made by RSPB as the reserve expands in the coming years. The series of seminars were well attended and that they raised the profile and significance of the historic landscape is seen in one unexpected 'impact' that this project had. The funding application to the AHRC for this project mapped out the intended pathways to specific impacts, and it was also hoped that this project would inspire similar work elsewhere, but what was not foreseen was how soon this would be. Part way through the South Essex Marshes project, one of the local authorities who had attended a project seminar – Southend-on-Sea Borough Council –

commissioned the author to carry out a similar study in an area of countryside to the north of Southend, around Stonebridge, where there were proposals to improve public access in an area that, like the South Essex Marshes, had also featured in the Thames Gateway South Essex Greengrid Strategy (Figure 6). Both projects, discussed further below, serve to show how understanding a broad concept of historic landscape character can be used to foster a community's sense of place and belonging far better than simply mapping field boundary morphology.

The South Essex Marshes: A Traditional Grazing Marsh

The South Essex Marshes are an extensive area of reclaimed coastal wetland on the northern banks of the Thames Estuary between East Tilbury and Canvey Island. Although large areas have been lost to urban and industrial development (notably in the eastern and southern parts of Canvey, and at the Shellhaven oil refinery in Corringham), extensive areas of traditional grazing marsh survive between these developments in the coastal areas and the dryland-edge. The landscape is characterised by a series of distinctive morphological features that are readily apparent on maps or aerial photographs (Figure 7). The fields are mostly large, with a mixture of curvilinear boundaries, that follow the lines of naturally meandering former tidal creeks, and dead straight alignments that were laid out later. The remains of other former tidal creeks are preserved as earthworks that form extensive relict landscapes. A series of very long, straight roads were also laid out after the curvilinear fields had been created, but before their subsequent sub-division. The settlement pattern is highly dispersed, with just a handful of isolated farmsteads scattered across the reclaimed marshes (many called 'wick', another example of the importance of place-names in shaping landscape character). Another character defining feature of the landscape is its sea walls, some of which have now been abandoned as further reclamations took place. Taken altogether these physical components of

the landscape give it a highly distinctive character, and provide the spatial framework within which its history can be reconstructed.

Archaeological investigations have revealed how in the Roman period this landscape consisted of a vast area of saltmarsh that was grazed by livestock and used to produce salt by heating sea water (Biddulph, 2010). A reconstruction of the natural pattern of creeks and estuaries that drained the South Essex Marshes before they were reclaimed reveals that the area consisted of a large number of small islands (Figure 8A), and that it was only when Dutch engineers started to drain the area in the early 17th century that this archipelago was replaced by the large consolidated blocks of embanked marshland seen today, including Canvey Island (Figure 8C). These medieval marshes were mostly used for grazing sheep and the large number of 'wick' place-names reflects the location of small, probably seasonal settlements that were used by the shepherds and as dairies. Some of these were on raised areas that may represent former Romano-British salt production sites. There is also some documentary evidence for medieval embankment and arable cultivation on Canvey, and although no physical evidence for this survives today there are possible examples of medieval reclamations on the marshes to the west of East Haven and Hole Haven Creeks (e.g. around Great Mussels on Bowers Marsh, and Oozedam in Corringham) (Figure 8B). The surviving remains of these possible medieval innings are of particular importance as they are relatively rare in this particular landscape.

The Domesday survey of 1086 records a particularly curious feature of this landscape in that a number of inland communities had 'pasture for sheep' that later sources show lay in the coastal marshes: Laindon, for example, is an inland parish but in Domesday had pasture for a hundred sheep (Rumble, 1983, 3.1; and see Round, 1903, 368-74; Darby, 1952, 241-4; Rippon, 2000, 201-7). This probably explains another particularly distinctive feature of this landscape in the medieval and post medieval periods: the arrangement of parish boundaries

(Figures 7 and 9). A series of parishes centred on the adjacent dryland –Stanford le Hope, Corringham, Fobbing, Vange, Pitsea, Bowers Gifford, South Benfleet, Hadleigh and Leigh-on-Sea – extended onto the Marshes, usually as far as a substantial major tidal creek. There is nothing unusual about that. The areas of marsh furthest from the fen-edge were, however, divided up between a series of parishes that were located some distance away. The northern parts of Canvey Island, for example, were in the adjacent dryland parishes of Hadleigh and South Benfleet, while the rest of the island was divided between Bowers Gifford, Laindon, North Benfleet, Pitsea, Prittlewell, Southchurch, and Vange.

When the boundaries of these detached parochial parcels are mapped it can be seen that they clearly followed the naturally meandering lines of former tidal creeks that were later preserved as field boundaries. When this creek system is reconstructed (Figure 8A) it becomes clear that many of these detached parcels were once islands, and a logical assumption is that they correspond to the 'pasture for sheep' recorded in Domesday. The origins of this complex pattern of grazing rights and parochial boundaries appear to lie in the early medieval period, before the reclamation of these marshes, when they were a vast area of common land on which members of nearby communities had the right to graze livestock. The pattern of detached parochial parcels reflects the change from presumably seasonal intercommoning to a landscape held 'in severalty' (i.e. blocks of land belonging to an individual person or a single institution). It is generally thought that parish boundaries in southern England were established between the 10th and 12th centuries AD (Blair, 2005, 368-425), and there is no reason to assume that parochial rights on the Essex marshes were not defined at the same time.

In the later medieval period these areas of saltmarsh grazing were known as 'sheepwalks' and were associated with settlements, probably seasonal, known as 'wicks' (e.g. Figure 7). The place-name 'wick' can have a variety of meanings, including a dependent farm

associated with livestock, but on the Essex marshes it is specifically associated with dairies, cheese-making sheds, and shepherds huts (Rippon 2000, 204): in 1586, for example, Camden specifically refers to 'dairy sheddes ... that they call there wickes' on Canvey island (Cracknell, 1959, 12-13). These 'wicks' often lay on slightly raised areas, including re-using old Romano-British saltern mounds ('red hills'), some of which were surrounded by ditches and have produced medieval occupation debris (e.g. Rodwell, 1965; Rippon 2000, 204-5). By the 16th century the names of 'wicks' in the sense of dairies had become synonymous with discrete areas of marshland as in 1557 it is specified that Sir Roger Appleton held 'a marsh called North-Marsh alias North Wick' containing 400 acres of arable and pasture, and 'a marsh called West-Marsh alias West Wick' containing 300 acres (Figure 7; Morant, 1763-8, 266-7). The association between areas of marsh – sometimes called sheepwalks – and 'wicks' is most clearly seen on St Paul's Cathedral's marshes at Tillingham (on the Dengie peninsula in eastern Essex) in 1222: 'In the marsh there are four sheepwalks, of which one is called Howich and can carry 180 head of sheep, another is called Middelwich and can carry 130 head, the third is called Doddeswich and can carry132 head, and the fourth is called Pirimers and can carry 110 head' (Grieve, 1959, 5).

It is also interesting to note some features that are found on nearby coastal wetlands but not the South Essex Marshes. Upstream of our study area, for example, there was more extensive embankment of the Thameside marshes in the medieval period reflected in the numerous documentary references to meadow and 'mead' field-names (e.g. a grant of 82 acres of land in Hamme to the abbot of Hamme [West Ham] in 1198/99 which included six acres in 'Wicmede', 5 acres in 'Riedmede', and 4 acres in 'Fardenesmede': Feet of Fines I, 16). The scarcity of these 'mead' place-names in the South Essex Marshes is, however, very noticeable and in the *c.*1840 Tithe Apportionments for the marshland areas of Vange, Pitsea, Bowers Gifford, and South Benfleet parishes for example only two 'mead' field-names were

located, both immediately south-east of Pitsea Hall (and a map of 1654 depicts these as part of a much larger field called 'the East Marsh' showing they are of recent origin: ERO D/DU 561/1). This scarcity of 'mead' names once again reflects how the South Essex Marshes were a traditional grazing marsh, and not a landscape associated with arable or meadow.

The main phase of embankment on the South Essex Marshes was in the early 17th century when local landowners employed Dutch engineers and labourers to carry out the work and who in return received a third of the land (Figure 8C). Local communities are still aware of this Dutch presence due to the survival of two distinctive 'Dutch cottages' (both listed buildings, bearing date stones of 1618 and 1621) and the naming of a local school after Cornelius Vermuyden, the after young Dutch engineer thought to have been in charge of drainage operations (Cracknell, 1959, 20-21). In contrast to the medieval embankments, which appear to have enclosed small areas of marsh between tidal creeks (i.e. individual sheepwalks, e.g. Figure 8B), the Dutch sea walls were on a far larger scale and cut across a series of creeks to completely transform the landscape (Figure 8C). The embanked land was at first divided into large fields whose meandering boundaries reflect the course taken by former saltmarsh creeks. These large fields were later divided by dead straight boundaries that created smaller parcels of land, and are also earlier than a series of long, straight roads that date to the 17th and 18th centuries (they certainly existed by 1777 when Chapman and Andre drew their map of the county of Essex). Many of the former dairies and shepherds huts became farmsteads, preserving the traditional 'wick' place-names and ensuring their survival in the modern day landscape and so forming an important part of its character.

Overall, the importance of the South Essex Marshes is that for almost all of their history they have been used for grazing livestock, in contrast to most reclaimed coastal wetlands in southern Britain that have seen a long history of arable cultivation and meadow following reclamation in the medieval period (Rippon 2000). As such, the South Essex

Marshes retain a suite of relatively rare but well-preserved features that are characteristic of traditional grazing marshes that, firstly, need to be preserved and enhanced through sensitive management, and secondly, can be promoted to visitors and the local community. Some of these characteristics would have been readily apparent through a traditional HLC, such as the large irregularly shaped fields whose boundaries preserve the meandering courses of former tidal creeks, but most of the key character defining features of this landscape are not morphological and so can only be understood through adding depth to HLC by looking at different facets of landscape character such as the 'Dutch cottages', territorial structures within which society managed their landed resources (the pattern of detached parochial parcels), and the language of landscape such as the distinctive field- and place-names.

Connections Between Communities and Landscapes

In the programme of seminars that formed part of this AHRC-funded project, the territorial links between these marshes and the adjacent dryland areas proved to be of particular interest to countryside managers as these could be used to foster a greater sense of community interest in the new nature reserves as these marshlands can be presented as having once belonging to all the local communities. Laindon and Pitsea, for example, were two formerly rural communities that were swallowed up when Basildon New Town was created from the 1950s and one way of generating interest in the countryside amongst these now urban populations is to show how those communities had once controlled parts of the marshes. These inland communities were linked to their coastal resources by a series of droveways along which the sheep were driven and some of these still survive as public rights of way (e.g. Church Road that runs past the moated manor site and medieval parish church in Bowers Gifford, and Marsh Lane, a peaceful green lane in Fobbing).

This South Essex Marshes project had as its focus informing the development of a series of nature reserves where the land was in single ownership (by the RSPB) whereas the subsequent work in the Stonebridge area was concerned with improving and promoting public access to the countryside through a network of public rights of way through what remains private farmland. Once again, a substantial report was written about the history of this landscape and once again one theme that emerged was the connections between that area and adjacent communities (https://eric.exeter.ac.uk/repository/handle/10036/3031).

The Stonebridge area is fringed by marshland on three sides with the Roach Estuary to the north, an archepeligo of islands to the east (Foulness, Havengore, New England, Potton, Rushley, and Wallasea), and the Thames Estuary to the south, and the value of these marshes for grazing is once again recorded in Domesday. A series of essentially dryland parishes extended onto adjacent areas of marshland, and most also had detached parcels in the archipelago of islands to the east (Figure 9; Darby, 1952, 241-4). Foulness, for example, was shared between the mainland parishes of Rochford, Little Stambridge, Little Wakering, Shopland, and Sutton until it became a parish in its own right in the 16th century (Smith, 1970, 9, map 1). The intermingling of these detached parcels suggest that these wetlands were, like the South Essex Marshes, once common land and it was only as the desire to define property rights increased that particular communities were allocated specific marshes.

The parishes in this area appear to have been created through the fragmentation of three early medieval estates centred on minster churches at Prittlewell, Great Wakering and Southchurch. These estates/minster *parochiae* were themselves probably created through the sub-division of what was once a single territory/estate that embraced all of South East Essex between the Thames Estuary to the south, the Crouch Estuary to the north, and extending as far west as the Rayleigh Hills and which broadly corresponds to the later Rochford Hundred (a 'hundred' was a 10th century and later administrative unit). The evidence for this is once

again found in the pattern of detached parochial parcels in the coastal marshes and similarly, a number of communities in the lowlands to the east of Rochford Hundred, including South Shoebury, Sutton, and Great Wakering, held areas of woodland on the high ground in the west on Rayleigh Hills (Figure 9; Rackham 1986, fig. 14). In addition to these territorial connections, the place-names Canewdon and Canvey at the eastern and western ends of Rochford Hundred (both on Figure 9) may both contain the personal name 'Cana', suggesting that this was the region of Cana's people (Reaney, 1935, 148).

Whilst of great historical interest in terms of how the landscape has developed, these former territorial links could also be used in promoting public access to the countryside, in showing how all local communities used to share resources in the area. One example could be the Knights Templar's interests in the area. They held the manor of Little Sutton, now Temple Farm on the edge of Southend, and their name is also reflected in 'Temple-Marsh' on the island of Havengore (Lord 2002, 71). In addition to this marshland, a survey of the Templar's property in 1309 refers to woodland which is noteworthy as the parish was devoid of woodland from at least the 18th century (Chapman and Andre's map of 1777). The Templar's woods was in fact Temple Wood, 7 km to the west in Hadleigh on the Rayleigh Hills (Rackham 1986, 16), the existence of which is still reflected in the name of a Templewood road in Hadleigh. The plan for improving and promoting public access to the countryside in the Stonebridge area is currently to develop a series of footpaths and cycle paths focussed upon a series of 'heritage hubs', and these historical connection between the high ground of the Rayleigh Hills (now within the urban area of Castle Point Borough), the fertile agricultural lands around Stonebridge (including Sutton), and the marshlands of Havengore to the east, could provide the focus for one such trail that linked the urban and rural areas of South East Essex.

Discussion

Many academic disciplines have an interest in landscape, however defined, and there needs for greater dialogue between them. Within archaeology and historical geography there has been an emphasis upon studying the morphology of settlement patterns and field systems, with the technique of HLC having now been applied to much of England, Scotland, and Wales. This is a useful start but a far better understanding of landscape character and history can be gained through adding depth to HLC by also looking at a range of other components of landscape character. In particular, there is a need to go beyond two-dimensional, morphological, analysis to embrace a more multi-sensory approach that includes – for example, the language, colour and texture of landscape as reflected in place-names and vernacular architecture – as local and regional distinctiveness in landscape character is an important part of a modern community's sense of place and belonging.

The main case-studies in this paper are the extensive marshes that fringed the creeks and estuaries of southern Essex. The morphology of the settlement patterns, field boundary patterns, and flood defences has been mapped and this has provided the key spatial framework within which the history can be written, and as a means of integrating documentary and place-name evidence with the physical fabric of the landscape. A key character defining feature of these marshland landscapes is their uniformity, but both here and elsewhere adding depth to historic landscape characterisation can help understand local distinctiveness for example through looking at the language of landscape (place-names and field-names), vernacular architecture, and territorial structures.

The work on the South Essex Marshes carried out in the context of an Arts and Humanities Research Council Knowledge Transfer Fellowship designed to inform the development of an extensive new wetland nature reserve and in this it has also been successful. Research can, however, also have unexpected impacts and understanding the early

medieval territorial geography of this landscape revealed important links between the wetlands and the adjacent dryland areas which provide a major potential visitor catchment area. The way that medieval communities across southern Essex used to have a stake in the coastal marshes can now be used to promote the new nature reserves as belonging to all the people of the region, as was the case in the medieval period.

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Abbreviations used for primary sources

CPR: Calendars of Patent Rolls

DCLG: Department of Communities and Local Government

ERO: Essex Records office

Feet of Fines: *Feet of Fines for Essex*, published by the Essex Archaeological Society in 27 parts (in four volumes) between 1899 and 1965

HLC: Historic Landscape Characterisation

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Table 1: objectives and outputs of the 'Our Wetland Heritage' project

	objective	*outputs*
1	to inform future management of the RSPB's South Essex Marshes Reserve, through a better understanding of its historic character	a report outlining the historical development and importance of the whole area - including the proposed *c.*1,500 ha South Essex Marshes Nature Reserve - and which characterises the present historic landscape in terms of the processes and past patterns of land-use that have led to its creation (https://eric.exeter.ac.uk/repository/handle/10036/3030).
2	to raise awareness of the need for a more integrated approach towards nature conservation and the historic environment through a programme of seminars targeted at planners and countryside managers through which the results of the project will be disseminated, and issues arising from it discussed	a series of seminars organised and hosted by the project partners that included representatives from the Environment Agency, English Heritage, the Land Restoration Trust, Natural England, Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership, Essex County Council (Historic Environment, and Parklands services), Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership, Thurrock Unitary Authority, Basildon Borough Council, Castle Point Borough Council, Southend-on-Sea Borough Council, Renaissance Southend, Essex Wildlife Trust, and the RSPB.
3	to produce information for the wider public (local communities and visitors to the area) on the cultural importance of these landscapes	travelling exhibition, leaflet, and public lecture (that gave rise to centre-page spreads in three local newspapers)

4	to produce a generic ‘Toolkit’ to enable similar work to be carried out elsewhere	Toolkit (https://eric.exeter.ac.uk/repository/handle/10036/3048)
5	to disseminate results to other professionals	this paper!

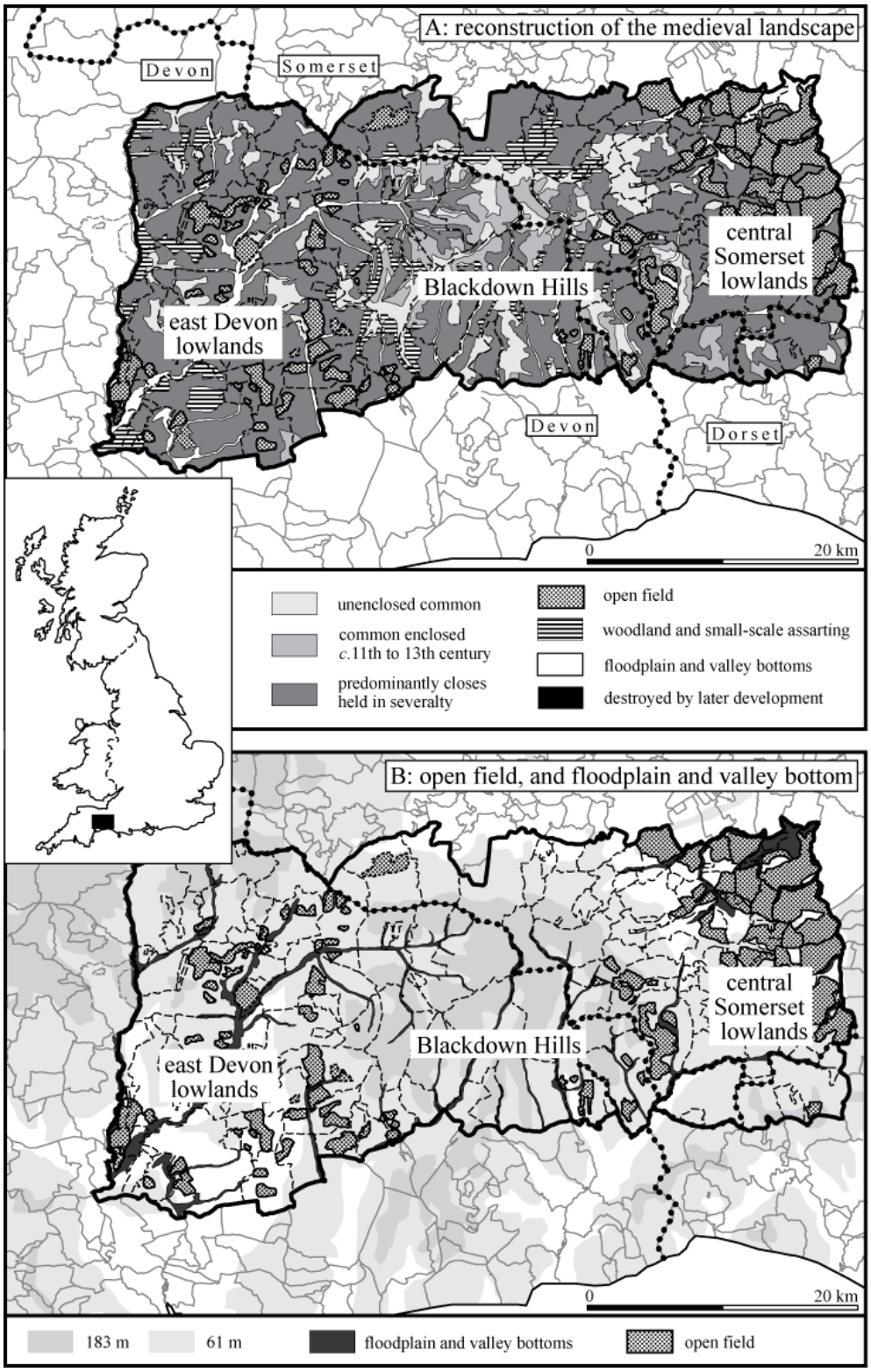


Figure 1. (A) The results of a historic landscape analysis of the Blackdown Hills and adjacent areas of Devon, Dorset, and Somerset; (B) selected historic landscape types: former open field, and floodplain and valley bottom (from Rippon in press).

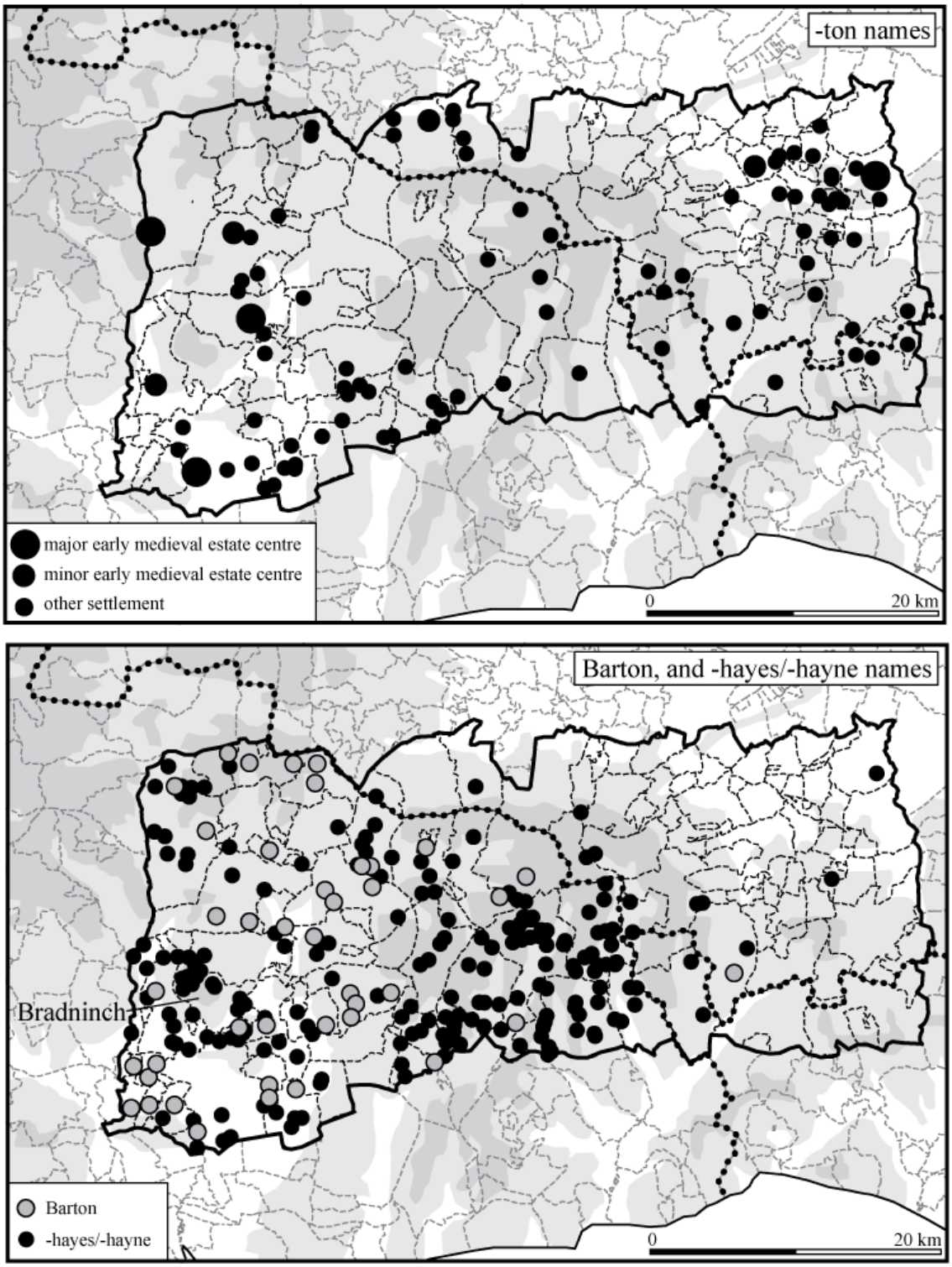


Figure 2. The distribution of selected place-name elements that make a particular contribution to landscape character in particular parts of the Blackdown Hills and adjacent areas.

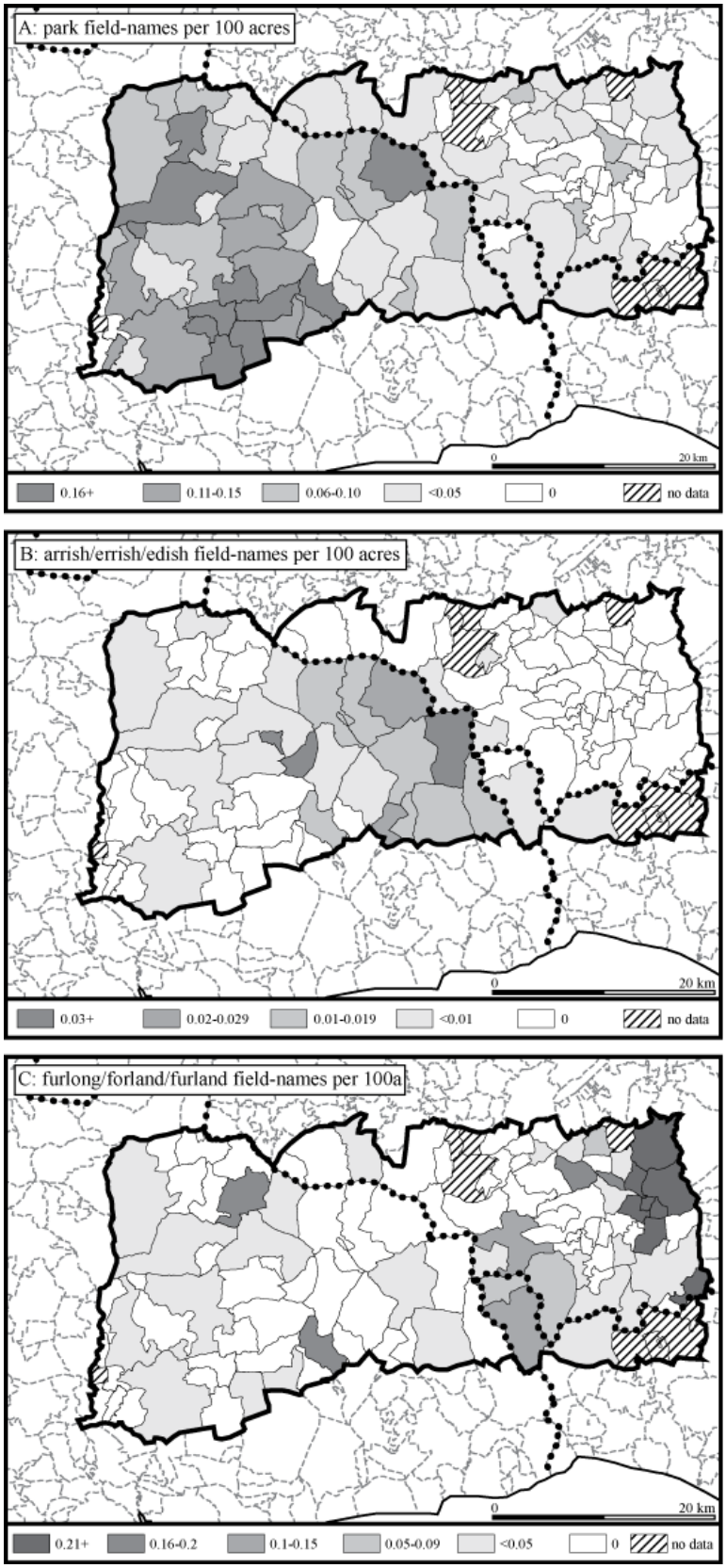


Figure 3. The distribution of selected field-name elements that make a particular contribution to landscape character in particular parts of the Blackdown Hills and adjacent areas.

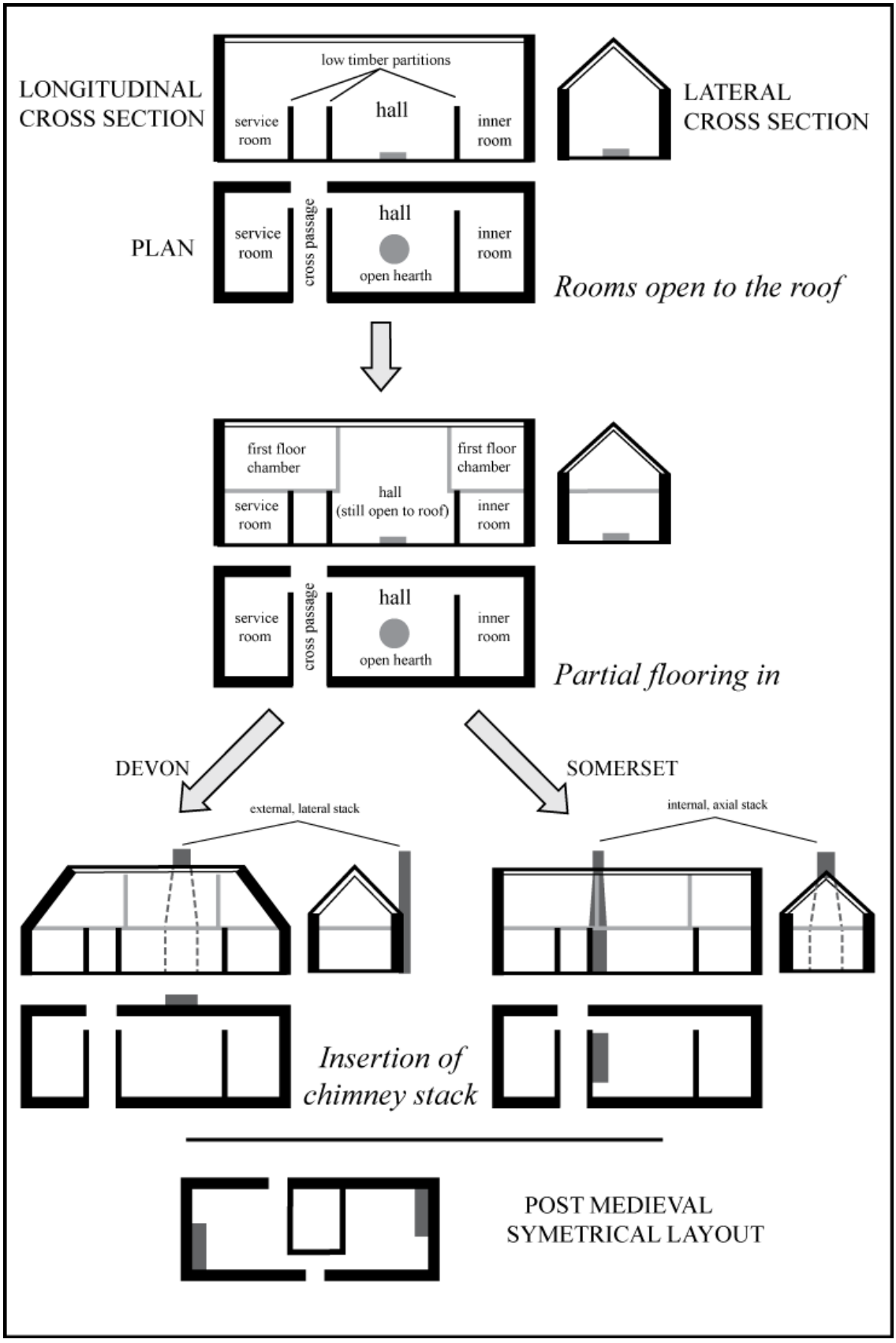


Figure 4. The development of late medieval house plans, showing the different position of chimneystacks adopted in Devon and Somerset (after SVBRG 2008 and Rippon in press, fig. 5.2).

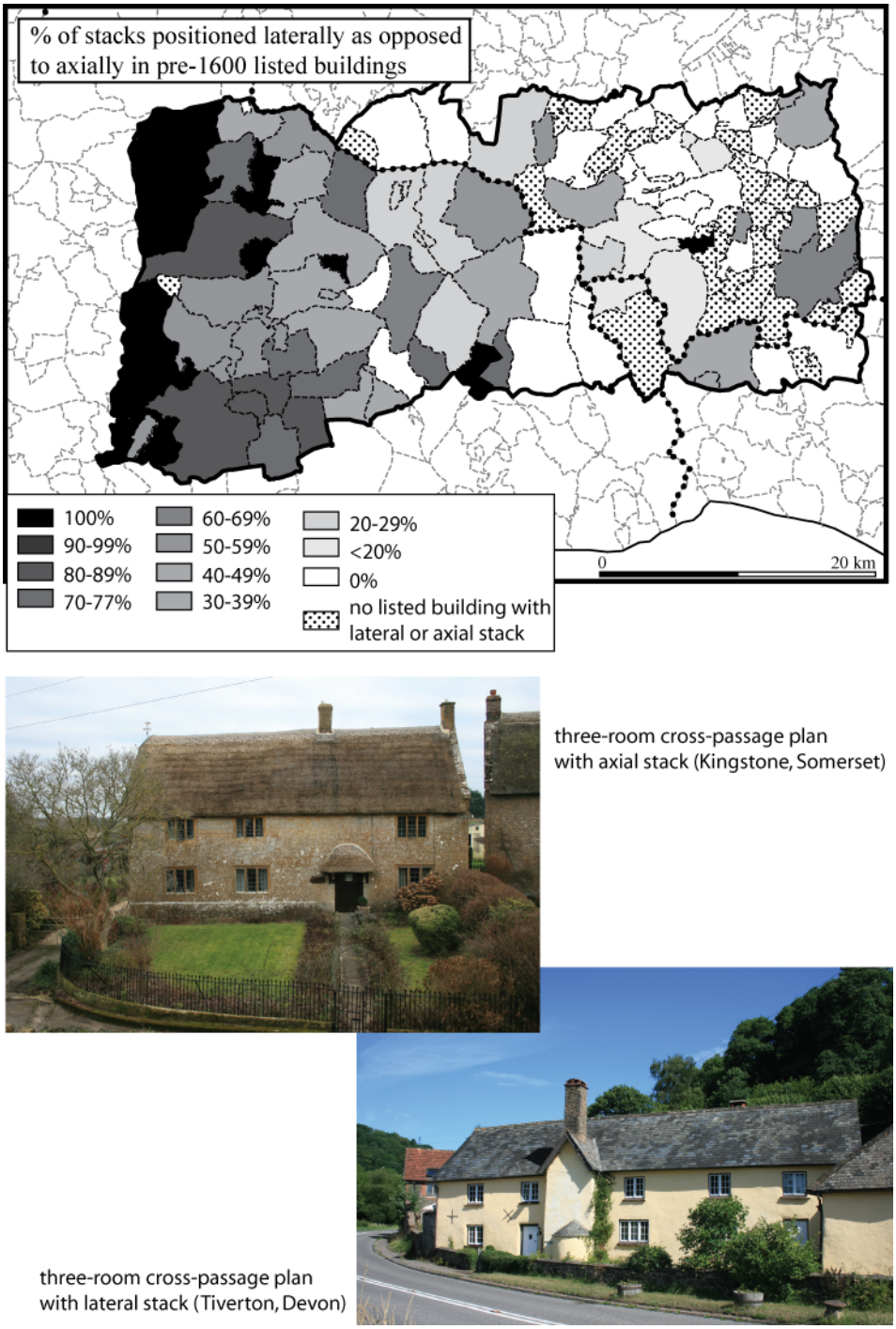


Figure 5. The percentage of chimney stacks positioned laterally as opposed to axially in pre-1600 listed buildings, and examples of these two layouts.

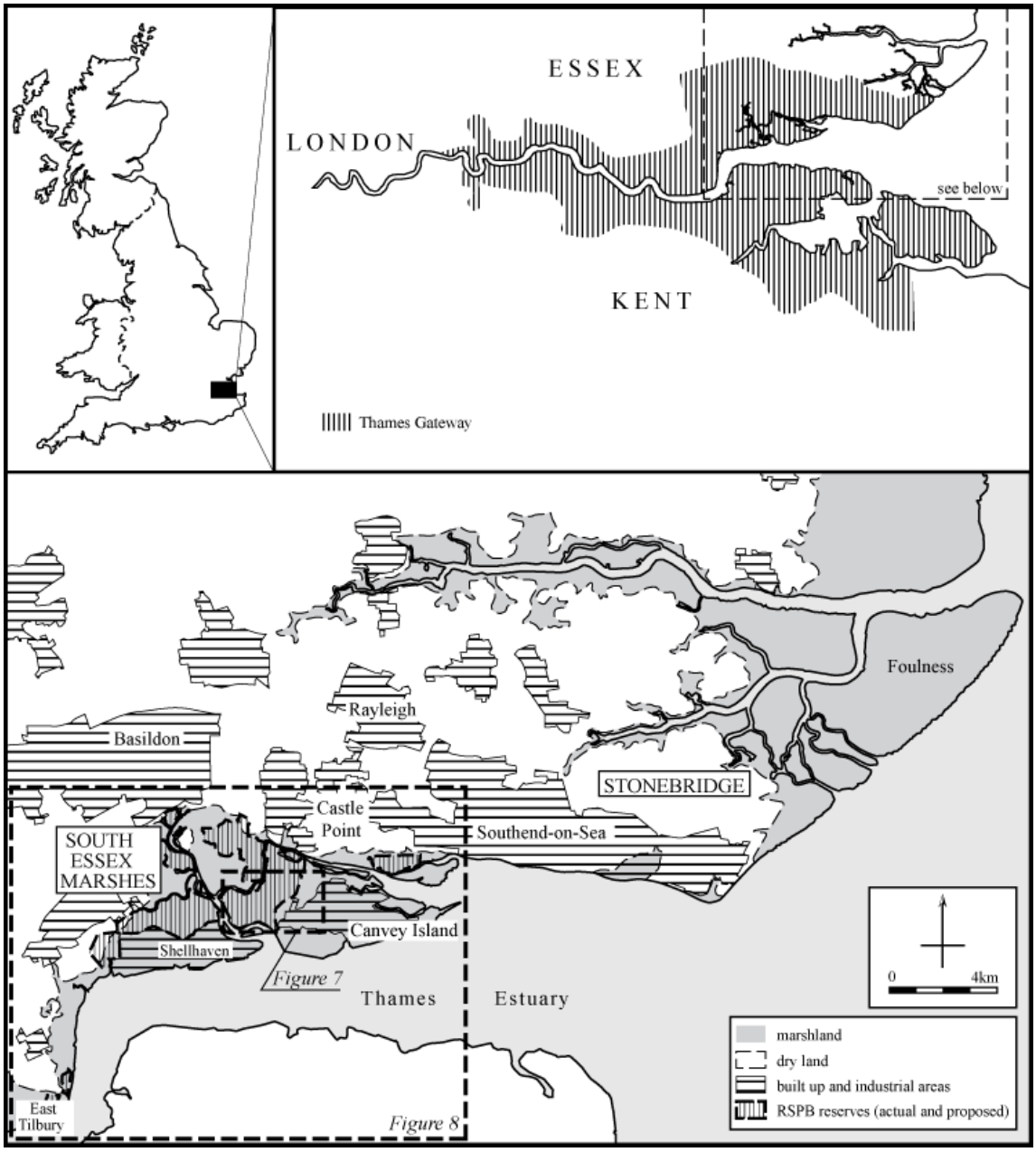


Figure 6. Location map for the two case-studies in southern Essex (South Essex Marshes and the Stonebridge area) within the context of the Thames Gateway initiative.

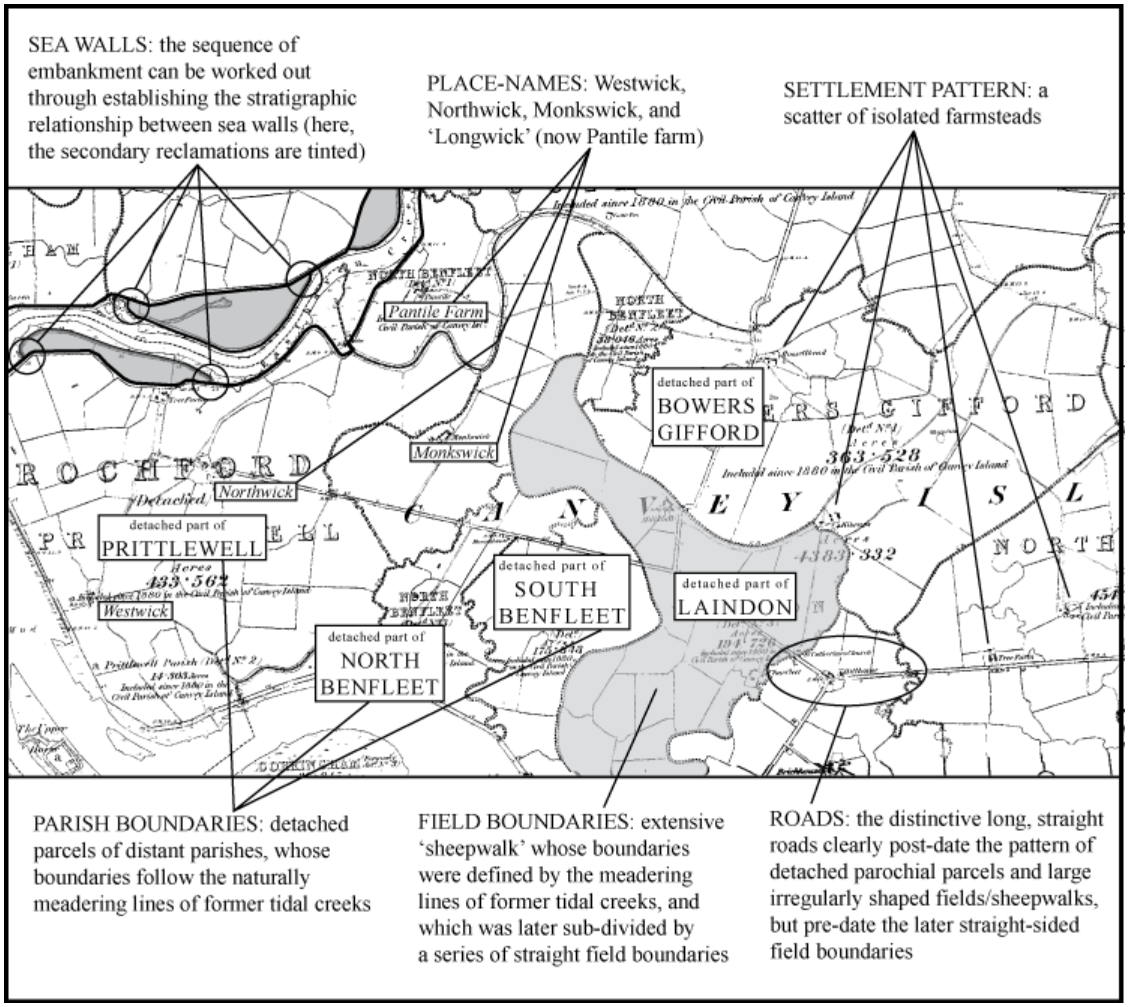
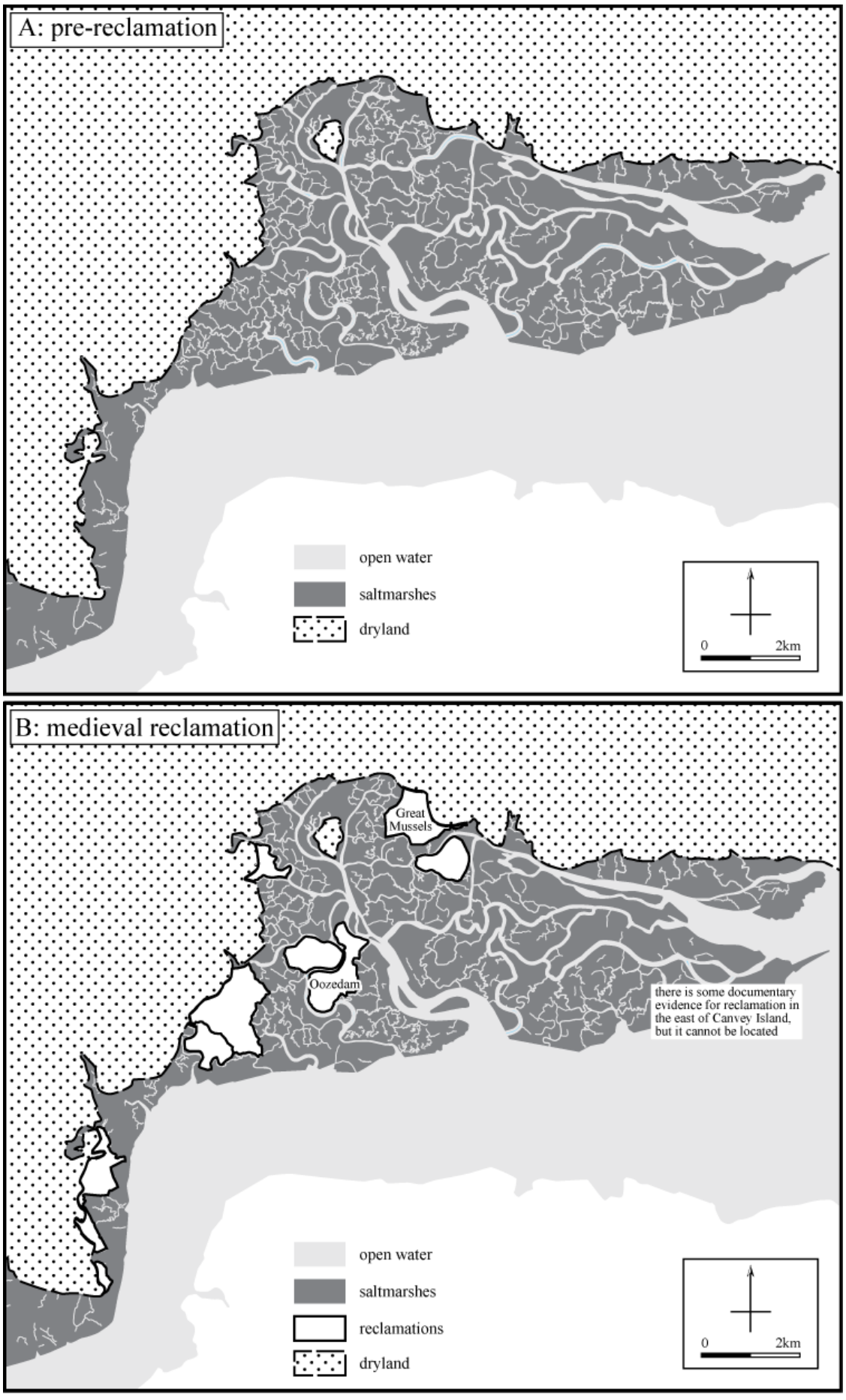


Figure 7. Extract from the First Edition Ordnance Survey Six Inch to the Mile map of the western part of Canvey Island, showing a variety of the key character defining features of this landscape.


A: pre-reclamation
open water
saltmarshes
dryland
0
2km
B: medieval reclamation
Great Mussels
Oozedam
there is some documentary evidence for reclamation in the east of Canvey Island, but it cannot be located
open water
saltmarshes
reclamations
dryland
0
2km

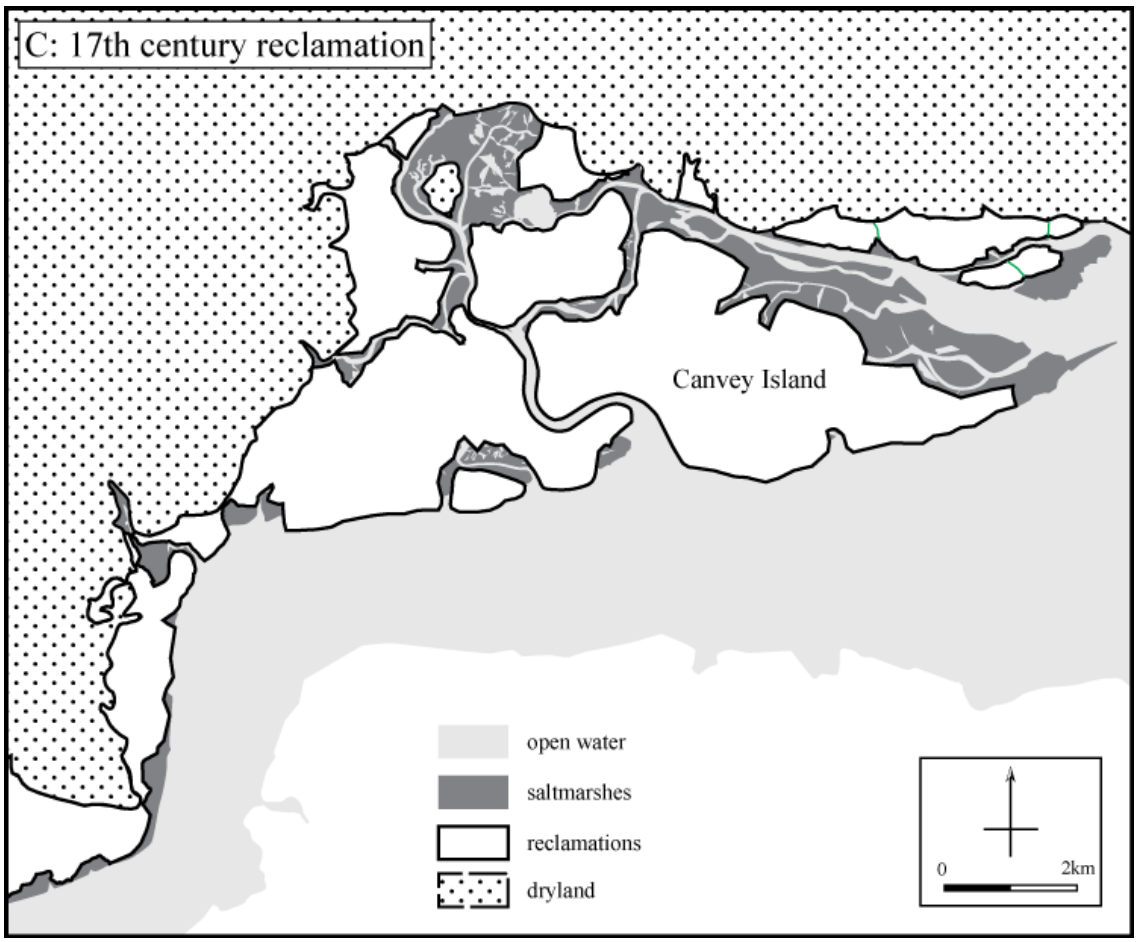


Figure 8. The first three phases in the development of this landscape. (A) A wide range of evidence can be used to reconstruct the natural pattern of creeks and estuaries including earthworks showing on aerial photographs and LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging), and the naturally meandering line taken by field and parish boundaries (e.g. see Figure 2). (B) A series of probably medieval reclamations can be identified in the north and west of the study area based on the type of sea wall. There is a small amount of documentary evidence for embankment on Canvey Island but there is nothing contained within the fabric of the historic landscape to indicate where it was located. (C) It was only during the early 17th century that extensive embankment was carried out, and this is when the archipelago of small islands in the east of our study area became the single island of Canvey.

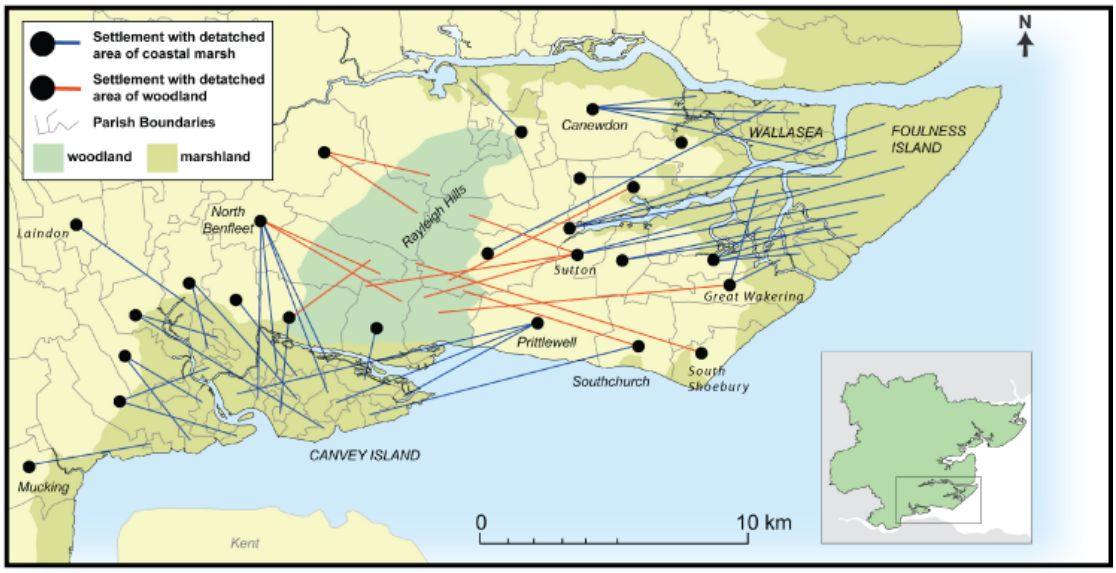


Figure 9. Selected territorial links within South East Essex: parishes that had detached parcels on the coastal marshes such as Canvey, Foulness, and Wallasea Islands, and areas of woodland on the Rayleigh Hills (© Essex County Council).